



## Chief Executive Women

2 March 2022

The Hon Anne Ruston  
Minister for Women's Safety  
Minister for Families and Social Services  
Via [senator.ruston@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.ruston@aph.gov.au)

### **Chief Executive Women Response – *Draft National Plan to end violence against women and their children 2022-2032***

Dear Senator Ruston,

Chief Executive Women (CEW) welcomes the *Draft National Plan to end violence against women and their children 2022-2032* (Draft National Plan) and the government's commitment to develop related Action Plans, including specific First Nations Plans. CEW welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft National Plan.

CEW advocates for greater representation of women in senior leadership and equal economic and social choices. We believe women should be equally represented at all decision tables so that outcomes for the whole community are better considered.

Taking serious and committed action to prevent and address gender-based violence is a critical priority for CEW. Domestic and family violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence, are a key barrier to women's workforce participation and negatively impact women's economic security as well as women's personal health and well-being. We all deserve to have workplaces that are safe, respectful and inclusive.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency and Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre report *Gender Insights 2020: Delivering the Business Outcomes* demonstrates the strong and convincing causal relationship between an increase in the number of women in key decision-making positions and improvements in company performance. It found that more women in senior leadership delivers the needed cultural change.<sup>i</sup>

In this response CEW makes overall recommendations that will strengthen the new National Plan and associated Action Plans, as well as specific recommendations on:

- Gender-based violence, gender equality and women's economic security
- Making workplaces safe
- The role of business in addressing gender-based violence and sexual harassment



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A rigorous evidence based national plan, that outlines clear directions for action and is adequately resourced is essential for driving action to eradicate gender-based violence across Australia.

CEW supports broad and inclusive definitions of gender-based violence in the Plan, in accordance with Australia's obligations under CEDAW and the Sustainable Development Goals, and that recognise gender-based violence occurs in a range of spaces including domestic settings, workplaces, schools, care settings, state institutions and in the community.<sup>1</sup> CEW also welcomes grounding the draft national plan in the foundation principles of gender equality, diverse lived experiences of victims -survivors informing policies and solutions, supporting Closing the Gap and intersectionality. CEW supports a new National Plan and Action Plans that are grounded in a rigorous evaluation and evidence base.

### **CEW makes the following overall recommendations to strengthen the draft National Plan:**

- Identify clear strategies and actions across the four pillars of prevention, early intervention, response and recovery demonstrating how the plan will work towards significantly reducing violence against women by 2032.
- Ensure the first Action Plan is released alongside the new National Plan, for a commencement date of 1 July 2022.
- Include a clear outcomes framework, with targets, measures and indicators in the National Plan, to enable clear monitoring and evaluation to be conducted across the entire National Plan.
- Identify adequate funding required to fully implement the National Plan and associated Action Plans.

Given the gravity and extent of gender-based violence in Australia, CEW welcomes bipartisan support for the National Plan and its implementation.

### **CEW makes the following recommendations in relation to specific gender-based violence issues:**

#### **Gender-based violence, gender equality and women's economic security**

Domestic and family violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence significantly undermine women's economic security in relation to their employment, housing and the accumulation of their retirement incomes and savings over their lifetime. Economic

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to prioritise specialised services, which are developed and delivered in co-design with women with disability, First Nations women, LGBTIQ+ individuals and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It is also appropriate the National Plan recognise and address the full range of gender-based violence including forced sterilisation and forced abortion, faced by women and girls with disability, along with violence they experience from carers, parents, children and support people.



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abuse and other tactics of violence contribute to financial instability and stress, exacerbating economic inequality between women and men.<sup>ii</sup> Gender-based violence also imposes a cost on the economy, with domestic and family violence costing Australia \$22 billion a year according to KPMG and PwC;<sup>iii</sup> and workplace sexual harassment costing \$2.6 billion in lost productivity and \$0.9 billion in other financial costs in 2018.<sup>iv</sup>

CEW supports the new National Plan acknowledging the strong link between women's safety and economic security, and specifically the ongoing impact of domestic and family violence on women's financial stability at all stages of life.

In line with the Respect@Work Report<sup>v</sup> CEW supports the development of gender equality strategies, recognising that gender-based violence is driven by gender inequality. A National Gender Equality Strategy would provide a mechanism for the new National Plan and Action Plans to be part of a comprehensive strategy to address gender inequality in our society.

Effective primary prevention requires clear strategies that recognise and aim to shift the gendered drivers that underpin gender-based violence and that promote gender equality. Specific gender equality measures CEW recommends include:

- Invest in well-paid, secure jobs in care sectors
- Make quality early childhood education and care accessible and affordable
- Expand the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave scheme for all parents<sup>vi</sup>

A critical component of women's economic security is access to affordable housing. Nearly 7700 women return to violent partners every year due to a lack of affordable housing and Australia needs an additional 16,800 social housing dwellings for women fleeing domestic violence.<sup>vii</sup> Aligning the new National Plan with the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement will assist to address this aspect of economic security.

### **Making workplaces safe**

To ensure the new National Plan and Action Plans prevent and address sexual harassment in workplaces, specific actions should be identified across all four pillars. CEW recommends the following specific actions:

- **All 55 recommendations of the Respect@Work report, and particularly a positive duty for employers under the Sex Discrimination Act; and a prohibition on sexual harassment in the Fair Work Act. Implement the recommendations of the Set the Standard report.**

As part of implementing the 55 recommendations, introducing a positive duty under the Sex Discrimination Act would require an employer to take reasonable and proportionate measures to (as far as possible) eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation in the workplace. Such measures could include training for managers on gender inequity and the causes of sexual harassment; and how to respond to and support staff impacted by sexual harassment.



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- **Implement the recommendations of the Set the Standard report**

CEW welcomes the Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins' Set the Standard report into parliamentary workplace culture and calls for the full implementation of the recommendations.

The Jenkins 'Set the Standard' recommendations are sensible, practical and achievable steps that must be taken immediately to ensure that parliamentary workplaces are safe, respectful and inclusive for all and meet the standards that Australians expect.

- **Introduce at least 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards.**

Workplace protections for employees experiencing domestic and family violence and sexual assault supports women's workforce participation and economic security.

The ability to take leave from work with no loss of income is essential to enable people experiencing domestic and family violence to access support services, particularly when they are seeking to leave a violent relationship. Leaving a violent relationship costs a significant amount of time and money, and is a very high risk time.

While 1 in 3 employers now provide access to paid FDV leave, 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave should be available to all workers through the National Employment Standards. KPMG estimate the annual cost to employers of search, hiring and retraining employees who have left the workforce due to family and domestic violence at \$96 million per year. The cost of absenteeism of victims and perpetrators is estimated at a further \$860 million per year.<sup>viii</sup>

### **The role of business in addressing gender-based violence and sexual harassment**

Effective governance and organisational solutions to preventing and adequately responding to sexual harassment are key to bolstering women's workforce participation and economic security, and consequentially boosting the Australia's economy. More women in senior leadership delivers the needed cultural change.

Businesses and the private sector can play a central role in preventing and addressing sexual harassment in workplaces. CEW members are actively supporting organisations to adopt strategies to address sexual harassment, that already go above and beyond what is required in the law.

- **Respect is Everyone's Business**

The [Respect is Everyone's Business](#) resources, created for CEW members by CEW members, are designed to help facilitate conversations at leadership tables around the country to drive commitment and focus on eradicating sexual harassment in the workplace. They include:

- sample script for having this conversation to put the issue of sexual harassment on the table
- suggested ways to respond to pushback
- being paired with a CEW member to practice having a conversation
- Tools such as sample reporting dashboards



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Available through a dedicated microsite – [respect.cew.org.au](https://respect.cew.org.au), these resources focus on the ‘how’ – how to start the conversation on boards and in executive teams that lead to putting the sexual harassment on the agenda.

The Respect is Everyone’s Business resources also provide guidance on how to navigate potential resistance, how to initiate appropriate action, effective communication and how to report on progress.

### **Consulting with CEW**

CEW welcomes the opportunity to further engage in the finalisation of the Draft National Plan and the development of the Action Plans. We also welcome the opportunity to engage with the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, and its appointed Commissioner, as it oversees the implementation of the next National Plan to end violence against women and children.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Metcalf  
CEO, Chief Executive Women

### **About Chief Executive Women**

Founded in 1985, CEW represents Australia’s most senior and distinguished women leaders across business, academia, government, the arts and not-for-profit sectors. CEW’s over 800 members have leading roles within Australia’s largest private and public organisations overseeing more than \$749 billion in revenue, 1.3 million employees, \$1.144 trillion combined market capitalisation and making a greater than \$249 billion contribution to Australia’s GDP.

Our shared mission is ‘women leaders enabling other women leaders’. Through advocacy, leadership programs and scholarships, CEW works to remove the barriers to women’s progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity. As a member organisation, CEW is uniquely positioned to offer solutions for achieving gender balanced leadership and removing the complex barriers to women’s progression and economic security.

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<sup>i</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency and Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre report *Gender Insights 2020: Delivering the Business Outcomes*, <https://bcec.edu.au/publications/gender-equity-insights-2020-delivering->



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<sup>ii</sup> ANROWS, *Domestic violence and women's economic security: Building Australia's capacity for prevention and redress: Key findings and future directions*, [ANROWS-Compass-Report-Domestic-violence-and-womens-economic-security-2.pdf \(netdna-ssl.com\)](#)

<sup>iii</sup> KPMG, *The cost of violence against women and their children (2016)*

[https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08\\_2016/the\\_cost\\_of\\_violence\\_against\\_women\\_and\\_their\\_children\\_in\\_australia\\_-\\_summary\\_report\\_may\\_2016.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_-_summary_report_may_2016.pdf) ; PwC Australia, *A high price to pay: The economic case for preventing violence against women*, <https://www.pwc.com.au/publications/economic-case-preventing-violence-against-women.html>

<sup>iv</sup> Deloitte Access Economics, *The economic costs of sexual harassment in the workplace | Deloitte Australia | Economics* (2019).

<sup>v</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report (2020)*, <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/respectwork-sexual-harassment-national-inquiry-report-2020#dRks5>

<sup>vi</sup> Chief Executive Women, *Pre-Budget Submission 2022-23*.

<sup>vii</sup> Equity Economics, *'Nowhere To Go' Report (2021)*.

<sup>viii</sup> KPMG, *The cost of violence against women and their children (2016)*

[https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08\\_2016/the\\_cost\\_of\\_violence\\_against\\_women\\_and\\_their\\_children\\_in\\_australia\\_-\\_summary\\_report\\_may\\_2016.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_-_summary_report_may_2016.pdf).