

PUTTING A FULL STOP TO SEXUAL, DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE.

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Sexual Violence Victims Await Justice, One Year After Inquiry into Justice Responses Launched.

Date: 22 January 2025

Notes to Editors: Please use **"Full Stop Australia"** (full name) when referring to the organisation in a media story. The contents of this press release can be used as quotes attributable to **Full Stop Australia CEO, Karen Bevan**.

Today marks one year since the Attorney General, Hon Mark Dreyfus announced the Australian Law Reform Commission's Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence.

The need for urgent, transformative change to the legal system's response to sexual violence and to combat the disturbingly high levels of sexual violence in our community is clear. A clear pathway for reform and a response by government to implement change is needed now.

The legal system is not fit for purpose in responding to sexual violence and urgent change is needed. This inquiry offers an opportunity for reform that cannot be missed.

"We need sweeping, timely reform resulting from this inquiry and beyond. We must keep sexual violence on the agenda and better support victim-survivors who tell us every day about their troubling experiences reporting sexual violence and the response of the legal system overall." said CEO Karen Bevan.

The Inquiry has heard from many victim-survivors, advocates and specialist services who highly anticipate recommendations that make real change towards a more just system.

The case for change is compelling.

- 92% of victim-survivors of sexual violence don't report to police because they face systemic barriers, including a fear of not being believed (25%) or that authorities could not do anything to help them (28%).¹
- Attrition of sexual violence matters that do make it to the courts is another significant issue, for example in NSW only 7% of reported sexual assault incidents resulted in a conviction and cases often horrifically retraumatise the victim of the crime.²
- Victim survivors told Full Stop that the court process is highly re-traumatising and that they are exposed to harsh treatment as witnesses.

Full Stop Australia made a [comprehensive submission](#) (and [executive summary](#)) to the ALRC inquiry, underpinned by the vital contributions of lived experience advocates and members of the National Survivor Advocate Program.

The submission makes 40 recommendations to address gaps in reporting options, police responses, trial processes, system response and sentencing.

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Full Stop Australia's key recommendations include:

1. Ensure victim-survivors of sexual violence can access all the services they need from a single, integrated service hub.
2. Fund access to 'system navigators' to support victim-survivors who have to engage with a bewildering array of systems.
3. Allow all complainants in sexual violence proceedings to give pre-recorded evidence.
4. Halt irrelevant, invasive and retraumatising cross-examination of victim-survivors during court proceedings.
5. All victim-survivors of sexual violence should have standing to intervene in relation to cross-examination, and applications to admit evidence, that affect them.
6. Establish specialist sexual violence courts or lists.
7. Amend legislation in all jurisdictions to clarify that the character of an offender should not be considered a mitigating factor in sentencing for child or adult sexual offences.
8. An affirmative standard of consent should be adopted in legislation in all Australian states and territories.

The legal system was not designed with victim-survivors in mind, nor during a time when equal treatment under the law was for everyone. The legal system largely continues to fail to deliver safety or justice to victims of sexual crimes.

"The legal system has a responsibility to ensure violent crime has consequences and that people are held [accountable] for those crimes. To fail in that, as it is currently doing, is to be negligent in its duty of care to society, to abuse its power and to protect and enable violence. I refuse to call this institution the justice system. There is no justice found here." said one of the victim-survivors who contributed to Full Stop's ALRC submission.

The value of this inquiry and its potential to catalyse real change cannot be overstated. The time for change is now.

The **NSW Sexual Violence Helpline** provides free, trauma-specialist counselling to anyone in NSW impacted by sexual violence. Call 1800 424 017.

1800 FULL STOP provides free, trauma-specialist counselling to anyone in Australia impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence. Call 1800 FULL STOP (1800 385 578).

END

Media Enquiries

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¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021-22), Personal Safety, Australia, ABS Website

² NSW BOCSAR (2024), Attrition of sexual assaults from the New South Wales criminal justice system

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