

# SAFE+EQUAL

Standing strong  
against family  
violence

## Strategic Plan 2024–2027

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Safe and Equal acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional and ongoing custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We pay respects to Elders past and present.

We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded and recognise First Nations peoples' rights to self-determination and continuing connections to land, waters and community.



Safe and Equal honours the strength and resilience of adults, children and young people who have experienced family violence and recognises that it is essential that responses to family violence are informed by their expert knowledge and advocacy. We pay respects to those who have not survived and acknowledge the lasting impacts of this preventable violence on families and communities.

At Safe and Equal we value different perspectives, ways of thinking and ways of knowing. Our diversity is our strength.

We welcome people from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including people with disability and people with different cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, lived experiences, gender identities, sexual orientations and religions.

Together we foster a culture where everybody can belong, connect and succeed. We endeavour to be flexible and meet people where they are with openness and curiosity. We respect and honour First Nations peoples' rights to self-determination and cultural safety, and we work in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are bold in our advocacy for a more just world. We are an Equal Opportunity employer, an accredited Rainbow Tick workplace and do not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment.

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Safe and Equal is proud to present our Strategic Plan for 2024–27. After a period of world-leading reform in Victoria, we are stepping into a new era.

This Plan represents our commitment to our members, victim survivors, and community to lead through this new era – across the continuum including primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.

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## A message from the chair

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I am incredibly proud of this new Strategic Plan and the direction we have set for the next three years. It represents a new phase for our organisation, building on the inaugural Strategic Plan of the newly-merged Safe and Equal in 2021.

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In preparing this plan, we heard universally from members and stakeholders that we must be bold and brave in setting a path forward for ongoing system reform, and meaningful and inclusive change to prevent family and gender-based violence. So much has been achieved since the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, but we cannot slow down and we will have to advocate strongly to ensure ongoing funding and policy prioritisation.

In doing so, this Strategic Plan clearly sets out our commitment to delivering the social and structural shifts required to meet the needs of all victim survivors, and ultimately to end family and gender-based violence entirely. It is incumbent on the family violence sector to challenge and disrupt systems of power, but also to look inward and recognise these patterns in our own practice – where we can do better in integrating intersectional approaches and ensuring inclusive and culturally-safe services for all people and all communities.

I am particularly proud of Safe and Equal's commitment to solidarity with First Nations organisations and communities, specifically through our ongoing partnership with Djirra and our deepening engagement with all Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation members. I look forward to seeing these relationships evolve and strengthen across the lifespan of this plan and beyond.

More than ever, we will need to connect and collaborate for change, both in Victoria and nationally. The new National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children sets out a bold aim to end violence in a generation and transform service systems to meet the needs of victim survivors. Increasingly, we are working together to facilitate a united voice at a national level through our collaboration and partnerships with domestic and family violence peak bodies and networks across the country.

I am continually in awe of what Safe and Equal has achieved since the merger. As we prepared this plan, the Board and I gained invaluable insights into the volume and quality of work undertaken by the staff team. All our conversations with our incredible members also inform the work of the Board and have shaped this plan – to you all, I say a heartfelt thank you.

I also wish to commend the Board for the breadth of expertise, skills and insight that they brought to the table in setting the direction of this plan. Our ability to anticipate and remain responsive to social, policy and system dynamics will be critical as we move forward, and I feel confident we are well-placed to achieve the outcomes in this plan.

**Maria Dimopoulos**  
Board Chair

## A message from the CEO

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The last eight years have been a time like no other for our sector, with unprecedented attention and investment in the ongoing reform of Victoria’s family violence system since 2016. Twelve months on from the acquittal of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, we have the foundations in place for effective systems to prevent and respond to family and gender-based violence – but there is much more to be done, and in a rapidly shifting context.

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At its core, this new Strategic Plan represents a transition – for our organisation, and the sector more broadly. Coinciding with development of the Victorian Government’s third and final Rolling Action Plan to address family violence, this Strategic Plan will help to ensure a focused effort and high-quality, incisive contributions by the sector to inform future policy and ensure ongoing investment.

As a peak body, our strength is our members, and I am excited to present this plan for our expanded full membership of organisations working across the continuum, including primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery. We remain acutely aware of the pressures that our members are facing, and the need for continued advocacy to ensure their critical and specialised work is not only sustained, but able to expand and evolve. I look forward to continuing to work with our members to build the profile of both Safe and Equal and our sector to ensure family violence remains on the agenda.

The three core priorities outlined in this Strategic Plan detail a roadmap forward for the peak, and aim to generate change, foster connectivity, drive improvement and ensure sustainability. Within this, our advocacy priorities moving forward will be focussed on sustainable funding for services and programs across the continuum, ongoing reform to the family violence service system, and ensuring integration with other service systems, such as homelessness and housing.

Working towards a client-centred system will also be a priority, including person-centred, accessible, inclusive and culturally-safe services. We will continue to prioritise embedding lived experience of family violence in service system design and reform, as well as ensuring our own organisation is guided by these voices through our Expert Advisory Panel.

Finally, we will continue to support the workforces delivering family violence services and prevention programs, with the aim of building a highly-skilled and well-paid workforce that reflects the communities we serve. We will work alongside practitioners to further develop a system that attracts and retains capable and committed people, through a strong focus on wellbeing.

I wish to extend my gratitude to our staff, the Board, and our members, for their contributions to this plan and their ongoing commitment to this work. This Strategic Plan is firmly grounded in hope for a better future where everyone is safe, respected and thriving, living free from family and gender-based violence.

**Tania Farha**  
CEO



## Our vision

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A world where everyone is safe, respected and thriving, living free from family and gender-based violence.

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Our work prioritises the safety of all people experiencing, recovering from or at risk of family and gender-based violence. While we know that most family violence is perpetrated by men against women and children, we recognise that family violence impacts people across a diversity of gender identities, social and cultural contexts, and within various intimate, family and other relationships. We apply an intersectional feminist lens in our work to address the gendered drivers of violence, and how these overlap and intersect with additional forms of violence, oppression and inequality.

We believe in and work towards a world where people are not only safe and free from family and gender-based violence, but are *respected for who they are and thriving in their lives*.

## Our purpose

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Safe and Equal is the peak body for Victorian organisations that specialise in family and gender-based violence across the continuum, including primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.

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As a peak, we work with and for our members to prevent and respond to violence, building a better future for adults, children and young people experiencing, at risk of, or recovering from family and gender-based violence.

- We bring together evidence, lived experience, practice **expertise and collaborative partnerships** to mobilise for and effect social, policy and system change.
- We **advocate on behalf of and support the development of** high-quality services and programs across the continuum.
- We **drive** the continued development of an **innovative and leading** family violence sector.

## Our guiding commitments

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Our work is practical and based in evidence about what drives and addresses violence. We cannot respond to, and eventually end, family and gender-based violence without well-informed ideas about what works.

Our guiding commitments describe what we will hold at the centre of our work – the ideas that will shape what, how and with whom we work to deliver on our vision and fulfill our purpose.

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### **Support and ally with Aboriginal communities and organisations to further self-determination**

We know that for Aboriginal people and communities to be safe, respected and thriving, we must have self-determined systems and services.

We are committed to Aboriginal self-determination. We work towards strong relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Elders and communities. We will work with, learn from and respect community-led solutions.

We will build our understanding of the impact of colonisation and other forms of discrimination and use this to challenge oppressive and racist systems, and strengthen cultural safety across the family violence service system.

### **Recognise and respond to diversity of experience and intersecting forms of power and oppression**

We know that gender intersects and overlaps with multiple forms of inequality and oppression to drive violence, and compound the impact. This includes oppression experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, people from migrant and refugee communities, people of colour, LGBTIQ+ communities, and people living with disabilities. We also recognise the influence of age, location and socio-economic disadvantage, amongst other factors.

We aim for everything we do to be socially transformative by addressing power, privilege and oppression, with the aim of ending violence for all.

We will advocate for and lead the development of a safe, accessible, inclusive and equitable service system to meet the needs of all people.

## **Centre and platform lived experience of children, young people and adults affected by violence**

We are ultimately accountable to victim survivors of family violence and those who did not survive. Our work is fundamentally shaped by their voices.

We prioritise the safety, wellbeing and agency of victim survivors in all that we do. Our work aims to promote flexible service responses that support them to achieve autonomy and empowerment.

We recognise the unique needs of children and young people affected by family violence. We work to ensure that their voices are heard and strengthen systemic responses to prioritise their safety and wellbeing.

## **Continue evolving as a member-based, intersectional feminist organisation**

Intersectional feminism is foundational to who we are and how we work; it is the primary framework we use to deepen our understanding of the family violence evidence base, build coalitions and partnerships, and engage in critical reflection.

We have grown from a long history of grassroots and community activism. We have evolved over time to meet the changing needs of our members and communities, and to reflect evolving understandings of violence and oppression.

Our work is both evidence-informed and evidence-building, including evidence drawn from practice and lived experience.

## Our values

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- Accountability + Integrity
- Equality + Justice
- Compassion + Humility
- Expertise + Collaboration
- Boldness + Courage
- Curiosity + Reflection

# Strategic context

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## Where have we come from?

The family violence sector in Victoria has undergone a period of significant change since the Royal Commission into Family Violence. We – our members, our partners and our stakeholders – have navigated significant changes to the capability and capacity of our systems, services, and workforce. These world-leading reforms have created the foundations of an integrated, expert system for preventing and responding to family and gender-based violence.

In this time, Safe and Equal has cemented our role as the peak body for specialist family violence services and grown our presence to represent and work with our membership in primary prevention. We have stayed true to our history in grassroots feminist activism, while growing through our commitment to inclusive, intersectional feminism. We have been a strong advocate throughout the reforms, developing clear policy positions in partnership with members and providing a courageous voice to government and community.

## Our challenge

**Our work is not done.** Family and gender-based violence is ongoing and the volume and complexity of demand for services remains high. People’s experiences of violence are compounded by rising pressures in the economy, climate and political environment. The workforce and service system has grown over the past three years – but they cannot yet fully meet people’s needs or our aspirations for the end of family and gender-based violence.

**Inequality and oppression remain pervasive.** We are making progress in shifting attitudes toward gender equality, but this progress is hard fought. We are facing significant resistance and backlash, which affect both the violence we respond to and our efforts to create social change.

**We will need to focus our work.** With the Royal Commission’s recommendations acquitted and growing pressure on other service systems, the policy environment is beginning to shift. We must make a concerted effort to ensure that funding and policy priority are maintained and built upon in coming years. We must be bold in our advocacy to stay the course, knowing that ongoing change is necessary.

## Our next three years

- We must collaboratively **set the clear direction** for our sector's future and **lead the resulting change** in an increasingly challenging environment. We will need to move from implementing reforms to deciding how our system will look in the future and what it will take to get there.
- We must remain a **courageous advocate** for our cause – on behalf of and with victim survivors, our partners, stakeholders and our members. We will need to work strategically and be discerning in the constrained environment.
- We must **focus our work** to where we can have the most impact and ensure alignment to our core purpose. We will lead where appropriate and amplify others' voices where needed, contributing our expertise where valuable. We will invest in partnerships that make us all stronger.

# Our priorities

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Our priorities are where we will focus our efforts over the next three years.

We will work across Safe and Equal and through all our functions to deliver collectively on these three areas.

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## Priority 1: Lead and provoke change and influence policy, systems and the public agenda

Our voice is more essential than ever. We seek to drive change in policy and service systems, and also in community attitudes and public discussion of the problem. We will:

- keep family and gender-based violence on the agenda and drive change
- unequivocally use our voice to effect change, backed by evidence, lived experience, member authorisation and practice expertise
- work in partnership to do better, and to deliver more impact.

## Priority 2: Drive practice excellence and workforce development

A core part of our role is to support the capability, sustainability and connectedness of the specialist family violence workforce, the prevention workforce and broader workforces whose work intersects with family violence. We will:

- set standards for and support the pathway to an even stronger, skilled sector
- lead the continuous evolution of specialist practice, and share this with others in related systems and sectors
- share lessons and insights from evidence, expertise and lived experience.



### **Priority 3: Bolster an enduring specialist sector and peak**

We work in a mutually supportive ecosystem of services and programs and as a peak we work closely to support and be supported by our members. We collectively play a critical and specialist role. We will:

- work over the next three years to strengthen the sector, our members, and us as a peak in order to support them
- gather and share data and evidence
- support financial sustainability across the sector
- strengthen our own organisation's culture and practices.

# Priority 1: Lead and provoke change and influence policy, systems and the public agenda

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- work in partnership to do better, and to deliver more impact.

## Our key actions

1. Map and build our partnerships to support a strategic approach to advocacy across priorities and the continuum.
2. Define, embed and build understanding of our role in primary prevention and awareness raising, including with broad audiences.
3. Work with our members to deliver the tools and knowledge to advocate for investment and ongoing system reform.

## Change we contribute to

### Safe and Equal Outcomes

- Organisations and their staff across sectors understand family and gender-based violence and its drivers.
- Public conversation is shaped and changed by well-informed views and public communications.
- Policy is driven by evidence, practice expertise and lived experience of family violence.

## **Areas of Impact**

- Victorians reject attitudes, norms and behaviours that enable violence through challenging rigid gender roles, gender inequality, and all forms of inequality and discrimination.
- Government and other key institutions take sustained and effective action on family and gender-based violence.
- Service system reform is ongoing, and specialist family violence services are well-integrated with other services systems such as housing.
- Family and gender-based violence remain a strong focus of public conversations and strategic social policy.

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- set standards for and support the pathway to an even stronger, skilled sector
- lead the continuous evolution of specialist practice, and share this with others in related systems
- share lessons and insights from evidence, expertise and lived experience.

### Our key actions

1. Develop and advocate for strategic approaches to workforce development, including entry points, pathways, professional development, retention and support for wellbeing.
2. Embed the voices of lived experience of family violence and partner with community-led organisations to develop specific approaches and practices which respond to needs and ensure good, safe practice.
3. Build connections and lead sector conversations to support sharing of evidence, lessons and good practice in ways that allow others to embed prevention and response in their work.

### Change we contribute to

#### Safe and Equal Outcomes

- The prevention workforce is connected and supported to deliver effective programs.
- Practitioners are skilled and confident to deliver high-quality services.
- The specialist family violence workforce is connected and supported to deliver services.
- Specialist family violence services are supported to embed best practice and lived experience.

## **Areas of Impact**

- The family violence workforce is well- remunerated, retained and supported.
- Practice is consistent, high quality, and evolving.
- Services are available and accessible, personalised, flexible, culturally-safe and reflect individual needs.
- Victim survivors, including children and young people, are safe, heard and in control, and supported to rebuild their lives and thrive.
- Prevention programs are effective and reaching a wide range of audiences and communities, driving sustained social change to stop violence before it starts.

## Priority 3: Bolster an enduring specialist sector and peak

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We work in a mutually supportive ecosystem of services and programs and as a peak we work closely to support and be supported by our members. We collectively play a critical and specialist role. We will:

- work over the next three years to strengthen the sector, our members, and us as a peak in order to support them
- gather and share data and evidence
- support financial sustainability across the sector
- strengthen our own organisation's culture and practices

### Our key actions

1. Evolve our approach to measurement, evaluation and learning to communicate impact and grow practice, within the organisation and the sector.
2. Evolve our organisational structures, governance and approaches to support sustainability.
3. Embed our commitments and values in how we work – exemplify how to live out our values.

### Change we contribute to

#### Safe and Equal Outcomes

- Investment across the continuum from prevention to response is ongoing, sufficient and well-targeted.
- The sector is diversified and works towards and advocates for a unified vision.
- Maintain a strong, effective peak organisation with capable, supported people.

## **Areas of Impact**

- Our organisation is sustainable, and our workforce feels supported through a focus on wellbeing and professional development.
- We remain trusted and valued by a growing number of members and stakeholders.
- Our efforts and our advocacy are increasingly informed by research, high-quality data, evaluation and lived experience.
- Specialist family violence services are well-funded and equipped to meet the needs of victim survivors, and the system intervenes early to identify and respond.
- A strong system of evidence-based prevention efforts is funded, valued and coordinated.

# **SAFE + EQUAL**

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**[safeandequal.org.au](https://safeandequal.org.au)**

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