



***“If we say Domestic Violence is Hidden, which it is.....
.....it is a Hidden Disaster in Rural Areas”.***

The National Rural Women’s Coalition (NRWC) supports the efforts of governments across the nation to make a real and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women and their children, and encourages the work being done under The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

In 2015, the NRWC hosted a Health and Wellness Roundtable in Adelaide, South Australia on the 2nd and 3rd March 2015 to bring together a diverse group of informed rural women from all parts of Australia to examine what support can be provided to rural and remote women who experience family violence. The 21 women represented organisations including the Australian Local Government Women’s Association; Economic Security4Women; Women’s Industry Network Seafood Community; Australian Women Against Violence Alliance; The Country Women’s Association Australia; Australian Women in Agriculture; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Alliance; National Rural Health Alliance; Equality Rights Alliance and the National Rural Women’s Coalition.

The NRWC recognises that one in three Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. Almost one in five have experienced sexual violence. It is time for that to change for all women, including those who live rurally and remotely. Women were asked to share their experiences and make recommendations on the following topic.

How can we support the well-being of rural and remote women who experience family violence?

- *What is the role of primary health care in supporting women experiencing family violence?*
- *What are the barriers for RRR women when accessing family violence support?*
- *What is the impact on RRR women when access to family violence support is not accessible?*
- *How could these impacts and barriers be addressed?*

The NRWC supports the definitions of violence used in the National Plan, and agrees that violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Family violence is a broader term that refers to violence between family members, as well as violence between intimate partners.

WHAT RURAL WOMEN WANT

Rural Women Want Access to Support Services

“Family violence is at the core of mental health, suicide, child abuse and many other issues”.

Rural, remote and regional women want to see all levels of government having ownership of “The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022” and to be accountable for delivery of the plan.

Rural Women Want Economic Sustainability for Family Violence Support Services

“We need action on the ground”.

Rural women would like to redirect funding to the provision of Family Violence prevention and intervention services. A funding model based on a case management approach which utilises nationally coordinated, regionally based family violence teams that are integrated with existing agencies would be considered ideal. This funding would see primary services funded on an NDIS model of case management and additional smaller grant funding available to communities to enable grassroots innovation. It was agreed that the current piecemeal funding is reactive and creates instability for service providers.

Rural Women Want Recognition of Isolation as a Vulnerability Indicator

“You clean your teeth so they don’t fall out. Can we teach our girls emotional and psychological resilience so our girls are better armed to deal with domestic violence before it happens?”

Rural women believe that isolated living can lead to an increased vulnerability and that women need to be trained to identify when they are experiencing gender based violence and to possess a repertoire of positive preventative strategies.

Rural Women recognise that living in isolated circumstances compounds the challenges surrounding family violence, and would like a public awareness campaign and targeted education and training provided to rural women and children so that they have confidence and capacity to speak out about their violated circumstances. An awareness campaign should have a recognisable slogan used widely (e.g. on library cards, drivers licences, Medicare cards and so on) and could use social media to reinforce the campaign messaging.

Rural Women Request Nationally Consistent Legislation

“We need to look at ways of reporting – and investigating. We shouldn’t have to sneak away. The system is failing them and there should be a bit of mandatory reporting”.

There is a need for nationally consistent legislation and supporting legal and judicial system support, including a national police data database for protection orders.