

**Submission: Consultation on the Second
Action Plan, National Plan to End Violence
against Women and Children 2022–2032**

National Legal Aid | 10 August 2026



Prepared for: **Department of Social Services**

Acknowledgements

National Legal Aid acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders both past and present. We recognise the strength, leadership and enduring expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, and the disproportionate and ongoing impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence arising from colonisation, systemic racism and structural inequality.

We acknowledge all adult and child victim-survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence. We honour those whose lives have been taken by violence and recognise the profound and continuing grief experienced by their families, friends and communities.

We thank the victim-survivors, advocates and communities whose expertise and lived experience have informed this submission. Their voices must remain central to the design, implementation and evaluation of the Second Action Plan.

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Abbreviations List

Abbreviation	Expanded meaning
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ALRC	Australian Law Reform Commission
ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
ATSILS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
DFSV	Domestic, family and sexual violence
DOORS	Detection of Overall Risk Screen
DVUs	Domestic Violence Units
FASS	Family Advocacy and Support Service
FCFCOA	Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia
FDR	Family Dispute Resolution
FLPN	Family Law Pathways Network
FNAAFV	First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence
FVO	Family Violence Order
FVPLS	Family Violence Prevention Legal Services
HJP	Health Justice Partnerships
ICL	Independent Children's Lawyer
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer/questioning and asexual people, plus other sexuality, gender and sex characteristic diverse people
NAJP	National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–30
NLA	National Legal Aid
NLAP	National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020–25

About National Legal Aid

Who are we?

National Legal Aid (NLA) represents the eight state and territory Legal Aid Commissions (Legal Aids) in Australia. Legal Aids are independent, statutory bodies established under respective state or territory legislation. They are funded by Commonwealth and respective state or territory governments to provide legal assistance services for the community and for people who are economically and/or socially disadvantaged.

What do we do?

Australia's Legal Aids are a core part of the nation's family violence response. Legal Aid family violence work extends from first disclosure and urgent safety planning through to complex litigation, appeals and long-term resolution. We operate in state and territory protection-order courts, the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA) and Family Court of WA, children's and child protection courts, criminal courts, tribunals and dispute-resolution processes. We reach people before court through helplines, digital information, Health Justice Partnerships (HJPs), outreach and relationships with family violence and community services.

Legal Aid provides a nationwide continuum of specialist legal and multidisciplinary assistance: early advice and outreach, protection-order duty services, integrated Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS), urgent and ongoing family law representation, child protection advocacy, Independent Children's Lawyers (ICLs), safe dispute resolution, Family Violence and Cross-examination of Parties Scheme representation and help with the housing, financial, migration and social security consequences of violence. We do this through expert in-house teams and quality-assured private practitioner networks, in courts, hospitals, communities, regional and remote locations and online.

Why do we do it?

NLA is committed to ensuring that all Australians, regardless of their means, have access to a justice system that is safe, fair and effective. In the family violence context, this means advocating for a system that protects victim-survivors, children and vulnerable parties from harm, makes users of violence accountable, and that equips courts with the information they need to make well-informed decisions. Legal Aid lawyers appear daily representing clients in child-related, property and family violence matters – many of whom are victim-survivors of family violence, or face intersecting disadvantages that make navigating complex legal processes particularly difficult. NLA engages in law reform and policy processes to ensure that the voices and experiences of these clients inform the development of a legal system that works for those who need it most.

Executive summary

NLA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032. Australia's eight Legal Aids provide specialist legal assistance to victim-survivors, children, and families experiencing domestic, family, and gender-based violence across every state and territory.

Legal assistance is essential safety infrastructure. It converts legal rights into practical protection, helps victim-survivors make informed choices and gives children a safe way to be heard. Legal assistance helps people understand, obtain, test and enforce legal protection across multiple jurisdictions.

Family violence legal services are frontline, specialist services. A national family violence strategy that treats legal assistance as a referral option rather than frontline infrastructure will leave a critical implementation gap. The Second Action Plan is an opportunity to recognise legal assistance as an essential part of how Australia keeps women and children safe, and to fund it to meet the need.

Australia is facing a growing family law legal assistance crisis in the context of 86% of matters before the FCFCOA involving allegations of violence. Legal Aid services remain constrained by inadequate core funding to meet demand, short-term funding and an inability to provide ongoing legal representation when it is needed most. While the National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP) 2025-30 delivered important investment for the legal assistance sector, it did not address the level of funding required. Legal Aids across Australia are now being forced to restrict services in response to increasing demand and rising costs. Eligibility for legal aid remains highly restrictive, with legal aid estimated to be accessible to only around 8% of Australian households.

Unmet family law legal need does not disappear. It is transferred to victim-survivors, children, courts, crisis services, housing systems, child protection and income support.

The Second Action Plan should include a dedicated, reportable commitment to legal assistance for victim-survivors. Government must commit to and fund a **National Family Violence Legal Assistance Guarantee**, and urgently secure ongoing, core funding to expand family law legal services and specialist models including the FASS and ICLs.

NLA makes 12 recommendations for priority actions, services, and investment under the Second Action Plan, aligned to the Consultation Priority Areas: 1 – Victim survivors, 2 – Prevention and early intervention, 3 – Children and young people in their own right, 4 – People who use violence, and 5 – System integration and workforce.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Establish a named and funded National Family Violence Legal Assistance Guarantee

The Second Action Plan should include a dedicated, funded and reportable national action that recognises legal assistance as essential safety infrastructure and establishes a **National Family Violence Legal Assistance Guarantee**.

The Guarantee should ensure that:

- victim-survivors who cannot safely or reasonably afford private legal services can obtain timely, specialist and culturally safe legal assistance; and
- children whose safety and interests require independent legal representation can receive properly resourced, high-quality assistance.

Legal assistance should be available from the point at which a person is considering separation or seeking protection through to the resolution, enforcement or variation of family violence, parenting, property, child-support and related legal matters. The level and continuity of assistance should reflect legal need, safety risk, complexity and the consequences of proceeding without representation.

Recommendation 2: Secure and expand the family law safety architecture that is already working

Commit governments, working with Legal Aids and service providers, to make proven models including family law services, FASS, Domestic Violence Units (DVUs), HJPs, ICLs, and legally-assisted dispute resolution permanent, nationally accessible and capable of meeting demand.

Recommendation 3: Treat children as victim-survivors, and as rights holders

Recognise children and young people affected by family violence as victim-survivors and rights holders. The Second Action Plan should make the family law system a funded point of intervention for children's safety, participation and recovery.

Recommendation 4: Complete and fund the national family law safety, risk and information-sharing system

Commit the Australian Government, in partnership with state and territory governments, to complete and sustainably fund a national, safety-by-design system for identifying and responding to family violence risk in family law matters.

Recommendation 5: Stop systems abuse and strengthen economic safety

Require every relevant legal and administrative system to prevent, identify and remedy systems abuse. It should include family law, child support, tax, social security, migration, child protection, complaints and financial systems.

Recommendation 6: Fund First Nations-led justice responses

Governments should give effect to Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026-2036 (Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices) through First Nations decision-making authority, long-term, flexible and full-cost investment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS), Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) and other Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs); and require mainstream legal and service systems to implement co-designed institutional reforms.

Recommendation 7: Guarantee accessible and culturally safe pathways

Set enforceable accessibility and cultural safety standards for legal and justice systems and fund the specialist pathways, adjustments and workforce needed to meet them.

Recommendation 8: Make independent legal assistance for people who experience sexual violence permanent and nationally available

The Second Action Plan should make specialist independent legal assistance for people who experience sexual violence a named, funded and reportable national action. Governments should implement the legal assistance recommendations in the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) *Safe, Informed, Supported* report and establish a funded pathway from the current sexual violence legal-service pilots to permanent national coverage.

Recommendation 9: Strengthen perpetrator accountability and intervention

Governments should establish national minimum standards, accreditation, partner-safety requirements and a common outcomes dataset for interventions with people who use violence, while preserving legal advice and procedural fairness.

Recommendation 10: Build a national legal and justice workforce capability including safe work with people who use violence

The Second Action Plan should fund a national family violence capability and accountability framework for legal and justice workforces. The framework should establish nationally consistent, role-specific and assessable capabilities, supported by the supervision, practice systems, workload settings and workforce conditions required to translate learning into safe practice.

Recommendation 11: Make legal assistance visible within a strengthened National Plan accountability framework

The Second Action Plan should strengthen and integrate the National Plan's existing implementation, monitoring and reporting arrangements and ensure they can answer a fundamental safety question: *can victim-survivors and children obtain timely, specialist and culturally safe legal assistance, and are legal and justice systems improving their safety, agency and access to justice?*

Recommendation 12: Respond to emerging access to justice risks

The Second Action Plan should recognise AI-enabled and technology-facilitated abuse as an emerging family violence priority and fund legal assistance, digital safety, trusted multilingual legal information, and justice-system capability to detect manipulated evidence and respond to AI-related abuse. It should also support national research on victim-survivors' use of AI and other online tools for legal help, including impacts on safety, outcomes, court workload and equity.

NLA's recommendations align to the consultation priority areas as follows:

#	Recommended action	Priority area
1	Establish a named and funded National Family Violence Legal Assistance Guarantee	1, 2, 3, 5
2	Secure and expand the family law safety architecture that is already working	All
3	Treat children as victim-survivors, and as rights holders	1, 3, 5
4	Complete and fund the national family law safety, risk and information-sharing system	1, 3, 5
5	Stop systems abuse and strengthen economic safety	1, 5
6	Fund First Nations-led justice responses	All; Our Ways; Closing the Gap Target 13

#	Recommended action	Priority area
7	Guarantee accessible and culturally safe pathways	1, 3, 5
8	Make independent legal assistance for people who experience sexual violence permanent and nationally available	1
9	Strengthen perpetrator accountability and intervention	4, 2
10	Build a national legal and justice workforce capability including safe work with people who use violence	5
11	Make legal assistance visible within a strengthened National Plan accountability framework	All
12	Respond to emerging access to justice risks	1, 4, 5

Strategic Context

Legal assistance is essential safety infrastructure

Legal assistance is critical to support victim-survivors get safe and stay safe.

Legal assistance is how victim-survivors secure and keep protection orders, safely navigate the complex and disconnected legal systems including the family law system, avoid misidentification, and resolve safety, housing, and financial issues.

A victim-survivor may first encounter police and a protection-order court, then need urgent family law advice, child protection help, safe housing, income support, migration advice, a property settlement and/or urgent spousal maintenance and child-support assistance. Each decision can affect the next. Without legal help, a person experiencing violence is expected to understand and navigate complex and disconnected systems while managing their trauma and safety.

Legal assistance provides more than representation in court. It helps a person understand risk, preserve evidence, make informed choices, correct an inaccurate record, negotiate safely, secure enforceable orders and connect with social, financial, housing and therapeutic support. For children, it can provide an independent pathway for their safety, rights and views to be put before a decision-maker. For a person using violence, legal advice can support procedural fairness, reality testing, compliance and referral to behaviour-change and other services. A non-collusive and family violence informed lawyer can safeguard against systems abuse.

Timely advice can stop a legal problem escalating, reduce unsafe parenting agreements, support earlier separation and stabilise housing and income. Legally assisted dispute resolution can resolve suitable parenting and property matters outside court while screening for family violence and power imbalance. Integrated legal and social support can address several connected problems at the same time.¹

¹ Inside Policy, [An Evaluation of the Family Advocacy and Support Services Final Report](#) (2018); Andrew Metcalfe AO, [Support for Separating Families: Review of the Family Relationship Services](#)

However, legal assistance is funded for only a fraction of the people who need it. The Second Action Plan is a critical opportunity to recognise legal assistance as an essential part of how Australia keeps women and children safe, and to fund it to meet the need.

In 2024–25, Legal Aids delivered 347,593 completed services to 194,832 clients in national Commonwealth-funded services² alone, including more than 18,000 family law duty services, more than 33,000 representation services and more than 7,000 ICL representations. The FCFCOA has reported that 86% of matters involve an allegation of family violence. Legal Aids report that this figure is higher for Legal Aid grants for family law matters.

Legal Aids provide a highly specialised service response embedded in dedicated practices, trauma-informed and coercive control capability, specialist child representation, multidisciplinary teams, safe dispute resolution, practitioner accreditation and mentoring, and decades of frontline law reform expertise. Legal Aids' ability to work across the federal family law system and state or territory protection-order, child protection, criminal and civil systems is unique and essential.

Family violence assistance provided by Legal Aids (Figure 1) includes:

- **Information and intake** through helplines, online resources, community legal education, multilingual and accessible resources for the public, and specialist information for frontline workers.
- **Early intervention and trusted-place outreach** in specialist advice clinics, HJPs, outreach with refuges and family violence services, and referral pathways with hospitals, police, courts and community agencies to take legal help to places where people are already seeking safety.
- **Protection orders and immediate court safety**, including advice and duty lawyers for applications, variations, revocations, negotiations and breach-related issues, and to arrange safe waiting, shuttle or remote processes.
- **Ongoing family law representation**. We provide more than 23,000 family law representation services to over 20,000 clients a year. In-house and funded private lawyers conduct parenting, property, child support and related proceedings, including complex risk matters, trials and appeals. Legal Aids also administer the Commonwealth Family Violence and Cross-examination of Parties Scheme.

[Program](#) (2024); Rae Carson et al, [Evaluation of the Lawyer-assisted Family Law Property Mediation: Legal Aid Commission Trial: Final Report](#) (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2022).

² Australian Bureau of Statistics. [Legal Assistance](#). (Report, 2026). Note these national figures are for Commonwealth-funded services only, and do not include Legal Aids' further work in state and territory family violence, child protection, criminal and civil jurisdictions.

- **Integrated legal and wraparound services.** Family violence rarely produces a single legal issue. Legal Aids assist with tenancy and housing, debts and financial abuse, social security, victims' compensation, migration, child support, employment and related criminal or child protection matters. Social workers, mental health workers, financial counsellors, family experts and other allied professionals provide risk assessment, safety planning, practical support and coordinated referrals. The [FASS](#) combines free legal assistance with social support for people affected by family violence who have a family law issue.
- **Children's safety, interests and participation.** Legal Aids are the only providers of the national ICL Program³; providing more than 7,000 specialist legal representation services⁴ a year. The program is currently delivered by 631 accredited ICLs; 432 are Legal Aid panel practitioners, and 199 employed in-house ICLs. Almost all Legal Aids also provide representation and early advocacy in child support matters and in state and territory child protection systems.
- **Safe dispute resolution.** Legal Aids support more than 16,000 people per year with lawyer-assisted Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) Services and, in some jurisdictions, arbitration to address parenting and property issues with specialist screening for family violence, power imbalance and child safety, and child-inclusive mediation.
- **System stewardship and prevention.** Legal Aids recruit, train, accredit and audit private-practitioner panels; develop risk tools and best-practice guidance; train courts and service partners; maintain national resources; contribute to law reform; and use frontline evidence to identify systemic safety gaps.

Legal representation fundamentally changes the conditions in which a victim survivor engages with the justice system (Figure 2). Legal assistance helps victim-survivors navigate interconnected legal systems, identify and respond to risk, obtain protective orders, participate safely in proceedings and achieve workable, enforceable outcomes.

³ National Legal Aid, [Independent Children's Lawyers](#) (Webpage, 2026).

⁴ National Legal Aid, [Legal Assistance Data Highlights Increasing and Critical Role of Legal Aid in Providing Family Law Services](#), (Media Release, 23 April 2026).

FAMILY VIOLENCE ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY LEGAL AIDS INCLUDES:

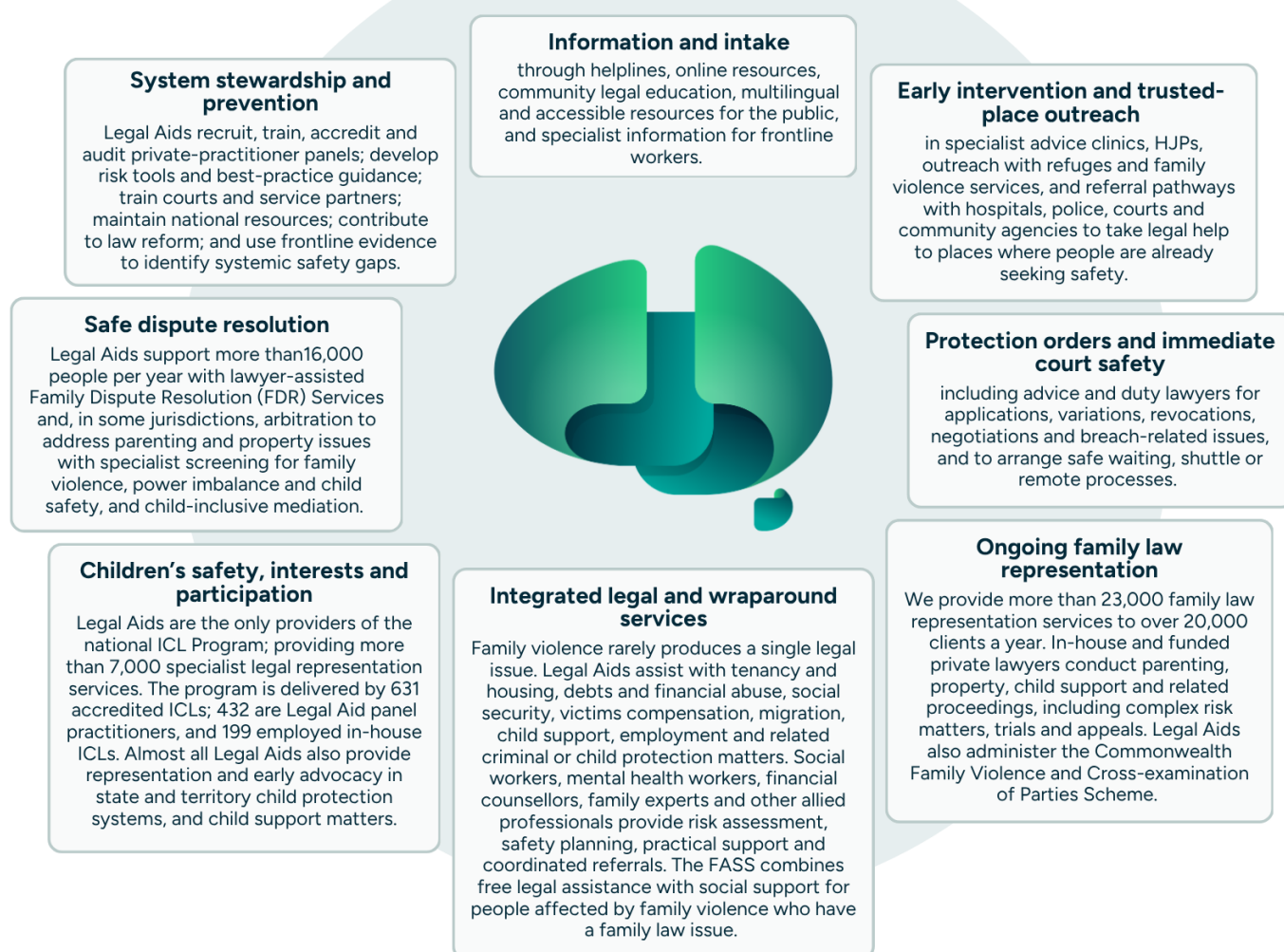


Figure 1. Overview of family violence assistance provided by Legal Aids



VICTIM-SURVIVORS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE OFTEN FACE MULTIPLE LEGAL PATHWAYS AT ONCE

Legal assistance is crucial to help people navigate overlapping legal and justice systems safely, consistently and early

4.2 MILLION ADULTS IN AUSTRALIA

have experienced partner violence, emotional abuse or economic abuse since age 15.



2.7 MILLION WOMEN

have experienced partner violence, emotional abuse or economic abuse since age 15.



1 IN 5 WOMEN IN ONE-PARENT FAMILIES

with children under 15 experienced partner emotional abuse or economic abuse in the previous two years.



86% OF LEGAL AID FAMILY LAW

grants involve a risk of domestic and family violence.

WHY IS IT SO HARD WITHOUT A LAWYER?

- Different courts, agencies and timeframes
- Urgent safety, housing and parenting decisions
- Conflicting forms, evidence and legal tests
- Trauma and financial abuse reduce capacity to self-manage
- One problem can affect every other pathway
- A brief appointment is not the same as ongoing representation

ONE EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE CAN TRIGGER MANY LEGAL TOUCHPOINTS

These pathways often overlap and must be navigated at the same time

Parenting and family law
safe parenting arrangements, recovery orders, injunctions

Police and criminal law
reporting violence, statements, charges, bail, evidence

Migration and visas
provisions, status security

Child protection
safety concerns, notifications, court proceedings

Debt and financial abuse
including debt, credit, utility and phone accounts



Property and finances
property settlement, urgent money, superannuation

Tenancy and housing
staying safe, ending leases, emergency relocation

Protection orders
family violence orders, breaches, variations

Child support
administrative court-based child support issues

Victims support/compensation
applications, evidence, recognition of harm

WHAT LEGAL ASSISTANCE MAKES POSSIBLE

- Early advice before problems escalate
- Safer and more consistent legal strategy
- Help across multiple connected legal problems
- Better evidence, documents and court preparation
- Protection of children, housing and financial stability
- Ability to leave an abusive relationship
- Reduced risk of the legal system becoming another tool of abuse



Legal assistance is essential infrastructure in the family violence response

Victims-survivors should not have to navigate multiple legal pathways alone. Early, free and ongoing legal assistance improves safety, supports children and helps prevent family violence from creating cascading legal and financial harm.

Sources: ABS Personal Safety Survey; National Legal Aid data; ANROWS; Legal Aid Commission guidelines.

Build on proven legal assistance models

Governments have invested in effective legal assistance models that improve safety outcomes for victim-survivors and children. The priority should be to build on what is working, and to secure, expand and connect these services so they are available wherever and whenever they are needed.

Core family law legal services - from information and education, through to advice, duty lawyer services, and complex ongoing legal representation - are essential to safety and upholding rights of women and children, holding perpetrators accountable, and the functioning of court processes and the justice system.

The FASS is a clear example of legal assistance as safety infrastructure. Delivered by Legal Aids nationally, the FASS combines legal assistance with social support for people affected by family violence who have a family law issue. Independent evaluations⁵ have found that FASS improves risk identification, safety planning, court preparedness, evidence gathering and connections to support services.

DVUs⁶ and HJPs demonstrate the value of integrated legal and non-legal responses. DVUs provide specialist legal assistance alongside referral pathways to housing, financial, counselling and other support services, while HJPs embed legal services in health settings to facilitate early intervention and access to justice.⁷ Health Justice Australia has identified 104 HJPs across Australia providing services for people experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence in 2026.⁸

A 2025 evaluation of DVUs and HJPs found that victim-survivors often experience complex and interconnected legal, financial, housing and wellbeing issues, and may have little engagement with the broader service system. For some women, legal assistance services are **the primary point at which these needs are identified and addressed**. The evaluation highlighted the importance of holistic, trauma-informed and multidisciplinary legal assistance in supporting safety, recovery and access to justice.⁹

⁵ Inside Policy, '[An Evaluation of the Family Advocacy and Support Services Final Report](#)' (Report, 2018); ARTD Consultants, *Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) Evaluation Report*, (Report, June 2025).

⁶ Attorney-General's Department (Cth), [National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–30](#) (2025), p29; ACIL Allen, *Evaluation of Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships Report* (Report, 2025)14.

⁷ *National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–30*, 30.

⁸ Health Justice Australia, [Health Justice Landscape: June 2026 Snapshot](#) (Snapshot, June 2026).

⁹ ACIL Allen (Report, 2025) 62. (Emphasis added).

Legal Aid lawyer-assisted FDR also provides a safe and effective pathway to resolve suitable parenting and property matters outside of court, including matters involving family violence where participation is voluntary and risk can be safely managed. The Legal Aid Lawyer-Assisted Property Mediation Trial¹⁰ supported women, primary carers and people affected by family violence and economic abuse to pursue property settlements they could not otherwise afford, with 81% of matters resolving in whole or in part. When delivered in a trauma-informed, properly screened and safe environment, lawyer-assisted FDR can improve participation, reduce conflict and achieve durable outcomes without the need for lengthy court proceedings.

The family law legal assistance crisis requires immediate action

Family law can now be characterised as a family violence jurisdiction, with 86% of parenting matters before the FCFCOA involving allegations of family violence, and 77% of matters involving allegations of child abuse.¹¹ The Second Action Plan must therefore centre family law as a critical intervention point in Australia's efforts to end violence against women and children.

Research¹² and practice experience shows that separation is a period of heightened risk. Family law proceedings occur within this risk environment. Parenting, property, child support, disclosure, handover and enforcement processes can create necessary but potentially dangerous points of contact. Children may be exposed directly to violence or used to monitor, pressure or to continue the abuse through post-separation systems or financial abuse. Litigation and repeated applications can be used to exhaust a victim-survivor's financial and emotional resources.

For a person experiencing family violence, legal assistance can perform an immediate protective function. A specialist lawyer can:

- advise about the safest timing and legal consequences of separation;
- identify the interaction between family violence orders (FVOs), parenting orders, child protection, criminal law, housing, immigration, social security, property and child support;

¹⁰ Carson et al, [*Evaluation of the Lawyer-assisted Family Law Property Mediation: Legal Aid Commission Trial: Final Report*](#) (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2022).

¹¹ Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, [*Annual Report 2024-25*](#) (Report, 2025) 38.

¹² For example, see: Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, [*Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network Data Report: Intimate Partner Violence Homicides 2010-2018*](#) (Research Report No 03/2022, 2nd ed, 2022); Hayley Boxall et al, [*The 'Pathways to Intimate Partner Homicide' Project: Key Stages and Events in Male-Perpetrated Intimate Partner Homicide in Australia*](#) (Special Report, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, 2022).

- communicate with the other party so the victim-survivor does not have to;
- identify coercive control, economic abuse, systems abuse and risks to children;
- preserve and obtain police, medical, child-protection, financial and other evidence;
- seek urgent, interim and protective orders;
- arrange safe attendance, remote participation and other procedural protections;
- negotiate without exposing the client to direct intimidation;
- assess whether a proposed agreement is safe, practical and enforceable; and
- respond to breaches, repeated applications and other post-order risks.

Legal representation fundamentally changes the conditions in which a victim-survivor engages with the justice system. It provides a professional boundary between the parties, reduces direct exposure to intimidation and supports informed decisions at a time of acute risk. But not all victim-survivors are able to access legal assistance, and many are left to navigate complex proceedings alone.

The NAJP 2025–30¹³ provides \$3.9 billion over five years, including an \$800 million increase, to the legal assistance sector, with substantial new investment for Women's Legal Services, ATSILS and FVPLS.

For Legal Aids, NAJP core funding for programs including FASS and DVUs is welcome. However, the NAJP did not resolve the funding pressures affecting family law representation by Legal Aid. NLA advised¹⁴ that the NAJP would not support an expansion of family law or ICL representation, an increase in means-test eligibility or private-practitioner fees at sustainable levels, despite Legal Aids seeing significant increases in demand for services. For example, Legal Aid NSW experienced a 30% increase in demand for family law advice alone in the last financial year.

This has now become an immediate service crisis:

- From 1 July 2026, Legal Aid NSW restricted eligibility for parenting and property representation, with approximately 25% of previously eligible clients expected to be affected.
- Tasmania Legal Aid reduced ICL appointments by 38% and grants to parents by 30%.
- Legal Aid ACT reduced family law grants by 30%.

¹³ *National Access to Justice Partnership 2025-30.*

¹⁴ National Legal Aid, '[National Legal Aid Welcomes National Access to Justice Partnership Funding Commitment but Warns of Ongoing Service Delivery Pressure Points](#)' (Media Statement, 3 December 2024).

- Tasmania Legal Aid reported that the average cost of a family law matter had increased by 42% since 2022.
- Legal Aids have experienced significantly increased costs associated with the FCFCOA case-management pathway, court-based dispute resolution and expanded ICL responsibilities.
- Funding for the Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme was extended in the 2026–27 Budget for only the first six months of the financial year.

While demand is increasing, workforce capacity is deteriorating. The 2025 National Legal Aid Private Practitioner Census,¹⁵ based on responses from 1,010 practitioners, found that: 85% reported having to perform unremunerated work; 74% had observed increased case complexity; and 31% were uncertain whether they would continue or intended to cease legal aid work within the following 12 months. The mixed in-house and private-practitioner model is essential to national coverage, conflict services and access in rural and remote areas. If private practitioners continue to withdraw, nominal funding for a grant of aid will not ensure that a lawyer is available to undertake the work. This will mean more delays and more victim-survivors being unable to access legal help.

The NAJP investment did not meet the independently assessed funding requirement

The National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) Review¹⁶ found that the legal assistance sector had been under-resourced over an extended period. It recommended:

- an additional \$459 million from Australian governments for civil and family legal assistance in 2025–26;
- additional Commonwealth funding to raise private-practitioner grant rates, including \$46 million in 2025–26;
- Commonwealth funding for ICL work at court-scale rates, estimated at \$88 million in 2025–26;
- indexation reflecting both price growth and growth in demand;
- a national legal-needs survey;
- funding based on geographic need and actual service costs; and
- complete national coverage of FVPLS.

¹⁵ Natasha Cortis and Megan Blaxland, [*Legal Aid Private Practitioners: 2024 Census*](#). (Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, 2025)

¹⁶ Warren Mundy, [*Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership: Final Report*](#), (Report, 2024).

These recommendations were not fully reflected in the NAJP. The \$800 million increase over five years was distributed across the entire legal assistance sector and included wage-parity and sustainability measures. It did not provide the level of family law representation, ICL and private-practitioner funding identified by the Review.

Eligibility also remains highly restrictive (Figure 3). The Productivity Commission estimated that current legal aid means tests extend to only about 8% of Australian households.¹⁷ The Victoria Law Foundation's 2025 analysis¹⁸ confirms that many people living in poverty remain ineligible for legal aid. The evidence is clear that many victim-survivors fall between legal aid and the ability to afford private legal help, including where income or assets are inaccessible because of economic abuse.

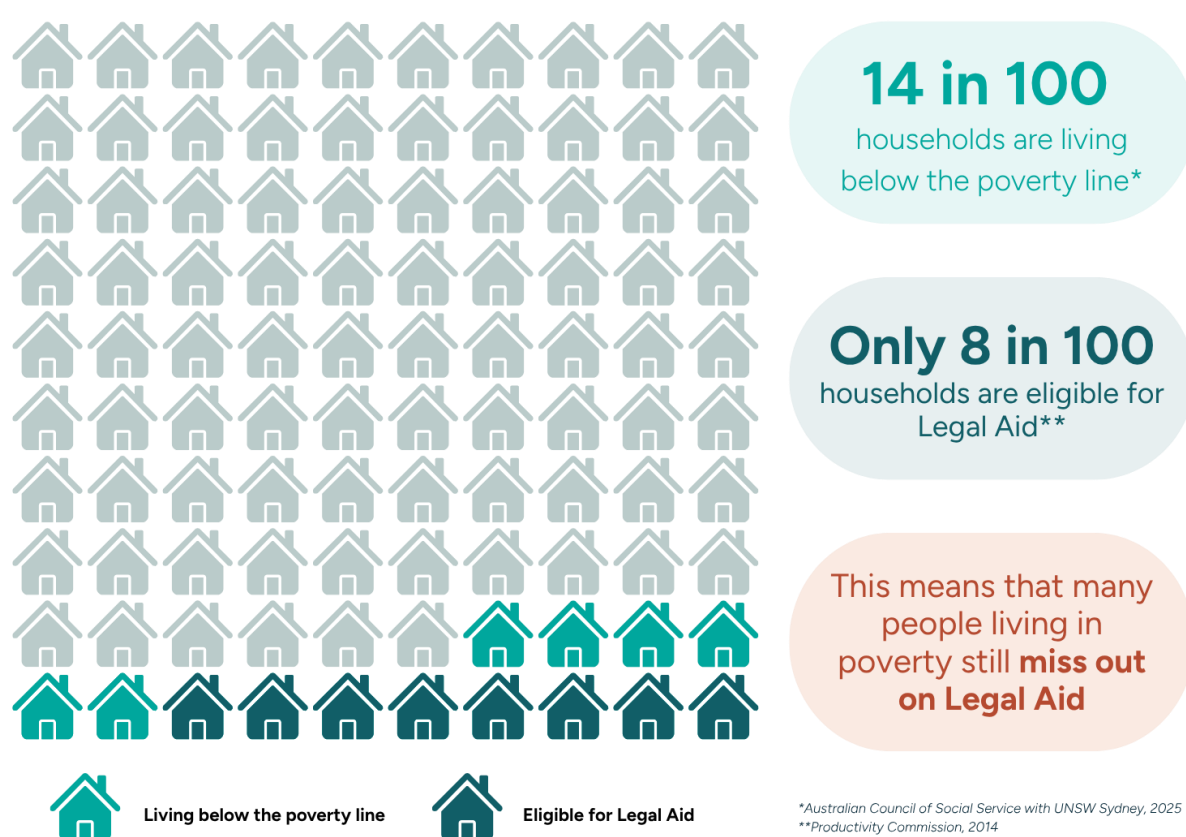


Figure 3. Only 8 in 100 Australian households are estimated to meet eligibility tests for Legal Aid, despite 14 in 100 Australian households living below the poverty line

Legal Aids use limited resources to support as many as possible

In response to the extremely limited legal assistance that is available to victim-survivors which is restricted to only the most disadvantaged in the community, and

¹⁷ Productivity Commission, [Access to Justice Arrangements: Inquiry Report No. 72](#), (Report, 2014).

¹⁸ Nigel Balmer and Hugh McDonald, [Access to just this? Eligibility for legal aid in Australia and its implications](#). (Victoria Law Foundation, 2025).

the huge need for legal support, Legal Aids dedicate resources to innovative service delivery that supports as many people as possible.

Legal Aid family law and family violence representation services are embedded within a broader service mix that includes early intervention, specialist advice clinics, information and referral services, and community legal education. Legal Aids deliver community-wide legal information and education, so that those who are going without legal help have access to resources that can support them to navigate complex systems. The Family Violence Law Help webpage¹⁹ reflects the range of trusted, accessible information provided by Legal Aids across the country.

Increased investment will reduce costs elsewhere

PwC modelling²⁰ estimated that each dollar of Commonwealth investment in legal aid produced \$2.25 in benefits and avoided costs. More than half of the identified benefit arose from assistance supporting women and children experiencing family violence.

Unmet family law legal need does not disappear. It is transferred to victim-survivors, children, courts, crisis services, housing systems, child protection and income support.

Without legal assistance, a victim-survivor may:

- delay or abandon separation;
- agree to unsafe parenting arrangements;
- abandon a property or superannuation claim;
- remain liable for coerced debt;
- miss a child-support remedy;
- be unable to obtain or enforce protective orders; or
- return repeatedly to court because orders are unclear, incomplete or unworkable;
- self-represent in proceedings, requiring more judicial and registry time.

Reforms provide a foundation, but gaps remain

NLA acknowledges progress to date to improve family violence responses in the legal and justice system.

¹⁹ National Legal Aid, [Family Violence Law Help](#) (Webpage, n.d).

²⁰ PricewaterhouseCoopers Consulting (Australia), [The benefits of Providing access to justice: report for National Legal Aid](#), (Report prepared for National Legal Aid, 2023).

- The *Family Law Amendment Act 2023* simplified the parenting framework and strengthened children's safety and participation requirements, including new duties for ICLs.²¹
- The 2024 family law information-sharing reforms created stronger legislative pathways between the family law courts, state and territory child protection agencies and police.²²
- Lighthouse and the Evatt List created a national risk screening and high-risk case-management pathway in the federal family courts.²³
- FASS, specialist family violence services and DVUs, HJPs and co-location models have been established with integrated legal and non-legal responses.²⁴
- The Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme protects specified parties from direct cross-examination and provides representation where required. Legal Aids administer this scheme for the Commonwealth.²⁵
- The National Domestic Violence Order Scheme created national recognition of orders, and the 2025 inquiry and government response provide a roadmap for further reform.²⁶
- Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices and increased investment in ACCOs provide a platform for self-determination.²⁷
- Commonwealth Budget announcement for funding over four years from 2026-27, to address issues of weaponisation, financial abuse, and non-compliance in the Child Support Scheme.
- The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSVM) Commission and its new monitoring framework provide an independent national accountability base.²⁸

²¹ Attorney General's Department (Cth), [Children and Family Law](#) (Webpage, n.d.)

²² Attorney General's Department (Cth), [Family Law Information Sharing](#), (Webpage, n.d.)

²³ Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia [Lighthouse Overview](#), (Webpage, n.d.).

²⁴ Inside Policy, (Report, 2018). Inside Policy, ['An Evaluation of the Family Advocacy and Support Services Final Report'](#) (Report, 2018)

²⁵ Robert Cornall AO and Kerrie-Anne Luscombe, [Report to the Attorney-General: Review of the ban on direct cross-examination under the Family Law Act 1975](#) (Report, August 2021).

²⁶ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, [Report of the Inquiry into family violence orders](#), (Report, 2025); Australian Government, [Australian Government response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs report: Inquiry into family violence orders](#), (2025).

²⁷ Senate Standing Committees on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, [Missing and murdered First Nations Women and Children inquiry report](#), (Report, 2024); Ministers for the Department of Social Services, [Media Release: First ever dedicated plan to end violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children](#) (Media release, 10 February 2026).

²⁸ Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, Australian Government [Yearly Report to Parliament 2025](#), (Report, 2025); Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, Australian Government, [Media statement: Monitoring and Reporting Framework announced](#), (Media release, 10 July 2026).

Despite the progress, significant gaps, barriers and challenges remain. The Second Action Plan provides a critical opportunity to address these.

- Access to legal assistance is not guaranteed, even for people living in poverty or facing serious safety risks – despite legal help being critical to securing safe outcomes. Demand, regional coverage, conflict capacity and private practitioner supply remain uneven.²⁹
- Positive programs are not always moved from pilot or short-term funding to secure national service architecture.
- Children do not have a consistent national entitlement to information, participation, legal advocacy and post-separation support. The ICL workforce is at crisis point and previously recommended ICL, child-inclusive mediation and youth governance reforms remain incomplete.³⁰
- Risk screening and information sharing are not universally accessible, fully interoperable or independently evaluated for safety outcomes. Real-time visibility of orders, conditions and breaches is incomplete.³¹
- Misidentification remains a serious risk, particularly for First Nations women and other marginalised victim-survivors. National correction pathways and comparable data are absent.³²
- Legal and administrative systems can still be used to continue abuse. The full findings, owners and timeframes from the Australian Government's systems abuse audit are not yet publicly available.³³

²⁹ Warren Mundy, [*Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership Final Report*](#), (2024).

³⁰ Family Law Council, [*Support for Children and Young People \(Children\) and Strengthening Their Voices*](#) (Report, 2024); Rachel Carson et al, [*Children and Young People in Separated Families: Family Law System Experiences and Needs*](#) (Final Report, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2018).

³¹ Attorney General's Department (Cth), [*Family Law Information Sharing*](#), (Webpage, n.d.); Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia [*Lighthouse Overview*](#), (Webpage, n.d.); Claire Toivonen and Chantelle Backhouse, [*National Risk Assessment Principles for domestic and family violence*](#) (ANROWS Insights 07/2018); House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, [*Report of the Inquiry into family violence orders*](#), (Report, 2025).

³² ANROWS, [*Accurately identifying the "person most in need of protection" in domestic and family violence law: Key findings and future directions*](#) (Research to policy and practice, 23/2020).

³³ Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission [*Yearly Report to Parliament*](#) (Report, 2025); Australian Government, [*Webinar: Systems Abuse Audit*](#), (Webinar, 8 July 2026).

- Evolving issues with technology-facilitated abuse,³⁴ and use of generative-AI tools by parties, especially self-represented litigants³⁵, present further challenges requiring system-wide coordination and responses.
- Training to build family violence capability is widespread but a nationally coordinated approach is required. Participation, assessed competence, supervision and changes in practice are not consistent across police, legal practitioners, judicial officers, report writers and other decision-makers.³⁶
- Government reporting still focuses heavily on activity and expenditure. Coverage, accessibility, user experience and safety outcomes are not measured consistently.³⁷

³⁴ Anastasia Powell, Asher Flynn and Samantha Hindes, [*Technology-facilitated abuse: National survey of Australian adults' experiences*](#) (Research report, ANROWS, 12/2022).

³⁵ Michael Legg, Vanessa McNamara and Arman Alimardani, [*The promise and the peril of the use of generative Artificial Intelligence in litigation*](#) (The UNSW Law Journal, 48(4), 2025) 1196.

³⁶ Christopher Dowling, [*Police training in responding to family, domestic and sexual violence*](#) (Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 689, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2024); Christopher Dowling, Helen Wolbers, Anthony Morgan and Cynthia Long, [*Improving police risk assessment of domestic violence: A follow-up validation study*](#). (Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 674, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2023).

³⁷ Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission [*Yearly Report to Parliament*](#) (2024); Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission [*Media statement: Monitoring and Reporting Framework announced*](#), (Media release, 10 July 2026); Australian National Audit Office, [*Coordination and Targeting of Domestic Violence Funding and Actions*](#), (Report, 13 June 2019).

NLA's recommendations for the Second Action Plan

NLA recommends 12 priority areas of focus for governments in developing the Second Action Plan, accompanied by recommended actions for inclusion in the Plan.

Recommendation 1: Establish a named and funded National Family Violence Legal Assistance Guarantee

The Second Action Plan should include a dedicated, funded and reportable national action that recognises legal assistance as essential safety infrastructure and establishes a **National Family Violence Legal Assistance Guarantee**.

The Guarantee should ensure that:

- victim-survivors who cannot safely or reasonably afford private legal services can obtain timely, specialist and culturally safe legal assistance; and
- children whose safety and interests require independent legal representation can receive properly resourced, high-quality assistance.

Legal assistance should be available from the point at which a person is considering separation or seeking protection through to the resolution, enforcement or variation of family violence, parenting, property, child-support and related legal matters. The level and continuity of assistance should reflect legal need, safety risk, complexity and the consequences of proceeding without representation.

The Guarantee should be implemented as a national service commitment with clearly identified Commonwealth, state and territory responsibilities, staged coverage and access standards, funding based on independently assessed need and service costs, measurable milestones and public reporting on access, coverage, equity and safety outcomes.

Consultation alignment: Priority Area 1 - Victim-survivors; Priority Area 2 - Prevention and early intervention; Priority Area 3 - Children and young people in their own right; Priority Area 5 - System integration and workforce.

Why this is needed

Legal assistance is recognised in the National Plan, but it is not sufficiently visible in its implementation, investment and outcomes architecture. Specialist legal assistance services, FASS, DVUs, specialist family-law practices, ICLs and integrated multidisciplinary services, are purpose-built family violence responses. They should be recognised as part of the frontline safety system, not treated merely as a referral option or an incidental part of the non-specialist workforce.

Legal assistance converts legal rights and system reforms into practical protection. It helps victim-survivors understand their options, make informed decisions, preserve evidence, obtain and enforce protective orders, secure safe parenting arrangements, protect property and income, correct inaccurate records and respond to systems abuse. For children, independent legal representation can ensure that their safety, interests and views are properly considered in proceedings that will shape their lives.

For many victim-survivors, the legal system is a first point of formal contact and the gateway to family violence, housing, financial, social work and other support.³⁸ If legal assistance is unavailable, broader government investments in risk screening, information sharing, court reform and family violence services cannot reliably translate into safer outcomes.

The NAJP provides an important foundation, but it has not resolved the pressures affecting family law representation, ICLs, private-practitioner supply or restrictive financial eligibility. Legal Aids are already reducing or restricting services in response to rising demand, increased case complexity and the growing cost of providing assistance. The Second Action Plan should not assume that the legal assistance system can absorb further demand or new responsibilities within existing resources.

Without action, more victim-survivors will navigate separation and family law proceedings without representation, and fewer children will have effective independent representation in matters directly affecting their safety. Access will continue to depend on postcode, the availability of a private practitioner willing to undertake legally aided work, and whether a victim-survivor is sufficiently poor to meet a highly restrictive means test - even where income or assets are controlled or inaccessible because of economic abuse.

A named and funded Guarantee would close this implementation gap. It would make clear what governments are committing to provide, who is responsible for delivery

³⁸ ACIL Allen, *Evaluation of Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships Report* (Report, 2025) 62.

and whether victim-survivors and children can obtain the legal assistance necessary to make other parts of the family violence response effective.

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should commit to the following:

- **Establish the National Family Violence Legal Assistance Guarantee.** Agree to national service and access standards covering early advice, duty assistance, ongoing representation, ICLs, parenting, property and child-support matters, lawyer-assisted dispute resolution, post-order assistance, enforcement and related legal problems, with appropriate levels of funding. Eligibility should include victim-survivors who cannot safely or reasonably afford private representation, including where income or assets are controlled or inaccessible because of economic abuse. Access should not depend on a victim-survivor first obtaining a FVO or other formal finding.
- **Provide an immediate family law legal assistance stabilisation package.** Provide additional Commonwealth funding to prevent and reverse reductions in family law and ICL services, meet demonstrated increases in matter costs and maintain effective protection from direct cross-examination in family law proceedings. Funding should provide continuity while the Guarantee and its longer-term funding model are developed and should not rely on repeated short-term extensions.
- **Introduce a needs and cost-based funding model.** During the first year of the Second Action Plan, commission an independent assessment of family law legal need, unmet demand, service coverage, workforce supply, matter costs and funding adequacy. Funding should then be adjusted for demand, complexity, wages, operating costs, regional delivery and material changes in legislation, court practice or statutory responsibilities. Evaluation and costing should inform staged expansion but must not delay immediate investment required to prevent further service reductions.
- **Fund sustainable representation and a viable national workforce.** Implement the Independent Review of the NLAP recommendations concerning private-practitioner grant rates and ICL funding. Remuneration should reflect the actual work required and support a sustainable mix of in-house and private-practitioner services. Funding should cover travel, interpreters, communication support, expert reports, disbursements, specialist supervision and quality assurance. High-risk and complex matters should have access to continuity of representation rather than disconnected, one-off assistance.
- **Expand integrated and nationally accessible assistance.** Provide sufficient ongoing funding for FASS, DVUs, Health Justice Partnerships and comparable

integrated models, including regional and remote delivery, conflict services, social work, case coordination and pathways from duty assistance to ongoing representation. Funding must cover the full cost of safe delivery, including partnership development, culturally safe practice, interpreters, disability supports, outreach, travel, data and evaluation.

- **Expand safe lawyer-assisted dispute resolution.** Make favourably evaluated parenting and property models available nationally where specialist assessment determines that dispute resolution can occur safely. Services should include separate legal representation, continuing family violence and child-safety assessment, informed consent, child-inclusive practice where appropriate, effective financial disclosure and a prompt, funded pathway to court where resolution is unsafe or unsuitable.
- **Fund culturally safe and accessible pathways.** Support ATSILS, FVPLS and other ACCOs through direct investment, formal partnership and shared decision-making. Funding should also meet the cost of interpreters, disability and communication supports, culturally responsive services, outreach, regional travel and trusted entry points for migrant and refugee communities, LGBTIQ+ people and other communities facing barriers to legal assistance.
- **Identify and report government responsibilities.** Publish the respective Commonwealth, state and territory responsibilities for funding, commissioning, court processes and service interfaces. Reporting should show investment, activity, access, geographic coverage, unmet demand, continuity and safety outcomes without imposing duplicative reporting or fragmenting essential base funding into short-term program silos.
- **Require Legal Assistance Impact Assessments.** Commonwealth, state and territory family law and family violence reforms that are likely to materially change legal assistance demand or the work required of providers should include a proportionate assessment of service and workforce impacts. Implementation costs should be identified and funded before new obligations commence.
- **Build evaluation and accountability into the Guarantee.** Commission independent longitudinal evaluation of access, safety, child wellbeing, economic recovery, cultural safety, order workability, enforcement and re-litigation. Evaluation should compare the experiences and outcomes of represented and unrepresented victim-survivors, examine differential outcomes across communities and identify unintended consequences. Findings, government responses and corrective action should be published.

The Guarantee would give practical effect to the recognition that legal assistance is essential safety infrastructure. It would ensure that governments' investments in family violence prevention, risk identification, court reform and service integration are

matched by the legal assistance victim-survivors and children need to obtain safe, workable and enforceable outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Secure and expand the family law safety architecture that is already working

The Second Action Plan must commit the Australian Government, working with state and territory governments, Legal Aids, the courts and specialist sector partners, to build on proven family law safety service architecture and make it permanent, nationally accessible and capable of meeting demand.

At its core, that architecture should include FASS, ICLs, the Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme, Legal Aid duty and ongoing representation, lawyer-assisted FDR for parenting and property matters, DVUs and HJPs. These services should be connected to risk screening, safe court and remote participation infrastructure, and culturally safe community-controlled and specialist services.

Governments should ensure that favourably evaluated programs and pilots are shifted to ongoing baseline funding; expand them according to geographic need and demand and to ensure equitable access; fund the full cost of safe delivery; and publish continuation decisions well before temporary funding ends.

Consultation alignment: Priority Area 1 - Victim-survivors; Priority Area 2 - Prevention and early intervention; Priority Area 3 - Children and young people in their own right; 4 Priority Area - People who use violence; Priority Area 5 - System integration and workforce.

Building on what works

Australia has already built many of the elements required for a safer family law system: specialist Legal Aid services, FASS, DVUs, lawyer-assisted dispute resolution, and the ICL program. The problem is not an absence of workable models. It is that access remains rationed and funding has not kept pace with demand, complexity and the cost of delivering them.

The task for the Second Action Plan is to make that infrastructure accessible and reliable wherever a victim-survivor or child enters the system, alongside measures to improve and build on these proven foundations.

A victim-survivor may first disclose violence to a health worker, need urgent FASS assistance at a court event, require a grant for ongoing representation, have a child for whom an ICL is appointed, and later need either safely designed dispute resolution or the protection of the Family Violence Cross-Examination Scheme. When each

service is funded and designed in isolation, the person experiencing violence carries the burden of finding the next door, repeating their story and managing the gaps. A safety architecture connects those doors, responds as risk changes and does not abandon a client at the end of a single court day. This is core business for Legal Aids.

The Government has continued FASS, DVUs and HJPs under the NAJP. The Second Action Plan should secure successful services in baseline funding and expand them according to need, including in regional and remote communities and through ACCOs. Funding must cover the whole partnership: legal work, case coordination, training, relationship-building, governance, safe information sharing, evaluation and pathways to ongoing family law representation.

The Government must:

- Implement the findings of the 2025 Evaluation of the FASS³⁹ and the 2025 Evaluation of DVUs and HJPs⁴⁰ including to address resourcing shortfalls and develop a resource model that addresses unmet demand.
- FASS should be expanded to every permanent family law registry, on regular circuits and through reliable remote-access arrangements, with staffing matched to listings, demand and conflict risk. The Second Action Plan should:
 - preserve integrated lawyer and social-support delivery for victim-survivors and appropriately specialised, separate support for people using violence, delivered without collusion;
 - fund in-house and private panel capacity at sustainable rates, including an additional service where conflict prevents one party from receiving help;
 - resource enhanced duty work, urgent document preparation and a direct pathway from FASS to grants and continuity of representation where the matter cannot be made safe through a short intervention;
 - fund court safety measures; and
 - establish consent-based, opt-out warm referrals to FASS from family law courts intake, Lighthouse and listing processes, using safe contact methods and clear confidentiality protocols.
- Ensure funding for DVUs and HJPs enables delivery of a fully integrated, multidisciplinary approach that targets equitable access and consistent experiences for all women victim-survivors, and address discrepancies in the level

³⁹ ARTD Consultants, *Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) Evaluation Report*, (Report, June 2025).

⁴⁰ ACIL Allen, *Evaluation of Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships Report* (Report, 2025).

of access, types of service and supports women experiencing family violence can receive based on who and where they are.⁴¹

- Expand funding for lawyer-assisted FDR as a core national pathway for parenting and property matters where a specialist assessment determines that dispute resolution can occur safely.
 - Expansion should include funding for FDR services for small-property pool cases; representation for both parties; continuous family-violence and child-safety assessment; informed consent; no direct contact where unsafe; interpreters and disability adjustments; robust financial disclosure; access to financial counselling and economic-abuse expertise; and a prompt, funded exit to urgent legal advice or court.
 - Performance measures should include safety, agency, fair and durable outcomes and compliance, not settlement rates alone. The extent to which lawyer-assisted FDR has supported parties to narrow and refine the issues in dispute and assists them along their resolution/determination pathway is an important performance measure that should also be captured.

Connect Lighthouse identification to help that can respond

Lighthouse has been an important reform that has changed the way the FCFCOA identifies and triages family-safety risk. It combines confidential screening, specialised triage, safety planning and referrals, and the Evatt List for eligible high-risk matters. Between November 2022 and June 2025, 24,193 parties completed a risk screen. Court data from the first two years of national expansion showed that 61% of screening parties were initially classified as high risk, with family violence and child abuse or neglect commonly reported.⁴²

The Government has provided \$33.8 million for continuation in 2026–27 and 2027–28, but Lighthouse remains described as a pilot.⁴³ The Second Action Plan should convert it to an ongoing court function and strengthen the service response around it. Identifying risk does not, by itself, make a family safe. The legal and social supports to which a person is referred must have the capacity to respond promptly.

⁴¹ ACIL Allen, *Evaluation of Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships Report* (Report, 2025).

⁴² Australian Government, [Women's Budget Statement 2026–27](#) (12 May 2026); Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, [Lighthouse Update: Two Years of Lighthouse](#) (Webpage, 28 November 2024).

⁴³ Australian Government, [Women's Budget Statement 2026–27](#) (12 May 2026) 19; Australian Government, [Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2025–26](#) (17 December 2025) 214.

The Australian Government must:

- Sustainably fund Lighthouse and the Evatt List on an ongoing basis beyond 2027–28 and extend supported access to regional, rural and remote, circuit locations and to property matters;
- Provide non-digital and assisted completion options, culturally safe support, interpreters and disability adjustments, and analyse who does not complete screening and why;
- Enable re-screening at defined risk points and a practitioner pathway to request renewed triage where new information or escalating risk emerges, without displacing urgent judicial risk-notification processes;
- Retain the confidentiality and inadmissibility protections that encourage disclosure, and ensure screening is never used as evidence, a credibility test or a gatekeeper to safety measures; and
- Sustainably fund FASS and other referral partners to accept warm referrals, with feedback loops that confirm whether the person safely connected to help without disclosing protected screening content.

Culturally safe and equitable implementation

Expansion of Legal Aid service models must strengthen the distinct role of ATSILS, FVPLS and other ACCOs. Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices requires First Nations voice, agency and self-determination.

Governments must:

- Co-design local FASS, ICL, FDR and referral pathways with First Nations community-controlled legal and family-violence services through shared decision-making about funding, workforce, delivery and evaluation;
- Consider how the limited specialist workforce can be most efficiently used to benefit and support clients – for example through sharing cultural support or case worker roles across services;
- Provide funding for community-controlled delivery, cultural support, interpreters, outreach, travel, kinship-informed practice and participation in case coordination;
- Fund independent accredited interpreters, translated information, migration-law expertise, disability adjustments and communication support, and partnerships with migrant and refugee, disability and LGBTIQ+ specialist services;
- Retain face-to-face and telephone entry points and fund outreach and travel so remote access expands choice rather than becoming a lesser service; and
- Apply safe-contact, privacy, anti-misidentification and data-sovereignty safeguards, and never use a child or accompanying family member as an interpreter.

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should convert this service architecture into a costed, accountable, ongoing commitment. Program continuity cannot depend on repeated short extensions or on Legal Aids absorbing demand within unrelated service budgets. The Second Action Plan should consolidate and build on a decade of reform by making the proven services that translate legal rights into safety accessible and dependable in practice. The evidence supports building on and expanding models we know are already effective. Government should commit to sustainably funding these models as permanent infrastructure, with the reach and integrity needed to protect victim-survivors and children.

- **Baseline proven services.** Ensure favourably evaluated models including FASS, DVUs, HJPs and Legal Aid dispute-resolution have sufficient ongoing baseline funding under the NAJP. Make critical programs for victim-survivor safety such as Lighthouse permanent sustainably funded functions rather than rolling pilots or short extensions.
- **Fund the full model.** Cost legal work, panel and conflict capacity, social support, case coordination, interpreters, cultural and disability supports, regional travel, safe facilities and technology, supervision, training, data and evaluation. Index funding for price increases, demand and material changes in case complexity.
- **Plan equitable expansion.** Publish a national implementation plan identifying coverage gaps by registry, circuit, remote-access setting and population, with minimum service standards and staged expansion based on need rather than equal but inadequate distribution.
- **Protect continuity.** Require formal warm-referral and escalation protocols between Lighthouse, FASS, Legal Aid grants, ICL administration, the Family Violence Cross-Examination Scheme, FDR, DVUs/HJPs, courts and specialist partners. A victim-survivor should receive a safe handover and know who will act next rather than being the courier of their own trauma between the different parts of the system.
- **Evaluate, improve and sustain.** Use common outcome measures and independent evaluation, co-designed with victim-survivors, children and young people, First Nations partners and practitioners. Publish the evaluations and a continuation or scale-up decision before temporary funding expires.
- **Assess reform impacts.** Apply a Legal Assistance Impact Assessment before any legislative reform, court procedure or policy changes that alter demand or

the work required of Legal Aids, and provide recurrent implementation funding when impacts are identified.⁴⁴

Recommendation 3: Treat children as victim-survivors, and as rights holders

The Second Action Plan should recognise children and young people affected by family violence as victim-survivors and rights holders; in their own right. It should recognise the family law system as a critical point of intervention for children's safety, participation and recovery.

This requires child-appropriate information, safe ways to be heard, properly funded independent legal representation, recovery support and a practical pathway to review arrangements that become unsafe.

Consultation alignment. Priority Area 1 – Victim-survivors; Priority Area 3 – Children and young people in their own right; Priority Area 5 – System Integration and workforce.

Why this is needed

Children are not passive witnesses to family violence. They experience its effects directly⁴⁵, often in ways adults and systems do not see. FCFCOA data⁴⁶ (Table 1) is clear that family law proceedings are a critical point of intervention for children's safety, with high and rising percentages of matters before the courts involving allegations of risk to children.

⁴⁴ Warren Mundy, [Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership Final Report](#), (2024) 146, recommendation 22.

⁴⁵ Ben Mathews et al, '[The Australian Child Maltreatment Study: National prevalence and associated health outcomes of child abuse and neglect](#)' (*Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol 218, Issue 6 – Supplement, 2023); Monica Campo, [Children's exposure to domestic and family violence: Key issues and responses](#) (CFCA Paper No. 36, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015).

⁴⁵ Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, *Annual Report 2024-25*, (Report, 2025), 38.

⁴⁶ Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, *Annual Report 2024-25*, (Report, 2025) 38.

Table 2.5(a): allegations of risk factors in parenting or parenting and property matters, 2023–24 and 2024–25

Risk factor	2023–24	2024–25
Matters alleging that a child has been abused or was at risk of child abuse	73%	77%
Matters alleging that a party has experienced family violence	83%	86%
Matters alleging that a child has experienced family violence	77%	81%
Matters alleging that drug, alcohol or substance misuse by a party had caused harm to a child or poses a risk of harm to a child	55%	56%
Matters alleging that mental health issues of a party have caused harm to a child or pose a risk of harm to a child	61%	63%
Matters alleging that a child is at risk of being abducted	47%	48%
Matters alleging that there have been recent threats made to harm a child or other person relevant to the proceedings	22%	23%
Percentage of matters mandatorily referred to child welfare agencies	79%	82%

Table 1. Table 2.5(a) Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia Annual Report 2024-25

Family law decisions about where children live, who they spend time with and how orders are enforced can either promote safety and recovery or expose children to continuing harm. Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) research with children and young people in separated families found that many did not feel adequately heard in family law decision-making. Nearly one-third reported not feeling safe in one parent's household, and almost one-sixth reported anxiety about attending a parent's home under shared-care arrangements. Some described not being believed when they disclosed violence or abuse.⁴⁷

The May 2024 family law reforms strengthened the legislative framework by requiring courts to consider arrangements that promote the safety of children and their caregivers, including safety from exposure to family violence. The reforms also qualify the benefit of a parental relationship by whether it is safe, remove the presumption of equal shared parental responsibility and generally require ICLs to meet children aged over five. These reforms will only improve safety if they are properly funded and implemented.

ICLs must be adequately funded

ICLs are lawyers appointed to represent children in family law matters under the *Family Law Act 1975*. ICLs are appointed in the most difficult family law cases. They independently represent and promote a child's best interests, gather and test evidence, help maintain a child focus and ensure the child's views are before the court

⁴⁷ Rachel Carson et al, *Children and Young People in Separated Families: Family Law System Experiences and Needs* (Final Report, Australian Institute of Family Studies, June 2018) 89–91.

where possible. ICL appointments give practical effect to children's rights under the *Family Law Act 1975* and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the right for a child capable of forming views to express them and have them given due weight.⁴⁸

Legal Aids are concerned that we are facing a serious crisis in terms of ongoing ICL availability, and that growing demand, expanded statutory duties and sustained underfunding will continue to make ICLs harder to access. Without urgent investment, children at risk will miss out on independent, child-focused advocacy in proceedings that directly affect their safety.

The NLAP Review recommended additional demand-driven Commonwealth funding for ICLs, including \$88 million in 2025–26, to address unmet need, supply pressures and the real cost of this work.⁴⁹

The requirement for ICLs to meet children is a welcome advance, but it adds significant responsibilities and costs, including time to:

- establish a safe and developmentally appropriate relationship with the child;
- meet the child on more than one occasion where necessary;
- explain the ICL's role and the family law process;
- identify and communicate the child's views and safety concerns;
- obtain and analyse information from courts, police, child protection, health and education agencies;
- engage with family consultants, therapeutic services and other professionals;
- arrange interpreters, disability supports and culturally safe assistance;
- travel to meet children in regional and remote communities; and
- keep the child informed as proceedings and proposed arrangements change.

These responsibilities cannot be delivered consistently through underfunded grants or practitioner goodwill. Insufficient funding risks reducing both children's access to ICLs and the quality of their participation.

The Family Law Council has also recommended funding for more in-house ICLs, mandatory culturally safe ICL training developed with ATSILS, co-designed with children and young people, and longitudinal research into children's post-separation outcomes.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Warren Mundy, [Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership Final Report](#), (2024).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Family Law Council, [Support for Children and Young People \(Children\) and Strengthening Their Voices](#) (Report, Term of Reference 2, 2024).

The Second Action Plan should provide dedicated, ongoing Commonwealth funding for ICLs. Funding should:

- be based on demand, case complexity and the cost of meeting statutory and procedural responsibilities;
- support a sustainable mix of appropriately remunerated private-panel and in-house ICLs;
- fund ongoing specialist training in family violence, coercive control, trauma, child development, disability and cultural safety;
- cover interpreters, travel, communication aids and other participation costs;
- support workforce development, supervision and quality assurance; and
- be additional to, rather than absorbed within, existing legal assistance funding.

Child-inclusive mediation should be available, safe and properly resourced

Children should also have safe opportunities to participate when parenting arrangements are developed outside court. Child-inclusive FDR can help parents and professionals understand a child's experiences, needs and views, and support more workable arrangements.

The Second Action Plan should fund safe child-inclusive mediation models that include:

- appropriately qualified child consultants;
- specialist family violence screening and risk assessment;
- integration with legal assistance and specialist family violence services;
- child-specific safety planning and referral pathways;
- safeguards governing when child-inclusive mediation should not proceed;
- culturally safe and disability-accessible participation;
- regional, remote and digital access options; and
- evaluation based on children's safety and wellbeing, not merely settlement rates.

Client Story: Benefits of child inclusive processes that recognise children as victim-survivors

Following a high-conflict separation involving family violence, parents disagreed about the care arrangements for their three children. Legal Aid WA's Family Dispute Resolution service undertook a child inclusive process, allowing the children's views, experiences and needs to be safely communicated through an experienced child consultant in an age-appropriate manner. The process recognised the children as victim-survivors in their own right, rather than viewing them solely through the lens of the parental dispute.

The children's feedback highlighted feelings of anxiety during parental conflict, concerns about exposure to arguments and a desire for more predictable routines. Hearing the child consultant's feedback during the FDR process helped both parents better understand the impact of ongoing conflict on their wellbeing.

As a result, the parents agreed to revised parenting arrangements that reduced handovers, improved communication and created greater stability for the children. The agreement focused on meeting the children's developmental and emotional needs and included commitments to shield them from adult conflict. The child inclusive process contributed to a resolution that was more responsive to the lived experiences of the children and improved their overall wellbeing and safety.

Children need accessible information about their rights and options

Children cannot participate meaningfully if they do not understand what is happening, who the professionals are, what decisions are being made or how to seek help. Too often, information is directed only to parents.

The Australian Government should fund age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate information for children and young people about:

- family violence and coercive control;
- their right to safety and to express views;
- what happens in FDR and court proceedings;
- the role and limits of an ICL;
- who will receive information they disclose;
- available counselling, legal and advocacy services;
- how to raise a safety concern;
- what to do if an existing parenting arrangement becomes unsafe; and
- options for seeking independent advice or assistance.

Information should be available in accessible, Easy Read, multilingual and culturally appropriate formats, and at different literacy and developmental levels. First Nations resources should be developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, communities and community-controlled organisations. Information should be provided directly through courts, ICLs, legal assistance providers, family relationship services, schools and relevant government services. The FCFCOA's Kids Corner and Children's Charter provide a strong foundation.

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should commit to the following:

- **Recognise children exposed to family violence as victim-survivors and rights holders** across family law, FDR and legal assistance responses.
- **Make the family law system a priority setting for children's safety, participation, recovery and early intervention**, with implementation jointly owned by the Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Social Services.
- **Provide dedicated, ongoing Commonwealth funding for ICLs**, based on demand, complexity and the full cost of statutory, participation and cultural-safety responsibilities.
- **Fund NLA to develop mandatory culturally safe ICL training** with ACCOs, consistent with the Family Law Council's recommendation.
- **Expand safe child-inclusive FDR**, supported by specialist family violence screening, legal assistance, child consultants, therapeutic referrals and safeguards where mediation is unsafe.
- **Fund nationally consistent child-friendly information and resources**, co-designed with children and young people and available independently of parents.
- **Fund integrated legal, family violence and therapeutic support for children and protective caregivers**, recognising that safe parenting arrangements and recovery require more than legal orders.
- **Establish a national outcomes and evaluation framework**, including longitudinal research and linked data, to measure whether family law processes and parenting arrangements improve children's safety, recovery and wellbeing.

These measures would give practical effect to the commitment to centre children's voices, rights and safety. Recognition alone will not change outcomes unless the people, processes and information that enable safe participation are properly resourced.

Recommendation 4: Complete and fund the national family law safety, risk and information-sharing system

The Second Action Plan must commit the Australian Government, in partnership with state and territory governments, to complete and sustainably fund a national, safety-by-design system for identifying and responding to family violence risk in family law matters.

The system should build on the FCFCOA Lighthouse and the Evatt List, the National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing and Co-location Program, the 2024 family law information-sharing reforms, and the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme. It should provide:

- accessible and repeated opportunities to disclose risk;
- timely specialist risk assessment and safety planning;
- an immediate pathway to legal and non-legal assistance;
- lawful and timely collection of evidence;
- real-time, role-appropriate visibility of current FVOs, conditions, variations, service and breach status; and
- enforceable safeguards for privacy, data quality, misidentification, procedural fairness and correction of inaccurate records.

Consultation alignment: Priority Areas 1 -Victim-Survivors, 3 -Children and Young People in their Own Right, and 5 - System Integration and Workforce.

Governments should build on the foundations that are already in place

Australia has already invested in important foundations:

- Lighthouse provides confidential risk screening, specialist triage and the Evatt List for eligible high-risk matters in the FCFCOA.
- The National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing and Co-location Program supports two-way information sharing between the family law courts and state and territory courts, police, child-protection and firearms agencies.
- *The Family Law Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2023* strengthened the family law courts' ability to obtain particulars, documents and information about family violence, child abuse and neglect.
- The National Domestic Violence Order Scheme provides for national recognition and enforcement of FVOs.

- The National Criminal Intelligence System gives police near real-time access to law-enforcement information from multiple jurisdictions.
- National Cabinet has agreed to further work on national family violence risk-assessment principles and technological options for improving information sharing.

These initiatives represent significant progress. However, they do not yet operate as a complete system from the perspective of a victim-survivor.

A person may still be required to disclose violence repeatedly, obtain records from several agencies, explain the relationship between different orders, and alert each part of the system when risk changes. A court or service may know that risk exists without having the current evidence, legal capacity or service response needed to respond. Information about a new or varied order may not reach every relevant decision-maker quickly enough.

The Second Action Plan should address gaps between identifying risk and responding effectively to it. The AIFS evaluation of the 2012 family violence reforms⁵¹ found greater attention to family violence screening but comparatively limited changes in parenting outcomes, as well as continuing gaps in whether people were asked about safety. More recent research supports the value of Lighthouse triage in identifying risk. Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety' (ANROWS) ongoing evaluation⁵² is important to establish its longer-term safety, efficacy and cost-benefit outcomes.

The Australian Government's response to the parliamentary Inquiry into FVOs⁵³ agreed in principle to extending Lighthouse, strengthening the capacity of the courts to respond to high-risk matters and developing a national information-sharing solution. The Second Action Plan should provide long-term funding certainty and move this work from a series of time-limited initiatives to enduring national infrastructure.

Expand accessible and repeated risk identification

Family violence risk is dynamic. It may change following separation, the commencement of proceedings, service of court documents, a new FVO, a reported

⁵¹ Ray Kaspiw et al, [*Evaluation of the 2012 family violence amendments: Synthesis report*](#) (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015).

⁵² See: ANROWS, '[Family violence triage in family courts: Safety, efficacy and benefit](#)', (Webpage, ongoing).

⁵³ Australian Government, [Australian Government Response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Report: Inquiry into Family Violence Orders](#), (2025)

breach, a child-protection intervention, a contravention application or a change in parenting arrangements.

The Second Action Plan should fund consistent, evidence-informed risk identification at key family law entry points and throughout proceedings. Screening should be an accessible offer, not a requirement that a victim-survivor disclose before they are ready or in circumstances that are unsafe. Tools must be appropriate to the role and setting and must not replace professional judgement or specialist assessment.

Lighthouse should receive ongoing funding and be progressively expanded to include:

- Equitable access across Australia including in regional, rural and remote areas and for those who speak languages other than English;
- Equivalent coverage in the Family Court of Western Australia;
- Property-only proceedings, particularly following the 2025 reforms recognising the relevance of family violence and economic abuse to property decisions;
- Contravention, enforcement, variation and other post-order proceedings;
- Repeat screening at defined stages and following significant risk events;
- Supported completion for people with disability, people requiring interpreters, people with low literacy or digital access, and people who cannot safely use a personal device;
- Specialist clinical review where risk indicators, cross-allegations or available information require contextual assessment; and
- Differentiated responses for children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right.

Expansion does not mean that every matter should be placed on the Evatt List. It should provide a proportionate pathway based on current risk and need, including timely safety planning and specialist follow-up for people who do not meet the highest-risk threshold.

Ensure that identifying risk activates a response

Screening does not improve safety unless it leads to timely action.

Where risk is identified, the system should provide a warm, accountable pathway to:

- Urgent legal advice and representation;
- Safety planning and specialist family violence support;
- Culturally safe, disability-responsive and child-focused services;
- Appropriate court case management and procedural protections;
- Consideration of whether dispute resolution is safe and suitable;

- Timely review of existing parenting and protective arrangements; and
- Lawful collection of police, child-protection, health, FVO and other relevant evidence.

This response must preserve the confidentiality that makes Lighthouse screening effective. The FCFCOA's current Lighthouse model⁵⁴ provides that answers to the Family Detection of Overall Risk Screen (DOORS) Triage questionnaire are confidential, are not seen by the other party or judicial officer and cannot be used as evidence. Those protections should be retained.

Screening information is a basis for triage and safety action; it is not proof of an allegation. Where screening identifies a need for further action, court case management should activate independent evidence-gathering through the information-sharing provisions and other lawful processes without disclosing confidential questionnaire responses.

Provide real-time visibility of orders and relevant risk information

NLA and Women's Legal Services Australia have previously called for a national family violence risk information-sharing scheme and register. Women's Legal Services Australia's 2024 submission to the Inquiry into FVOs⁵⁵ recommended real-time access to family law orders, FVOs and relevant child-protection information. The Law Council of Australia similarly supported a properly funded national electronic database.⁵⁶

The Second Action Plan should commit governments to an interoperable national service that gives authorised users timely access to authoritative information necessary to assess and manage risk.

At a minimum, it should make visible:

- Current interim and final FVOs;
- The precise conditions in force;
- Whether and when an order has been served;
- Variations, suspensions, revocations and expiry dates;
- Relevant parenting orders and injunctions;

⁵⁴Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, [Lighthouse Overview](#), (Webpage, n.d.).

⁵⁵ Women's Legal Services Australia, '[Submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee of Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into family violence orders](#)', (26 July 2024, Recommendation 5).

⁵⁶ Law Council of Australia, '[Submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee of Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into family violence orders](#)', (6 August 2024, p. 28).

- Relevant child-protection and firearms information; and
- The status and outcome of reported breaches.

The system must distinguish clearly between a reported or alleged breach, a police action or charge, and a breach proved or admitted in court. Allegations must not be presented as findings.

Access should be based on role and necessity. Police, courts, child-protection agencies, legal representatives and prescribed specialist services do not all require the same information. Victim-survivors and their lawyers should be able to obtain an accessible, authoritative copy of the orders and conditions affecting them.

NLA emphasises that a victim-survivor should not have to act as the courier between fragmented systems or bear responsibility for ensuring that every decision-maker knows which orders are currently in force.

Embed safeguards for privacy, misidentification and inaccurate records

Information sharing can improve safety, but more information is not inherently safer. Poor-quality information, overcollection, insecure access or the replication of an incorrect perpetrator identification can cause serious harm.

Victim-survivor agency and informed consent should be the starting point wherever information sharing is discretionary. Where legislation authorises sharing without consent, only information reasonably necessary for the safety or decision-making purpose should be disclosed. The person should be informed about the use of their information wherever this is safe, lawful and practicable.

National safeguards should include:

- Data minimisation and clear limits on permitted uses;
- Protection of addresses, contact details, health information and other sensitive material;
- Role-based access, access logs and independent auditing;
- Clear identification of the source, date and legal status of each record;
- Separation of allegations, intelligence, charges, interim orders and final findings;
- Restrictions on automated decision-making and adverse inferences based solely on a risk score or database entry;
- A rapid, accessible process for seeking correction, annotation or review;
- Notification to downstream agencies when information is corrected; and
- Independent oversight of privacy, data quality, security incidents and systemic errors.

NLA recommends misidentification as an area requiring particular attention. ANROWS research⁵⁷ has found that women, particularly Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women, are at heightened risk of being misidentified as perpetrators. Incident-based responses can fail to recognise patterns of coercive control, self-protective violence and systems abuse. Once recorded, an incorrect identification can be relied upon by police, courts and agencies, perpetuating the harm.

Cross-applications, cross-orders and conflicting allegations should therefore trigger specialist, pattern-based assessment of the person most in need of protection. Assessment should consider coercive control, relative fear, severity, intent, cumulative harm and the history of the relationship. No person should be designated as a predominant aggressor solely by an automated process or an unreviewed single-agency record.

Design, governance and evaluation must be undertaken through formal partnership and shared decision-making with ACCOs. This is necessary to address the particular risks of misidentification, criminalisation, child removal and distrust of mainstream systems experienced by First Nations women.

Fund legal assistance as part of the safety response

Legal assistance is not an optional referral at the end of risk screening. It is one of the principal means by which identified risk is translated into evidence, safe court procedures and enforceable orders.

A specialist, family violence-informed lawyer can help a victim-survivor:

- Understand the interaction between family violence, parenting and child-protection orders;
- Place relevant evidence before the court;
- Seek urgent or protective orders;
- Respond to unsafe proposals or systems abuse;
- Correct inaccurate or misleading information;
- Enforce orders and respond to breaches; and
- Participate meaningfully in a process that may otherwise be inaccessible or unsafe.

A specialist, family violence-informed lawyer working with a person using violence is also integral to improving safety. Through their work, a lawyer can engage with a person using violence towards them accepting responsibility, being accountable and

⁵⁷ ANROWS, [*Accurately identifying the “person most in need of protection” in domestic and family violence law: Key findings and future directions*](#) (Research to policy and practice, 23/2020).

embracing behaviour change, and is a critical safeguard to prevent further violence and abuse being perpetrated through the legal and justice systems.

The legal assistance sector has consistently advised that improved screening and information sharing will increase, rather than reduce, the need for legal work. More information must be assessed, explained, tested and applied to a client's circumstances. The sector cannot absorb this additional work within existing NAJP funding.

The Second Action Plan should therefore provide additional, dedicated funding for Legal Aids, Women's Legal Services, FVPLS, ATSILS, and Community Legal Centres. Funding should also support interpreters, social workers, cultural liaison, disability support and specialist child-focused assistance.

Legal assistance organisations should be represented in the design, testing, governance and evaluation of risk screening and information-sharing systems. Their specialist experience is essential to ensuring that reforms work for clients who are self-represented, geographically isolated, digitally excluded or experiencing intersecting disadvantage.

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should commit governments to:

- Provide long-term funding for Lighthouse, specialist triage and the Evatt List, and progressively extend screening and response pathways to additional proceeding types and the Family Court of Western Australia.
- Establish nationally consistent triggers and protocols for repeat risk screening, supported completion and specialist assessment.
- Continue and expand the National Strategic Framework and Co-location Program beyond 2028, with sufficient staffing for participating courts, police and child-protection agencies.
- Deliver an interoperable national service providing real-time, role-appropriate visibility of FVOs, conditions, service, variations and breach status, together with relevant family law and child-protection information.
- Establish nationally consistent privacy, data-quality, misidentification, correction and procedural-fairness safeguards, overseen by an independent governance body that includes victim-survivors, the legal assistance sector, specialist women's services and ACCOs.
- Require legislation, policies, guidelines and judicial bench books to include mandatory misidentification factors for courts to consider in domestic and family violence matters. Police agencies should adopt best-practice, trauma-informed

standards that recognise family violence as a pattern of harm and identify the person most in need of protection.

- Provide dedicated additional funding to legal assistance and specialist support services so that every identified risk can receive an appropriate response.
- Commission independent, longitudinal evaluation of safety outcomes, client experience, equity, cost-effectiveness and unintended harms.

Recommendation 5: Stop systems abuse and strengthen economic safety

The Second Action Plan should require every relevant legal and administrative system to prevent, identify and remedy systems abuse. It should include family law, child support, tax, social security, migration, child protection, complaints and financial systems.⁵⁸

Consultation alignment. Priority areas 1 - Victim-survivors; 5 - System

Why this is needed

Systems abuse can include repeated proceedings, retaliatory applications, misuse of complaints, non-disclosure, coerced debt, manipulation of child support, false reports and threats linked to visa or child protection status and conflicting out of legal services to limit victim-survivor accessibility, most acutely felt in regional, rural and remote areas. Each act can appear routine when viewed within one system but form part of coercive control when the pattern is visible.

Recent family law property reforms recognise the economic effects of family violence and strengthen disclosure duties. The 2026 Budget also included welcome child support safety reforms. These reforms need accessible legal help, effective enforcement and evaluation.

⁵⁸ Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (2025) [Yearly Report to Parliament](#), Australian Government (2025); Family Law Council, [‘Protecting victims of family violence, including children, in the family law system: Disincentives to disclosing family violence and child abuse, and responding to systems abuse – Terms 1a and 1b, 2024’](#), (2025); Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, [‘Webinar: Systems Abuse Audit | Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission’](#) (12 June 2026); Attorney-General’s Department, [‘Fact Sheet: Family Law changes from June 2025’](#) (26 February 2025).

Temporary visa holders remain exposed where family violence provisions do not cover their visa or relationship, evidentiary requirements are too hard to meet, or separation from an Australian-citizen child creates further danger.

Client story: Mia's story

For over a year, our client Mia* (not her real name) has been fighting for the child support payments owed to her three-year-old daughter, who is currently experiencing serious health issues. A victim-survivor of family violence, Mia had to get an intervention order against her daughter's father, 'I even had to move house for my safety, because of the sort of person he had become.'

After the father's reported income decreased from \$100,000 to under \$20,000 per year, Mia thought something was up. She applied to child support for a Change of Assessment, arguing that the father was still working and may be minimising or hiding his income. Child support accepted Mia's application, but the father lodged an objection. This prompted another internal process and ended up with an appeal to the Administrative Review Tribunal.

After months of hearings and conferences, the Tribunal dismissed the father's appeal.

Despite all this, the father has only partially complied with his child support obligations. The original debt remains. Mia is now faced with the stress of further administrative and legal proceedings to claw back the debt or being left without.

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should commit to the following:

- Publish the de-identified findings, responsible agencies, deadlines and outcome measures from the Australian Government's Systems Abuse Audit.
- As a next step, conduct an independent systems abuse audit of the family law system to identify how family law legislation, court processes and interfaces with FVOs, child protection, child support, tax and social security systems are being weaponised, to assist in preventing future abuse.
- Recognise that specialist, coercive control-informed legal assistance for people using violence is an important safeguard against the misuse of legal and administrative processes to perpetrate systems abuse or coercive control.
- Require safety-by-design assessments and recurring independent tests for family law, child support, tax, social security, migration and other relevant systems.
- Provide simple escalation, record-correction, debt-waiver and review pathways supported by legal assistance.

- Evaluate and support practitioners to utilise harmful proceedings orders and the courts to utilise case management powers to address systems abuse.
- Improve access to property and income information held by government, including the Australian Taxation Office, with safeguards.
- Fund early property, child-support and financial legal assistance, financial counselling, legally assisted dispute resolution and enforcement.
- Expand family violence visa protections and create a substantive pathway for temporary visa holders who are otherwise excluded.

Recommendation 6: Fund First Nations-led justice responses

Governments should give effect to Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices by placing First Nations decision-making authority over all Second Action Plan actions affecting First Nations peoples, including the justice actions; providing long-term, flexible and full-cost investment to ATSILS, FVPLS and other ACCOs; and requiring police, courts, child protection agencies and mainstream legal and service systems to implement co-designed institutional reforms.

The First Action Plan under Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices should govern First Nations-specific priorities and investment. The Second Action Plan should carry the corresponding obligations of mainstream systems and any genuinely shared actions. The two plans must use a single, published implementation strategy with common owners, funding sources, milestones, outcomes and reporting, and embeds Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles and accountability mechanisms.

Consultation alignment. All Priority Areas; Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices; Closing the Gap Target 13.

Why this is needed

Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is shaped by gender inequality and by the continuing effects of colonisation, dispossession, racism, child removal, criminalisation and economic exclusion. Government reports that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are seven times more likely to be victims of intimate partner homicide and 27 times more likely to be hospitalised because of family violence than non-Indigenous women, rising to 41 times in regional

and very remote communities. These figures demand a response led by the people and organisations with cultural authority, community trust and specialist expertise.⁵⁹

For many women, seeking safety can also expose them and their children to policing, child protection, family law, housing, income support and immigration systems. Fear of misidentification, criminalisation or child removal can deter disclosure and help-seeking. Culturally safe legal assistance is therefore safety and prevention infrastructure: it can secure protection, housing and financial entitlements; correct inaccurate records; challenge unlawful decisions; keep mothers and children safely together; and prevent legal and administrative systems being used as another form of abuse.

NLA welcomes Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices as the authoritative national plan for this work. Important foundations are now in place, including the establishment of Our Ways - Strong Together as the national community-controlled family, domestic and sexual violence peak, a \$218.3 million Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices commitment and funding for up to 40 ACCOs. First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence (FNAAFV) has called for clarity and direct collaboration with the specialist FVPLS sector in allocating this investment.⁶⁰ The Second Action Plan must enable Our Ways on all matters affecting First Nations people, rather than competing with or cross-cutting self-determined First Nations priorities.

This also requires governments to change their own conduct. The Productivity Commission found that many funding and contracting practices still follow business as usual and recommended dedicated, reliable and consistent funding, longer and more flexible contracts, reduced reporting burden and funder accountability for the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms. Community control is an exercise of self-determination, not simply a service-delivery preference.⁶¹

Cultural safety in Legal Aids

NLA recognises that First Nations-specific policy, governance and service priorities must be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community-controlled organisations. Legal Aids services complement, not compete with or substitute for, FVPLS, ATSILS, and other ACCOs. Funding designated for First

⁵⁹ Australian Government, 'First ever dedicated plan to end violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children', (Media Release, 10 February 2026).

⁶⁰ First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence, 'Budget Announces Family Violence ACCO Funding, Peak Body Calls for Clarity and Collaboration' (Media Release, 12 May 2026); FNAAFV, 2026-27 Pre-Budget Submission (January 2026).

⁶¹ Productivity Commission, 'Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap', (Final Report and factsheets, 2024).

Nations-led responses should be provided directly to the relevant ACCOs unless First Nations partners determine another arrangement.

Legal Aids have enduring statutory and practical responsibilities to First Nations communities. They provide access where a person chooses Legal Aid, where an ACCO is not available or cannot act because of conflict, and through jurisdiction-wide family, criminal and civil law services, duty lawyer programs, grants of aid, ICL panels, FASS and private practitioner panels. In 2022-23, First Nations people comprised 24% of clients receiving Legal Aid grants nationally, rising to 37% in Western Australia and 74% in the Northern Territory. Cultural safety in Legal Aid services is therefore a core accountability obligation, not an optional initiative.⁶²

Legal Aids should be funded to enter formal, locally determined partnership agreements with ATSILS, FVPLS and other ACCOs. Agreements should cover shared regional planning; client choice; early and warm referral; conflict arrangements; family law, child protection and ICL interfaces; interpreters and cultural liaison; information and record-correction pathways; workforce collaboration; and Indigenous data governance. The time and infrastructure required of ACCO partners must be funded.

Legal Aids should also be accountable for transforming our own services: increasing First Nations employment and leadership; implementing cultural safety and anti-racism standards; auditing client experience and outcomes under First Nations data governance; and using commissioning, panel and quality-assurance functions to support safe practice. Any additional role must be specifically funded and must not shift unmet demand from under-resourced ACCOs or divert resources from frontline legal assistance.

Align the plans and fund the gaps

The Second Action Plan should be explicit about the division of responsibility:

The First Action Plan under Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices should set First Nations-specific priorities, governance, service and healing responses, investment and community-defined outcomes. Our Ways Strong Together, FVPLS, ATSILS and relevant local ACCOs should exercise decision-making authority according to their respective roles.

The Second Action Plan should make mainstream institutions accountable for eliminating racism and unsafe practice and for changing police, court, child protection, family law and legal assistance systems. It should also fund shared

⁶² National Legal Aid, [Submission to the Independent Review of the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25](#) (2023), p. 40.

interfaces where cooperation between community-controlled and mainstream services is necessary for safety.

The NAJP should carry core legal assistance funding and its Closing the Gap Schedule, developed with the community-controlled legal assistance sector. The Schedule, the National Justice Sector Strengthening Plan and the two family violence action plans should use compatible actions and indicators, without duplicating consultations, reporting or service infrastructure.⁶³

The existing commitments are substantial, but they do not remove the need to fund unmet legal need, complete national service coverage or reform mainstream systems. The Senate inquiry into missing and murdered First Nations women and children specifically called for urgent implementation of the NLAP review recommendations and increased geographic spread and capacity of FVPLS. The Second Action Plan is the opportunity to make that commitment concrete.⁶⁴

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should commit to:

- **Put First Nations governance into the decision rules.** Governance protocols, agreed through the Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices shared decision-making mechanism, should identify who has authority to design, approve, change and evaluate each action. First Nations representatives must be selected through community-controlled structures. Participation, cultural knowledge, data governance and lived experience must be properly remunerated. Governments should publish how any departure from agreed advice was resolved.
- **Fund ACCOs for the full cost and duration of the work.** Fund First Nations-specific services directly through agreements covering the full 2027-32 Action Plan period, with indexation and a pathway to continuation. Funding should cover wages and pay parity; prevention and early intervention; legal and non-legal wraparound support; cultural and clinical supervision; interpreters; transport and outreach; safe premises, housing links, digital and regional infrastructure; governance; policy and systemic advocacy; data capability; and evaluation. Relational contracting and expansion of proven services should replace short pilots and competitive processes that require ACCOs to compete against mainstream organisations.

⁶³ National Access to Justice Partnership 2025-30, clauses 73-79; Attorney-General's Department, Justice Policy Partnership, Strategic Framework and Implementation Roadmap.

⁶⁴ Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee, Missing and murdered First Nations women and children (2024), recommendation 5.

- **Close legal service access gaps.** Publish an ACCO-governed map of legal need, unmet demand, existing FVPLS and ATSILS coverage, conflicts and the new Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices service network. Use it to agree on a national minimum access standard and a costed expansion plan. Investment should achieve equitable geographic access to specialist FVPLS services; strengthen ATSILS family, civil and child protection practice, including family law and ICL work where sought by communities; and fund interpreters, warm referrals, conflict pathways, outreach, transport and place-based integrated models. Digital access should supplement, not replace, trusted local and face-to-face services.
- **Fund First Nations-led family law and child protection pathways.** Restore, expand and sustain Aboriginal-led FDR, family law navigation and hub models where communities support them. Fund early and continuing culturally responsive legal representation for parents and children, Aboriginal Family-Led Decision Making and supports that keep children safely connected to family, kin, culture and Country. Co-design a national First Nations child protection legal notification and referral model, building on the FVPLS sector's proposal and current legal supports scoping work, with privacy, consent and information-governance safeguards determined through First Nations leadership.⁶⁵
- **Make mainstream systems correct harm.** Require police, courts and child protection agencies to implement nationally consistent, culturally safe processes for identifying the person most in need of protection and patterns of coercive control.⁶⁶ Every jurisdiction should provide rapid specialist review, accessible appeal and correction of police, protection-order, child protection and related administrative records when a victim-survivor is misidentified. Services must include a warm referral to an FVPLS, ATSILS or another ACCO chosen by the person. Public agencies should be accountable for anti-racism, cultural safety, interpreter access and the consequences of unsafe decisions; responsibility should not be shifted to ACCOs through unfunded consultation or referral obligations.
- **Build and sustain the First Nations workforce.** Align the Second Action Plan with the FVPLS Sector Strengthening Plan, the NAJP Workforce Strategy and the National Justice Sector Strengthening Plan. Fund wage parity, secure regional positions, scholarships and paid placements, family law and dispute-resolution accreditation, ICL pathways, leadership development, specialist and cultural

⁶⁵ National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Improving Access to Legal Supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families: Legal Scoping Study Report (2026); FNAAFV, Budget media release (12 May 2026).

⁶⁶ Nancarrow, H., Thomas, K., Ringland, V., & Modini, T. (2020). Accurately identifying the “person most in need of protection” in domestic and family violence law (Research report, 23/2020). Sydney: ANROWS.

supervision, worker wellbeing and recognition of cultural load. Workforce measures should include retention and advancement, not only recruitment and course completion.

- **Embed Indigenous data sovereignty.** First Nations peoples and organisations should govern the collection, access, interpretation, linkage, publication, retention and use of data about them. Fund ACCOs to collect and analyse their own data and define measures of safety, healing, culture, trust and service quality. No dataset or evaluation should be treated as community-governed merely because it includes an advisory group. Legal professional privilege, confidentiality, victim-survivor safety and service independence must be protected.
- **Publish one cross-plan accountability schedule** covering the First Action Plan under Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, the Second Action Plan, the First Nations action plan under Safe and Supported, the NAJP Closing the Gap Schedule and relevant Justice Policy Partnership reforms. For every legal and justice action, identify the First Nations governance body, government owner, funding source, baseline, milestone, community-defined outcome and reporting date. Report annually and publish funded corrective action within six months when commitments are delayed or outcomes are not improving.

Recommendation 7: Guarantee accessible and culturally safe pathways

The Second Action Plan should set enforceable accessibility and cultural safety standards for legal and justice systems and fund the specialist pathways, adjustments and workforce needed to meet them.

Consultation alignment. Priority Area 1 -Victim-Survivors; Priority Area 3- Children and young people in their own right; Priority Area 5 – System Integration and Workforce.

Why this is needed

General service expansion does not guarantee access for women and children with disability, migrant and refugee women, temporary visa holders, LGBTIQ+ people, older women, people in regional and remote communities or people with low literacy and limited digital access.

The Disability Royal Commission recommended a dedicated action plan for women and children with disability and disability-inclusive definitions of family and domestic violence. Family Law Council recommendations also support disability and multicultural liaison, accessible technology and culturally responsive reporting.

Access requires more than translated information. It can require interpreters, communication support, accessible buildings and remote processes, specialist legal expertise, trusted community organisations and extra time.

Actions for the Second Action Plan

- Implement the Disability Royal Commission recommendations relevant to the National Plan and justice responses
- Set minimum accessibility, reasonable adjustment, interpreter, cultural safety and assisted-digital standards
- Fund disability and multicultural liaison roles and specialist community-controlled navigation
- Close visa, income and crisis-payment gaps that prevent victim-survivors leaving violence
- Create regional minimum service guarantees backed by travel, outreach, technology and workforce incentives
- Require co-design and independent accessibility audits, including for court safety and remote participation.

Recommendation 8: Make independent legal assistance for people who experience sexual violence permanent and nationally available

The Second Action Plan should make specialist independent legal assistance for people who experience sexual violence a named, funded and reportable national action. Governments should implement the legal assistance recommendations in the ALRC's *Safe, Informed, Supported* report and establish a funded pathway from the current sexual violence legal-service pilots to permanent national coverage.

Every person who experiences sexual violence should have access to:

- free and confidential legal advice before deciding whether or how to engage with a justice process;
- independent advice during criminal proceedings;
- representation where access is sought to counselling records or other sensitive information; and
- assistance with related legal needs, including family law, protection orders, child protection, victims' compensation, employment, migration, housing and debt.

Services should be independent of police and prosecution agencies, specialist, trauma-informed, culturally safe and accessible.

Consultation alignment. Priority Area 1 – Victim-Survivors

Why this is needed

Legal Aids' practice experience across criminal, family and civil law jurisdictions is that sexual violence rarely creates a single legal problem. A person may simultaneously be navigating a criminal investigation, separation, parenting proceedings, child protection involvement, financial hardship and concerns about the disclosure of private records.

Police and prosecutors act on behalf of the state; they are not the complainant's personal lawyer. Independent legal advice enables people to understand their rights, make informed choices and protect their privacy without pressure to report or pursue a particular outcome. The ALRC accordingly recommended free early legal advice, continuing advice during criminal proceedings and representation when access is sought to confidential information.⁶⁷

The Australian Government's \$21.4 million investment over three years and the establishment of a pilot in each jurisdiction provide an important foundation. Legal Aids are already contributing to specialist models, including Victoria's Victims Legal Service, Legal Services Commission South Australia's Sexual Violence Legal Service and Legal Aid NSW's Sexual Assault Communications Privilege Service. However, time-limited pilots do not provide enduring or consistent access. The pilots are a positive first step towards implementing the ALRC's recommendations.⁶⁸

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should commit to the following:

- **Publish a national implementation roadmap.** The Attorney-General's Department, working through the Standing Council of Attorneys-General, should identify the responsibilities, legislative reforms, funding and milestones required to implement the relevant ALRC recommendations. Progress should be reported under the Second Action Plan.
- **Transition the pilots to permanent services.** Governments should evaluate the current pilots and agree to an ongoing national service model before existing

⁶⁷ Australian Law Reform Commission, [Safe, Informed, Supported: Reforming Justice Responses to Sexual Violence](#) (Final Report No 143, January 2025).

⁶⁸ National Legal Aid, ['National Legal Aid Welcomes Funding to Expand Support for Victim-Survivors of Sexual Violence in the Justice System'](#) (Webpage, 6 March 2025).

funding expires. Evaluation should improve service design, not delay continuity of assistance.

- **Establish a nationally consistent minimum service.** This should include free initial advice, ongoing advice where required and representation to protect confidential or sensitive information. Access should not depend on a person's postcode, financial circumstances or decision to report to police.
- **Fund a coordinated provider network.** Legal Aids should be funded to co-design and deliver services alongside women's legal services, ATSILS, FVPLS, community legal centres and specialist sexual violence services. Reliable conflict pathways must be built into the model.
- **Connect criminal, family and civil legal assistance.** Services should identify related legal needs and provide warm referrals or continuing assistance across relevant jurisdictions, supported by justice navigators and specialist non-legal services.
- **Protect the integrity of the justice system.** Independent advisers should act for victim-survivors in relation to their own rights and interests; they should not operate as a second prosecutor. Reforms must preserve fair-trial safeguards and be funded without reducing criminal defence or other existing legal assistance.
- **Provide additional, full-cost funding.** Funding must cover specialist staff, supervision, interpreters, disability supports, culturally safe delivery, outreach, travel and evaluation. It must not be drawn from existing NAJP funding allocations.

Permanent independent legal assistance would build on governments' existing investment and provide the practical infrastructure needed to make justice responses safer, more accessible and more trusted.

Recommendation 9: Strengthen perpetrator accountability and intervention

Governments should establish national minimum standards, accreditation, partner-safety requirements and a common outcomes dataset for interventions with people who use violence, while preserving legal advice and procedural fairness.

Consultation alignment. Priority Area 4 -People who use violence; Priority Area 2 -Prevention and early intervention

Why this is needed

Legal and justice systems are important accountability points. When people using violence have access to lawyers with capability in family violence and non-collusive

practice, this can provide a critical safeguard to prevent coercive control and systems abuse being perpetrated through the legal system. Clear legal advice can challenge minimisation, test unrealistic positions, support compliance, prevent systems abuse, and connect a person to behaviour-change, alcohol and drug and other services. This work must avoid collusion and keep victim-survivor and child safety central.

Reviews continue to find uneven quality, access and evaluation in relation to perpetrator interventions and programs. National standards, partner contact, accreditation and comparable safety outcomes remain incomplete, particularly in regional areas and for culturally specific responses.

High-risk initiatives and coercive-control offences should be accompanied by legal assistance, predominant-aggressor safeguards, culturally safe practice and independent evaluation to avoid unintended criminalisation or misidentification.

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should commit to the following:

- Fund legal advice and representation that supports procedural fairness, reality testing and informed compliance.
- Finalise national minimum standards and accreditation for men's behaviour-change and other perpetrator interventions, and evaluate for effectiveness.
- Require safe partner contact, information sharing and risk escalation in funded programs.
- Fund a continuum from early voluntary engagement to court-mandated, high-risk and post-release interventions.
- Establish culturally safe and community-led responses, including for First Nations people and diverse communities.
- Adopt a common dataset and independently evaluate safety, reoffending, completion, attrition and differential outcomes before scaling trials.

Recommendation 10: Build a national legal and justice workforce capability including safe work with people who use violence

The Second Action Plan should fund a national family violence capability and accountability framework for legal and justice workforces. The framework should establish nationally consistent, role-specific and assessable capabilities, supported by the supervision, practice systems, workload settings and workforce conditions required to translate learning into safe practice.

The framework must include safe and effective work with people whose use of violence is alleged, identified or established. It should equip practitioners to recognise risk, avoid collusion and systems abuse, support appropriate accountability and referral, and keep the safety of victim-survivors and children in view, while preserving procedural fairness, professional independence and each practitioner's legal and ethical obligations.

NLA and Legal Aids should be funded to co-lead the legal workforce stream. This work should build on the National Legal Assistance Workforce Strategy under the NAJP 2025–30, and use existing Legal Aid training, accreditation, panel and quality-assurance infrastructure.

Consultation alignment. Priority Area 5 - System Integration and Workforce

Why this is needed

Legal Aids work across Commonwealth family law and state and territory family violence, child protection, criminal and civil justice systems. We assist victim-survivors, children and people alleged to have used violence through early advice, duty services, ongoing representation, ICLs, lawyer-assisted dispute resolution and integrated legal and non-legal services.

Legal Aids hold a distinctive view of how workforce capability affects safety across jurisdictions and legal systems. Our experience is that family violence capability cannot be confined to specialist services or treated as a one-off training requirement. It must be embedded in legal practice, decision-making, supervision, service design and professional accountability.

The Second Action Plan consultation paper identifies both people who use violence and system integration and workforce as national priorities. It calls for earlier identification, multi-sector approaches to accountability and behaviour change, stronger justice responses, and connected and capable workforces using trauma- and violence-informed approaches.⁶⁹ These priorities must extend to the legal and justice workforces that advise, represent and make decisions affecting victim-survivors, children and people who use violence.

Training is repeatedly recommended following inquiries, reviews and system failures. Attendance, however, is not evidence of competence. Safe practice requires practitioners to apply knowledge to complex and contested situations: recognising patterns of coercive control; identifying the person most in need of protection; understanding trauma and evidence; recognising children as victim-survivors; and

⁶⁹ ANROWS: [‘Evidence to action: informing direction for the Second Action Plan Consultation Paper in support of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032’](#) (May 2026).

identifying when legal and administrative processes are being used to continue abuse.

Inconsistent capability can contribute to misidentification, unsafe risk assessments, inappropriate referrals, avoidable adjournments, unsafe parenting or contact arrangements and advice or decisions that compound trauma. These risks increase where practitioners must interpret fragmented information across family law, protection orders, criminal law, child protection, migration, housing, debt, social security, child support and victims' compensation.

Safe legal work with people who use violence

Legal Aids have expertise in providing legal assistance where family violence may be alleged, disputed, admitted or established. This includes representing respondents and defendants, delivering FASS services for people alleged to have used violence, and representing children independently of the adult parties.

Competent representation and procedural fairness are essential to the integrity of the justice system. They are not inconsistent with safe family violence practice. Lawyers working with people alleged to have used violence must be able to:

- recognise indicators of risk and patterns of controlling or abusive behaviour;
- understand how litigation, disclosure, subpoenas, cross-examination, repeated applications and non-compliance may be used as part of systems abuse;
- avoid reinforcing denial, minimisation, victim-blaming or narratives that misuse children;
- provide clear, respectful and non-collusive advice about legal responsibilities and consequences;
- identify the potential safety implications of a client's proposed litigation or settlement position;
- make informed referrals to specialist, culturally appropriate interventions;
- manage confidentiality, privilege and information-sharing obligations safely; and
- maintain professional boundaries and understand the limits of the lawyer's role.

Lawyers must be supported to perform their role safely, recognise when specialist expertise is required and avoid practices that increase risk to victim-survivors, children, practitioners or services.

Legal Aid Commissions' capability-building expertise

Legal Aids bring established national capability-development infrastructure. We combine frontline family, criminal and civil law practice; specialist family violence services; statutory legal aid functions; practitioner panels and quality-assurance

systems; and national and jurisdictional training capability. This allows learning to be connected to induction, accreditation, supervision, panel entry, continuing eligibility and practice improvement.

NLA has demonstrated its capacity to translate national policy into practical and scalable workforce development:

- **Understanding Coercive Control when Providing Legal Assistance**⁷⁰, co-developed by Women's Legal Service Victoria and FNAAFV through a consortium with Women's Legal Services Australia and NLA, provides free national training for lawyers across practice areas, including a specialist family law course. Since being launched in June 2026, 1,184 legal professionals commenced the Foundational course and 1,142 legal professionals have commenced the Family Law course,⁷¹ demonstrating the strong demand in the profession for family violence capability development.
- **With You**, led by Legal Aid NSW on behalf of NLA, provides trauma-informed and rights-based training through self-directed and facilitated learning, a community of practice and an organisational toolkit. The prevalence of trauma amongst clients of the legal assistance sector is uncontested, particularly at the point where they need legal assistance. With You recognises that a lawyer who can identify and respond to trauma can deliver an effective legal service, without causing further harm, and lessen the impact of vicarious trauma. It was informed by consultation with 534 people, while the toolkit draws on practice from approximately 40 legal services.⁷²
- The **National ICL Program** provides mandatory national accreditation training, mentoring, professional development and specialised practice resources for ICLs.⁷³

The Second Action Plan should build on this work to develop a national family violence capability framework.

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should commit to:

- **Develop a national capability and accountability framework.** Establish foundation capabilities for all legal and justice personnel and advanced capabilities for roles with frequent or high-consequence family violence responsibilities.

⁷⁰ National Legal Aid, [Understanding Coercive Control](#), (Webpage, n.d.)

⁷¹ As at 10 August 2026.

⁷² National Legal Aid, [With You](#), (Webpage, n.d.)

⁷³ National Legal Aid, [Independent Children's Lawyers](#) (Webpage, n.d.).

- **Establish core national capabilities.** These should include:
 - coercive control, sexual violence, economic abuse, technology-facilitated abuse, systems abuse and post-separation violence;
 - risk during separation, litigation and changes to parenting or financial arrangements;
 - predominant-aggressor identification and prevention of misidentification;
 - trauma- and violence-informed legal practice and evidence;
 - children's status as victim-survivors and rights holders;
 - culturally safe, disability-responsive and intersectional practice;
 - safe referral, information-sharing, confidentiality and privilege;
 - safe work with people who use violence; and
 - practitioner safety, vicarious trauma and psychosocial risk.
- **Fund NLA and Legal Aid Commissions to co-lead the legal workforce stream.** NLA and Legal Aids should be resourced to:
 - map foundation and advanced legal capabilities;
 - adapt, expand and evaluate existing curricula;
 - develop applied assessment, supervision and refresher models;
 - support specialist communities of practice;
 - develop resources for work with victim-survivors, children and people who use violence;
 - align appropriate capabilities with panel, accreditation and quality-assurance arrangements;
 - support consistent implementation across jurisdictions; and
 - contribute de-identified practice evidence to independent evaluation.

This work should be undertaken in partnership with ACCOs, Women's Legal Services Australia, specialist family violence services, the Law Council of Australia, professional regulators, judicial education bodies and people with lived experience.

- **Embed First Nations leadership and local application.** First Nations organisations must own decision-making authority over the design, delivery and evaluation of capabilities affecting First Nations people and communities. National outcomes should allow local implementation to reflect distinct laws, cultures, languages, community structures and service systems. Government must separately fund First Nations organisations' participation and recognise the cultural load carried by First Nations practitioners.
- **Support implementation beyond training.** Funding should cover induction, advanced learning, specialist supervision, secondary consultation, communities of practice, practice resources, regional delivery, practitioner backfill, periodic

refreshers and organisational change. New requirements should not be imposed without funding the time and infrastructure required to implement them.

- **Build on the NAJP workforce reforms.** The NAJP requires governments, in consultation with the sector, to develop a National Legal Assistance Workforce Strategy by 30 June 2027. That Strategy must address recruitment and retention, particularly in regional and remote areas; pay disparity; organisational capacity; strengthening the First Nations community-controlled sector; workforce distribution; and high-quality, inclusive and culturally safe services. It must also align with the National Justice Sector Strengthening Plan.⁷⁴

The division of responsibility should be explicit:

- the **NAJP Workforce Strategy** should address legal assistance workforce sustainability, including remuneration, attraction and retention, regional and remote supply, organisational capacity, First Nations community-controlled sector strengthening and workforce data; and
- the **Second Action Plan** should fund family violence capability and accountability across the wider legal and justice system, including common capability outcomes, role-specific implementation, safe work with people who use violence and independent evaluation.
- The two processes should share governance, evidence and implementation arrangements without duplicating obligations.
- **Sustain the workforce on which safe practice depends.** Capability cannot be maintained where practitioners face excessive caseloads, inadequate remuneration, regional shortages, insufficient supervision or unmanaged vicarious trauma. Governments must address the availability and remuneration of private practitioners undertaking legally aided work, including ICLs, and fund culturally safe workplaces, specialist career pathways, supervision and psychosocial support.
Any new accreditation, training or reporting requirement must be costed and funded. It must not reduce participation in legal aid panels or divert resources from frontline legal assistance.
- **Measure changes in practice and safety.** Evaluations should examine whether the framework improves identification of family violence, prevention and correction of misidentification, responses to systems abuse, children's safety and participation, referral quality, culturally safe practice and the experiences of victim-survivors in legal and justice systems. They should also assess practitioner retention, confidence, supervision and wellbeing.

⁷⁴ [National Access to Justice Partnership](#), cls.88–91.

Governments should publish implementation responsibilities, coverage, funding and evaluation findings. Where evaluations identify unsafe or ineffective practice, the relevant agency or professional body should be required to publish and implement corrective action.

Family Law Pathways Networks

Family Law Pathways Networks (FLPNs) were an important mechanism to facilitate system integration and workforce capability in the family law system. The 36 locally-driven FLPNs across Australia were a key part of the family law system's early intervention and referral infrastructure. They supported collaboration and training in the family law and support services sector, fostering appropriate referral pathways for separating families caught in the system.

NLA is concerned that the Australian Government's cessation of funding for FLPNs in the 2026–27 Budget will impact the sector's ability to tailor referrals and service delivery for vulnerable families navigating multiple systems and services, and will make it harder for vulnerable families to access family law support. The funding reduction comes at a time of increasing pressure on families, growing demand for family law and family violence services, and continued strain across the legal assistance and community sectors risking greater fragmentation.

The FLPNs built and sustained collaboration in the family law service sector including between Family Relationship Services Program providers and legal assistance services. This collaboration is critical to enable integrated service delivery through models such as legally-assisted FDR, delivering better outcomes for clients.

FLPNs played a critical role in:

- connecting families experiencing separation, family violence and other complex issues with the legal, social and community support services they need
- facilitating information exchange about services currently available in their areas; pathways; wait times.
- facilitating sector wide training and development to encourage best practice in assisting families as they navigate the challenging time of separation.

The 2024 Review of the Family Relationship Services Program found that the Family Law Pathways Network (FLPN) was a key mechanism in building collaboration across the family law system and delivered significant benefit for relatively little investment. The decision to cut funding for the FLPN runs counter to the Review's

recommendation that a separate funding stream for the FLPN should be maintained, and that a full-time National FLPN Coordinator position should be established.⁷⁵

NLA recommends the Australian Government reconsider the funding decision and continue investing in integrated, collaborative responses that improve safety and access to justice for families across Australia, or alternatively what can be implemented to replace the important function that FLPNs provided to ensure a joined-up service response for those navigating the family law system including victim-survivors of family violence and children.

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should ensure that the system integration and workforce capability function that was provided by the FLPN is continued to support a joined-up quality service response that supports vulnerable families to access family law support.

Recommendation 11: Make legal assistance visible within a strengthened National Plan accountability framework

The Second Action Plan should strengthen and integrate the National Plan's existing implementation, monitoring and reporting arrangements and ensure they can answer a fundamental safety question: can victim-survivors and children obtain timely, specialist and culturally safe legal assistance, and are legal and justice systems improving their safety, agency and access to justice?

The Second Action Plan should:

- upgrade the existing Activities Addendum into a public implementation, investment and evaluation register;
- strengthen existing Commonwealth delivery arrangements to identify and resolve cross-government implementation risks;
- establish the DFSV Commission as an independent statutory authority with proportionate information-gathering powers;
- connect the Commission's Monitoring and Reporting Framework and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) outcomes reporting with the NAJP data and outcomes architecture; and

⁷⁵ Andrew Metcalfe AO, [Support for Separating Families: Review of the Family Relationships Services Program](#) (Final Report, June 2024).

- fully fund Legal Aids and other legal assistance services to contribute data, practice evidence, measure development and evaluation without diverting resources from frontline assistance.

Consultation alignment: Priority Area 5 -System Integration and Workforce; cross-cutting across all five priority areas.

Why this is needed

Legal Aids operate across the Commonwealth family law system and state and territory family violence, child protection and criminal justice systems. They provide early legal advice, duty services, grants of legal aid, ongoing representation, ICLs, lawyer-assisted dispute resolution and integrated legal and non-legal support.

This national reach gives Legal Aids a distinct view of how reforms operate across jurisdictions and systems. They can identify where victim-survivors are unable to obtain representation, where children's interests are not adequately addressed, where legal processes are being used to continue abuse, where misidentification is occurring and where gaps between family law, family violence, child protection and criminal justice responses are creating risk.

Governments have established important foundations for monitoring the National Plan. These include the Activities Addendum, national investment and highlights reporting, AIHW's Outcomes Framework and Performance Measurement Plan, the DFSV Commission's yearly report to Parliament and Monitoring and Reporting Framework, and revised national governance arrangements. The Second Action Plan should strengthen and connect these mechanisms.

The Second Action Plan should be clear about government commitment to the actions, the investment supporting it, its operational implementation, its reach and accessibility, and its effect on safety and justice outcomes. Current reporting can show that an initiative has been announced, commenced or established as business as usual without showing whether it is adequately funded, available nationally, reaching the people who need it or achieving its intended purpose.

This gap is particularly significant for legal assistance. For example, activity data cannot, on their own, show whether legal help was available when it was needed, whether a person could obtain ongoing representation, whether an order was workable and enforceable, whether misidentification was corrected or whether legal assistance improved safety and reduced repeated engagement with courts and other services.

Legal assistance data must also be interpreted carefully. Legal Aid data primarily describes people who reach a service and are able to receive assistance. It is shaped by funding, eligibility rules, service capacity, geography and the availability of private practitioners. A reduction in service numbers may reflect reduced capacity rather than reduced legal need. Service data must therefore be considered alongside legal needs research, court and police data, population level evidence, qualitative evidence and the experiences of victim-survivors and children.

Better connected implementation and outcomes reporting would help governments identify unmet need and implementation risks earlier, understand whether broader legal and justice reforms are adequately supported, direct funding to effective interventions and demonstrate the value of public investment.

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should commit to:

- **Upgrade the existing Activities Addendum.** Reporting should distinguish between commitment, funding, commencement, operation, coverage, evaluation and demonstrated outcomes. An initiative should not be recorded as delivered merely because funding has been announced, legislation has passed or a limited pilot has commenced.
- **Strengthen existing Commonwealth delivery arrangements.** These arrangements should identify and resolve cross-portfolio dependencies, and monitor and respond to delivery risks. This should include risks created where reforms in one part of the legal or justice system increase demand elsewhere. New family law and family violence reforms should identify their anticipated effect on legal assistance demand, service costs and workforce capacity, and implementation funding should be provided before new obligations commence.
- **Connect National Plan and legal assistance reporting.** During the first year of the Second Action Plan, formally map the NAJP Data Strategy and Outcomes-Based Framework to relevant National Plan outcomes and measures. The two frameworks should have distinct but connected functions:
 - the NAJP should provide the legal assistance data infrastructure, including common definitions, a proportionate minimum dataset, outcomes measures and secure reporting capability;
 - the Activities Addendum should report publicly on Second Action Plan implementation, investment and coverage;
 - AIHW should continue to measure national outcomes, baselines and data gaps; and

- the DFSV Commission should provide independent, systems-based assessment of whether collective implementation is contributing to meaningful change.
- Common definitions, identifiers and reporting pathways should be used wherever possible so that legal assistance providers report information once for authorised and transparent uses.
- **Develop meaningful legal assistance and justice measures.** Measures should be co-designed with NLA, Legal Aid Commissions, ATSILS, FVPLS, community legal centres, women's legal services, victim-survivors, children and young people, and relevant specialist practitioners. Measures should include:
 - unmet legal need;
 - the timeliness of access to legal advice and representation;
 - access to continuous representation in high-risk and complex matters;
 - access to ICLs and children's effective participation;
 - access to safe lawyer-assisted dispute resolution;
 - regional, rural and remote service coverage;
 - cultural safety and accessibility;
 - misidentification and whether it is corrected;
 - systems abuse and repeated litigation;
 - the workability, enforcement and durability of legal outcomes;
 - referral continuity and repeated telling; and
 - differences in access and outcomes between population groups.

Measures should examine outcomes that matter to clients, including safety, agency, child wellbeing, housing and economic stability, confidence in legal processes and the ability to resolve related legal problems.

- **Fund Legal Aids to contribute evidence and expertise.** Legal Aids should be funded to:
 - co-design relevant measures, definitions and data standards;
 - make necessary changes to information and case-management systems;
 - provide appropriately aggregated and de-identified service and practice evidence;
 - identify emerging gaps in access, representation and system performance;
 - participate in independent evaluations of legal assistance, family law and justice-system initiatives; and
 - contribute operational expertise to implementation reviews and corrective action.

These functions require specialist policy, data, evaluation, information technology and legal practice capability. Their cost must not be absorbed from funding intended to provide frontline legal assistance.

- **Build evaluation into legal and justice reforms.** Evaluation should examine what works, for whom, in what circumstances, at what cost and with what unintended consequences.
- **Strengthen independent accountability.** Establish the DFSV Commission as an independent statutory authority with proportionate powers to obtain timely implementation, investment, evaluation and outcomes information from Australian governments. Its yearly report to Parliament should include an independent assessment of Second Action Plan implementation, including legal and justice-system performance, systemic barriers and priorities for corrective action. Governments should provide a formal, public and time-bound response to the Commission's recommendations.
- **Protect client safety, confidentiality and legal professional privilege and embed Indigenous Data Sovereignty.** Legal assistance information should be collected only where necessary and aggregated wherever possible. Data collection, linkage, access and publication must protect victim-survivor safety, client confidentiality, legal professional privilege and the statutory independence of Legal Aids. First Nations people and community-controlled organisations must have decision-making authority over priorities, methods, access, interpretation and publication concerning First Nations data.
- **Prevent reporting from reducing service capacity.** New reporting requirements should be introduced only after consultation with legal assistance providers, assessment of their cost and utility, privacy and safety review, and provision of funded systems support. Governments should measure and reduce provider reporting burden. No Legal Aid should be required to reduce legal assistance to meet National Plan reporting, coordination or evaluation obligations.

Recommendation 12: Respond to emerging technologies and access to justice risks

The Second Action Plan should recognise AI-enabled and technology-facilitated abuse as a growing family violence and justice system priority. Governments should fund legal assistance, digital safety advice, trusted multilingual legal-information tools, forensic expertise and stronger capability across courts, police and services to identify manipulated evidence, protect confidential information and respond to AI-enabled litigation abuse. The Second Action Plan should also commit to national research and data collection on victim-survivors' use of AI, social-media legal-help

groups and crowdfunding to meet their legal needs, including impacts on safety, case outcomes, court workload and inequality.

Consultation alignment: Priority Area 1 – victim-survivors; Priority Area 4 – people who use violence; Priority Area 5 – System Integration and Workforce

Why this is needed

Digital technologies are changing both how family violence is perpetrated and how victim-survivors seek justice. ANROWS research found that one in two Australian adults had experienced technology-facilitated abuse and that more than one-third of victimisation occurred in a current or former intimate-partner relationship. The Australian Institute of Criminology has found that perpetrators increasingly use evolving technologies to extend coercive control, while services frequently lack the knowledge and specialist resources required to respond effectively.⁷⁶

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) intensifies these risks. Cheap and accessible tools can be used to create sexual deepfakes, impersonate victim-survivors, fabricate messages, images or recordings, facilitate doxxing and harassment, and generate large volumes of material to overwhelm or intimidate another party. The eSafety Commission warns that deepfakes can be highly realistic, difficult to detect and used for sexual exploitation, extortion, reputational damage and intimidation.⁷⁷ In family law matters, fabricated or manipulated material can generate disputes about the authenticity of evidence, increase forensic costs and delay, obscure genuine patterns of coercive control, and create new opportunities for legal systems abuse.

AI can support access to reliable legal information when it is designed and supervised appropriately. It is not, however, a substitute for tailored legal advice and representation, particularly where family violence risk and children's safety are involved. The FCFCOA's 2026 Practice Direction on the Use of AI recognises that generative AI may produce plausible but inaccurate or misleading material, reproduce systemic bias, compromise confidential information and be used to perpetrate family violence or litigation abuse. It specifically identifies the danger of disclosing protected addresses, medical records and information about children. The Chief

⁷⁶ Anastasia Powell, Asher Flynn and Samantha Hinds, [Technology-facilitated abuse: National survey of Australian adults' experiences](#) (Research report, 12/2022, ANROWS, 2022); Anastasia Powell, Asher Flynn, Lorraine Wheildon and Kate Bentley, [Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on responses to technology-facilitated coercive control](#) (Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice no. 698, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2024).

⁷⁷ eSafety Commissioner, ['Deepfake Trends and Challenges—Position Statement'](#) (Webpage, 4 August 2026).

Justice of the High Court has separately described the prevalence of AI-generated material in litigation as reaching an ‘unsustainable phase’, with judicial officers required to filter machine-generated or enhanced arguments.⁷⁸

These risks fall disproportionately on people who cannot afford a lawyer but are ineligible for, or unable to obtain, legal assistance. They may turn instead to generative AI or social-media groups for immediate help. In ANROWS technology-facilitated abuse survey, only 8.4% of victim-survivors sought legal advice, while 17.8% searched online for information or advice. AI and peer groups may provide useful general information and connection, but they do not owe professional duties, assess risk, distinguish Australian law from overseas law or protect confidentiality. Incorrect advice can lead to missed deadlines, unsafe agreements, inappropriate court material or the disclosure of information that identifies or locates a victim-survivor or child. Legal Aid NSW cautions that AI may invent cases, apply overseas law and provide misleading advice, and should not replace a lawyer.⁷⁹

The growing use of crowdfunding to meet legal costs is another indicator of unmet legal need in the community. In family law matters, crowdfunding campaigns may disclose information contrary to the publication restrictions in the *Family Law Act 1975* or compromise the safety and privacy of children and victim-survivors.⁸⁰

Actions for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should commit to:

- Recognise AI-enabled and technology-facilitated abuse as a family violence and justice system priority, including in risk assessment, evidence management and perpetrator-accountability frameworks;
- Fund Legal Aids and specialist legal services to provide timely, trauma-informed legal assistance, digital-safety advice and access to specialist forensic expertise;
- Fund trusted, accessible and multilingual digital legal-information tools that are connected to human legal assistance and are never treated as a replacement for representation;

⁷⁸ Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, [Practice Direction: Use of Artificial Intelligence](#), PD-AI (29 May 2026); Stephen Gageler, ‘[The State of the Australian Judicature in 2025](#)’ (Speech, Australian Legal Convention, High Court of Australia, Canberra, 21 November 2025).

⁷⁹ Legal Aid NSW, ‘[Using AI in Family Law](#)’ (Webpage, June 2026).

⁸⁰ Law Council of Australia, [Crowdfunding: Guidance for Australian Legal Practitioners](#) (Guidance Note, December 2019).

- Resource courts, legal assistance services, police and family violence services to identify manipulated evidence, protect confidential information and respond to AI-enabled litigation abuse; and
- Establish national data collection and research on victim-survivors' use of AI, social-media legal-help groups and crowdfunding, including their effects on safety, case outcomes, court workload and inequality.

Emerging technologies should be harnessed to improve access to justice, not permitted to create a second-tier system in which people who cannot afford a lawyer must assume the risks of automated advice, public disclosure or fundraising for their own safety.

Case Study: amica^{one}* - an innovative digital solution helping people understand their financial position after separation

Financial abuse and uncertainty about property rights can prevent victim-survivors from leaving an unsafe relationship or taking steps to secure their economic future. A person whose partner has controlled the family's finances may have limited information about the asset pool and may have been told that they will receive nothing in a family law property settlement if they leave.

amica, and amica^{one} have been developed by the Legal Services Commission of South Australia on behalf of NLA. amica^{one} is an online tool that provides a free, single-user pathway through which a person can obtain an indicative range for dividing property after separation without creating an account or notifying or communicating with their former partner. The user enters their own financial information and estimates of the other party's finances. The structured process can help them understand the matters relevant to a property settlement, identify missing financial information and prepare for specialist legal and financial advice.

amica^{one} was developed in response to user research and client feedback, including feedback from people affected by domestic and family violence who wanted to better understand their likely money and property position before involving their former partner. Since 2023, there have been more than 43,000 visitors to the site.

For victim-survivors, amica^{one} can be a valuable private early-information and referral tool. It can counter misinformation used as part of financial abuse, reduce uncertainty and support informed safety and separation planning. It does not, however, provide legal advice, uncover concealed assets or manage the risks of negotiating with a person using violence. It complements timely, trauma-informed legal assistance, financial counselling and safety planning. Australian Government funding through to 30 June 2030 will enable the Legal Services Commission of South Australia, on behalf of NLA, to continue developing and enhancing amica.