

## **Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy Reference Group**

### **Communique – Meeting 10 June 2022**

The Office of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime in the Department of Justice and the Department of Communities are jointly leading a project to develop Western Australia's (WA) first Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy (the Strategy). The purpose of the Strategy is to improve outcomes for victim-survivors of sexual violence, focusing on primary prevention, support for victim-survivor recovery and holding perpetrators to account.

To support the development of the Strategy, a Reference Group has been established to provide expert input on stakeholder requirements and issues, and to the design of the consultation process and final strategy. The Group is comprised of individuals and organisations who have professional experience and expertise in the sexual violence field and who represent different cohorts impacted by sexual violence. The Group also includes people with lived experience of sexual violence. Meetings will be held quarterly, and members are provided with meeting papers for consideration in advance of each meeting.

The Reference Group will provide advice and recommendations to the Steering Committee and will operate alongside the Project Team and various project working groups. The Chair of the Reference Group is also a member of the Steering Committee to ensure that the views of the Reference Group are reflected at the approvals stage.

The Reference Group met for the first time on Friday 10 June 2022 and is Chaired by Nicole Lambert, Chief Executive Officer, Allambee Counselling and Deputy Chair of the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing Board. This Communique has been developed to provide all stakeholders information and outcomes from this meeting.

### **Terms of Reference**

The Reference Group Terms of Reference were endorsed by members with minor changes to be agreed out of session. Following approval by the Steering Committee, the Terms of Reference will be published on the Office of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime website at <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-justice/commissioner-victims-of-crime/sexual-violence-prevention-and-response-strategy>.

### **Project objectives**

Members broadly agreed on the following objectives for the Strategy.

1. Define the continuum of sexual violence.
2. Establish the prevalence of sexual violence and its intersectional impacts across the life-course.
3. Understand the drivers of sexual violence.
4. Develop a framework to provide effective, evidence-based prevention and perpetrator programs.
5. Understand how victim-survivors seek support; the barriers to accessing support; barriers to reporting; and support through the reporting process.
6. Develop a framework for coordinating support systems for victim-survivors that is governed by victim safety, autonomy, and choice.
7. Evaluate the effectiveness of responses to sexual violence.

## **Review of sexual offences and criminal justice process**

The Project Team updated the Group on related projects that are happening concurrently with the development of the Strategy. The [Law Reform Commission of WA](#) is currently reviewing Chapter XXXI of the WA Criminal Code, which relates to sexual offences, to identify whether there is a need for reform, with particular regard to the issue of affirmative consent.

The Office of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime will also lead a review of the experience of sexual violence victim-survivor across the criminal justice process. The review will consider the full spectrum of criminal justice processes from reporting of an offence through to the time after an offender is released from prison.

[Media Statements - Two major reviews to examine WA's sexual offence laws](#)

## **Consultation process**

Members discussed the outcomes from the consultative forum which was hosted by the Departments of Justice and Communities and the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing on 4 November 2021. The forum was well attended by stakeholders and organisations which work to address sexual violence in WA.

The aim of the forum was to learn from previous consultation processes and form a better understanding of how to reach diverse populations and how best to address their needs. A consultative forum [Background Paper](#) was provided to attendees prior to the meeting, to provide them with context and raise some key questions for discussion.

The consultative forum [Outcomes Report](#) outlines the overarching themes that stakeholders identified for the consultation process. Themes included clarity of purpose; respectful language; collaboration and co-design; training and education for communities and organisations; representation of regional and remote voices and appropriate funding. Participants strongly advocated for consultation processes to be trauma-informed, with the wellbeing of victim-survivors being the primary consideration.

The Reference Group agreed that these outcomes should inform the consultation plan. They also discussed the importance of the consultation process being community based, culturally responsive and tailored to suit the needs of diverse victim-survivor groups.

## **Next steps**

The Project Team has engaged the Gender Research Network at Curtin University to produce a literature review of the evidence base on sexual violence prevention and response. A copy of the literature review will be provided to members prior to the next meeting. The Project Team is also progressing a service mapping exercise to identify organisations across the state that engage (directly or indirectly) with victim-survivors of sexual violence. The findings from these activities, along with the outcomes of the consultative forum will be used to inform a draft consultation plan for the Reference Group's consideration.

The next Reference Group meeting will be held in September 2022. Please feel free to distribute this Communique to your wider networks. Communiques and other relevant documents for the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy are also available on the Office of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime website at <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-justice/commissioner-victims-of-crime/sexual-violence-prevention-and-response-strategy>.