# Background

The Northern Territory (NT) Government is committed to preventing and improving responses to domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) for all Territorians, and is guided by [Safe, Respected and Free from Violence 2018-2028](https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/464775/Domestic,-Family-and-Sexual-Violence-Reduction-Framework.pdf).

In 2022 a Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence was created, and the 12-month DFSV Inter-Agency Co-ordination and Reform Office (DFSV-ICRO) was established to lay out a whole-of-government reform agenda for DFSV. This marks a significant strengthening of the NT’s whole-of-government focus and response to DFSV and recognises that all relevant agencies, services, and community members need to work together to prevent and respond to DFSV.

While DFSV affects people across all population groups, the evidence shows that Aboriginal women and children experience disproportionate rates of violence, and that violence is often more severe and more complex in its impacts, as a result of the intersection between the multiple drivers of gendered factors, the ongoing impacts of colonisation, and systemic racism.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Aboriginal women living in the NT are over 8 times more likely to be assaulted than either non-Indigenous women or non-Indigenous men and over 3 times more likely to be assaulted than Aboriginal men. 65 Aboriginal women have been killed by a current or former intimate partner in the NT over the last two decades.[[2]](#footnote-2) Domestic and family violence is also a strong indicator for children entering the child protection and criminal justice systems.

Aboriginal people and communities across the Northern Territory have consistently identified the problem and enormous impact of DFSV on their lives and wellbeing, especially on Aboriginal women and children. DFSV is not part of Aboriginal culture, and Aboriginal communities have also identified the important roles that Aboriginal men play in modelling positive and respectful relationships with women and children, each other and the broader community. It is important to recognise that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is perpetrated by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men.

While we all have a responsibility to work together to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, it is recognised that the solutions must be led by Aboriginal people and communities, in line with the principles of self-determination, community control and community leadership. The NT Government is committed to self-determination[[3]](#footnote-3) including a commitment to transfer decision making, control and resources, where appropriate, to Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

# Purpose

The NT Aboriginal Advisory Board on DFSV (the Board) provides advice and information to the Minister for the Prevention of DFSV in relation to improving the prevention of and response to DFSV as it impacts upon Aboriginal people, communities and services. This includes information and advice on governance mechanisms, policies and programs, and service delivery.

The Board is a non-statutory Board comprising members of the public approved by the Minister.

The Board will:

* work collaboratively and in alignment with the NT Government’s DFSV policy framework and principles;
* provide evidence based feedback and strategic advice to the Minister on DFSV matters relevant to Aboriginal Territorians, including policies, funding priorities, governance structures, plans, practices or issues referred to the Board for comment;
* provide evidence based feedback and strategic advice on the development and implementation of DFSV reform work being undertaken by the DFSV Interagency Coordination and Reform Office, the DFSV Cross Agency Working Group and other governance bodies;
* promote a shared understanding of DFSV across the NT, in line with the principles of the DFSV Framework;
* develop and promote a shared understanding of promising practices in relation to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in regard to DFSV across the NT;
* inform the NT’s implementation of national initiatives on DFSV in relation to Aboriginal Territorians;
* maintain and seek ways to improve effective engagement and information sharing, including providing information from the Board to members’ communities, services, and networks, and advice from members’ communities, services, and networks to the Board;
* support integrated and collaborative DFSV policy development and implementation;
* enhance understanding of DFSV in Aboriginal Communities and how policy can support community led action; and
* support the NT’s commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, in particular Target 13: *By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero.*

# Composition

## 3.1 Membership

The Board will consist of 9 members, four of whom identify as male and five of whom identify as female.[[4]](#footnote-4) One of the members will be the Chairperson. The Chairperson must be a female.

A minimum of 2 will be currently residing in a remote area in the NT.

Members will be Aboriginal people residing in the NT, who have expertise in DFSV policy, programs and initiatives as they are relevant to Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.

Members will be appointed by the Minister following an expression of interest process.

In selecting Members, the Minister will have regard to the applicant’s:

* skills, knowledge or experience to actively participate in Board deliberations
* ability to commit the time required
* understanding of the objectives, roles and obligations of the board
* awareness of any real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest
* experience in the DFSV sector, noting that in addition to professional experience, people may bring their own lived experience to the role
* understanding of accountability relationships
* understanding of current DFSV practice frameworks and evidence
* ability to think and act strategically
* reputation, integrity and credibility
* ability to understand and raise issues relevant to the diverse geographical regions of the NT.

The Minister will also appoint a Chairperson who, along with the points above, will also hold a thorough understanding of good governance in practice.

The Board will include 2 ex officio members from the NT Government.

## Role of Chair

The Chair will:

* lead the activities of the Board, including leading discussion during the meeting and ensuring the meeting runs to schedule
* be responsible for ensuring actioning of work between meetings and reporting back at the next meeting
* drive delivery of agreed actions arising from meetings
* facilitate the flow of information and participation of all members
* determine the necessary approach for members with real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest
* liaise with, and report to the Minister where relevant
* review board performance

## 3.4 Term of membership

Members are appointed for three years, with the option of re-appointment. This flexibility will accommodate both a staggered turnover of membership and retention of expertise.

The Minister may terminate the appointment of a member on the grounds of misconduct or inability to competently perform the duties of office.

The Minister must terminate the appointment of a member if the member is absent, except on leave of absence granted by the Chairperson, from 3 consecutive meetings. The termination of an appointment must be in writing and a copy must be given to the member.

## 3.5 Remuneration

While there are no prescribed entitlements for members of non-statutory boards to receive remuneration or other entitlements, members of the Board will be remunerated at a rate equivalent to a Class C2 (Expert high impact statutory board).

Members will receive sitting fees and travelling expenses in line with the NTG Boards Handbook processes and travel policies.

## 3.6 Conflicts of interest

Members must declare all potential conflicts of interest. The Chairperson will advise if the Member is to refrain from participating in any discussions. Any conflict of interest will be recorded in the Minutes.

## Proxies and guests

Members must nominate a proxy to attend meetings on their behalf where required and ensure the proxy is fully informed and capable of participating in the meeting on behalf of the member.

The Board may agree to invite guests including subject matter experts to attend meetings to provide advice regarding specific agenda items or on relevant issues. Proposed invitees should be agreed at the preceding meeting and included in the relevant meeting agenda. Where an invitee is proposed on short notice, all members should be consulted out of session prior to issuing an invitation, with the Chairperson making a final decision.

# Operating procedures

## 4.1 Meetings

Meetings will be held quarterly. Special meetings will be negotiated and determined by the Board.

Urgent matters may be considered by the Board out of session. Any urgent matters should be referred to the Chairperson, who may direct the Secretariat to distribute materials to the group for comment or decision.

The Board may establish time-limited specialist working groups or sub-committees to consider particular issues– this may include external members.

## 4.2 Quorum

A quorum is half the membership of the Board (4 people), and must include the Chair. A quorum is required to hold all meetings.

## 4.3 Reporting

Members will report directly to the Minister for the Prevention of DFSV following each meeting.

## 4.4 Secretariat

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Interagency Coordination and Reform Office, within the Reform Management Office, will provide secretariat services for all meetings. This includes:

* circulating agendas and documentation, scheduling meetings, sending invites, and preparing rooms
* arranging travel as required, and ensuring remuneration of board sitting fees are processed in a timely manner
* maintaining minutes and action items from the meetings
* circulating and publishing documents, including agendas and minutes of meetings
* providing briefings and induction materials to new members
* preparing a public Communique, summarising the meeting outcomes, after each meeting

## 4.5 Stakeholder communications

The Board will agree a public meeting communique at the conclusion of each meeting. A communique will assist the members to deliver a consistent message to the public and their constituents on the discussions and decisions of the Board.

## 4.6 Review of these Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed every 12 months by the Board, or earlier if agreed by the Board. The Board can amend these Terms of Reference as it deems appropriate.

1. Our Watch (2018) Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, Our Watch, Melbourne [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Records maintained by the Coroner’s Office from August 2000 through to August 2019 [PARTIES: ––––– (nt.gov.au)](https://justice.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1113600/D01052019-Roberta-Curry.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Everyone Together, Aboriginal Affairs Strategy NT 2019-2029 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This does not preclude a member who identifies as non-binary or gender diverse being appointed. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)