

# Addressing Violence against Women and their Children

## *Action Plan Consultation Framework*

January 2012

Addressing violence against women and their children is a key priority for the Baillieu Government. In 2011-2012, we are investing over \$75 million in a range of services and programs that are specifically tackling family violence and sexual assault - the most prevalent and serious forms of violence against women. This investment is also being used to address the underlying causes of this violence and to stop it from occurring.

The next stage of addressing violence against women and their children in Victoria involves the development of an **Action Plan**, based on a long term vision of women and their children living free from violence. Consistent with the United Nations *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*, our **Action Plan** will affirm that violence against women constitutes a violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of women.

This Consultation Framework provides our roadmap for addressing violence against women and their children. It covers our proposed areas of focus, actions areas, governance, system elements and contains key questions for stakeholder consideration.

We recognise that addressing violence against women and their children requires extensive collaboration between government and the community and we are seeking feedback from stakeholders on all components of the Consultation Framework. Following this feedback, the Consultation Framework will be translated into a three year **Action Plan**, which will be monitored and publicly reported against on an annual basis.

Violence against women is not acceptable and can be effectively tackled with the necessary commitment and direction. Although we are operating in a financially constrained environment, our efforts to address violence against women and their children must continue, and be better coordinated and, therefore, more effective. Under our **Action Plan**, we will bring together previously separate policy platforms to more effectively prevent, intervene early and respond to violence against women and their children.

We will deliver a whole of government approach, with integrated support to women and their children across community services, especially child protection and children, youth and family services, mental and physical health services, housing services, police, the courts and corrections.

To prevent violence against women and their children, our approach will be broader and link to our agenda for crime prevention, homelessness, education, local government, and sport and recreation. Our **Action Plan** will also complement the current plan to prevent and respond to family violence in Aboriginal communities – *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 year plan*. It will also support *Living free from Violence – Upholding the Right: Victoria Police Strategy to reduce violence against women and children 2009-2014*.

As family violence and sexual assault are the most prevalent forms of violence against women, our **Action Plan** will focus strongly on these. Other forms of violence against women, such as stalking, sexual harassment, cyber bullying and sexting, which affect significant numbers of women, will be covered by the **Action Plan**. While sex trafficking and female genital mutilation affect smaller numbers of women, their impact is profound so the **Action Plan** will cover them.

The **Action Plan** will take account of the needs of women across all age groups and their children, focussing on women and their children who are at greatest risk of experiencing violence. Men will also be engaged to act as champions to prevent violence and reject it when it occurs.

The **Action Plan** will be flexible and adapt to emerging issues and trends in terms of violence against women and their children. Our approach will enable the **Action Plan** to reflect government responses to recommendations emerging from the *Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry*, the *Inquiry into Access to and Interaction with the Justice System by People with an Intellectual Disability and Their Families and Carers*, the *Inquiry into People Trafficking for Sex Work*, the *Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths*, and the *Sexual Assault Reform Strategy Final Evaluation Report*. It will ensure that Victoria is in a strong position to support the implementation of the *National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children*.

Thank you for your commitment to ending violence against women and their children. By working together we can make great strides towards achieving our shared goal of a Victoria in which all women and their children live free from violence.

Victoria Police Crime Statistics for 2010-2011 show that the incidence of family violence remains unacceptably high, with 40,892 family violence incidents reported, up by 14.6 per cent from the previous year. The incidence of sexual assault is also disturbing with 1,826 incidents of rape recorded in Victoria in 2010-2011, up by 9.3 per cent from 2009-2010.

These statistics show that reporting of family violence and sexual assault is increasing. We want to encourage this reporting so that women and their children get the help they need to build safe, healthy and secure lives and to ensure that male perpetrators are held to account. These statistics also indicate that we need to take action to prevent violence, intervene early and respond appropriately.

Violence against anyone is unacceptable and while some men and boys are victims of family violence and sexual assault, women are overwhelmingly the victims of these forms of violence. Women and girls of all ages are affected by this violence.

According to Victoria Police Crime Statistics for 2010-2011, women make up 76.3 per cent of family violence victims, 91.7 per cent of rape victims and 83 per cent of victims of sex (non rape) offences. We know that violence against women occurs in all cultures, socio economic groups, and areas across Victoria, but that some women are more at risk of violence than others. In 35 per cent of family violence incidents attended by Victoria Police in 2010-2011, children were present.

The impact of violence against women, children and young people is profound. Infants, children and young women are at particular risk. Improving the safety and well being of children and young people requires a targeted, child focused service response to meet their needs.

We know that the causes of all forms of violence against women relate to gender inequality, gender stereotypes and broader cultures of violence. By tackling these underlying causes, we can act to stop family violence, sexual assault and other forms of violence such as stalking, sexual harassment, sexting, cyber bullying, sex trafficking and female genital mutilation.

Work has already started to build an integrated system, which provides women with consistent and coordinated support and services when they experience family violence and sexual assault.

Legislative and practice reform has also led to strengthened civil and criminal responses to family violence and sexual assault cases, improving responses for victims, and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

We are also strengthening action to prevent violence against women and their children, through a range of programs.

**We are currently investing over \$75 million to address family violence and sexual assault**

**We will continue to address violence against women and their children**

**Our approach will be flexible, so that we can identify and deal with emerging issues and trends**



Prevent violence against women and their children by fostering relationships, organisations, communities and cultures that are **gender equitable and non-violent**.

Intervene earlier by **identifying and targeting individuals and groups** who exhibit early signs of violent behaviour or of being subjected to violence.

Respond through an integrated system which provides **consistent, coordinated and timely responses to women and their children** and which holds perpetrators to account.

**Prevention:** Strategies to prevent violence against women and their children from occurring in the first place

**Early intervention:** Strategies that enable early intervention where individuals or groups are at risk of experiencing violence or of being violent, so that this violence is not experienced or committed

**Integrated response:** Strategies to support victims of violence after it has occurred and to hold perpetrators to account

## **The Victorian government is investing over \$75 million in 2011-2012 in a range of services that respond to violence after it has occurred, in early intervention programs and in a number of prevention initiatives.**

### **In terms of responding to family violence and sexual assault, we are investing over \$70 million in a range of areas including:**

- Services to women and children experiencing family violence such as refuges, at home support, counselling, outreach, and case management
- Sexual assault support services, including crisis care, counselling, casework, advocacy and after hours phone crisis service
- Men's family violence services, including men's behaviour change programs, case management and emergency accommodation
- Services targeting Aboriginal women and men including refuges and case management
- Specialist court responses, including Family Violence Court Divisions, Specialist Family Violence Services and the Family Violence Court Intervention Program
- Multidisciplinary centres which provide integrated responses to victim/survivors of sexual assault through police, counselling and forensic examinations
- Strengthening family violence risk management pilots
- Support for statewide services and organisations
- Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups

In addition to the above investment, Victoria Police engages Family Violence Advisors, Liaison Officers, Civil Advocates and Court Liaison Officers, as well as undertaking their operational work in dealing with family violence and sexual assault. Through its recently announced Enhanced Family Violence Service Delivery Model, Victoria Police has also made a commitment to build on existing family violence units across the state.

### **We are investing \$2 million in a number of early intervention programs including:**

- A Media Advocacy project for victim/survivors of violence against women
- Family violence risk assessment and risk management professional development and resources
- Treatment services for problem sexual behaviour or sexually abusive behaviours

### **In addition, we are investing \$4 million in prevention activities including:**

- Local government and community partnerships program
- Preventing violence against women in our community program
- Eliminating Violence Against Women Media Awards (EVAs)
- White Ribbon Day activities
- Indigenous Community Initiatives Fund

### The **Action Plan** will build on the current platform of:

- Support and service options for women and children;
- Justice responses for victims;
- Accountability of perpetrators;
- Responsiveness of Victoria Police;
- Assessment and responses to women and children at risk; and
- Research, evidence and evaluation.

### The **Action Plan** will also:

- Support the intent of the *Families Statement*, of building stronger and more resilient families and safer communities;
- Continue to improve and integrate responses to violence against women, complemented by a stronger emphasis on prevention and early intervention;
- Create an integrated approach to prevent, intervene earlier and respond to violence against women and their children and include actions to address all forms of violence against women;
- Engage with men to help prevent violence against women and their children; and
- Address the needs of the most vulnerable and those at highest risk including:
  - Young women;
  - Children and young people;
  - Families with complex and multiple needs;
  - Aboriginal communities;
  - Families from diverse communities and backgrounds;
  - Women with disabilities; and
  - Older women.

The Victorian Government will deliver an integrated **Action Plan** to address all forms of violence against women and their children, with actions directed at prevention, early intervention and response.

## Prevention

Prevent violence against women and their children by fostering relationships, organisations, communities and cultures that are **gender equitable and non-violent**.



- Change attitudes and behaviours;
- Build organisations, communities and cultures that are gender equitable and non-violent; and
- Promote respectful and gender equitable relationships between men and women, boys and girls.

### Indicators:

- Changed community attitudes and behaviours in terms of violence against women;
- Reduced levels of violence against women;
- Higher levels of women who feel safe; and
- Improved measures of gender equity.

## Early Intervention

Intervene earlier by **identifying and targeting individuals and groups** who exhibit early signs of violent behaviour or of being subjected to violence.



- Identify vulnerability and those at highest risk of violence; and
- Strengthen protective factors.

### Indicators:

- Improved protective factors for individuals, families, organisations and communities; and
- Improved early identification of women and children at risk.

## Response

Respond through an integrated system which provides **consistent, coordinated and timely responses to women and their children** and which holds perpetrators to account.

- Ensure that community services and the justice system respond to women and their children who are victims of violence;
- Hold perpetrators to account and prevent reoffending of violence against women and their children; and
- Protect, support and empower women, children and communities at greatest risk of violence.

### Indicators:

- Improved accessibility of integrated support and services;
- In the short term, increased reporting and prosecution of perpetrators of violence;
- In the longer term, reduced re-offending and re-victimisation;
- Improved effectiveness of the system response to sex offenders and those accused of sexual offending; and
- In the longer term, a reduction in violence against women and the number of family violence related deaths.

## Action areas



Preventing violence against women and their children before it occurs

Intervening earlier so that women and their children do not continue to experience violence

Effectively responding to violence against women and their children after it occurs

- The next four pages set out a range of action areas in terms of preventing, intervening earlier and responding to violence against women and their children, grouped in the areas of focus identified on the previous page.
- Some of the action areas, such as working with the media to promote positive representations of women, apply to all forms of violence against women. In contrast other action areas, such as enforcing family violence offences and breaches or supporting multidisciplinary centres that respond to sexual assault, apply to specific forms of violence against women and their children.
- Some action areas also apply to specific demographic groups (for example supporting women to remain in their homes when it is safe to do so or men's behaviour change programs), while others apply to all demographic groups, such as raising community awareness.

**Key**

P → area of action related to prevention  
 E → area of action related to early intervention  
 R → area of action related to response

Our Focus	Action Areas	
<b>Change attitudes and behaviours</b>	P1	Raise community awareness
	P2	Support attitudinal change in organisations and communities through workforce-focused initiatives
	P3	Change attitudes and behaviours through statewide resources and tools that can be used in particular settings
	P4	Work with media to promote positive representations of women
<b>Foster organisations, communities and cultures that are gender equitable and non-violent</b>	P5	Work with local government to promote and implement initiatives in their communities to prevent violence against women
	P6	Work across government and business, sporting, community and other organisations to create gender inclusive and equitable environments for women and girls
	P7	Work with specialist agencies to implement a range of targeted prevention strategies in diverse communities and for women with disabilities
	P8	Work with Aboriginal communities to continue education, awareness and prevention of family violence
<b>Promote respectful and gender equitable relationships between men and women, boys and girls</b>	P9	Support schools and other educational institutions to implement Respectful Relationships Education Programs
	P10	Work with community agencies on programs to build gender equitable and respectful relationships between women and men, girls and boys
	P11	Engage men as ambassadors and leaders to spread positive messages that support respectful and gender equitable relationships between women and men, girls and boys

Intervening earlier so that women and their children do not continue to experience violence

**Key**  
 P → area of action related to prevention  
 E → area of action related to early intervention  
 R → area of action related to response

Our Focus		Action Areas
<p><b>Identify vulnerability and those at highest risk of violence</b></p>	E12	Support standardised approaches to risk assessment across the integrated family violence system
	E13	Work with mainstream and culturally specific services to identify violence and respond more effectively
	E14	Provide treatment services for young people displaying inappropriate sexual behaviour or sexually abusive behaviour
<p><b>Strengthen Protective Factors</b></p>	E15	Raise awareness of what is child abuse, family violence and sexual assault and promote protective behaviours
	E16	Encourage justice community partnerships to prevent violence against women and children
	E17	Collaborate with service areas associated with known risk factors, including corrections, drug and alcohol services, mainstream and Aboriginal health services, mental health services, disability services and pregnancy and early years’ health services

### Effectively responding to violence against women and their children after it occurs

**Key**  
 P → area of action related to prevention  
 E → area of action related to early intervention  
 R → area of action related to response

Our Focus		Action Areas
<p><b>Ensure that community services and the justice system respond to women and their children who are victims of violence</b></p>	R18	Handle family violence and sexual assault cases consistently and responsively
	R19	Support information sharing mechanisms across services and jurisdictions to enable identification of victims and perpetrators
	R20	Consider legislative reform, including consideration of the Australian Law Reform Commission’s report on Family Violence Laws and a national family and domestic violence order register
	R21	Deliver integrated support to women and their children across community services, especially child protection and children, youth and family services, mental and physical health services and housing services.
	R22	Strengthen risk assessment and management of sexual assault and family violence offenders to reduce the risk of violence re-occurring
	R23	Implement the Government’s response to the <i>Inquiry into People Trafficking for Sex Work</i>
<p><b>Hold perpetrators to account and prevent re-offending of violence against women and their children</b></p>	R24	Enforce family violence offences and breaches
	R25	Consider legislative reform
	R26	Support Men’s Behaviour Change programs
	R27	Provide opportunities for Aboriginal perpetrators of family violence to heal, change behaviour and choose a non-violent future
	R28	Identify effective post-intervention services and programs to sustain long term behaviour change and to reduce reoffending

### Effectively responding to violence against women and their children after it occurs

**Key**  
 P → area of action related to prevention  
 E → area of action related to early intervention  
 R → area of action related to response

Our Focus		Action Areas
<b>Protect, support and empower women, children and communities at greatest risk of violence</b>	R29	Support women and their children to remain in their homes and communities when it is safe to do so alongside other housing support options such as refuge
	R30	Provide coordinated crisis case management, outreach and therapeutic support for women and their children experiencing family violence
	R31	Support service delivery that responds to women and children from diverse communities and with multiple or complex needs, including women with disabilities
	R32	Provide a range of services tailored to Aboriginal women, children and men, that include opportunities for healing and behavioural change, with the aim of improving safety of Aboriginal families and individuals and supporting culturally respectful services, mainstream service cultural inclusion and engagement with Aboriginal communities
	R33	Support multidisciplinary centres that respond to sexual assault victims and child physical abuse and holistic crisis care responses to these victims
	R34	Support mainstream services to identify indicators of family violence and sexual assault and refer to specialist support services
	R35	Support integrated responses across family violence, ChildFIRST/integrated family services and Child Protection services to provide a coordinated, family centred response to children and young people
	R36	Provide specialist therapeutic responses to children and young people experiencing family violence that promote recovery and build resilience
R37	Support specialist family violence and children services to identify and assess risk to children and young people experiencing family violence and sexual assault in order to support their safety and protect them from harm	

Giving effect to the **Action Plan** will require concerted leadership and committed effort. As responsibility for prevention, early intervention and response is spread across a range of portfolios, we will adopt a coordinated whole of government approach.

The **Action Plan** will be led by the Minister for Women’s Affairs, in collaboration with other ministerial colleagues, supported by effective and efficient governance arrangements.

	Key ● Accountability	Primary Prevention	Early Intervention	Response
Responsible ministers	Women’s Affairs (Lead)	●	●	
	Community services	●	●	●
	Mental Health		●	●
	Health	●	●	●
	Housing		●	●
	Early Childhood		●	●
	Attorney General		●	●
	Police		●	●
	Crime Prevention	●	●	
	Corrections		●	
	Aboriginal Affairs	●	●	●
	Education	●	●	
	Consumer Affairs			●

**Notes**

- Other portfolios such as Local Government, Sport and Recreation and Multicultural Affairs will also be engaged in primary prevention to bring about changes in attitudes and behaviours in organisations and communities across Victoria.

We will continue to work in partnership with Victorian women, organisations and communities to ensure our approach supports women and their children to be safe in their homes, in their communities and in their neighbourhoods.

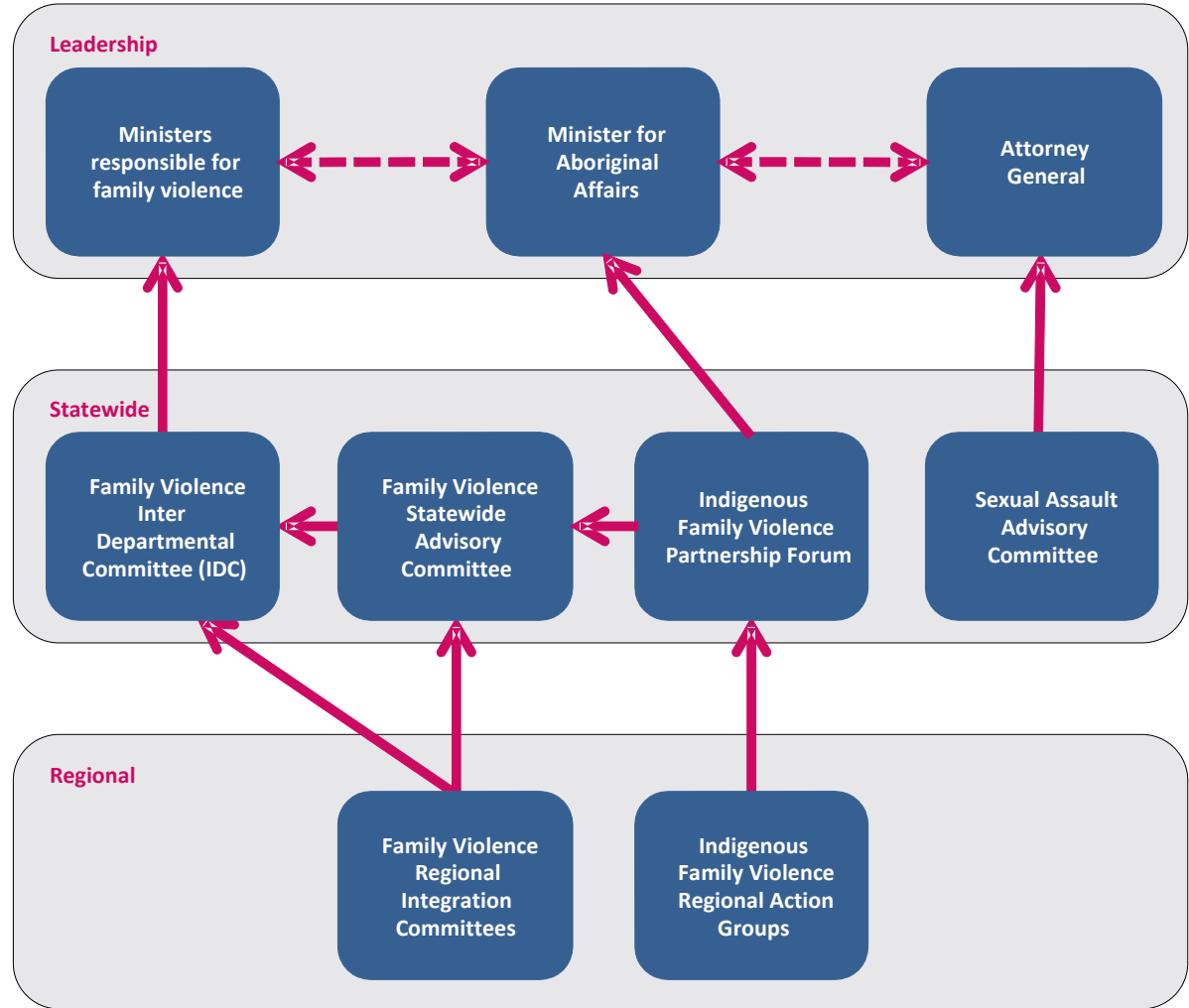
We acknowledge the achievements of the existing governance forums which have engaged advocates, peak organisations, experts and service providers to inform government policy and support integrated service delivery.

Given the broader approach of our new **Action Plan**, we are seeking feedback from stakeholders on the existing governance framework to ensure that future arrangements operate effectively.

Addressing violence against women and their children will also involve working with the Commonwealth and other state and territory governments.

The Select Council for Women’s Issues is responsible for implementation of the *National Plan*. The Victorian Minister for Women’s Affairs will work through this Council to ensure that our State’s priorities are addressed at the Commonwealth level. The Standing Committee for Law and Justice also has responsibility for aspects of the *National Plan* and the Attorney General will be engaged in this work.

## The current governance framework



**NB:** There is cross membership across statewide level committees

We recognise that in order to prevent, intervene early and respond to violence against women and their children we need a system underpinned by:

- A skilled workforce;
- Robust data collection and systems to enable better information sharing and the measurement of outcomes;
- Research, evidence and evaluation to inform current and future policy and program development and delivery;
- Coordinated and effective communication mechanisms between and across government and community representatives; and
- Effective and logical governance structures.

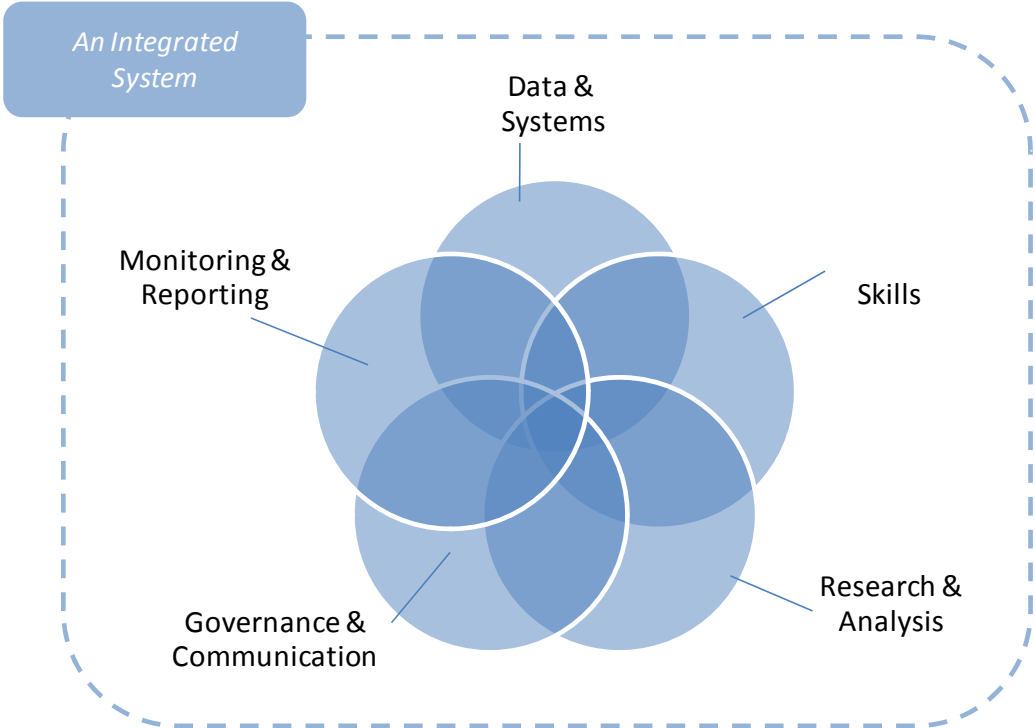
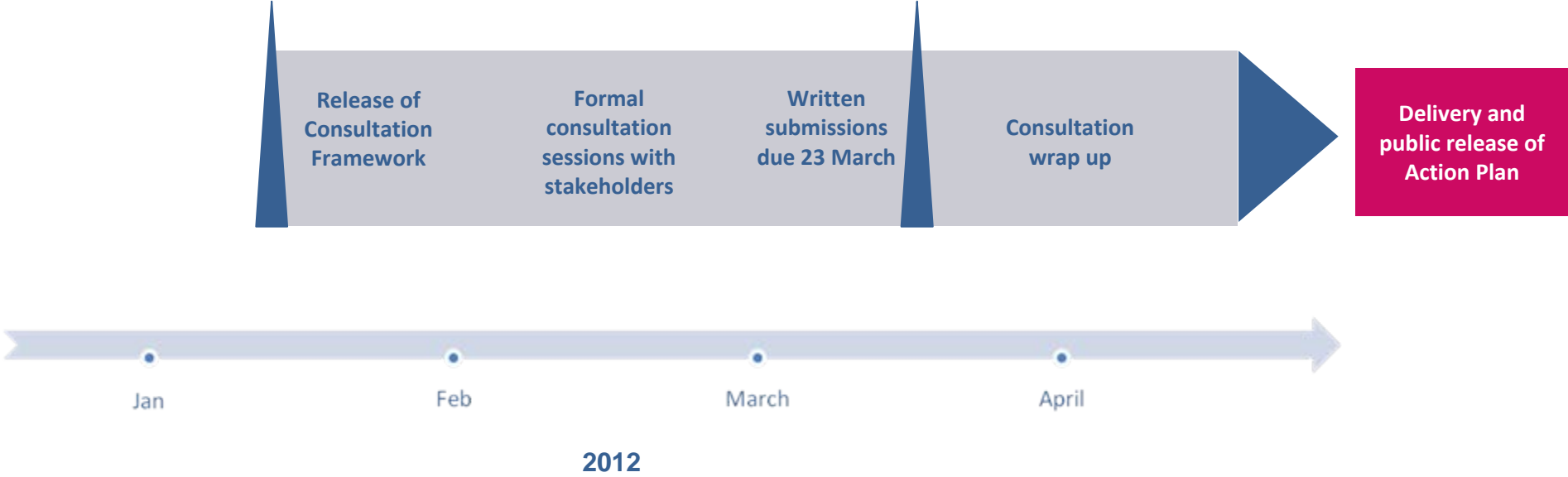


Diagram: These elements reinforce an integrated capacity to prevent, intervene early and respond to violence against women and their children and to identify future areas of focus.



Term	Definition
Family Violence	Family violence is defined in the Victorian <i>Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (section 5.)</i> It includes physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse and threatening or coercive behaviour, including towards or witnessed by children. Family violence within the context of indigenous communities relates to a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities. It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of Indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide. (Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force Final Report, 2003, p 123)
Sexual Offences	Sexual offences are outlined in the <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> including rape (s 38), indecent assault,(s 39), sexual offences against children (ss 45-49A), incest (s44), sexual offences against people with impaired mental functioning or people living in residential facilities (ss 50-52)
Sexual Violence	Sexual violence is a broader term than sexual assault involving a continuum of behaviours from sexual harassment to coerced sexual activity to rape.( Victorian CASA Forum and the Department of Human Services, <i>Standards of Practice for Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault</i> , Department of Human Services, Melbourne, November 2000, p 152)
Stalking and Cyberstalking	Stalking is defined in section 10 of the <i>Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010 (Vic)</i> as a course of conduct with the intention of causing physical or mental harm to a second person including self harm, or of arousing apprehension or fear in the second person for his or her own safety or that of any other person. S10 (1) (b) includes a non exhaustive list of stalking behaviours . A growing amount of stalking occurs via email and the internet. This is called cyberstalking.
Female Genital Mutilation	Female genital mutilation comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs, whether for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. Female genital mutilation is defined in section 3 of the <i>Crimes (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 1996 (Vic)</i> and is an offence under s32 of the <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> .
People Trafficking	The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (Article 3a, United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children). [ <i>United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.</i> ]
Sex Trafficking	Sex trafficking is trafficking of people for sexual servitude and is addressed in the <i>Commonwealth Criminal Code (Slavery and Sexual Servitude) Amendment Act 1999</i> . Division 8EAA of the <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> also has provisions covering the offence of sexual servitude including sexual servitude (s60AB), aggravated sexual servitude (s60AC), deceptive recruiting for commercial sexual services (s60AD), aggravated deceptive recruiting for commercial sexual services (s60AE).
Prevention	Prevention strategies seek to prevent violence before it occurs. Strategies can be delivered to entire populations and to particular groups that are of higher risk of using or experiencing violence. Strategies include fostering relationships, organisations, communities and cultures that are gender equitable and non violent.
Early Intervention	Early intervention strategies are targeted at individuals and groups who exhibit early signs of violent behaviour or of being subjected to violence. Strategies can be aimed at changing behaviours and skills of individuals and groups or to work in environments where strong signs exist that violence may occur.
Response	Responding to violence after it has occurred through an integrated system which provides consistent, coordinated and timely responses to women and their children and which holds perpetrators to account. Strategies aim to deal with the violence, prevent its consequences, and ensure it does not occur again or escalate.
Violence Against Women	Refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life ( <i>United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women 1993</i> ).

1. Does the Action Plan Consultation Framework *provide balance* in terms of addressing all forms of violence against women and their children?
2. Does the Action Plan Consultation Framework *provide the right balance* between prevention, early intervention and response?
3. Will the action areas *improve primary prevention, early intervention and responsiveness* ?
4. Should particular *action areas be prioritised*?
5. Are there any *gaps* in the Action Plan Consultation Framework that should be considered?
6. How can future *governance arrangements* most effectively engage partners across government and community?
7. What are the *potential barriers and risks* to be managed and mitigated in delivery of the actions?
8. What other *issues* need to be considered?