

Tuesday, 5 August July 2025

Re: Submission to Australia's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement Review

The Red Rose Foundation thanks the Productivity Commission for inviting submissions for the Final Review into the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement. The Red Rose Foundation is supportive of the Strategy, which takes a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention aimed at addressing social determinants of suicidality, increasing support in a range of spheres, and improving community understanding and breaking down stigma attached to suicide.

Our submission is informed by our work relating to domestic violence related death reviews and recommends improvements to the Strategy to better reflect the established link between domestic and family violence and suicide, thereby strengthening the Strategy's approach to the national crisis of gender-based violence.

About the Red Rose Foundation

The Red Rose Foundation is a national not for profit organisation focused on improving responses to high risk, high harm domestic and family violence and preventing fatal domestic abuse. We seek to address systemic, cross-sectoral gaps through training, education, awareness raising and research as well as the provision of long-term support to women who have experienced non-lethal strangulation. Our Strangulation Trauma Centre is unique to Australia, and we know of no other such service worldwide.

Red Rose Foundation Response:

The National Suicide Prevention Strategy recognises domestic violence as a factor which cause suicidal distress in Australia.¹

We make this submission under the Commissioner's power under the Terms of Reference to make recommendations in consideration of the complexity of integrating services across jurisdictions and ensuring that the voices of those

¹ <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-02/the-national-suicide-prevention-strategy.pdf>

with lived and/or living experience of mental ill-health and suicide, including families, carers and kin are heard and acted upon.

Under this power, we urge the Commissioner to use its powers to advocate for the inclusion of suicides—with a history of domestic violence—as part of every Australian state’s domestic violence-related death review framework. This integration is essential to adequately learn from these preventable deaths and to improve our collective response. We note that Full Stop Australia have also previously advocated for a similar response with “data collection on suicide captures the extent to which sexual, domestic and family violence increases the risk of suicidality” and ...” developing a methodology for accurate counting of the sexual, domestic and family violence death toll”².

Australian data relating to the prevalence of domestic violence related suicides or unexplained deaths is currently sparse, but we note that:

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data shows that people hospitalised due to family and domestic violence are twice as likely to die by suicide compared with people hospitalised for other reasons³.
- A report by the Ombudsman Western Australia found that more than half of all West Australian women and children who died by suicide in 2017 were known to the state government as victims of domestic violence.⁴ And as noted by the Ombudsman in that report, the extent of domestic and family violence among individuals who died by suicide was likely under-represented, because of ‘the limitations of available information contained in the record of state government departments and authorities.’⁵
- In Victoria, 17.5% of females who died by suicide between 2009-2016 had experienced family and domestic violence⁶.

The need for enhanced data was also highlighted by the report *Unlocking the Prevention Potential: accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence*, delivered by the expert panel engaged by the Australian Government

² <https://fullstop.org.au/uploads/main/Submissions-Reports/2024/Full-Stop-Australia-Submission-National-Suicide-Prevention-Strategy.pdf>

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Examination of Hospital Stays due to Family and Domestic Violence 2010-11 to 2018-19 [Internet]. AIHW; 2021 [cited 2023 October 30]. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/ce7f01c2-1979-4be5-b373-f65f1c9e4134/aihw-fdv-9.pdf.aspx>

⁴ Ombudsman Western Australia. (October 2022). Investigation into family and domestic violence and suicide—Volume 2: Understanding the impact of family and domestic violence and suicide. Available at: <https://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Reports/FDV-Suicide-2022-Volume-2-Understanding-the-impact-offamily-and-domestic-violence-and-suicide.pdf>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Campbell E, Fernando T, Gassner L, Hill J, Seidler Z, Summers A. Unlocking the Prevention Potential Accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence [Internet]. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Australian Government 2024 [cited 2025 January 29]. Available from: <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/unlocking-the-preventionpotential>

to undertake a rapid review of prevention approaches to domestic, family and sexual violence (Rapid Review Panel).

The Rapid Review Panel recommended *“Highlighting the importance of recognising and accounting for suicides related to DFSV victimisations – numbers not currently accounted for in conventional assessments of the ongoing national crisis – the Review also recommends an urgent inquiry into the relationship between suicide and experiences of DFSV victimisation. These numbers are not currently accounted for and therefore skew our understanding of the impact of DFSV. Capturing this data will enable the true scale of what the Review contends is actually a state of national emergency to finally be understood.”*⁷

The Rapid Review Panel then went on to recommend the following action to address the link between domestic, family and sexual violence and suicide: *“Initiating an urgent inquiry into the relationship between DFSV victimisation and suicide, with a view to developing a methodology for accurate counting of the DFSV death toll (Commonwealth, state and territory governments).”*⁸

International case studies further highlight the magnitude and nuances of domestic violence-related suicides:

- Domestic homicide reviews in England and Wales found that in 188 cases over two years, 40% of male offenders were known (to health or social services, friends, or family, but often not police) to have experienced suicidal ideation, self-harm, or attempted suicide before the homicide.⁹
- Nearly two-thirds (64.5%) of domestic homicide offenders had accessed mental health services, most with depression or anxiety, and almost half (43%) had a history of self-harm or suicidal ideation before the event. A striking 21.5% of these subsequently attempted or died by suicide after the homicide.¹⁰
- Recent collaborative work between Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention Programme and Kent Police has found that 20% of all suspected suicides in their region between 2019 to 2021 were linked to domestic abuse (2021).¹¹
- In 2022, based on an analysis of the 2014 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey, which involved interviews with over 7,500 participants forming a

⁷ Elena Campbell, Dr Todd Fernando, Dr Leigh Gassner APM, Jess Hill, Dr Zac Seidler & Dr Anne Summers AO. Unlocking the Prevention Potential: Accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence. (Report). 2024. Available at: <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/unlocking-the-prevention-potential>.

⁸ Ibid, Recommendation 21.

⁹ [Bridger et al. \(2017\)](#)

¹⁰ [MacInnes et al. \(2023\)](#)

¹¹ Kent & Medway Suicide Prevention Programme (2021) ‘Highlighting the Relationship Between Domestic Abuse and Suicide’, presentation at <https://nspa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Kent-presentation-DA-and-SuicideNSPA-May-21.pdf>

national cross-sectional sample of the general population in England, McManus et al reported that – after adjusting for other variables – past year suicide attempts were almost three times more common in victims of intimate partner abuse, and almost four times more common amongst those victimised in the previous year.¹²

Data collection enhancements are vital. The true extent of domestic violence-related suicide or unexplained deaths in Australia is unknown; however, the data we have from comparable jurisdictions offers insights into the data that in Australia should seek to secure. Without rigorous local data and integrated review processes, we will continue to miss critical opportunities to prevent suicides or unexplained deaths as a result of domestic violence.

We respectfully urge the Review to:

- Recommend that suicides linked to a history of domestic abuse become part of each state's domestic violence-related death review.
- Encourage cross-agency data sharing on relevant risk factors and mental health histories.
- Draw from international examples (such as Kent and Medway) to establish robust, evidence-based monitoring.
- Ensure police treat all unexpected deaths of known domestic abuse victims as potential femicide, with appropriate scene protocols.
- Commit to enhancing data collection and reporting—enabling real change and saving lives.

The link between domestic abuse and suicide is proven but under-examined in Australia. This Review has the power to bring our response in line with international best practice, generating the data and insights needed for real prevention.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent and life-saving issue.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Lord
CEO Red Rose Foundation

¹² McManus, S., Walby, S., Capelas Barbosa, E., Appleby, L., Brugha, T., Bebbington, P., Cook, E. & Knipe, D. (2022) 'Intimate Partner Violence, Suicidality, and Self-harm: A Probability Sample Survey of the General Population in England' Lancet Psychiatry at [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(22\)00151-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(22)00151-1)

APPENDIX A: About the Red Rose Foundation

The Red Rose Foundation Australia is a national charity dedicated to improving responses to high-risk, high-harm domestic and family violence, with a particular focus on preventing fatal domestic abuse. The charity pioneered Australia's first Strangulation Trauma Centre, delivering specialist, trauma-informed support and advocacy for survivors of non-fatal strangulation, a service unique in Australia and among the first of its kind globally. We provide training, education, awareness-raising, and research, as well as long-term support for women who have experienced non-fatal strangulation (NFS)

As part of our work to improve responses to victim-survivor of NFS, we established the Australian Strangulation Prevention Institute and partnered with the Training Institute for Strangulation Prevention USA to further advance research and training on non-lethal strangulation in Australia. Through this partnership we have joined the International Alliance of Strangulation Educators and Researchers which includes Dr Jacquelyn Campbell who has led the way with research and education on high-risk domestic violence. The Red Rose Foundation has also partnered with Central Queensland University to conduct groundbreaking research into the health impacts and long-term consequences of non-lethal strangulation for victims.

Our Board of Directors brings together sector management and legal professionals, violence prevention consultants, and researchers with extensive experience and expertise in domestic, family, and sexual violence. Direct client services are delivered by a small team of highly qualified counsellors. We are supported by our Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland, and guided by our First Nations Advisory Committee, who provide invaluable direction on the issues that matter most to First Nations women experiencing domestic and family violence.

The Red Rose Foundation maintains strategic partnerships with a wide range of government agencies, non-government organisations, and academic institutions, including services specialising in domestic, family, and sexual violence counselling and crisis support, refuges, family support, and child protection. We adopt an intersectional, trauma-informed, and feminist approach in all aspects of our work, guided by the voices of those with lived experience of high-risk, high-harm domestic and family violence.

This submission has been informed by our experience of supporting hundreds of women victim-survivors of non-fatal strangulation within an intimate partner relationship, consultation with national and international experts, and ongoing engagement with the latest research and best practice in DFV response. For this inquiry submission, the author has drawn upon knowledge and experience from Australia and the UK, as a Home Office accredited Domestic Homicide Review Chair and having helped influence UK policy and law in relation to domestic and family violence.