

## Sexual Violence Prevention

# BACKGROUND PAPER

## Sexual Violence Prevention: Having the conversation

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If you, or anyone you know, needs assistance after they have experienced sexual violence, you may wish to phone the Queensland Sexual Assault Helpline on 1800 010 120 or visit the website <https://www.dvconnect.org/sexual-assault-helpline/>

# Introduction

The Queensland Government is developing a Sexual Violence Prevention Framework to help government, services and communities do the best we can to make sure sexual violence is prevented and that victims and survivors get the help they need.

To help us develop a framework that reflects the views of Queenslanders, we want to know how you feel about issues relating to sexual violence.

Your views matter, so there are a number of different ways you can share your thoughts with us. Until 30 April, you can fill out our online survey, make a written submission or attend a consultation forum in person - these are being held in cities and towns across Queensland.

You don't have to read this background paper, you may wish to go straight to the online survey at [www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au](http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au)

This background paper outlines what we know about sexual violence and its causes. It also sets out four priority areas we want your views on:

- Priority area 1: Education, awareness and cultural change
- Priority area 2: Supporting victims and survivors, holding perpetrators accountable
- Priority area 3: Meeting the needs of all Queenslanders
- Priority area 4: Strengthening and integrating the service system.

To help you think about these issues, we have suggested some conversation starters below.

## Education, awareness and cultural change

What do you think causes sexual violence?

Why do some people perpetrate sexual violence while others do not?

What do you think needs to change so sexual violence doesn't occur in our communities?

How can we make those changes happen?

## Supporting victims and survivors, holding perpetrators accountable

What can we do to better support people who have experienced sexual violence:

- as individuals?
- as governments and services?
- as a community?

If you have experienced sexual violence or supported someone who has, did you seek help and support? If so, what did you find helpful and what (if anything) could have been done better?

## Meeting the needs of all Queenslanders

What do you think are specific issues relating to sexual violence in your community?

How can government and non-government services make sure our responses are inclusive of all Queenslanders and meet the needs of different groups and individuals?

## Strengthening and integrating the service system

How can we improve the system of services (e.g. sexual assault services, police, health) to support people who have experienced sexual violence and hold perpetrators accountable?

Do you know of any approaches that are already working well in Queensland, or in other states or countries?

# What is sexual violence?

## What is sexual violence?

When we talk about sexual violence, we mean all forms of sexual violence, including, but not limited to, sexual assault and rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse via technology such as messaging apps, and child sexual abuse. More information about these forms of sexual violence and other key terms is included in the glossary on page 11.

## What are the causes of sexual violence?

There are many reasons sexual violence occurs in our society. Research<sup>i</sup> identifies five key drivers:

- **Sexism** – limited roles for women and viewing women as objects or second-class citizens
- **Power** – placing value on having power over others and maintaining that power
- **Violence** – attitudes that tolerate aggression and blame victims.
- **Masculinity** – traditional ideas about what it means to be a man, including domination, control and risk-taking.
- **Privacy** – a culture that encourages keeping sexual violence secret.

## Who experiences sexual violence?

1 in 5 women and 1 in 20 men have been sexually assaulted or threatened since the age of 15<sup>ii</sup>.

1 in 6 women and 1 in 9 men report they have been sexually and/or physically abused before the age of 15<sup>iii</sup>.

Women overall make up the highest proportion of victims of sexual assault – they are four times more likely than men to experience sexual assault after the age of 15.

Women, men, boys, girls, teenagers and older people, and people from all backgrounds, all education levels, all occupations and all places experience sexual violence.

Vulnerable groups include women with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children under the age of 10, young women aged 10-19, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ). These groups (and other groups who have experienced historical sexual abuse, particularly in institutions, including men) require specialist support and responses.

## Where does sexual violence occur?

Sexual violence can occur in homes, workplaces, schools, community, faith and sporting groups, and other public spaces – almost anywhere.

Most often, it occurs in homes and other domestic settings, and the perpetrator is well known to the victim, whether they be a partner, family member, friend, peer, colleague or acquaintance<sup>vi</sup>.

# About the Sexual Violence Prevention Framework

## Why do we need a sexual violence prevention framework in Queensland?

Sexual violence has a significant impact on individuals, families and communities in Queensland. It can have major health, social, emotional and economic impacts on victims, survivors, their families, and the broader community.

The Queensland Government strongly believes that sexual violence is unacceptable and is committed to preventing and responding to all forms of sexual violence in our communities.

There has already been progress in addressing sexual violence and other forms of violence (like domestic and family violence), but there is more work to be done to:

- change community attitudes
- prevent sexual violence from occurring
- better support victims and survivors.

## What will the framework do?

The framework will:

- set out a clear vision and objectives for addressing sexual violence in Queensland
- bring together the Government's progress to date on this issue
- set priorities for action that will guide the Government's future responses.

Sexual violence overlaps with many other forms of violence, including domestic and family violence and institutionalised abuse.

The framework will provide a holistic approach to preventing and responding to sexual violence, and bring together work related to sexual violence happening across the Queensland Government. This includes:

- actions in the *Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016-22*
- responses to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- actions to address youth sexual violence.

## Consultation overview

### Who will be consulted?

A range of different activities are taking place to ensure we hear the views of the community, victims and survivors, and experts.

We especially want to hear the voices of victims and survivors, to help us best understand their needs and how we can ensure they are given the best support in the hours, days, months and years following the violence they experienced.

We are talking to community members, service providers and academic experts to guide the development of the framework and our priorities for action. We will also work with the sexual violence and women's support sectors, including sexual assault services, advocacy organisations and peak bodies.

### How can you participate in the conversation?

**You can participate online through:**

#### Online survey

An online survey is available at [www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au](http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au) which will include key questions across four priority areas. The survey is open from 25 March to 30 April 2019.

#### Youth eHub

The Youth eHub is focused on engaging with young Queenslanders aged 13-25. Young people are invited to share their thoughts and ideas on sexual violence to inform the framework. The Youth eHub consultation is open from 25 March to 30 April 2019 at [e-hub.engagementhub.com.au](http://e-hub.engagementhub.com.au)

### Written submissions

Written submissions responding to this background paper and the conversation starters can be sent to [violence\\_prevention\\_team@csyw.qld.gov.au](mailto:violence_prevention_team@csyw.qld.gov.au). Written submissions are due by 30 April 2019.

**You can participate in person through:**

#### Community forums

Community forums will be held across selected locations in Queensland. For further information visit [www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au](http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au)

Anyone with an interest in sexual violence prevention is encouraged to attend a forum in their area, particularly:

- people who have experienced sexual violence
- family members, friends and other supporters of people who have experienced sexual violence
- people who work in the sexual violence support sector or with victims and survivors of sexual violence
- advocates, academics and other experts
- people with a personal interest in sexual violence prevention.

The next pages set out details of what we know and are already doing about sexual violence – you don't have to read them if you don't want to and can go straight to the survey at [www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au](http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au)

## Priority area #1

# Education, awareness and cultural change

### What we know

Research and evidence from Queensland, Australia and internationally has consistently shown that communities are more likely to have high rates of sexual violence when:

- sexist, derogatory and outdated attitudes towards women and girls are seen as normal
- sexual violence and coercion is tolerated or excused (e.g. 'boys will be boys') and sexual harassment is seen as 'not a big deal'
- victims of sexual violence are blamed, and having experienced sexual violence is seen as something shameful.

While there are more public conversations about sexual violence happening, prompted by campaigns such as #metoo and initiatives such as the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, we know that harmful views about sexual violence persist and are seen as normal by some. These have the biggest impact on women, but also on children and young people of all genders, and men.

Our Watch, Australia's leading organisation for preventing violence against women and children, says violence is not an inevitable fact of life – it's a product of the society we live in, and we can change that. By focusing on education and awareness of the beliefs and behaviours which allow sexual violence to occur, calling out against these attitudes and behaviour, and holding perpetrators accountable, we can create cultural change and contribute to ending sexual violence.

### What we are already doing

The Queensland Government is raising awareness and supporting cultural change by:

- Releasing and implementing the *Queensland Women's Strategy 2016-21* and *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016-22*.
- Making the Respectful Relationships education program available in all Queensland schools.
- Supporting community organisations to raise awareness through the 2019 Sexual Violence Prevention Grants Program.
- Supporting Sexual Violence Awareness Month activities in October each year.
- Making community education a key element of new initiatives addressing sexual violence, for example in the three youth sexual violence trials being rolled out in 2019 and 2020.

### Spotlight on: findings from the National Community Attitudes Survey, 2017

The National Community Attitudes to Violence against Women survey is undertaken every four years. The 2017 results show some very worrying views about relationships and sexual violence:

- Up to 15% of people think it's justified for a man to force a woman to have sex if she kisses him first.
- 1 in 10 people think that if a woman falls asleep during sex, it's understandable if a man keeps having sex with her anyway.
- 13% of people believe that if a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible.
- Nearly 1 in 3 people believe that if a woman sends a nude image to her partner, she is partially responsible if he shares it without permission.
- Nearly half of Australians think it is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men.

Attitudes like these are wrong and reflect myths about sexual violence that need to change.

## Priority area #2

# Supporting victims and survivors, holding perpetrators accountable

### What we know

Queensland has a problem with sexual violence against women, children and men. In 2017, the Queensland Police Service recorded 4,651 victims of sexual assault – increasing for the sixth year in a row (*QPS 2017*). Statistics on sexual violence (in particular those on sexual assault) show that those most at risk include women (in particular young women) and children of all genders. In Queensland, young women aged 10-19 make up half of all female victims of sexual assault, and boys aged 0-14 make up half of all male victims (*QPS 2017*). In most cases, the perpetrator of sexual violence is a male who is already known to the victim, whether it be a partner, family member, friend or acquaintance. In 2016-17, 95% of recorded sexual offences in Queensland were committed by men (*QPS 2017*).

There is a lot of stigma associated with sexual violence. Many people believe sexual violence is shameful and shouldn't be talked about. We know only a small proportion of victims ever report their experiences or seek support. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, up to 75% of sexual assaults are never reported to the police. This is true of different types of sexual violence. For example, a recent national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces found that fewer than one in five people who had experienced sexual harassment at work had made a formal report or complaint. Clearly, the problem is worse than the statistics indicate.

Victims and survivors of sexual violence often don't know what support is available, may have trouble accessing services that meet their needs or may be fearful of reporting the violence. Friends, family and community members may not know how they can help. Governments, services, communities and individuals all have a role to play in supporting victims and survivors in ways that minimise trauma, promote healing and hold perpetrators – not victims and survivors – accountable.

### What we are already doing

The Queensland Government is supporting victims and survivors by:

- Providing \$10.1 million for 29 sexual assault service in 2018-19, and \$3.4 million for child sexual abuse counselling services.
- Investing \$7.7 million in new and enhanced services focusing on youth sexual violence, in addition to \$1.2 million for youth sexual violence responses in West Cairns and Aurukun.
- Funding the DVConnect Sexual Assault helpline.
- Participating in the National Redress Scheme for institutional child sexual abuse victims and survivors
- Introducing a sexual assault counselling privilege and automatic special victim status for adult victims of sexual assault.

Additionally, the Queensland Government is considering submissions from legal stakeholders on the question of consent and how it relates to the 'mistake of fact' defence.

### Spotlight on: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

- In 2017, the Royal Commission's final report exposed the widespread abuse of children and young people in institutions in Australia.
- It found sexual abuse of children and young people is not just a historical issue, but one that continues today, including outside of institutional contexts.
- A number of the Royal Commission's recommendations focus on supporting survivors and preventing child sexual abuse in the present and into the future.
- The Royal Commission also identified that child sexual abuse can also be perpetrated by children against other children.





## Priority area #3

# Meeting the needs of all Queenslanders

### What we know

Many Queenslanders experience disadvantage or discrimination that can make it difficult to access services and support after having experienced sexual violence. This may be because of barriers associated with poverty, cultural or linguistic background, diverse gender or sexual orientation, age, disability, or poor mental and/or physical health. Those who experience multiple forms of disadvantage at once find it harder to get the support they need.

Responses to sexual violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be culturally appropriate and sensitive to issues that may compound the trauma or create barriers to seeking support.

People (especially women) who experience multiple forms of disadvantage are more likely to experience sexual violence, and less likely to be able to access support from services and the justice system. The experience of sexual violence can have short and long term impacts on victims and survivors, and the experience can compound or add to a vulnerable person's existing problems.

A one-size fits all approach to preventing sexual violence and supporting victims and survivors isn't going to work for all Queenslanders – we need targeted responses that take into account the unique experiences and situations of different groups of victims and survivors.

### What we are already doing

The Queensland Government is already supporting the needs of diverse groups of Queenslanders by:

- Providing funding of \$1.54 million in 2018-19 for six sexual assault services with a specific focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, men and boys, women with disabilities, young women, and women in prison.
- Providing funding of \$3.4 million in 2018-19 for child sexual abuse counselling services.
- Supporting children in the child protection system by ensuring they have priority access to services to help their recovery from sexual abuse.
- Investing in specific responses to youth sexual violence, including a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

### Spotlight on: groups of people at higher risk of experiencing sexual violence

- Women and girls – 83% of victims of reported sexual assault in Queensland (*QPS, 2017*).
- Boys under the age of 15 – 53% of male victims of reported sexual assault in Queensland (*QPS, 2017*).
- Women and girls with disability – A 2007 study found that over a quarter of victims of sexual assault had a psychiatric or intellectual disability, despite making up just 3% of the population (*AIHW, 2018*).
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – 12% of victims of reported sexual assault in Queensland, despite making up only 4% of the population (*ABS, 2016*).
- Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds – while statistics are not readily available, some sources estimate the majority of women from a refugee background have experienced sexual assault (*AIFS, 2018*).
- LGBTIQ people – while there is more research to be done, one study of 5,500 LGBTIQ people found that 25% experienced sexual assault within a same-sex relationship, despite representing around 11% of the population (*AIHW, 2018*).

## Priority area #4

# Strengthening and integrating the service system

### What we know

The Queensland Government funds 29 sexual assault services across Queensland, including six specialist services which support specific groups in the community. These services are doing incredible work to support people who have been victims of sexual violence, but they cannot do it alone.

Research across many types of social services shows strong evidence that there are improved outcomes for victims and survivors when different parts of the service system work together and focus on each individual's personal needs.

In Queensland, government has begun applying this approach across a range of service systems, including child protection and domestic and family violence, and is seeing good results.

Sexual assault services have called for better integration between support services and other parts of the system that responds to sexual violence, such as police, hospitals and other health services, and courts. We are currently trialling a program where sexual assault services, police and health services work more closely together in Townsville (the Sexual Assault Response Trial, or SART).

While Queensland's sexual violence service system is strong, we know we must always look out for new approaches and take on board new evidence. We want to know about what is working well in Queensland, other states, and other countries, to ensure our approach to stopping sexual violence and supporting victims and survivors in Queensland is world-class.

### What we are already doing

The Queensland Government is working towards a stronger and more integrated service system by:

- Providing \$10.1 million for 29 sexual assault services in 2018-19.
- Investing \$7.7 million over four years from 2018-19 in new and enhanced services focusing on youth sexual violence.
- Providing \$3.4 million in 2018-19 for child sexual abuse counselling services.
- Trialling multi-agency service responses to child sexual abuse in Townsville and the Gold Coast
- Supporting the Townsville Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) trial.
- Redeveloping the interagency guidelines for responding to people who have experienced sexual assault.

### Spotlight on: Victim Assist Queensland

- Victim Assist leads and coordinates the victim services sector in Queensland and assists government and non-government agencies to comply with the Charter of Victims' Rights.
- Victim Assist also provides financial assistance to victims of personal acts of violence including sexual offences committed against adults and children.
- Eligible victims of sexual offences may receive financial assistance of up to \$75,000 through Victim Assist.

Victim Assist's service coordination work includes:

- An information and referral service for victims of personal acts of violence
- Administration of funding (a recurrent funding program and funding for capacity-building within the victim sector)
- Education and training to government and non-government agencies to broaden community knowledge of victims' rights, including victims of sexual violence.

## Glossary

**ABS** – Australian Bureau of Statistics

**AIFS** – Australian Institute of Family Studies

**AIHW** – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

**Child sexual abuse** – any act by an adult involving a child in sexual activity which they can't understand or goes against accepted community standards. This can include any kind of sex or sexual touching of a child, someone exposing themselves to a child, taking or sharing sexual pictures of a child, or any other sexual activity that harms a child physically, mentally or emotionally.

**Domestic and family violence** – when one person in an intimate personal, family or informal care relationship uses violence or abuse to maintain power and control over the other person. Under Queensland law, it includes behaviour that is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive, threatening, coercive or aimed at controlling or dominating another person through fear.

**Image-based abuse** – when someone takes or shares a nude or sexual image of another person without their consent or permission. It also includes threatening to share images with other people, such as friends, family, workplaces, or on social media. Both of these are illegal in Queensland. Image-based abuse is sometimes called 'revenge porn' or 'non-consensual sharing of intimate images.'

**QPS** – Queensland Police Service

**Rape** – when someone has sex, or tries to have sex, with someone else without their consent. See also **sexual assault**.

**Sexual assault** – any unwanted sexual act that is forced on a person without their consent – including by intimidation, physical force, or coercion. Sexual assault includes rape and attempted rape, as well as unwanted sexual touching or groping, or being forced to perform a sexual act on another person.

**Sexual harassment** – any form of unwelcome or unwanted sexual attention. Sexual harassment includes unwanted touching, kissing, grabbing, suggestive or explicit jokes or comments, staring or leering, unwanted requests for sex, showing someone unwanted sexually explicit or offensive images, and asking intrusive questions or making intrusive comments about someone's body or personal life.

**Sexual violence** – a broad, catch-all term that is used to describe all forms of sexual assault, sexual harassment, image-based abuse, and child sexual abuse.

**Technology-facilitated sexual violence** – any form of sexual harassment or assault that is 'facilitated' or made possible through new technologies. This can include unwanted sexting, stalking using mobile and social media technology, harassing and repetitive text messages or phone calls of a sexual nature, using technology such as webcams or phone cameras to record sexual activity (either consensual or non-consensual) without people's consent, and sharing images or video without people's consent.

**Youth sexual violence and abuse** – refers to sexual contact between persons where either the perpetrator or the victim (or both) is under 18 years of age and where such contact is non-consensual, violent or illegal. Such contact is non-consensual if any of the following apply: either person is under the age of consent or lacks the capacity to consent; a situation of imbalance of power exists; there is present a threat or coercion to either person.

## References

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- <sup>i</sup> National Sexual Violence Resource Centre (USA). 2006. *Sexual Violence and the Spectrum of Prevention: Towards a Community Solution*. <https://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications/sexual-violence-and-spectrum-prevention-towards-community-solution>
- <sup>ii</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2017. *Personal Safety, Australia, 2016*
- <sup>iii</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Safety Survey 2016 & Recorded Crime – Victims, Australia, 2017*
- <sup>iv</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2017. *Personal Safety, Australia, 2016*. Compared to the overall female violence rate of 4.7%, women aged 18-24 were the most likely to have experienced violence. In 2016, an estimated 12% of women aged 18-24 years experienced violence in the 12 months prior to interview. In 2016, an estimated 5.9% of women with a disability or long-term health condition experienced violence in the 12 months prior to interview.
- <sup>v</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. 2016. *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016*. Productivity Commission: Canberra.
- <sup>vi</sup> Queensland Police Service. 2017. *Annual statistical review 2016-17*.