



Terms of Reference

Authority	On 30 September 2022, National Cabinet agreed to the recommendations of the First Secretaries Group Review of Ministerial Councils. This included the formal establishment of the Women and Women’s Safety Ministerial Council (the Council) as part of a renewed federal relations architecture.
Purpose	The Council provides a forum for Commonwealth, state and territory governments to drive national progress on gender equality and women’s safety across all areas in ending violence against women and children within Australia.
Membership	<p>The Council consists of Commonwealth, state and territory ministers responsible for women and women’s safety. Each jurisdiction is represented by a maximum of four ministers with portfolio responsibility for women, families and/or prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence.</p> <p>The Council is co-chaired by the Commonwealth Minister for Women and the Commonwealth Minister for Social Services.</p> <p>The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner is an ex-officio observer on the Ministerial Council.</p> <p>Where agreed, members of the Council may invite expert advisers and other government ministers to participate in specific meetings or discussions, as appropriate.</p>
Governance	<p>Women and Women’s Safety Senior Officials Group</p> <p>The Council will be supported by a Senior Officials-level group with representatives from the Commonwealth, states and territories. Senior Officials may identify new and emerging priorities for the Council, develop and review papers and provide oversight of the delivery of Council agreed priorities.</p> <p>The following working groups will sit below the Women and Women’s Safety Senior Officials that will work to implement the Council’s priorities. These groups will be:</p> <p>Women’s Safety Jurisdictional Working Group</p> <p>The Women’s Safety Jurisdictional Working Group (JWG) comprises of Commonwealth and state and territory government representatives responsible for women’s safety. The JWG will work to progress the priorities of the Australian Government related to gender equality and eliminating gender-based violence, under the <i>National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032</i> (the National Plan). In addition, the JWG can facilitate coordination and collaboration across jurisdictions in support of implementation of the of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025, the First Action Plan 2023-2027 and the First Nations Family Safety Plan following its release in 2025,</p>



	<p>where appropriate/as requested by the First Nations National Plan Steering Committee.</p> <p>Subject-matter specific Jurisdictional Working Groups</p> <p>Subject specific working groups can be convened as needed to drive joint Commonwealth, state and territory activities and respond to emerging issues for timely delivery of advice and solutions. Membership will be determined by the Commonwealth lead on the subject matter, and may include government officials from relevant portfolios and subject matter experts. Subject specific working groups may also draw on the expertise of existing advisory committees or convene subject specific advisory committees when required.</p> <p>Gender Equality Jurisdictional Working Group</p> <p>The Gender Equality Jurisdictional Working Group will consist of both Commonwealth and jurisdictional officials responsible for women’s policy, including workplace gender segregation. The Group will support Senior Officials in driving progress on a broad base of women’s policy issues and will support the Senior Officials Group by implementing decisions on gender equality and women’s policy.</p> <p>The Group will convene as needed, as requested by any jurisdiction, and facilitated by a secretariat in the Commonwealth Office for Women (the Council Secretariat). The Group may also conduct work out-of-session where required.</p>
<p>Operations and decision making</p>	<p>The Council will meet a minimum of three times per annum via a mixture of virtual and face-to-face formats. Where agreed by the co-Chairs and on advice from members, extraordinary meetings may be scheduled.</p> <p>The Council may also conduct work out-of-session as required (protocols discussed below).</p> <p>Meeting agendas and papers will be distributed at least five business days prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The Council will make joint decisions and agree on common principles, however there will be flexibility in implementation across the jurisdictions to account for each jurisdiction’s unique circumstances.</p> <p>Where possible, decisions should be consensus based. Where consensus or resolution cannot be reached on an agenda item within the established timeframe, consideration will be given to progressing an item through agreement between the Commonwealth and smaller groups of States and Territories.</p> <p>The operations and decision making of the Council will adhere to National Cabinet’s Guidance for Intergovernmental Meetings.</p> <p>All jurisdictions will be invited to propose agenda items for consideration by the co-Chairs. These items must be submitted to Council Secretariat no later than six weeks (45 calendar days) prior to the relevant meeting, with the exception of urgent or emerging issues.</p>



	<p>The Council will consult and collaborate as appropriate with other Ministerial Councils on matters of gender equality and women’s safety. This will enable collaborative work and ensure alignment of priorities, noting that gender inequality and women’s safety issues intersect across multiple portfolios.</p> <p>This may include, but is not limited to, collaboration with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data and Digital Ministers Meeting - Standing Council of Attorneys-General - Police Ministers Council - Health Ministers Meeting - Housing and Homelessness Ministerial Council - Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council - Council on Federal Financial Relations <p>For example, the Ministerial Council will coordinate with the Standing Council of Attorneys-General in relation to work on women’s safety. Under the <i>Work Plan to Strengthen Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault 2022-27</i>, all state and territory governments have committed to take collective and individual action to improve the experiences of victim-survivors of sexual assault in the criminal justice system. The Commonwealth, state and territory governments are working together to implement the National Principles to Address Coercive Control.</p>
<p>Out of session protocols</p>	<p>Where a decision needs to be made out of session, the Council Secretariat will circulate a decision brief to all Ministers seeking their unanimous endorsement, approval, agreement or noting of the relevant matter.</p> <p>Ministers will endeavor to return their votes within 15 business days. The Council Secretariat will circulate written confirmation the item has been endorsed, approved, agreed or noted.</p> <p>Council Secretariat will maintain a list of all items progressed out of session, and will provide an update at each Council meeting.</p>
<p>Scope of Ministerial Council responsibility</p>	<p>As an outcome of its 6 September 2024 meeting, National Cabinet tasked the Women and Women’s Safety Ministerial Council with overseeing governments’ collective response to the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches report, <i>Unlocking the Prevention Potential: Accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence</i>, and to report back to National Cabinet on progress by the end of 2025.</p> <p>In addition to specific work plan priorities, the Council will also support efforts to collectively respond to emerging issues and evidence relating to women’s safety, where possible and appropriate.</p> <p>The Council will also consider the interactions and alignment between jurisdictions’ gender equality strategies and frameworks, including to inform the Commonwealth’s implementation of <i>Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender</i></p>



	<p><i>Equality.</i> The Council will also consider interactions and alignment with jurisdictions' domestic, family and sexual violence strategies to inform future work to implement the National Plan.</p>
Review and reporting	<p>The Council will annually review the agreed priorities outlined in the work plan to ensure the Council continues to meet its objectives. This will ensure that identified new and emerging priorities, informed by discussions at meetings, are reflected in the forward work plan.</p> <p>The Council will report annually to National Cabinet on their priorities and annual work plans and on other key national priorities affecting women and women's safety, as required.</p> <p>To ensure the intergovernmental system remains focused on key priorities, the First Secretaries Group and National Cabinet will review the Council structure every two years.</p> <p>To facilitate review, the co-chairs of the Council will submit a summary of achievements of the previous year and the top priorities (maximum of five) for the upcoming year to the First Secretaries Group.</p> <p>Members of the Council may request a review of the operations of the Council and/or the forward work plan at any time through a written request to the Secretariat. Any review of operations must be agreed to by the Council.</p>



Women and Women’s Safety Ministerial Council Members

Council Co-Chairs	
Commonwealth	Minister for Women
	Minister for Social Services

Council Members	
Commonwealth	Assistant Minister for Women
	Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence
ACT	Minister for Women
	Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence
NSW	Minister for Women
	Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
NT	Minister for Youth, Seniors and Equality
	Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence
QLD	Minister for Women and Women’s Economic Security
	Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence
SA	Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence
TAS	Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence
VIC	Minister for Women
	Minister for Prevention of Family Violence
WA	Minister for Women’s Interests
	Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence