

A Primary Prevention Plan to Address Gendered Violence across Queensland

Position Paper – Queensland Equal and Together Alliance

The Queensland Equal and Together Alliance (QuETA) acts as a collective to eliminate gendered violence by making gender equity and inclusion more widely understood and practiced across Queensland.

As a collective QuETA focuses on the primary prevention of gendered violence by engaging in a range of activities, including but not limited to sharing best practices and resources on primary prevention, leveraging collective wisdom and efforts to contribute to research and advocacy, collaborating on events and campaigns that aim to educate and engage the broader community, and partnering with other organisations and efforts for gender equity and inclusion.

QuETA members bring a range of expertise for primary prevention of gendered violence, with touchpoints across community, government, education, research and private entities in Queensland. Members have a strong interest in contributing to collective efforts for sustainable and widespread change to the cultures across Queensland (and nation-wide) that contribute to increased rates of gendered violence.

The Queensland Government has an opportunity with the first statewide primary prevention plan to address gendered violence to build strong foundations for widespread cultural change. As an Alliance, we see this plan as an opportunity to move beyond awareness raising, to build the understanding and skills for prevention action among both the primary prevention workforce, and the wider community. We all have a role to play in ending gendered violence and contributing to a safe, equitable and inclusive Queensland.

Our vision:

For members of the Queensland Equal and Together Alliance (QuETA) a strong, aspirational vision is central to reaching shared outcomes for equality for all.

QuETA members describe the future of Queensland through the following vision for primary prevention of gendered violence:

Everyone, regardless of their gender, cultural background, sexuality and ability feels safe in their community. They have access to safe, secure and adequate housing, where families do not live in fear of violence or abuse. They are respected members of community, sporting and recreational groups where cultures of respect and equality are fostered. They have the knowledge, skills and ability to exercise their individual rights in relationships, workplaces and education settings. They are equipped to support others within their communities, schools and workplaces, and to challenge the attitudes and behaviours that contribute to a world where violence is excused and accepted as the norm. All members of the community are supported to reach their full potential – in their relationships, health status, socially and economically.

Our statewide systems and institutions uphold the wellbeing of all Queenslanders. They ensure accountability for any violence, discrimination or harassment, and they actively address social inequities that create the environment where this violence occurs. There is strong political, institutional and societal support for those members of the community that speak out against the many forms of violence and inequity.

A primary prevention approach:

In developing a state-wide primary prevention plan to address gendered violence in Queensland, dedicated consideration of the approaches that will be adopted is needed in order to see that this plan contributes to

the vision we have outlined above. Achieving this vision will require a multilayered approach, consisting of multiple strategies to address the complex social conditions that drive violence in the first place. QuETA supports the evidence-base outlined in OurWatch’s [Change the Story](#) Framework (2021) and encourages the Queensland Government to be guided by this body of work. To be impactful, a primary prevention approach must include:

Intersectionality and solutions for community, driven by community –

First and foremost, any primary prevention plan developed should feature solutions for the Queensland community, driven by the Queensland community. Our community is diverse and bring unique experiences, needs and perspectives of which should inform future action.

Employing an intersectional approach is about more than listing the different identities that Queenslanders hold; it is about understanding how their unique experiences are shaped by the intersecting and oppressive structures they interact with across their lives. Beyond this, it is about considering the different ways in which discrimination, harassment and violence play out in our communities to be able to address the root causes of this discrimination, harassment and violence and not simply responding to the symptoms we can see.

A focus on the gendered drivers of violence –

Gendered violence, including violence against women, is not caused or determined by any single factor. The gendered drivers of violence arise from discriminatory institutional, social and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, community, family or relationship practices that *together* create environments in which men and women are not equal, and violence against women is more likely ([OurWatch, 2021](#)).

Driver 1: Condoning of violence against women.	Driver 2: Men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence in public and private life.	Driver 3: Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.	Driver 4: Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.
--	---	--	---

Source: Our Watch 2021, [Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia \(second edition\)](#), Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.

Therefore, approaches that aim to transform the underlying social and cultural environments that endorse violence should address these drivers in a holistic way that recognises how they interact with and reinforce one another, and how they intersect with other factors. This needs to be applied at all levels, from the individual to the societal ([OurWatch, 2021](#)).

Actions that address factors that reinforce gendered violence –

Additional factors influence the occurrence and dynamics of gendered violence. These reinforcing factors are context-specific – meaning that they each operate in different ways and need to be considered within the particular circumstances in which they occur ([OurWatch, 2021](#)).

Reinforcing factor 1: Condoning of violence in general.	Reinforcing factor 2: Experience of, and exposure to, violence.	Reinforcing factor 3: Factors that weaken prosocial behaviour.	Reinforcing factor 4: Resistance and backlash to prevention and gender equality efforts.
---	---	--	--

Source: Our Watch 2021, [Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia \(second edition\)](#), Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.

For this reason, prevention actions that aim to address the factors that reinforce gendered violence should be created following careful analysis of their impact and influence within the specific context (or part of society) that they present. Linked to our first point, above, community input is needed to understand the contextual influence and impact of specific factors that reinforce gendered violence in order to effectively address them.

A population-level (or public health) approach –

A population-level approach to primary prevention of gendered violence ‘goes beyond addressing individual behaviours to consider the broader social, political and economic factors that drive violence’ ([OurWatch, 2021](#)). A population-level approach seeks to uncover the necessary strategies for addressing the common drivers of violence, whilst recognising that some groups of women are more likely to experience particular forms of violence, or more frequent or more severe violence. Combined with targeted strategic and actions to address violence in particular sub-populations, a population-level approach expands across communities to reach people in a range of settings.

Intervention across a range of settings –

Primary prevention efforts ‘need to engage people across the many settings where they live, work, learn, socialise and play, and involve the people, professionals and communities who are part of these settings’ ([OurWatch, 2021](#)). Through working with key settings – such as in early childhood, primary and secondary education, tertiary education and training organisations, workplaces, sports clubs, and in the media – individuals and communities can be engaged with primary prevention initiatives over their life course. By building on individual experiences across a range of contexts, we reinforce the attitudes, behaviours and beliefs that support equality for all.

Mechanisms to coordinate prevention efforts, including connecting and expanding on existing work –

To create lasting change, a primary prevention approach should support efforts that address broader inequities and the social conditions that increase the likelihood and severity of gendered violence. This involves embedding a prevention approach that reaches across government departments and sectors, connecting the work that is happening to address inequity in one sector with the efforts of others. Addressing the social determinants of health appropriately is fundamental for improving health and reducing longstanding inequities in health, which requires action by all sectors and civil society ([World Health Organisation, n.d.](#)).

Additionally, coordination across multiple levels supports the integration of gender equity and violence prevention into the work of established agencies, organisations and networks, as well as the scaling-up, systematisation and embedding of approaches that are effective at preventing violence against women, and funding of grants to support evidence building ([OurWatch, 2021](#)).

Mechanisms to support partnerships and leadership at all levels –

Complex problems, including addressing gendered violence, require collaborative effort across settings and sectors. Systems thinking theory tells us that a range of skills and expertise are needed to enable change; that is, we don’t need everybody doing the same thing but instead working in a mutually reinforcing way that makes the most of the unique leadership skills and influence that each actor brings to the work ([Davidson & Morgan, 2018](#)).

Mechanisms to support research, evaluation and monitoring of progress –

Primary prevention of gendered violence is gaining momentum across Australia and comes with an emerging research-base. There is a range of primary prevention action taking place across Queensland, however

progress is not consistently monitored across the state meaning that collective outcomes are not well understood. By embedding a strong framework for evaluation we can collectively contribute to the local evidence-base, further developing our understanding of what works (and what doesn't) for communities across Queensland.

Dedicated and enduring funding –

All of this is only possible with the ongoing support of the Queensland Government through dedicated resourcing and funding. Understanding of, and commitment to, a primary prevention approach will be evident in the ways in which the wider community and workforce are supported to implement prevention activities across Queensland, measure progress overtime and contribute to a shared evidence-base for the state.

Our priorities:

The Queensland Equal and Together Alliance (QuETA) recommends that the following priorities are featured in a state-wide primary prevention plan to address gendered violence.

1. Build prevention structures and systems:

This priority encompasses three key areas for dedicated resourcing, thoughtful leadership and strategic action:

a. Coordinate and fund prevention activities, alliances and infrastructure.

For Queensland's first primary prevention plan to address gendered violence to be successful, prevention activities need to be overseen and coordinated within and across all levels of government, and with community, corporate partners and stakeholders. We are in a position to learn from our Victorian colleagues whom, in implementing [Free From Violence: Victoria's Prevention Strategy](#), endorsed a new prevention agency in Respect Victoria. The role of Respect Victoria is to provide a strengthened focus on primary prevention and to coordinate and develop partnerships across both public and private sectors.

b. Develop workforce capacity for action.

Queensland's prevention workforce is multidisciplinary and diverse and comprises a wide range of roles. New research from [OurWatch \(2023\)](#) tells us that 'primary prevention workers operate in complex and frequently unknown contexts, and are often building the evidence and practice knowledge as they do the work'.

Specific strategies for developing workforce capacity are needed for each distinct group of professionals working across primary prevention (technical and content experts, specialist primary prevention professionals, settings or sector-based professionals, and potential primary prevention professionals) to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in their work ([OurWatch, 2023](#)). Strategies aimed at developing the capability of the presentation workforce need to be holistic and complimentary, appropriate to the skills required for each role.

c. Enable partnerships for prevention.

This work is not possible without the buy-in of community and grassroots organisations who interact with the broader community every day. Strong investment is needed in locally-led initiatives for prevention to see that efforts are appropriate and applicable to the populations

they seek to engage. Community organisations contribute significantly, often with very little resources, due to the strength of the partnerships and relationships they foster. With this plan there is the opportunity for the Queensland Government to support and enable strong and collaborative partnerships for prevention, including through measuring their collective impact.

2. Undertake outcomes-focused evaluation and research.

It is integral that the Queensland Government adopts a strong, outcomes-focused framework for evaluation and monitoring of prevention strategies outlined in this new plan. An outcomes-focused evaluation framework should seek to measure short- and long-term changes in community attitudes and behaviours, as well as those systemic changes that are required to prevent violence before it occurs.

The work of building a local evidence-base is as important as the prevention interventions themselves. Through an iterative learning process, we will develop our collective understanding of what works (and what doesn't) in our unique Queensland context. Through strong investment in and commitment to measuring progress overtime, we are well-placed to develop the theories for primary prevention in action from the practice itself.

Respect Victoria has developed a strong example of a state-wide monitoring and evaluation strategic framework to support activities outlined in Free From Violence: Victoria's Prevention Strategy. The Framework is accessible [here](#).

3. Develop community capability for prevention.

In addition to building the capacity of the Queensland prevention workforce, strategies for developing community capability for prevention are also needed. We see two over-arching strategies emerging here to increase the community's understanding of gendered violence and confidence to act: fully embed respectful relationship education into all Queensland schools and invest in localised programs to build community skills and confidence for gender equity.

Respectful relationships education that effectively engages students, parents and the wider community needs to be consistently delivered across the state, utilising an evidence-based whole-of-school approach to ensure efforts are connected and reinforced across: school culture and environment, school leadership and commitment, professional learning strategy, teaching and learning, community partnerships and support for staff and students ([OurWatch 2021](#)).

Localised, place-based prevention programs that work with, and harness the influence and relationships of, community organisations and groups are ideally placed to initiate meaningful change within subsets of the community which sets the impetus for broader social change.

Only with broad, ongoing community support will it be possible to create lasting change.

As an Alliance, we look forward to continuing to support the efforts of the Queensland Government to fully embed primary prevention of gendered violence across our communities, workplaces and schools, and within all government programs and systems. With this first dedicated plan comes the opportunity to build on existing primary prevention efforts and coordinate these for maximum impact. The Queensland Government has a responsibility to listen deeply to the needs of our communities and build the mechanisms to support sustained change, for many years to come. In partnership, we all have a role to play in ending gendered violence and contributing to a safe, equitable and inclusive Queensland.