

MEDIA RELEASE



Catholic Social
Services Australia

Australia's first dedicated plan to end violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council and Catholic Social Services Australia

11 February 2026

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) welcome yesterday's joint announcement by the Federal Minister for Social Services and the Federal Minister for Indigenous Australians on the launch of the *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026-2036*.

Under the Plan, new funding of over \$218 million across four years will be dedicated to ending violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children who continue to face significantly higher and unacceptable rates of violence than other Australians.

Dr Jerry Nockles, CEO of Catholic Social Services Australia, said the launch of the Plan affirms the elimination of domestic, family and sexual violence as a truly national priority, alongside the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* and key Closing the Gap targets.

"With around 65 per cent of CSSA's Catholic social service provider members working with First Nations individuals and communities across Australia, we strongly support the Plan's emphasis on community-led approaches, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples leading decision-making and solutions" Dr Nockles said.

Dr Nockles said the Plan aligns with the enduring collaboration and commitment of Catholic social service organisations, who have long stood alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the pursuit of justice and healing. Ending violence requires sustained partnership, genuine respect for self-determination, and a shared responsibility to close the gap in safety and wellbeing. "We recommit to supporting community-led solutions that empower and protect the most vulnerable, ensuring a safer future for women and children" Dr Nockles added.

The national network of Catholic social services

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CSSA member organisations that provide frontline crisis response, emergency accommodation, counselling support and behaviour change and education programs understand that lasting change cannot be achieved without placing agency, self-determination and lived experience at the centre of policy and practice.

For example, in late 2025, CSSA member organisation CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes hosted a symposium highlighting that domestic violence assault rates in its service region were more than three times the NSW state average in the twelve months to June 2025, highlighting the urgency of targeted, place-based responses.

NATSICC Chair, Mrs Shirley Quaresimin said the Plan's investment in establishing a network of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to deliver culturally safe and specialist services under the Plan is consistent with the Catholic Social Teaching principle of subsidiarity.

"Put simply, subsidiarity recognises that those closest to the issues are best placed to provide solutions and must be empowered to do so" Mrs Quaresimin said.

"As the peak national body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics for more than three decades, NATSICC is grounded in teachings that uphold human dignity, decentralised decision-making, and a preferential option for those most in need. We welcome the long-awaited launch of the Plan in aligning strongly with those values."

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About CSSA

CSSA is the national peak body for Catholic social service providers. CSSA's network of forty-two member agencies runs across all Australian States and Territories with a combined total of over seven hundred sites, delivering essential services to vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians.

About NATSICC

NATSICC is the peak advisory body to the Australia Catholic Bishops on issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

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