December 7, 2025

Response to launch of the Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Strategy

Quotes attributable to Dr Alison Evans, CEO

The Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing has long advocated for a Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy in WA to provide a coordinated, comprehensive approach to prevention, support, and response, addressing systemic issues and ensuring that victim-survivors receive the resources and justice they need and perpetrators are held accountable.

Today we welcome the release of the "*Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy 2025-2035: Addressing sexual violence together*". This is a long overdue piece to drive our responses to the high rates of sexual violence across Western Australia.

"Sexual violence is a serious issue that can have devastating, cumulative and long-lasting effects on the lives of victims and survivors, their families and communities. The scale and severity of sexual violence makes it a nationally significant issue, requiring a nationally coordinated response. The entire system requires fundamental, systemic and transformational change. The time has come for real and meaningful change."

We are relieved to see an acknowledgement of the urgent need for coordination and leadership on sexual violence at a state level. We have long called for a cross-government, cross-sector mechanism and we are pleased that this is being prioritised in the action plan. The current absence of a comprehensive, joined-up approach has seen too many victim-survivors without the supports and services they need.

Additionally, we are pleased to see a commitment to a sexual violence data review. This was a key recommendation from CWSW's Review of the specialist Sexual Assault Support Services in 2024 and we look forward to working in partnership with the Government on this.

Sexual violence is at crisis levels, since 2017 there has been a more than 40% increase in reports of recent sexual assaults to WA Police, and recent ABS data recorded sexual assaults in WA at the highest recorded number of victims in the thirty-two-year time series – with nearly half of all victims of sexual assault aged between 10 and 17 years.

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“Despite crisis levels of sexual violence, specialist sexual assault and child sexual abuse support services are under untenable strain and are significantly underfunded to provide timely responses to victim-survivors who are reaching out to them for support. It weighs heavily on these services that they are unable to engage in any outreach to provide lifelines to the many victim-survivors who don’t know where to turn for help.”

We know that changing attitudes and behaviours takes time, but there has not been enough investment in primary prevention for that to occur in a generation and women and children continue to experience crisis levels of rape, assault and violence right now.

“While we are thankful that the strategy identifies sustainable funding of the specialist frontline sexual violence services as a priority, we are dismayed by the absence of a funding commitment to these life-saving services. The current frontline specialist sexual violence infrastructure in WA is threadbare. As a result too many victim-survivors are going without the bare minimum level of support. It is critical that the specialist sexual assault support services are available to victim-survivors when they need it, where they need it to be safe and recover from the impacts of their experiences.”

“If we are serious about ending sexual violence and supporting victim-survivors to rebuild their lives, an immediate uplift in funding is the bare minimum required. Victim-survivors are already paying the price for this neglect, and every delay only deepens the harm.”

Ends.

Media enquiries
Jessica Murray
0478 214 619