

# Chapter 2

## Gender inequality and domestic violence

2.1 This committee has previously inquired into domestic violence in Australia. In that report the committee noted that there is a complex range of social and personal factors that can contribute to the incidence and severity of domestic violence. As part of that report, the committee discussed the gendered nature of domestic violence.<sup>1</sup>

2.2 The terms of reference for this present inquiry focus on specific aspects of that discussion. This committee has been asked in particular to inquire into and report on:

- (a) the role of gender inequality in all spheres of life in contributing to the prevalence of domestic violence;

2.3 This chapter summarises the evidence received that was responsive to this first part of the terms of reference.

2.4 Our Watch explained the term gender inequality:

Gender inequality is a social condition characterised by unequal value afforded to men and women and an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. It often results from, or has historical roots in, laws or policies formally constraining the rights and opportunities of women, and is maintained and perpetuated today through structures that continue to organise and reinforce an unequal distribution of economic, social and political power and resources between women and men.

Gender inequality is [also] reinforced and maintained through more informal mechanisms, many of which are strongly characterized by their reliance on gender stereotypes. These include, for example, social norms such as the belief that women are best suited to care for children, practices such as differences in childrearing practices for boys and girls, and structures such as pay differences between men and women.<sup>2</sup>

2.5 The South Australian Premier's Council for Women expanded further on the consequences of gender inequality in society:

Social norms and gendered expectations shape the roles of men and women, defining what is considered appropriate behaviours for each sex. In many societies, women are viewed as subordinate to men and have a lower social status, allowing men control over, and greater decision-making power than, women. These differences in gender roles create inequalities and unless

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1 Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee, *Domestic Violence in Australia*, August 2015, pp 2-3.

2 *Submission 66*, p. 10. Our Watch is an independent, not-for-profit organisation established by the Victorian and Australian Governments to focus on the prevention of violence against women and their children. Since its establishment the South Australian, Northern Territory, Tasmanian and Queensland Governments have also become members.

challenged, over time they become entrenched and we, as a society, begin to accept that unequal power and status is fair and just the way things are. These beliefs become values that build attitudes; for example, that girls and women are less important, that they think less and feel more than men, that men are leaders, women caregivers. Paying women less for their work or assigning most or all of child care to them, making it harder for them to get education and job training, or keeping them out of 'good-paying' jobs (or any jobs at all) are tactics, sometimes deliberate and sometimes unconscious, to keep the existing power structures as they are.<sup>3</sup>

2.6 Submissions outlined the connection between gender inequality and domestic violence:

Family violence is gendered in nature. While both men and women can be victims and perpetrators of family violence, the overwhelming majority of family violence is perpetrated by men against women. Further, family violence experienced by women is usually more frequent and severe.<sup>4</sup>

2.7 Likewise, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) observed:

Gendered violence is rooted in the structural inequalities between men and women. It is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality.<sup>5</sup>

2.8 The AHRC referred to, and quoted from, the United Nations' *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* (1993) (Declaration), which recognises that:

[V]iolence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.<sup>6</sup>

2.9 VicHealth, the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and Our Watch all referred to the findings on gender inequality in

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3 *Submission 6*, p. 2.

4 Victorian Council of Social Service, *Submission 27*, p. 2. See also: Women's Health Victoria, *Submission 38*, pp 9-10.

5 *Submission 41*, p. 4.

6 *Submission 41*, pp 4-5, quoting from the United Nations' *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* (1993).

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*Change the Story*, which is a shared primary prevention framework.<sup>7</sup> Part of the work for *Change the Story* involved identifying the drivers of violence, including gender inequality:

There is now consensus in the international research that examining the way in which gender relations are structured is key to understanding violence against women. Studies by the United Nations, European Commission, World Bank and World Health Organization all locate the underlying cause or necessary conditions for violence against women in the social context of gender inequality.<sup>8</sup>

2.10 The Tasmanian Government's submission also commented on the connection between gender inequality and domestic violence:

While there is no single cause of violence against women and the relationship between gender and violence is complex, it is now widely recognised that gender inequality is a key driver of family violence, often in intersection with other social inequalities such as age, race[,] ability and social class.<sup>9</sup>

2.11 VicHealth reproduced a graph by the United Nations Development Fund for Women demonstrating the relationship between the prevalence of violence against women and gender equality (see Figure 1). The data, based on global indices of gender equality shows that as equality decreases, prevalence of violence against women increases.<sup>10</sup>

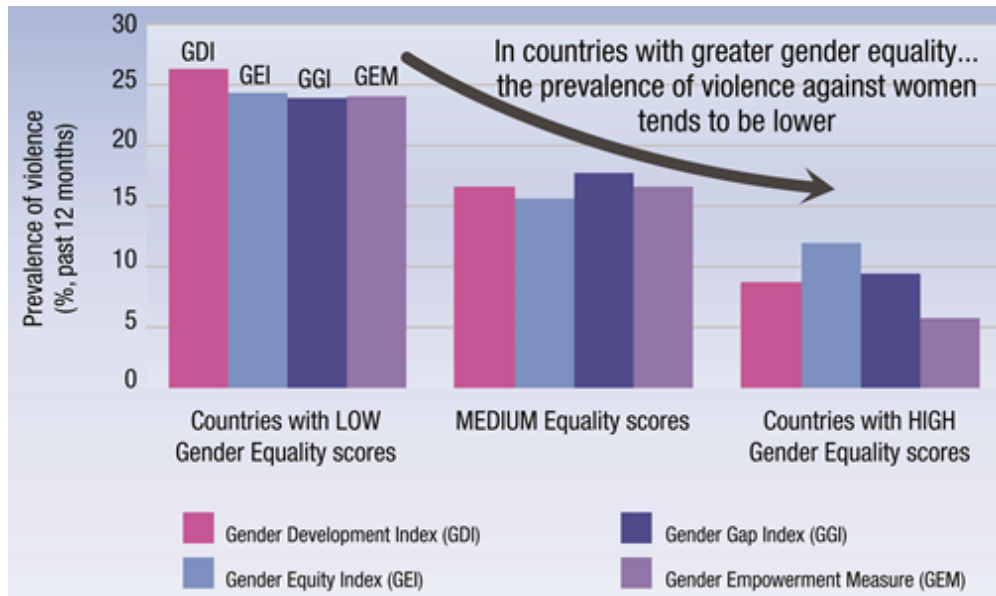
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7 See Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) *Submission 16*, pp 3 and 8-13; ANROWS, *Submission 24*, pp 2-4; Our Watch, *Submission 66*, pp 9- 12. See also Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* (2015) (*Change the story*), pp 22-31. Our Watch explains 'Change the story brings together international research, and nationwide experience, on what drives violence against women and their children and what works to prevent it. It establishes a shared understanding of the evidence and principles of effective prevention, and presents a way forward for a coordinated national approach', see <http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do/National-Primary-Prevention-Framework>. *Change the Story* is discussed further later in this chapter.

8 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 22.

9 *Submission 1*, p. 1.

10 *Submission 16*, pp 10-11.



**Figure 1: Physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence and measures of gender equality<sup>11</sup>**

2.12 VicHealth explained a socio-ecological model of violence against women showing the complex interplay between factors at various levels:

For example, at the societal and community levels, the risks of VAW have been found to be higher when resources such as education and income are distributed unequally between men and women, when women's economic, social and political rights are poorly protected and/or when there are more rigid distinctions between the roles of men and women and between masculine and feminine identities...

These factors which exist at the various levels of the socio-ecological approach associated with higher levels of violence against women include the ideas, values or beliefs that are common or dominant in a society or community – called social or cultural norms. Norms are reflected in our institutional or community practices or behaviours, and are supported by social structures, both formal (such as legislation) and informal (such as hierarchies within a family or community)...<sup>12</sup>

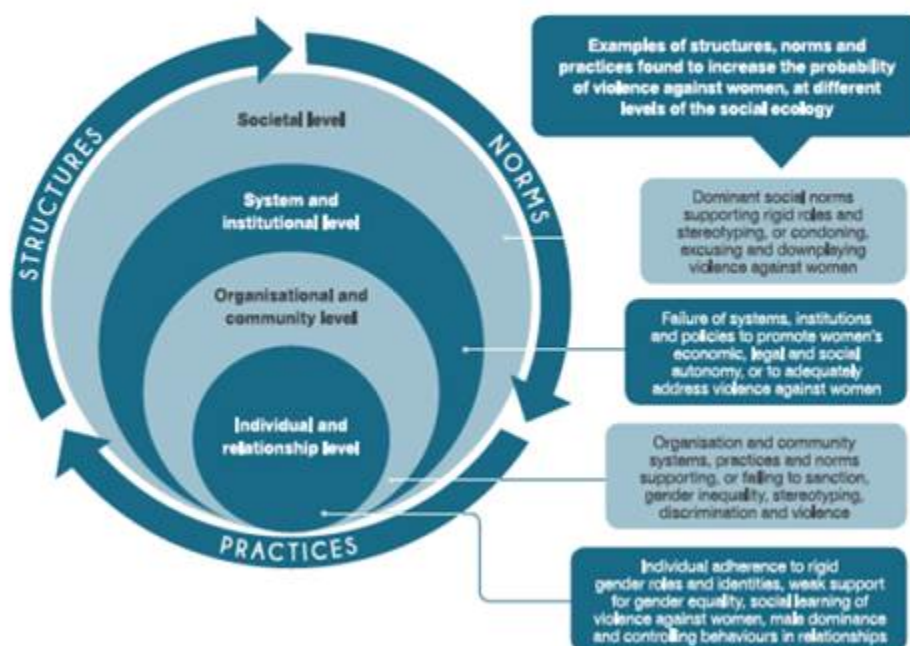
2.13 This is shown in Figure 2 below.<sup>13</sup>

11 VicHealth, *Submission 16*, p. 11, from United Nations Development Fund for Women, *Investing in Gender Equality: Ending Violence against Women and Girls*, 2010, p. 3.

12 VicHealth, *Submission 16*, p. 11.

13 VicHealth, *Submission 16*, p. 12.

Figure 2: Socio-ecological model of violence against women (Our Watch et al., 2015a)



2.14 Despite the research on the interaction between gender inequality and domestic violence, according to the South Australian Premier's Council for Women:

Across most sectors there is a poor understanding that gender inequality in all spheres of life contributes to the prevalence of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Gendered drivers of violence***

2.15 *Change the story* notes:

Research has found that factors associated with gender inequality are the most consistent predictors of violence against women, and explain its gendered patterns.<sup>15</sup>

2.16 *Change the story* explains further the effect of these so-called 'gendered drivers':

The gendered drivers arise from gender discriminatory institutional, social and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, community, family and relationship practices that together create environments in which women and men are not considered equal, and violence against women is tolerated and even condoned.<sup>16</sup>

14 *Submission 6*, p. 2.

15 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 23.

16 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 23.

2.17 *Change the story* identifies the following drivers as those consistently associated with higher levels of violence against women:

- condoning of violence against women;
- men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence;
- rigid gender roles and identities; and
- male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.<sup>17</sup>

2.18 *Change the story* also refers to another group of factors, the 'reinforcing factors':

[Reinforcing factors] while not sufficient in themselves to predict violence against women, [can] interact with the gendered drivers to increase the probability, frequency or severity of such violence.<sup>18</sup>

2.19 Those reinforcing factors are:

- condoning of violence in general;
- experience of, and exposure to, violence;
- weakening of pro-social behaviour, especially harmful use of alcohol;
- socio-economic inequality and discrimination; and
- backlash factors (when male dominance, power or status is challenged).<sup>19</sup>

2.20 The Change the Story framework provides more detail on the role of rigid gender roles and identities:

Levels of violence against women are significantly and consistently higher in societies, communities and relationships where there are more rigid distinctions between the roles of men and women – for example, where men are assumed to be the primary breadwinner and women to be primarily responsible for childrearing – and between masculine and feminine identities, or what an 'ideal' man or woman is.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Gender inequality in Australia***

2.21 Women's Health West noted that in 2015, Australia ranked 36 out of 145 countries on a global index measuring gender equality.<sup>21</sup> Submissions compared this

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17 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 23.

18 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 26.

19 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 26.

20 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 25.

21 *Submission 10*, pp 6-7, referring to the World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2015*. See also Victorian Council of Social Service, *Submission 27*, p. 7; Women's Health Victoria, *Submission 38*, p. 15.

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to previous years when Australia ranked 15<sup>th</sup> out of 115 countries in 2006; 24<sup>th</sup> out of 136 countries in 2013; and 24<sup>th</sup> out of 142 countries in 2014.<sup>22</sup>

2.22 The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) explained that gender inequality adversely affects women across all aspects of their lives:

[I]ncluding their educational and training pathways, employment opportunities, work-life balance, opportunities to take positions of formal leadership, health and safety, economic security, and social inclusion. Gender inequality maintains the power and privilege held by men, and reinforces negative messages about the value and status of women, increasing the likelihood of experiencing violence.<sup>23</sup>

2.23 VCOSS continued:

In financial terms, women continue to do the bulk of unpaid work across society, including caring for children, older parents or relatives with disability or long-term health conditions, and housework. As a result women of all ages have substantially lower labour force participation rates and when they do engage in work it is more likely to be in part-time, lower paid, insecure work. Even when working full-time, women earn lower average wages than men. A gender pay gap of 18 per cent exists between full-time male and female employees, equivalent to men earning an additional \$284.20 per week.

Combined these factors place women at risk of financial and housing insecurity, both while working and in retirement. Women are more likely to live in low economic resource households, be unable to raise \$2,000 in an emergency, have little or no superannuation coverage or be financially insecure in retirement.<sup>24</sup>

2.24 The Tasmanian Government referred to the lack of women in senior roles:

Women are underrepresented in leadership roles in both the private and public sectors, in boardrooms and in parliaments, despite the fact that women outperform men in higher education.<sup>25</sup>

2.25 The AHRC echoed this point, providing the following context:

The percentage of women on ASX 200 boards was 21.9 percent, as of 31 January 2016. As of 2012, women held 9.7 percent of executive key management personnel positions in the ASX 200; there were seven female CEOs in the ASX 200; and in the ASX 200, women's representation in line

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22 See Women's Health West, *Submission 10*, pp 6-7; Victorian Council of Social Service, *Submission 27*, p. 7; Women's Health Victoria, *Submission 38*, p. 15; Fighting for Justice Foundation, *Submission 47*, p. 3; Australian Psychological Society, *Submission 54*, p. 5.

23 *Submission 27*, p. 7.

24 *Submission 27*, p. 8.

25 *Submission 1*, p. 2.

management positions was 6.0 percent and in support positions, 22.0 percent.<sup>26</sup>

2.26 The Women's Health West added:

In the current Federal parliament, only six of the 21 cabinet ministers are women. In total, there are more than twice as many male federal parliamentarians, compared to women (71 per cent male compared to 29 per cent female). The disparity is even wider in the number of men compared to women holding ministerial positions (83 per cent male compared to 17 per cent female). In 2015, women held only 39 per cent of the 2570 board positions on Australian Government boards and bodies, and 30 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions on Australian Government boards.<sup>27</sup>

*Vulnerable groups*

2.27 Gender inequality affects all women, but it does not affect all women equally:

The intersection of multiple inequalities creates significantly different lived experiences for women. Serious efforts to address domestic violence must place gender inequality against a wider context of power and multiple forms of inequality, including racial inequalities.<sup>28</sup>

2.28 The National Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) informed the committee that any analysis of gendered stereotypes in family violence must also pay attention to how gendered stereotypes intersect with racial stereotypes:

Thus when acknowledging oppression associated with gender, it is vital to also acknowledge that for many women this also intersects with oppression caused by both historical and contemporary racism, often in complicated and complex ways. Without such recognition, it is easy to forget that gender stereotypes are not monolithic and that women from non-dominant ethnic communities face additional challenges in terms of stereotypes. Assuming that 'women' have a coherent group identity prior to their entry into social relations, ignores how the ideologies of masculinity, femininity and sexuality are inherently racialised.<sup>29</sup>

2.29 NATSILS highlighted that gender inequality is a contributing factor to family violence rates in ATSI communities:

...gender inequality can be a factor which both contributes to and compounds the victimisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are significantly disadvantaged in terms of entry into and promotion within the labour market, which can leave these women marginalised, discriminated

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26 *Submission 41*, p. 5.

27 *Submission 10*, p. 7. Note: as at 15 September 2016, six of the 23 cabinet ministers are women. See <https://www.pm.gov.au/your-government/cabinet> (accessed 15 September 2016).

28 National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, *Submission 21*, p. 9.

29 *Submission 52*, pp 8-9.



against and financially dependent on partners. As has often been acknowledged, economic dependency can make it extremely difficult for women to leave an abusive partner.<sup>30</sup>

2.30 Women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds face additional barriers in the pursuit of gender equality and a reduction in domestic violence. The unique challenges facing CALD women were outlined by the Women's Legal Services Australia, including:

- *Migration status.* Women who are on temporary visas are particularly vulnerable during domestic violence situations. They are often isolated, without family support and entirely reliant on their abusive partner. They may be fearful of leaving a violent relationship because of the consequences for their migration status. Accessing legal advice, finding employment and navigating the complexities of an unfamiliar court system are regular challenges.
- *Knowledge of family law, family violence law and child protection.* Women often come from countries where their legal systems are vastly different. They may have differing understandings on custody of children, divorce settlements, dowry payments and legal protections against domestic violence. Without timely access to legal information and advice that is in a form that is understood by women, women are unable to effectively access justice.
- *Access to interpreters.* Women are often unable to access appropriate interpreters once in the legal system. In some instances the same interpreter must interpret for both parties. Women who require interpreters of specific dialects or come from a small community where the interpreter is known face even greater barriers.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Attitudes to gender inequality and domestic violence***

2.31 In its submission, VicHealth referred to the findings of the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS):

This research found that the strongest influence on attitudes towards violence against women among young people is their understanding of the nature of violence and their attitudes towards gender equality.<sup>32</sup>

2.32 The NCAS investigates four areas:

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30 *Submission 52*, p. 4.

31 *Submission 58*, p. 26.

32 *Submission 16*, p. 15. The 2013 National Community Attitudes towards violence against Women Survey (2013 NCAS) is one of the studies designed to monitor the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. The 2013 NCAS was carried out by VicHealth in collaboration with the Social Research Centre and The University of Melbourne. The 2013 NCAS involved more than 17 500 twenty minute phone interviews with a cross-section of Australians aged 16 years or older. The aims and areas of investigation of the 2013 NCAS were discussed in the committee's previous report, see Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee, *Domestic Violence in Australia*, August 2015, pp 45-46.

- community knowledge of violence against women;
- attitudes towards violence against women;
- attitudes towards gender roles and relationships; and
- responses to witnessing violence and knowledge of resources.

2.33 The NCAS' findings in relation to attitudes towards gender roles and relationships are particularly relevant to the terms of reference for this inquiry. These findings are summarised below. In addition, Table 1 sets out the findings for these areas compared to findings in the 2009 NCAS.

*Attitudes towards gender roles and relationships*

2.34 The 2013 NCAS notes some 'encouraging results' in relation to attitudes towards gender roles and relationships, namely:

Most Australians support gender equality in the public arena such as workplaces.

Most acknowledge that women still experience inequality in the workplace.<sup>33</sup>

2.35 However, there were also 'areas of concern':

More than a quarter [27 per cent] believe that men make better political leaders.

Up to 28% of Australians endorse attitudes supportive of male dominance of decision-making in relationships, a dynamic identified as a risk factor for partner violence.<sup>34</sup>

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33 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: 2013 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence against Women Survey – Research Summary*, September 2014, p. 6, available at: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/2013-national-community-attitudes-towards-violence-against-women-survey>.

34 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: 2013 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence against Women Survey – Research Summary*, September 2014, p. 6.

|  | 2009 | 2013 |
|--|------|------|
| <b>Attitudes towards gender roles in public and private life (% agree)</b>                             |      |      |
| Men make better political leaders  | 23   | 27** |
| When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women  | 11   | 12   |
| University education is more important for a boy   | 4    | 5    |
| A woman has to have children to be fulfilled   | 11   | 12   |
| It's okay for a woman to have a child as a single parent and not want a stable relationship with a man | 60   | 66** |
| <b>Attitudes towards decision-making in relationships (% agree)</b>                                    |      |      |
| Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household                              | 18   | 19   |
| Women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship   | 27   | 28   |
| <b>Attitudes towards the status of women (% agree)</b>   |      |      |
| Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia                      | 11   | 13** |

**Table 1: 2013 NCAS findings on attitudes towards gender roles and relationships.**<sup>35</sup>

### *Attitudes towards violence against women*

2.36 In terms of the attitudes of violence towards women, the 2013 NCAS noted positive trends:

Only 4% to 6% of Australians (depending on the scenario) believe violence against women can be justified.

Since 2009 there has been a decrease in the proportion of Australians who believe that domestic violence can be excused if the violent person is regretful afterward.

Most do not believe that women should remain in a violent relationship to keep the family together or that domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family.

Since 1995 there has been a decrease in those who believe that women who are sexually harassed should sort it out themselves.

Most support the current policy that the violent person should be made to leave the family home.

35 Source: VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: 2013 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence against Women Survey – Research Summary*, September 2014, p. 6, available at: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/2013-national-community-attitudes-towards-violence-against-women-survey>. (\*\* indicates that a the difference between 2009 and 2013 is statistically significant).

Most agree that violence against women (both physical and non-physical) is serious.

Since 1995 there has been an increase in the percentage recognising non-physical forms of control, intimidation and harassment as serious.

There has been a 7% decline since 2009 in the proportion of young people who hold attitudes that support violence against women at the extreme end of the spectrum. The decline is 10% in young men. Young people have been the target of recent efforts to prevent violence against women.<sup>36</sup>

2.37 However, the NCAS also identified a number of areas of concern in relation to attitudes towards violence against women:

Sizeable proportions believe there are circumstances in which violence can be excused.

There has been an increase in Australians agreeing that rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex, from 3 in 10 in 2009 to more than 4 in 10 in 2013.

Nearly 8 in 10 agree that it's hard to understand why women stay in a violent relationship.

More than half agree that 'women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to'.

Compared with physical violence and forced sex, Australians are less inclined to see non-physical forms of control, intimidation and harassment as 'serious'.

More than half agree that women often fabricate cases of domestic violence in order to improve their prospects in family law cases and nearly 2 in 5 believe that a lot of times women who say they were raped led the man on and later had regrets.

Up to 1 in 5 believes that there are circumstances in which women bear some responsibility for violence. There has been no change since 2009.<sup>37</sup>

2.38 Further information on the findings of the 2013 NCAS on attitudes towards violence against women, including comparative results from surveys in 1995 and 2009, is set out in Appendix 2.

2.39 In summary, the 2013 NCAS made the following observation:

It is important to note that attitudes towards women are fairly consistent across the population, regardless of your education, where you live or what

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36 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: 2013 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence against Women Survey – Research Summary*, September 2014, p. 5.

37 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: 2013 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence against Women Survey – Research Summary*, September 2014, p. 5.

job you do. The survey found virtually no differences between respondents in rural, remote, urban and regional areas or between states and territories.<sup>38</sup>

2.40 However, the report continued:

[T]here are some differences in particular groups and places. Groups who are most likely to endorse violence-supportive attitudes and who have the poorest understanding of what constitutes violence against women are:

- men, especially young men and those experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage
- younger people (16-25)
- people from counties in which the main language spoken is not English, especially those who have recently arrived in Australia.<sup>39</sup>

2.41 In its submission, VicHealth noted the work to be done on improving attitudes to gender inequality and violence against women:

The research indicates that significant efforts are required to address young people's beliefs about gender roles in the family, household and intimate relationships and also to provide skills for the development of more equal and respectful relationships.<sup>40</sup>

## National initiatives

### *National Plan*

2.42 In its previous report on domestic violence in Australia, the committee set out in detail the National Framework to address domestic and family violence, specifically the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan).<sup>41</sup>

2.43 The National Plan was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and released in February 2011. It is being delivered through four three-year action plans. The First Action Plan operated from 2010-2013. The Second Action Plan: Moving Ahead 2013-2016 was released in June 2014.<sup>42</sup>

2.44 The Second Action Plan advanced the issue of gender equality through:

- national schemes to improve women's economic independence, such as paid parental leave and access to child care;

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38 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: 2013 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence against Women Survey – Research Summary*, September 2014, p. 7.

39 VicHealth, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women: 2013 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence against Women Survey – Research Summary*, September 2014, p. 7.

40 *Submission 16*, p. 15.

41 Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee, *Domestic Violence in Australia*, August 2015, pp 19-21.

42 Department of Social Services, *Submission 3*, p. 1.

- national and local efforts to support women's leadership in government, business and the community;
- male champions and leaders speaking out against domestic and family violence and sexual assault, and promoting the broader principles of gender equality.<sup>43</sup>

2.45 In its submission, the Department of Social Services (DSS) informed the committee that work was underway to develop the Third Action Plan, which was due for release in mid-2016:

The Third Action Plan marks the half-way point for the National Plan and will progress activities commenced during the First and Second Action Plans. The Third Action Plan will continue to focus on the drivers of violence, including gender inequality.<sup>44</sup>

#### *Other initiatives*

2.46 More broadly, in terms of the steps being taken to address domestic violence, DSS advised the committee of the following government funding announcement:

On 24 September 2015, the Australian Government announced increased funding to address domestic and family violence through the Women's Safety Package. This \$100 million package contains a set of practical measures to help keep women and children safe. This includes delivering better frontline services, leveraging innovative technologies and providing education resources to help change community attitudes to violence.<sup>45</sup>

2.47 DSS also reported on a national campaign to influence the attitudes of young people towards violence:

In addition, a \$30 million national campaign, jointly funded with the states and territories, to reduce violence against women and their children is expected to be launched in 2016. The campaign will focus on galvanising the people (such as parents, other family members and peers) and communities (such as schools, sporting and community groups) that surround young people to positively influence their attitudes to violence and gender inequality.<sup>46</sup>

2.48 DSS also mentioned the role of the COAG Advisory Panel:

The issue of domestic violence in Australia was elevated to the highest political level and reducing violence against women remains a priority for the Council of Australian Government's (COAG). An Advisory Panel was established to support COAG, with full membership announced on 14 May 2015. The COAG Advisory Panel is providing expert advice on how all

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43 Department of Social Services, *Submission 3*, p. 2.

44 *Submission 3*, p. 3. Note: The Third Action Plan 2016-19 was launched on 28 October 2016, see <http://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/the-national-plan/third-action-plan/> (accessed 3 November 2016).

45 *Submission 3*, p. 3.

46 *Submission 3*, p. 3.

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Australian governments can address violence against women and their children most effectively.<sup>47</sup>

2.49 Our Watch indicated its view that the current challenge for governments at all levels is to:

...scale up and systematise proven and promising, yet small-scale, programs to the population level – enabling them to reach and impact far greater numbers of people, and create the potential for the kind of whole-of-population change that is needed.<sup>48</sup>

***Primary prevention framework***

2.50 As noted above,<sup>49</sup> in addition to the National Plan, Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth have developed *Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*.

2.51 In November 2015, *Change the Story* was released. The framework:

...reinforces the direction outlined in the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022, and seeks to consolidate and strengthen the action already occurring around the country to address the issue.<sup>50</sup>

2.52 The framework includes five actions to address the gendered drivers of violence against women:

- challenge condoning of violence against women;
- promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships;
- foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles;
- strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys;
- promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.<sup>51</sup>

2.53 Five supporting actions are also included:

- challenge the normalisation of violence as an expression of masculinity or male dominance;
- prevent exposure to violence and support those affected to reduce its consequences;
- address the intersections between social norms relating to alcohol and gender;

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47 *Submission 3*, p. 3.

48 *Submission 66*, p. 27.

49 See para 2.9.

50 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 7.

51 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 33.

- reduce backlash by engaging men and boys in gender equality, building relationships skills and social connections;
- promote broader social equality and address structural discrimination and disadvantage.<sup>52</sup>

2.54 Following the release of the framework, Our Watch has indicated its intention to develop a dedicated resource to guide the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, which will be released as a companion document to the framework.<sup>53</sup>

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52 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 34.

53 Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story*, 2015, p. 3.