



**BARWON AREA**

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**Integrated Family  
Violence Committee**

# **Strategic Plan**

## 2020-2023



## **Aboriginal acknowledgment**

The Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee acknowledges the First Nations Peoples and traditional custodians of the land and waterways across Barwon, the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud people of the Eastern Maar Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the Barwon Area, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. We recognise the leadership of Aboriginal communities and Elders in Victoria in preventing and addressing family violence, and improving outcomes for Aboriginal people, children, families and communities.

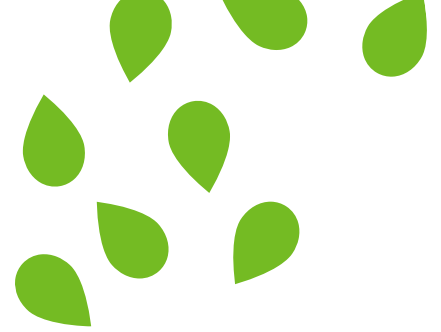
## **Acknowledgement of victim-survivors**

The BAIFVC acknowledges the strength and resilience of all victim survivors of family violence regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age and ability. We remember those who did not survive, and acknowledge friends and family members who have lost loved ones. We recognise that our efforts must be informed by the voices and lived experience of victim survivors. We also keep forefront in our minds all those who are experiencing family violence today for whom we undertake this work.

## **Family violence services and support**

If you have experienced family violence or sexual assault and require immediate or ongoing assistance, contact 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) to talk to a counsellor from the National Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence hotline. For confidential support and information, contact Safe Steps 24/7 family violence response line on 1800 015 188. If you are experiencing family violence, you can also contact the Barwon Orange Door on 1800 312 820, 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. If you are concerned for your safety or that of someone else, please contact the police in your location, or call 000 for emergency assistance.





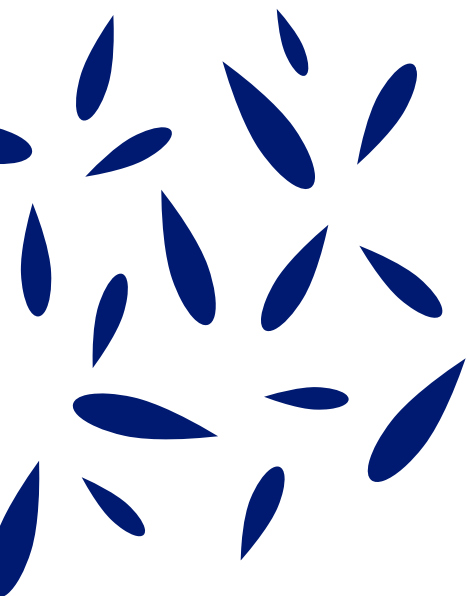
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# Who we are

The Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee (BAIFVC) provides leadership, advocacy and specialist expertise to strengthen, integrate and improve the family violence response system and help end family violence across Victoria's Barwon Area. The Barwon Area is defined by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and comprises four municipalities located to the south-west of metropolitan Melbourne. These are the City of Greater Geelong, Colac-Otway Shire, Surf Coast Shire, and the Borough of Queenscliffe.

BAIFVC has representation from specialist family violence services as well as broader cross-sector organisations and alliances whose work intersects with family violence response, early intervention and prevention. Committee members, including the Leadership Group, are all senior leaders involved in strengthening the family violence system and ending family violence in the Barwon Area.



## **BAIFVC has representation from:**

- Specialist women's family violence and sexual assault service
- Specialist men's family violence service
- Family Safety Victoria
- Victoria Police
- Child & Family Services Alliances
- Department of Health & Human Services
- Adolescent family violence service
- Dhelk Dja Regional Action Group
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
- Community legal service
- Magistrates' Court
- Housing & homelessness service & network coordinator
- Health service
- Victims Assistance Program
- Victoria Legal Aid
- Organisation providing services to culturally & linguistically diverse communities
- Specialist reintegration organisation
- Family Relationship Centre
- Department of Justice & Community Safety
- Department of Education & Training

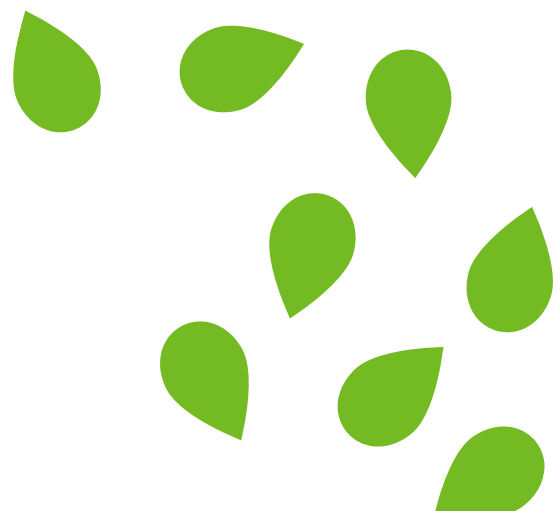


# Our planning context

BAIFVC is one of 14 regional family violence committees or partnerships that exist across Victoria. As local system governance structures, these committees are integral to the success of the Victorian Government's current agenda to transform family violence under *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's plan for change*.

*Ending Family Violence* is the Victorian Government's plan to deliver on all the recommendations of the historic Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence which concluded in 2016. Since its release, *Ending Family Violence* has seen an unprecedented breadth and pace of family violence reform and transformation across Victoria, with initiatives set to continue over several years.

BAIFVC is well-placed to **inform, influence** and **shape** the priorities and directions of the state-wide family violence reform agenda as the Victorian Government implements initiatives of *Ending Family Violence* across Victoria, including in the Barwon Area.





## Victorian policy and legislation that frame our strategic planning context

- *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's plan for change* (2016) and its three-year rolling action plans
- *Building from Strength: 10-year industry plan for family violence prevention and response* (2017) and its three-year rolling action plans
- *Dhelk Dja Safe Our Way: Strong cultures, strong peoples, strong families* (Family Violence Agreement 2018–2028)
- *Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women* (2017)
- *Safe and Strong: A Victorian gender equality strategy* (2016)
- *Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children* (2016)
- *Family Violence Protection Act 2008 and Family Violence Protection (Information Sharing and Risk Management) Regulations 2018*
- *Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018* (created Respect Victoria as an independent statutory authority focused on primary prevention)
- *Gender Equality Act* (2020)

## National policy context for our strategic planning

- *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2012–2022 and its Fourth Action Plan 2019–2022*



# Our unique value proposition

Our unique value proposition to the Victorian Government and *Ending Family Violence* is three-fold.<sup>1</sup>

## **Local system focus**

We have a steadfast focus on the family violence system as it exists and is understood in the specific geographic and system (or place-based) contexts of the Barwon Area.

## **Family violence lens**

We maintain a resolute focus on evidence-based understandings of family violence in our accountability to the diverse experiences, choices, safety and long-term recovery of victim survivors, and by keeping perpetrators accountable and squarely in view through an integrated system approach.

## **Across all workforces**

We are strongly focused on reaching into, and building the capacity and capability of, all workforces in sectors that intersect with the family violence system in the Barwon Area, especially in achieving greater consistency in family violence risk identification, assessment and management.

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<sup>1</sup>*Family Violence Regional Integration Project: Strengthening the case for the future of regional integration*, October 2018, p. 12.





# Our history

BAIFVC was formally established in January 2014. Prior to 2014, the BAIFVC was part of a larger Barwon South-West Integrated Family Violence Committee (BSWIFVC). The BSWIFVC was impacted by structural changes that occurred within the then Department of Human Services divisions and geographic boundaries which resulted in the creation of two separate areas: the Barwon Area, and the Wimmera-South West Area.

# Our vision

Our communities are free from family violence and the fear of family violence; our people are equal, respected and thriving.

# Our purpose

BAIFVC exists to drive family violence system integration and improvement to achieve safety, choice and accountability. We do this through our leadership, influence, collaborations, partnerships and innovations.



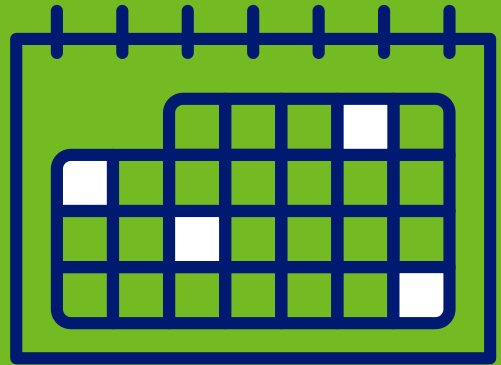
# Family violence facts and figures



Approximately **one quarter** of women in Australia have experienced at least one incident of **violence by an intimate partner**.

- **Most victim survivors** of intimate partner violence are **women**.

On average, **one woman a week is killed** by her intimate partner in Australia.



- Partner violence often occurs when women are **pregnant**.




Intimate partner violence is the **greatest health risk factor** (greater than smoking, alcohol and obesity) for women in their reproductive years.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience **high rates of violence** with significant health impacts.
- Many women **do not seek help** about their experience of violence.
- **People with disability** are **1.8 times as likely** to have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a partner in the previous year, compared with people without disability.
- People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ) experience intimate partner violence at **similar rates** as those who identify as heterosexual.



# Our principles

- Everyone has the right to live free from family violence and the fear of family violence.
- Ending family violence is a whole-of-community response. It is the collective responsibility of all levels of government, the non-government sector, justice and legal sectors, business sector, community, education and media.
- The experiences, choices, safety and long-term recovery of victim survivors of family violence are paramount to the work we do.
- Systems must keep perpetrators in view and hold them accountable for their choice to use family violence.
- Family violence is predominantly gendered in its contexts and dynamics, and is derived from, and maintained by, structural inequities and hierarchies that perpetuate gender inequality.
- All family violence occurs in the context of power imbalances that derive from, and are maintained by, *intersecting* structures of privilege and oppression. These intersecting structures drive and perpetuate manifestations of family violence that impact the lives of victim survivors across all facets of society.
- Family violence against Aboriginal people derives from, and is maintained by, the history of colonisation and the ongoing disempowering impacts of systemic racism, marginalisation and exclusion. Aboriginal self-determination is a fundamental right. It means exercising true freedom, full and total control of safety, healing, connections to land and culture, communities, futures and lives. (*Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way - Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families 2018*)

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- Children are victims of family violence too. Whether they experience abuse directly, or witness or hear it, family violence affects children's physical and emotional health and well-being. It can have a generational impact. It can 'normalise' violence in relationships for the children who experience it – children who will become the next generation of adults.
  - Sexual assault often co-occurs with family violence because it too arises from the same underlying power imbalances and structural causes.
  - The structural causes of family violence are socially constructed. They are not inevitable. Collective action on the structural causes of family violence is both possible and necessary if we are to end family violence once and for all.
  - We can be free of family violence.





# Our values

## **Accountability**

We are accountable to the experiences, safety, choices and long-term recovery of victim survivors of family violence in everything we do. We take an integrated system approach to keep those who use family violence accountable and firmly in view so their actions, and the impacts of their actions, cannot be justified, minimised, trivialised or excused, and blame cannot be shifted. We hold each other accountable to the improvement and change we seek in ending family violence in the Barwon Area.

## **Adaptiveness and agility**

We are adaptive and agile in considering solutions for Barwon Area's unique geographic and system (or place-based) contexts, including innovating to suit these contexts. We recognise the need to build adaptive capabilities, capacities and resilience to meet current and future challenges posed to our system, including the impacts of climate-related weather and natural disasters, public health emergencies, and other unforeseen large-scale events.

## **Barwon Area's uniqueness**

We value the diverse mix of larger regional centres, tourist towns, inland towns and rural communities that comprise the Barwon Area. We are a strong sustainable system that 'sits' neatly within the geographical boundaries and characteristics of the Barwon Area. As such, our relationships are sturdy and enduring as they have been built upon trust and over time. These are all assets for system integration and improvement.

## **Cultural safety**

We uphold cultural safety for Aboriginal organisations and communities partnering with us, and uphold their knowledge, self-determination and leadership in Aboriginal family violence response, early intervention and prevention.

## **Integrity**

We make evidence-informed decisions for system integration and improvement, and what we do contributes to the evidence base. We adhere to evidence-based understandings of family violence. We understand that family violence is predominantly a gendered issue; however, intersecting structures of privilege and oppression operate in different (not fixed) contexts to shape unique and diverse power imbalances and lived experiences of family violence.

## **Partnerships and collaborations**

We work collaboratively and with shared purpose to realise systemic and enduring changes in the family violence system, and to create conditions on multiple levels (individual, community and organisational) for an equal and just society. We know we have to contribute collectively and through partnerships to make any impact on the structural causes of family violence, to end family violence once and for all.

## **Respect and transparency**

We are respectful, transparent and open in our relationships, collaborations and communications with one another and those with whom we work. We seek to respond holistically, inclusively, respectfully and safely, particularly to all those with lived experiences of family violence.

## **Responsiveness, inclusivity and accessibility**

Wherever service users are, whatever time of day, no matter which entry point, our system must have the capacity and capability – especially around family violence risk – to respond equitably and inclusively to anyone seeking assistance and support.

# Our role and function

- **Provide expertise** and **leadership** on all matters relating to family violence and the family violence system in the Barwon Area. **Strive** continuously for system integration and improvement across the Barwon Area.
- **Advocate** on behalf of our family violence system and its unique contexts. **Influence** system designers and decision makers so that state-wide initiatives coming to the Barwon Area are articulated and delivered in a way that maximises benefits for our community.
- **Communicate** the inherent value articulation of our role in system integration and improvement, and in facilitating the state-wide reform agenda as initiatives roll through the Barwon Area.
- **Partner** with the Victorian Government and others as initiatives of *Ending Family Violence* are implemented in the Barwon Area.
- **Ensure evidence-informed design, sound planning, collaborations** and **linkages** take place, to integrate and improve Barwon Area's family violence system.

- **Innovate** and **evaluate** so we can contribute to the evidence base. **Share** our achievements and lessons learned as we build our evidence base for the Barwon Area.
- **Address** identified workforce capability development and capacity building needs through advocating for tailored resourced strategies and initiatives in the Barwon Area.
- **Enable** improved knowledge of the structural causes of family violence and **facilitate** more consistency in family violence risk literacy across the Barwon Area (i.e. the system and the community).
- **Acknowledge** that preventing family violence is everyone's business; **work purposefully** and **collaboratively** with primary prevention leaders and governance structures to prevent family violence from happening in the first place.





# Our strategic priorities at a glance

## **System integration and improvement**

To focus our advocacy and influencing role in achieving an integrated family violence system for the Barwon Area, and to enable us to collaborate and innovate as we continuously strive for system integration and improvement.

## **Workforce capability and capacity**

So we can support and facilitate the state-wide reform focus on work-forces across Victoria's family violence system through contributing our system expertise and leadership to initiatives in the Barwon Area.

## **Data and evidence**

So we can collect and use quality meaningful data to inform decisions and actions relating to system integration and improvement, workforce capability and capacity, and our governance; and so we can gauge the impact of our collective efforts to strengthen, integrate and improve the system.

## **Effective governance**

So we can continue to be the most expert and leading structure we can be for family violence system integration and improvement in the Barwon Area, and to support our communications, linkages, partnerships and collaborations.



## Priority 1

# System integration and improvement


We will continue to collaborate, coordinate, advocate and use our influence to build a family violence system in the Barwon Area that is integrated and promotes at all times the safety of those who are experiencing family violence, the accountability of those who choose to use family violence, and the wellbeing of all who engage with our system.

We will continue to maximise strategic opportunities for family violence system integration and improvement through evidence-informed design, piloting local innovations, and ensuring state-wide initiatives are implemented in ways that are a right fit for Barwon Area's contexts and conditions.

We will explore (i.e. conceptualise and design) a mechanism to capture the client or service user journey through our family violence system and the multiple systems that intersect with it (e.g. homelessness, mental health).

We will explore (i.e. conceptualise and design) an innovative independent system monitor function that routinely checks the family violence system, and feeds information to BAIFVC to support our strategic advocacy and influencing activities and facilitate our system expertise, system leadership and system integration activities.

We will engage and communicate with key Barwon Area communities and stakeholders, as revealed through data and evidence, on the role they play in an integrated family violence system.





## Priority 2

# Workforce capability and capacity

We will support and facilitate the state-wide *Building from Strength: 10-year industry plan for family violence prevention and response* so that workforces in the Barwon Area:

- have the capabilities and capacities for an integrated system response to family violence;
- understand the specific roles they each have in an integrated system response.

We will ensure that workforce initiatives arising from state-wide policy, including but not limited to information sharing scheme and MARAM activities, are implemented in ways that are a right fit for Barwon Area's conditions and contexts.

We will continuously assess and build adaptive workforce capabilities, capacities and resilience to meet challenges posed to our system by the impacts of climate-related weather and natural disasters, public health emergencies, and other unforeseen large-scale events.

We will forge meaningful linkages with Barwon Area's leading partnerships in primary prevention and (where appropriate) contribute to, and share in, their efforts to achieve gender equality and build cultures of respect in workplaces across our family violence system's workforces.

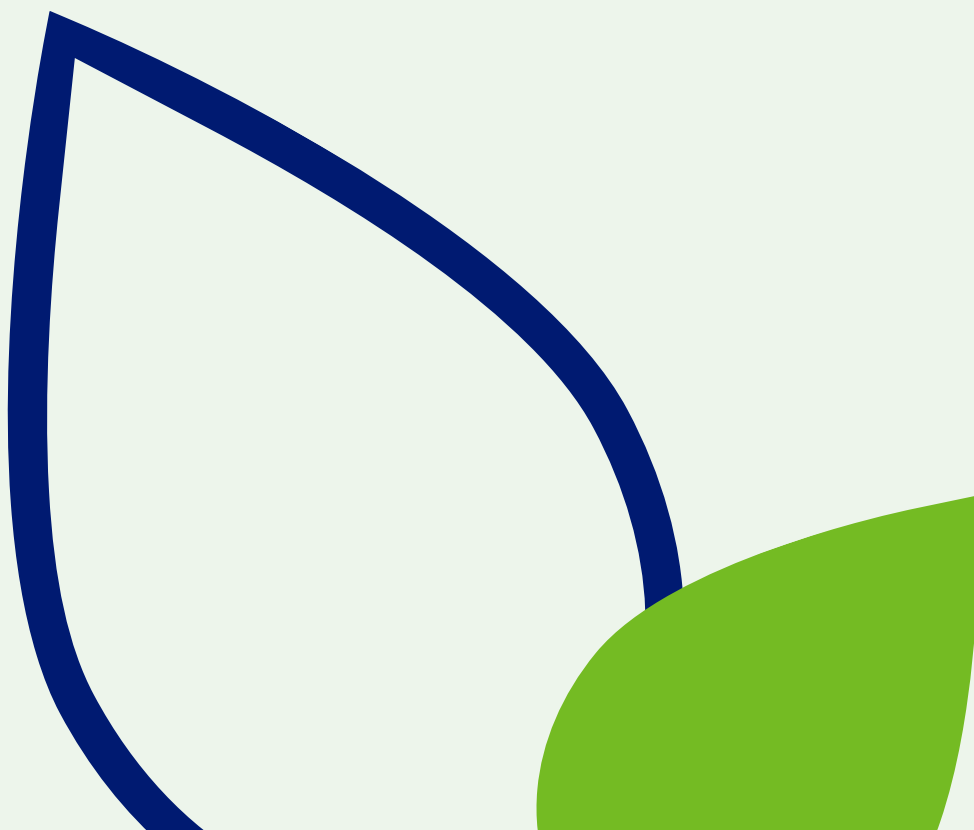


## Priority 3

# Data and evidence capability

We will develop our capacity and capability to utilise quality meaningful data and evidence for informed decision making, planning, improvement, advocacy and communications in relation to Barwon Area's family violence system.

We will establish shared measurement towards agreed long-term outcomes, and demonstrate the impact of our system integration and improvement efforts. We will implement the new state-wide Monitoring, Research and Evaluation Framework in ways that are a right fit for the Barwon Area.





## Priority 4

# Effective governance

We will continue to be recognised across the Barwon Area and by state-wide reform designers and decision makers as the most expert and leading structure for family violence system integration and improvement across the Barwon Area.

We will utilise our governance structure to maintain effective strategic oversight of the integration of and improvement to Barwon Area's family violence system. We will do this by:

- ensuring the high functionality of our structure and processes;
- maintaining and developing linkages with other governance structures;
- participating in broader strategic governance conversations and mechanisms in the Barwon Area.



# Monitoring and review

Our four strategic priorities and their objectives will inform 12-month operational action plans, which will include responsibilities, timeframes and 'progress measures' to monitor our performance as we implement the *BAIFVC Strategic Plan 2020–2023*.

Review and reflection will occur towards the end of each operational action plan to support the development of subsequent operational action plans and, in 2023, the development of BAIFVC's next strategic plan.

# Contact BAIFVC

For more information about the *BAIFVC Strategic Plan 2020–2023*, contact Elaine Williams, Principal Strategic Advisor, at **[ewilliams@bethany.org.au](mailto:ewilliams@bethany.org.au)**.

**[www.baifvc.org.au](http://www.baifvc.org.au)**

## Thank you to contributors

We are grateful for the commitment and participation of members of the BAIFVC who contributed to this Strategic Plan.

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Thank you to Chris de Hoog for the document design.

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**[www.baifvc.org.au](http://www.baifvc.org.au)**

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