



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department



Second Action Plan under the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030*

Public Consultation Paper

May 2026

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgement of Country

The Attorney-General's Department acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander as Australia's Traditional Owners and custodians of Country. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We recognise the strength of culture in responding to child sexual abuse and the capacity of cultural practices to offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people healing and recovery.

Acknowledgement of victims and survivors

We wish to pay our respects to all victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and acknowledge the enormity of the trauma child sexual abuse causes. We dedicate our ongoing efforts to improving supports for all victims and survivors.

We acknowledge that victims and survivors have different life experiences and may have been subjected to multiple experiences of victimisation and discrimination. Responses to children, young people and adults need to listen and attend to this range of lived experiences. This may also include practitioners with lived experience of child sexual abuse.

We recognise the tragedy of those who have lost their lives. We equally recognise the strength and courage of victims and survivors and their stories of survival, hope and resistance.

We endeavour to enhance our efforts to prevent child sexual abuse and ensure our children and young people are safe from all forms of child sexual abuse and harm.

Help and support

We understand that child sexual abuse is a sensitive and challenging issue. Reading the information in this document may bring up strong feelings for some people. Please take care as you read this document and ask for help if you need it. You might want to talk to your family and friends, or your counsellor, doctor, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health service.

You can find links and contact details for these organisations and for national, state and territory government services on our [Get support](#) page. If you have concerns about a child's safety or wish to make a report, please visit our [Make a report](#) page.

Crisis and suicide prevention

If you or a child are in immediate danger, call Triple Zero (000).

[Lifeline](#) (13 11 14) – National crisis support and suicide prevention service, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[13YARN](#) (13 92 76) is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander crisis support service. You can call 13YARN on 13 92 76, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Child sexual abuse and other support and advice

[Bravehearts](#) (1800 272 831) - Bravehearts Information & Support Line provides support and advice regarding child sexual abuse, available 8:30am – 4:30pm, Monday to Friday AEST/AEDT (hours may vary on public holidays).

[Blue Knot Foundation](#) (1300 657 380) - National service for anyone affected by complex trauma, available 9:00am – 5:00pm AEST/AEDT, Monday to Sunday.

[SAMSN – Supporting Male Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse](#) (1800 472 676) - Provides free support to male victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, their families and supporters, available 9:00am – 5:00pm AEST/AEDT Monday to Friday.

[Kids Helpline](#) (1800 55 1800) - National crisis support tailored for children and young people (aged 5 to 25), available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[MensLine Australia](#) (1300 78 99 78) - National crisis support for men, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[QLife](#) (1800 184 527) - LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral, available 3:00pm to midnight, 7 days a week.

[1800Respect](#) (1800 737 732) - National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[Stop It Now!](#) (1800 01 1800) – Free and anonymous national helpline which provides support, psychoeducation and advice to adults concerned about their own or someone else's sexual thoughts or behaviours.

Further information

Non-English speakers can access these services through the Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) by calling 131 450. TIS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you are deaf and/or find it hard hearing or speaking with people who use a phone, the [National Relay Service](#) (NRS) can help you. You can contact the NRS Helpdesk on 1800 555 660. The NRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Introduction

The safety of children and young people is a critical priority of the Australian Government. We recognise the importance of hearing from individuals and communities across the nation to stop the cycle of abuse and help victims and survivors to heal.

In response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Australian Government developed the [National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030](#) (National Strategy). The National Strategy is the first of its kind in Australia. It provides a nationally coordinated, strategic framework for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse.

The National Strategy is overseen by the National Office for Child Safety in the Attorney-General's Department. We work closely with other Australian, state and territory government bodies to prevent child sexual abuse and support victims and survivors.

The National Strategy has 5 themes that describe the different ways governments can address child sexual abuse:

- ▶ **Theme 1:** Awareness raising, education and building child safe cultures
- ▶ **Theme 2:** Supporting and empowering victims and survivors
- ▶ **Theme 3:** Enhancing national approaches to children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours
- ▶ **Theme 4:** Offending prevention and intervention
- ▶ **Theme 5:** Improving the evidence base.

Significant progress has been achieved through the National Strategy's First Action Plans, including:

- **Brought conversations about child sexual abuse out of the shadows** by launching ['One Talk at a Time'](#), Australia's first national campaign aimed at preventing child sexual abuse, and the [Shadows of the Web – Protecting our children in the digital world](#) documentary.
- **Supported child safe organisations** by promoting the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) and gaining endorsement from all Attorneys-General to the [Agreement to Deliver National Working with Children Check Reform](#).
- **Increased supports for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse** by establishing a national legal online chat for children and young people experiencing or at risk of harm and expanding a trauma-informed legal service.
- **Improved the evidence base** through the [National Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#) and the [Australian Child Maltreatment Study](#).
- **Uplifted workforce capability** by providing [\\$12 million in grant funding to 23 services](#) to expand their work responding to victims and survivors and launching the [Minimum Practice Standards: Specialist and community support services responding to child sexual abuse](#).

Read more about our key achievements in the [National Strategy annual reports at ChildSafety.gov.au](#).

We know there is more to be done. The prevalence and impact of child sexual abuse mean we need ongoing efforts to keep children safe. The development of a Second Action Plan under the National Strategy is an opportunity to address known and emerging challenges, and community concerns and priorities.

The Australian Government is providing all Australians with the opportunity to share what they believe needs to happen next to keep children and young people safe from sexual abuse and best support victims and survivors. These views will help to inform the Second Action Plan.

The Australian Government is also working to keep women and children safe from other forms of violence and maltreatment. We know that we need a whole-of-system response, rather than siloed interventions, to meaningfully address issues of family, domestic and sexual violence. We are working across portfolios and jurisdictions to deliver action plans that will make real change. This includes improving the way we design policy, share data, and work with stakeholders to ensure a 'no wrong door' approach.

The problem

Child sexual abuse is a profound national challenge that affects the lives of thousands of Australians and leaves impacts that endure across generations.

Data from the 2023 Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS) shows that child sexual abuse impacts more than 1 in 3 girls and almost 1 in 5 boys in Australia. This prevalence rate does not include online abuse, which indicates abuse rates are likely even higher.

Child sexual abuse causes lifelong harm, increasing risk of mental illness, chronic physical health conditions, substance misuse, disrupted relationships and reduced economic participation.

As well as the devastating human toll, the associated economic costs are significant. A 2025 study from Monash University found that child maltreatment costs Australia \$21.6 billion in annual health service use and \$24.1 billion in annual lost productivity.

The way in which child sexual abuse occurs is changing. Technology is lowering barriers to offending and enabling abuse to occur across borders. At the same time, harmful sexual behaviours between children and young people are increasing, with the ACMS finding young Australians aged 16-24 had experienced significantly higher rates of sexual harm from other children compared to adult offenders (18.2 per cent compared to 11.7 per cent).

We acknowledge the strength and courage of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and the impact all forms of child maltreatment have on survivors and their loved ones. We acknowledge that child sexual abuse is only one form of child maltreatment, and many Australians have experienced multiple types of harm. We want the National Strategy to make Australia safer for all children and young people.

What we have heard so far

We have engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders and heard their views on what should be included in the Second Action Plan. This includes consultations with [advisory and stakeholder groups](#) and at the [National Child Safety Youth Summit](#). They told us:



These topics will be key focus areas for the consultation on the Second Action Plan.

Consultation on the Second Action Plan

Purpose of the consultation: Engage communities, families, victims and survivors, advocates, experts and workforces to inform the Second Action Plan.

Objective for the Second Action Plan: Deliver a coordinated national plan that strengthens the prevention of child sexual abuse, improves responses to harm, and supports lifelong healing for victims and survivors.

The Second Action Plan will continue the important work started over the first 6 years of the National Strategy and address the emerging risks and challenges related to preventing and responding to child sexual abuse.

Participating in the consultation

We want to make sure the Second Action Plan improves outcomes for everyone, and everyone can have their say.

Individuals, communities, organisations and workforces can share their perspectives in an online survey. The purpose of this survey is to identify actions governments should take to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse. Your insights will also help shape the Australian Government's second action plan to end gender-based violence, under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032.

The survey is available on the [Attorney-General's Department Consultation hub](#).

If you have difficulty completing the online survey or have questions about the National Strategy or the Second Action Plan, please get in contact by emailing NationalOfficeforChildSafety@ag.gov.au and we can help you.

National collaboration to end abuse against families, women and children

The Australian Government is also working to keep women and children safe from other forms of violence and maltreatment. There are a number of upcoming action plans that collectively aim to end abuse and violence against families, women and children in all its forms. In addition to the Second Action Plan under the National Strategy these include:

- ▶ The Second Action Plan for the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan)
- ▶ The Second Action Plan for *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* (Safe and Supported)
- ▶ The Second Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan under *Safe and Supported*
- ▶ The First Action Plan supporting implementation of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence* (Our Ways).

The Australian Government is running consultations across Australia to inform the next action plans for the National Plan, Safe and Supported, and Our Ways. More information about these consultations is available at engage.dss.gov.au.

Activities to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse are an important prevention mechanism for responding to adult gender-based violence. By stopping harm from occurring

in the first place, and supporting victims and survivors to recover and heal, these activities help break cycles of trauma and disadvantage. In recognition that gender-based violence and child maltreatment do not occur in isolation, the next action plans for all 4 strategies will be meaningfully aligned.

The consultation approach for the Second Action Plan includes dedicated workshops with Australian, state and territory government representatives to agree paths forward that achieve national consistency in child sexual abuse prevention and response.

More information about the National Strategy and child sexual abuse

The National Office for Child Safety website has a range of information about child sexual abuse and progress achieved under the First Action Plans:

- ▶ [Summary of the National Strategy and its Action Plans](#)
- ▶ [Annual reporting](#)
- ▶ [About child sexual abuse](#)