

Statement September 2025

We, the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council (VSAC), are a collective of diverse people from across Victoria with lived experience of family and sexual violence. We know the profound cost of violence to people and communities. We don't represent all voices and experiences, but we advocate to help prevent others from experiencing harm.

Victoria has come a long way. Over the past decade, we have seen bold, nation-leading reforms that have reshaped how we address family and sexual violence. Because of this progress, we are building from a place of strength, knowledge and experience.

With foundational reforms now in place, the work becomes harder, more complex and less visible.

For too many Victorians, safety is still out of reach. The crisis is not over – it has evolved. Our responses must evolve with it to create a future where every Victorian can live safely, with dignity and respect.

Lived experience of family violence is even more vital at this point – to lead the way and keep the system honest and focused on what truly matters and what makes a difference.

As a community, we need continued and coordinated efforts to address the rising rates of violence. In particular, recognising the unique and racialised violence experienced by Aboriginal women and children. The effects of colonisation continue, through:

- over-representation in our justice system
- higher rates as victim survivors of family and sexual violence
- misidentification of Aboriginal women as predominant aggressors
- high rates of harm by non-Aboriginal perpetrators.

The growing demand on the family and sexual violence service systems must be met with culturally safe responses.

The task of preventing and responding to family and sexual violence must sit across all areas of government. Whether in health, housing, education, justice, mental health, or sport – every portfolio affects the lives of people impacted by violence.

We have world class tools like the MARAM Framework – but implementation cannot be a 'set and forget' task. Ongoing attention, resourcing, monitoring, and accountability are essential to ensure it delivers on its promise.

We need more than a moral commitment to MARAM. We need action to align with MARAM so that everyone gets a safe response – especially children and young people. We call on all departments to invest in this. Systems responses are only as effective as the processes within departments allow.

Serious system gaps remain. People choosing to use violence use systems to perpetuate abuse – through policing and legal processes, financial institutions, child support systems, and schools. This is systems abuse. It is preventable. And it has to stop.



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We urge the government to continue to embed lived experience leadership at the centre – not on the margins. Services and reforms must be co-designed, co-produced, and co-led by victim survivors. They must also be evaluated by people with lived experience. This is essential for us to know if responses are effective and if loop holes that allow perpetrators to continue to harm victim survivors have been properly closed.

Engaging people with lived experience must not be left to one portfolio. It must be embedded across the whole of the Victorian government.

Government, the sector and the broader community must all ensure that the family and sexual violence system is inclusive, fair and equitable.

Family and sexual violence disproportionately affects people who face discrimination and marginalisation on the basis of their sex, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, age, ability and sexuality.

People in rural and regional Victoria still face unequal access to support and services.

Children and young people are still being overlooked or spoken for, rather than engaged directly. They must be recognised in their own right – as victim survivors. Whether they're living with violence now, escaping it alone, or using harm because of the trauma they've experienced.

Each of these experiences must be met with carefully tailored support, so that children and young people know that they are not the problem.

As a community, we must name what goes unnamed. Violence does not happen without a choice – often many choices. People who use violence are not routinely identified or held accountable. Governments, institutions, service providers and the community together need to do this. This is not the victim survivor's responsibility or burden to carry.

Survival is the first step. Recovery and long-term healing are the next steps. It is only when victim survivors have access to the right supports that are culturally safe, at the right time and with real choice and control that people can rebuild their lives.

Inequality and coercive control drive family violence. Prevention is a priority so that every Victorian can recognise the patterns of coercive control, name it and support those experiencing violence. Prevention efforts must reach people at greatest risk not just those already known to services.

Let us be clear. Preventing family violence is a task for **all** Victorians. Boys and men need to be part of challenging harmful norms, taking responsibility, and being active allies with other survivors. Ending family violence is everyone's work.

In Victoria, we know we can act quickly, reach widely and adapt creatively. We must unite as a community to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence. This work is urgent.

VSAC works on behalf of all Victorians impacted by family and sexual violence. We will continue to advocate for victim survivors and the workers in services that support us during and after leaving violence.

We will also continue to stand with victims who did not survive and their families, victim survivors who continue to live unsafely, victim survivors who are trying to rebuild their lives despite the systems that cause harm.

We will stand with the community to ensure that the Victorian Government's Rolling Action Plan delivers real and lasting outcomes.

We are not just surviving – we are rebuilding, recovering and working towards a future where healing is possible because violence is not inevitable. Let's keep going.

Together we can create change.



VSAAC Victim Survivors' Advisory Council

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In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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