

Australia and New Zealand Police Commissioners – Protecting Women and Children from Family Violence

Leadership Statement

Family violence is a blight on our communities. We have been witness to this violence, especially against women and children, far too often.

As leaders of our police organisations we are committed to doing everything within our power to prevent family violence, protect victims and hold perpetrators to account.

Over the past decade, our organisations have progressed towards a much more effective recognition and response to family violence. We have improved our service delivery, our policies and our training. We have initiated police issued domestic violence orders so we can stop the violence then and there; we have enhanced our training to improve our understanding and upskill our first responders; we have implemented teams of officers dedicated to family violence response and investigation to ensure better expertise and oversight; and we have strengthened partnerships with other service providers and the community to enhance information sharing and risk assessments.

However family violence is not an issue that can be solved by police alone. It is a community issue and requires a community response. We will play our part and continue to enhance the services police provide, but others need to play theirs – including men who in the vast majority of cases are the perpetrators of violence.

The underlying causes of male violence against women have their roots in cultural attitudes towards the role of women in society – attitudes which all of us, but particularly men, need to take responsibility for changing.

In downplaying violence within the family context, perpetrators fail to take responsibility and reasonable steps to address the problem.

We acknowledge firstly that most men are not violent, abusive or controlling; and secondly that men can also be victims of family violence. However, we all need to ask ourselves how we contribute to the attitude, unconscious or otherwise, that leads some men to feel that it is their right to exert power and control over those closest to them.

No longer can we as a community turn a blind eye to family violence or endemic disrespect of women, whether it is in the workplace, in our sporting clubs or in the pub.

This Leadership Statement reflects our commitment as leaders of our police organisations and in our communities, to contribute to making change. Our message to women and children affected by family violence is that we believe your stories, we take all reports seriously and we can help. To the broader community, we say all of us have a responsibility to challenge behaviour and contribute to cultural change that protects women and children from family violence.

Policing Principles for Protecting Women and Children from Family Violence

The Policing Principles to Protect Women and Children from Family Violence are guided by the values expressed in the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022.

- *Police will take positive action* – protecting the safety of everyone, regardless of their age, gender, religious, cultural or social beliefs, for a community that is free from violence.
- *Police will work to deter the crime of family violence* – using their specialist skills, abilities and technology.
- *Police will lead sustainable change* – by challenging and changing behaviours and attitudes, particularly of men, to never tolerate any offending in their family, their neighbourhood, or the wider community environment.
- *Police will work in partnership with others* – including other law enforcement agencies, government, community and business groups - recognising that family violence, domestic violence, and sexual assault crosses all ages, races and cultures, socioeconomic and demographic barriers.
- *Police will provide holistic services and support* – prioritising the needs of victims and survivors of family violence to achieve fair and just outcomes, and to ensure the safety and long term well-being of women and children.
- *Police will receive specialised training* – ensuring that all front-line officers and specialist investigators have the best levels of appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities when responding to family violence.

Mike Bush, MNZM

Commissioner, New Zealand Police

Andrew Scipione, AO APM

Commissioner, New South Wales Police

Darren Hine, APM

Commissioner, Tasmania Police

Andrew Colvin, OAM APM

Commissioner, Australian Federal Police

Karl O'Callaghan, APM

Commissioner, Western Australia Police

Graham Ashton, APM

Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police

Ian Stewart, APM

Commissioner, Queensland Police

Grant Stevens, APM

Commissioner, South Australia Police

Reece Kershaw, APM

Commissioner, Northern Territory Police

Rudi Lammers, APM

Chief Police Officer, ACT Policing