

# **The Northern Territory Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework**

## **Consultation Summary**

**November 2019**

## BACKGROUND

The Northern Territory's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework Action Plan 1: Changing Attitudes, Intervening Earlier and Responding Better 2018-2021 includes a commitment to develop a Northern Territory Sexual Violence Prevention and Reduction Framework (the SVPRF).

For many years, Territorians have shared their experiences and knowledge of sexual violence with inquiries and Royal Commissions, including the recent Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Royal Commission into the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory.

Throughout 2019 community and expert perspectives about preventing and responding to sexual violence in the Northern Territory were gathered, along with relevant evidence to inform the development of the SVPRF.

## CONSULTATION PROCESS

A staged approach was taken to consultations to manage the sensitivities associated with sexual violence in the Northern Territory, and to build on evidence and experience as it emerged.

**Stage 1:** From January to April 2019, over 40 preliminary consultations were held in Darwin and Alice Springs with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory Government, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, government and non-government organisation (NGO) specialist domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) service providers.

In April 2019, a report back meeting was provided to preliminary consultation participants. In September 2019, a final report back meeting, including an opportunity to contribute to development of priority actions was held with Aboriginal people and organisations who participated in preliminary consultations.

These preliminary consultations were conducted to gain initial insights into the:

- Real and or perceived risks with Territory Families' proposed consultation process with Aboriginal communities and organisations about sexual violence in the Northern Territory.
- Emerging issues and innovations from the field associated with sexual violence in the Northern Territory.
- Possible actions for consideration under the SVPRF.
- Proposed SVPRF action areas:
  - Preventing sexual violence;
  - Responding to children and young people who have experienced sexual violence, including children and young people with problem and harmful sexual behaviours;
  - Responding to adults who have experienced sexual violence;
  - Responding to adults who have committed sexual violence; and,
  - Strengthening systems that respond to sexual violence.

A decision was taken during preliminary consultations not to conduct consultations in remote Aboriginal communities for the following reasons:

- wariness of raising issues of sexual violence in communities where there is no or limited therapeutic services to respond to disclosures of sexual violence after the consulting team leave the community;

- confirmation through preliminary consultations that discussions in remote Aboriginal communities about sexual violence need to be conducted over the long term and at the pace set by communities;
- the expectation that, over the life of the SVPRF, mechanisms for safe conversations about sexual violence in remote Aboriginal communities will be developed; and,
- that for some remote Aboriginal communities, their most recent experience of government consultations on sexual violence may have been during the development of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report. The publishing of that report led to the Commonwealth Government Northern Territory Emergency Response, the effects of which are ongoing or perceived to be ongoing and associated with actions of government departments.

**Stage 2:** From April to July 2019, consultations were broadened to the regions and included generalist NGOs, specialist DFSV networks and Local Reference Groups, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and government agencies.

In May and June 2019 the DFSV Cross Agency Working Group (CAWG) members were provided with an opportunity to comment on the discussion paper.

**Stage 3:** A discussion paper was developed and released for public comment from 3 July to 16 August 2019. The opportunity to comment on the discussion paper was promoted through social media, the Northern Territory Government Have Your Say website, agency networks, email invitation and face to face consultations. A total of 34 submissions were received, comprising:

- 16 written submissions from NGOs, Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations and independent statutory entities;
- 4 written responses from individuals; and,
- 14 contributors through the Have Your Say website

**Stage 4:** Workshops with government agencies with sexual violence service delivery responsibilities (including policy, practice and data) were held in September 2019.

These workshops were to develop priority actions on sexual violence prevention and system responses for children and young people who have experienced sexual violence, including children and young people with problem or harmful sexual behaviours, adults who have experienced sexual violence, and adults who commit sexual violence.

## **THEMES ARISING FROM THE CONSULTATION**

Numerous and in-depth descriptions were received outlining possible elements of sexual violence prevention frameworks, program development and delivery models for Aboriginal communities and the community at large, across all settings and the life course for all Territorians.

There was wide support from government, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and NGOs for a public health approach adapted for sexual violence prevention.

A majority of submissions focussed on responses to children and young people experiencing sexual violence, and children and young people with problem and harmful sexual behaviours. It was suggested that the SVPRF represents a chance to reset how sexual violence, particularly child sexual abuse, is approached in the Northern Territory.

The consultations were clear that there is a lack of appropriate services available in the Northern Territory to work with children and young people who have experienced sexual violence. It was clear that therapeutic interventions to respond to children and young people that have experienced sexual violence should be trauma informed, culturally responsive and underpinned by attachment theory.

Children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours is a significant issue and appeared frequently in consultations and submissions. Children and young people viewing pornography was reported as a concern and anecdotally linked to the rise in problem and harmful sexual behaviour. An immediate and comprehensive approach that includes outreach to rural and remote locations is required to address this issue.

Consultation discussions regarding adults who have experienced sexual violence centred on securing service provision across the life course. This acknowledges that the trauma from sexual violence manifests in different ways at different times across a person's life. One submission was received that focused on banning pornography and prostitution based on the perspective that these actions exploit women.

It was recommended that therapeutic interventions to respond to people who have experienced sexual violence are trauma informed and culturally responsive. Free, accessible, flexible sources of information and support is required including in the form of local face to face counselling, healing groups, art therapy, web sites, online counselling (in a language of choice), legal and court support.

The consultations reinforced there is a significant gap in the provision of services that address the offending behaviour of adults who use sexual violence on others. The reach and effectiveness of existing services should be examined against innovations from Australia and internationally.

All regions across the Northern Territory expressed the need for information about how to support and provide services to people who commit sexual violence. Social and emotional wellbeing approaches are important given that young males exposed to violence and sexual abuse are at higher risk of developing poor mental health and are at higher risk of suicide and self-harm, incarceration, homelessness, misusing alcohol and other drugs and using violence on others.

It is clear that a baseline of the nature, extent and drivers of sexual violence in the Northern Territory needs to be established, and the SVPRF will drive this data collection and analysis. An understanding of the nature and extent of sexual violence in the Northern Territory also requires an analysis of relevant and related legislation, guidelines and standards, policy responses, program and service development.

It was reported that workforce capacity building, practice skills and clinical supervision for specialist DFSV workers to respond to child sexual assault and sexual violence is required.

#### **Key themes arising from the consultations:**

- Sexual violence is a complex and sensitive issue, but there is willingness in the community to talk about it.
- Given the disproportionate statistical representation of Aboriginal people in the number of people who experience sexual violence, the Framework must consider:
  - addressing the ongoing impacts of colonisation including experiences of racial discrimination, impacts of shame and historical, intergenerational and lateral trauma;
  - developing Northern Territory specific culturally responsive and trauma informed approaches to prevention;
  - centralising Aboriginal people and communities in SVPRF development and implementation;
  - underpinning the SVPRF with the principles of self-determination and co-design with communities, requiring a commitment to funding and supporting Aboriginal community controlled services; and

- accountability to Aboriginal people, organisations and communities by including measures and actions that promote safe Aboriginal leadership and community led decision making, especially that which involves Aboriginal women.
- The SVPRF should consider sexual violence as a gendered crime. For Aboriginal women, sexual violence is both a racialised and gendered crime, which is interconnected with colonial violence, intergenerational trauma and racial discrimination.
- Specialist, child centred responses to children and young people with problem and harmful sexual behaviours are urgently required.
- Specialist DFSV and universal services require support to increase capacity to screen for, and respond to, women and children accessing their services who have experienced recent and/ or historical sexual violence.
- Greater investment and coordination of sexual violence prevention and response activities is required across Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and the NGO sector.
- The SVPRF should take a public health approach that addresses the complex intersection of sexual violence prevention and response factors; engages the broadest range of stakeholders; clearly articulates definitions related to sexual violence and the unique geographic and demographic elements of the Northern Territory.
- The SVPRF should include a clear governance structure with indicators and measures for change, levels at which responsibility and action lies and the type of action to be implemented.
- Sexual violence in the workplace (including sexual harassment) must be systematically addressed especially in large workplaces such as the Northern Territory Public Service.
- The Gender Equality Framework is welcomed and will complement prevention actions under the SVPRF.

## GROUPS CONSULTED AND DISCUSSION PAPER SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Specialist sexual violence services	Aboriginal people, organisations, groups	Non-Government Organisations, peak bodies and networks	Government agencies	Discussion paper submissions received
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sexual Assault Referral Centre (Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin)</li> <li>NT Police Child Abuse Taskforce and Domestic and Family Violence and Sex Crimes Unit (Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin, Nhulunbuy)</li> <li>Ruby Gaea Darwin Centre Against Sexual Violence</li> <li>Sex Worker Outreach Project and Sex Worker Reference Group</li> <li>NT Working Women's Centre</li> <li>Private psychology practitioners in Alice Springs and Darwin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal staff within government (Territory Families, Departments of Attorney General and Justice, Education)</li> <li>North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency</li> <li>Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter</li> <li>Darwin Indigenous Men's Service</li> <li>Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit</li> <li>Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory</li> <li>Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council</li> <li>Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group</li> <li>Central Australian Aboriginal Congress</li> <li>Danila Dilba Health Service</li> <li>Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation</li> <li>Kalano Community Association</li> <li>Wurli-Wurlinjang Aboriginal Health Service</li> <li>Katherine West Health Board</li> <li>Aboriginal Resource and Development Services</li> <li>Balunu Foundation</li> <li>Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence networks and Local reference Groups in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine</li> <li>NT Council of Social Service (Darwin and Alice Springs)</li> <li>Catholic Care / NO MORE</li> <li>Women's Safety Services of Central Australia</li> <li>Dawn House Women's Shelter</li> <li>Katherine Women's Crisis Centre</li> <li>Tennant Creek Women's Refuge</li> <li>Crisis Accommodation Gove</li> <li>Katherine Women's Information and Legal Service</li> <li>Top End Women's Legal Service</li> <li>Anglicare (Nhulunbuy)</li> <li>Jesuit Social Services</li> <li>Music NT</li> <li>Happy Yess</li> <li>Primary Health Network (Nhulunbuy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DFSV Cross Agency Working Group</li> <li>Department of Chief Minister (Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy)</li> <li>Territory Families (Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek, Katherine)</li> <li>Department of Health (Nhulunbuy, Darwin)</li> <li>Department of Education (Darwin)</li> <li>Department of Attorney General and Justice (Darwin)</li> <li>Aboriginal Interpreter Service (Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy)</li> <li>Department of Corrections (Darwin)</li> <li>Commonwealth Government (Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy)</li> <li>Barkly Shire Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australia's Right to Know coalition of media companies</li> <li>Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT</li> <li>Central Australian Aboriginal Congress</li> <li>Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit</li> <li>Child Wise</li> <li>Dawn House Women's Shelter</li> <li>Danila Dilba Health</li> <li>Darwin Indigenous Men's Service</li> <li>End Rape On Campus Australia &amp; Marque Lawyers</li> <li>Sex Worker Outreach Project</li> <li>Sex Worker Reference Group</li> <li>NAAJA</li> <li>NTCOSS</li> <li>NT Legal Aid Commission</li> <li>NT Working Women's Centre</li> <li>NT Anti-Discrimination Commission</li> <li>NT Department of Health</li> <li>Jesuit Social Services</li> <li>Melaleuca Refugee Centre</li> <li>18 Individual responses</li> </ul>