



National Women's
Safety Alliance

POSITION STATEMENT:
**THE COSTINGS AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
ALRC'S INQUIRY INTO
JUSTICE RESPONSES
TO SEXUAL
VIOLENCE REPORT**

March 2025



Introduction

Ensuring justice for victim-survivors of sexual violence requires a holistic, well-funded response that extends beyond traditional criminal justice mechanisms. While the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) report focuses on improving police reporting and criminal justice responses, a critical gap remains: the majority of victim-survivors do not report to police. The lack of meaningful alternatives, means they are often left without justice and with limited support, reinforcing cycles of harm and exclusion within our priority populations. A truly effective criminal justice response to sexual violence must be intersectional, recognising that victim-survivors of sexual violence experience compounded barriers based on factors such as gender, race, disability, sexuality, and socio-economic status (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2025).

This report presents a costed implementation strategy to address this gap by investing in alternative justice pathways, improve and expand victim-survivor support, and systemic legal reforms.

National Women's Safety Alliance has provided suggested investment over a five-year implementation period around the five key priority areas for focusing on better outcomes for victim-survivors. We have used a social return on investment from various federal government data sources to demonstrate the efficacy of investment.

Key Policy and Legislative Recommendations

1. **Mandating the Use of Alternative Reports in Investigations**
Alternative reporting tools should be formally integrated into intelligence gathering and prosecutions, ensuring that repeat offenders can be identified and reports contribute to crime mapping and law enforcement efforts (Heydon & Powell, 2018).
2. **Developing a Victim-Survivor Led Investigation Model**
Adopting coercive control-style legislation for sexual violence could allow victim-survivors to control how their reports are used, reducing the risk of traumatisation while maximising legal engagement (Tidmarsh & Hamilton, 2020).
3. **Expanding Restorative Justice Pathways with Legal Recognition**
Strengthening restorative justice mechanisms through Standing Council of Attorney Generals (SCAG) led reforms could enable legally binding agreements, ensuring perpetrator accountability outside the traditional court system while improving victim-survivor recovery and workforce participation (Strang, Sherman, Mayo-Wilson, Woods, & Ariel, 2013).
4. **Reforming Evidentiary Requirements for Prosecution**
Alternative reports should be admissible as supporting evidence in legal proceedings, particularly when they corroborate patterns of harm across jurisdictions. This could increase prosecution rates and contribute to long-term reductions in crime and legal costs (Australian Law Reform Commission (Australian Law Reform Commission [ALRC], 2025).
5. **Establishing National Consistency in Alternative Reporting Systems**
Current state-by-state inconsistencies in alternative reporting mechanisms limit their

effectiveness. A nationally standardised approach, guided by SCAG, would ensure best-practice implementation across all jurisdictions (Heydon et al., 2023).

Implementing these recommendations will help ensure a more just, effective, and fiscally responsible response to sexual violence in Australia. Whilst we have focused on the economic benefits of implementing these changes, this is also about political will. Our report has combined learnings across the breadth of work happening in the gender-based violence policy areas that intersect with sexual violence. Implementation costs should be shared across portfolios to maximise benefits and cost savings. The ALRC report should not be a standalone piece; it must be folded into the work already taking place.

This is an ambitious, long-term project. The clear financial gains mean a better fiscal future for Australians without sexual violence.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) Calculation Methodology

The SROI figures in the document were derived using the following approach:

Identifying Investment Categories

- Each investment area;
 - victim-survivor support,
 - justice system improvements,
 - alternative justice pathways

was allocated a specific funding amount based on current resourcing through National plan partnerships, the Attorney General's portfolio and the Department of Social Services, with indexation applied.

Sourcing SROI Ratios from Key Government Sources:

- Australian Institute of Criminology (2021, 2025): Provided estimates on the economic cost of gender-based violence.
- Productivity Commission (2014): Supplied data on justice sector investments.
- Australian Human Rights Commission (2020): Outlined workplace sexual harassment cost savings.
- ALRC Report (2025): included financial modelling on justice system investments.

These sources contain sector-specific SROI estimates (for example, A\$ 4 returned per A\$ 1 invested in victim-survivor support services).

Applying Weighted SROI Ratios

Each investment category was assigned an SROI multiplier based on research findings. For example:

- Victim-survivor support (A\$ 100 million, an SROI of 4:1) → Estimated benefit = A\$ 400M.
- Justice system improvements (A\$ 50 million, an SROI of 2.5:1) → Estimated Benefit = A\$ 125M.
- Alternative justice pathways (A\$ 40 million, an SROI of 5:1) → Estimated Benefit = A\$ 200M.
- Enhancing reporting access (A\$ 40 million, an SROI of 3.5:1) → Estimated Benefit= A\$ 140M.
- Workplace sexual harassment (A\$ 20 million, an SROI of 7:1) → Estimated Benefit = A\$ 140M.

Summing these benefits gives the projected total return of A\$ 1 billion.

Federal Government Economic Modelling Considerations

This report integrates Federal Government economic modelling considerations by applying macroeconomic assumptions, cost-benefit analysis, and fiscal impact projections to assess the long-term benefits of targeted investments in the justice system and victim-survivor support services. Each section of this analysis demonstrates how these modelling principles have been utilised.

Macroeconomic Assumptions

The economic modelling in this report aligns with established Australian Government methodologies for evaluating public sector investments. To ensure that the estimated returns are grounded in realistic and evidence-based economic conditions, several key macroeconomic assumptions have been incorporated:

1. Inflation-Adjusted Net Present Value (NPV) Calculations

- Discount Rate: A 3-5% discount rate has been applied to reflect long-term government investment standards and account for inflationary pressures.
- Rationale: This aligns with Treasury and Productivity Commission methodologies, ensuring that projected economic returns are adjusted for time-value depreciation.

2. Workforce Participation & Labour Market Effects

- Economic Link: Investments in victim-survivor support services and justice system improvements are expected to increase workforce participation by reducing barriers to employment due to trauma of sexual violence. This happens through:

- Reduced absenteeism & productivity losses: Addressing workplace sexual harassment is expected to yield significant economic savings through lower turnover and absenteeism rates (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020).
 - Employment multiplier effect: Greater workforce participation leads to increased consumer spending, indirectly benefiting overall economic growth (ABS labour force data and workforce elasticity models).

3. Fiscal Impact Projections & Government Savings

- Justice System Efficiency Gains:
 - Expanding alternative justice pathways and increasing reporting mechanisms will reduce case backlogs and lower per-case legal costs over time.
 - Estimated savings include reduced demand for emergency services, legal aid, and correctional system costs (Productivity Commission, 2014).
- Health & Welfare System Cost Reductions:
 - Investments in early intervention and trauma-informed services are expected to reduce future healthcare and welfare expenditures related to sexual violence trauma.
 - Previous Australian economic studies suggest that preventative interventions can yield cost savings of up to A\$ 7 for every A\$ 1 invested in reducing long-term welfare dependency.

4. GDP Growth & Treasury Fiscal Modelling Alignment

- GDP Contribution from Reduced Gender-Based Violence:
 - The Productivity Commission (2014) estimates that gender-based violence reduces GDP by billions annually due to lost productivity and increased public sector costs.
 - Investments in prevention and justice reforms contribute to GDP growth through workforce retention and public sector efficiency gains.
- Treasury Fiscal Multiplier Effect:
 - The fiscal multiplier (which measures the long-term return on public sector investment) has been factored into projections, demonstrating that targeted investments yield broader economic benefits beyond direct cost savings.

Economic Stability & Long-Term Benefits

The integration of these macroeconomic assumptions ensures that the economic modelling accounts for both direct and indirect financial benefits. By incorporating NPV adjustments, workforce elasticity considerations, fiscal efficiency, and GDP contributions, the analysis presents a realistic and fiscally responsible approach to improving justice outcomes and comprehensive victim-survivor support systems.

Cost-Benefit Analysis Framework

- Uses Treasury's cost-benefit methodology for public sector investments.
- Compares long-term savings in justice, health, and welfare sectors against upfront investment costs.
- Incorporates fiscal multiplier effects from increased workforce participation (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020).

Long-Term Economic Analysis & Projected Benefits for Victim-Survivor-Centred Policy Initiatives

With a total of A\$ 250 million in investments in victim-survivor support, justice system improvements, alternative justice pathways, and workplace protections, the projected long-term economic and social return is approximately A\$ 1 billion, based on sector-specific Social Return on Investment (SROI) estimates (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2021; Productivity Commission, 2014). This analysis follows Federal Government economic modelling principles, integrating cost-benefit analysis, dynamic fiscal impact projections, and macroeconomic assumptions.

Projected Economic & Social Returns by Investment Area

We have prepared three scenarios to reflect the changing political and economic landscapes.

Risk-Adjusted SROI Model: Three Scenarios

Investment Area	Funding (AUD)	Best-Case SROI (High Impact)	Base-Case SROI (Expected Impact)	Worst-Case SROI (Low Impact)
Victim-Survivor Support	\$100M	5:1 → \$500M	4:1 → \$400M	3:1 → \$300M

Investment Area	Funding (AUD)	Best-Case SROI (High Impact)	Base-Case SROI (Expected Impact)	Worst-Case SROI (Low Impact)
Justice System Improvements	\$50M	3:1 → \$150M	2.5:1 → \$125M	2:1 → \$100M
Alternative Justice Pathways	\$40M	6:1 → \$240M	5:1 → \$200M	2.5:1 → \$100M
Enhancing Reporting & Access	\$40M	4.5:1 → \$180M	3.5:1 → \$140M	2:1 → \$80M
Workplace Sexual Harassment	\$20M	8:1 → \$160M	7:1 → \$140M	4:1 → \$80M
Total Return Estimate	\$250M	\$1.23B	\$1B	\$660M

Potential Cost Savings through Policy and Budget Integration

Integrating these implementation solutions with existing initiatives under the National Plan and National Partnership Agreements can lead to significant cost savings, including:

- Shared Resources: Coordinated training programs and data systems reduce duplication, allowing for more efficient use of funds across government agencies (Treasury Department, 2025).
- Economies of Scale: National procurement strategies for services and infrastructure lower costs by leveraging bulk purchasing and standardised processes (Productivity Commission, 2014).
- Preventative Focus: Investing in early intervention and support services reduces long-term expenditure in healthcare, legal proceedings, and social services by addressing issues before they escalate (Department of Social Services [DSS], 2022).

By aligning the proposed solutions with the National Plan and leveraging existing partnerships, Australia can enhance the effectiveness of its response to gender-based violence while optimising resource allocation (DSS, 2022; National Cabinet, 2024).

Programme Investment Areas & Expected Social Impact

Each investment area has been analysed using federal government economic modelling principles. The assumptions underpinning the estimated economic returns are based on Net Present Value (NPV) calculations, workforce elasticity, and projected GDP growth impacts. These estimates align with Treasury’s cost-benefit analysis framework, which compares long-term

savings with upfront investment costs, ensuring fiscal sustainability and measurable policy effectiveness.

1. Improving wholistic Support for Victim-Survivors (A\$ 100 million)

Expanding trauma-informed legal, financial, and integrated sexual violence specialist support services ensures:

- Increased access to justice and specialist assistance, encouraging higher reporting rates.
- Tailored support for victim-survivors who prefer specialist services over legal pathways.
- Reduced reliance on emergency health and welfare services.
- Enhanced workforce participation by enabling victim-survivor recovery.

SROI Estimate: Every A\$ 1 invested generates A\$ 4 in economic benefits (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2021; ALRC, 2025).

2. Strengthening the Justice System (A\$ 50 million)

Investing in legal system resourcing will significantly benefit the community and justice outcomes by reducing the current case backlog, ensuring that justice is delivered promptly and efficiently. Enhancing trauma-informed prosecution and court practices, creating a more supportive environment for victims and witnesses. Increasing conviction rates acts as a deterrent to potential offenders and contributes to broader public safety.

SROI Estimate: Every A\$ 1 invested can generate A\$ 2 to A\$ 3 in savings (Productivity Commission, 2014; Australian Institute of Criminology, 2025).

3. Expanding Alternative Justice Pathways (A\$ 40 million)

Victim-Survivor led restorative justice programs provide effective alternatives to traditional court processes, focusing on victim-survivor needs, healing, and community reintegration. Current evaluations indicate a strong Social Return on Investment (SROI) of up to A\$ 5 per A\$ 1 invested (Strang et al., 2013; Australian Institute of Criminology, 2025). However, achieving this level of return within the Australian context requires comprehensive research and an environmental scan to identify opportunities and barriers, particularly given the narrow scope and limited availability of current restorative justice pathways.

To achieve the projected 5:1 Social Return on Investment (SROI) for alternative justice pathways, it is essential to integrate legislative improvements alongside the expansion of reporting mechanisms. Evidence suggests that standalone alternative reporting options may have limited impact unless supported by legal and policy reforms (Heydon, Henry, Loney-Howes, & Hindes, 2023). Victim-survivor feedback highlights concern that anonymous reports do not often lead to tangible justice outcomes, reducing their perceived effectiveness (Heydon et al., 2023).

Addressing these concerns requires collaboration with the Standing Council of Attorneys-General

(SCAG) to explore legislative solutions that enhance justice outcomes, reduce recidivism, and increase fiscal benefits.

SROI Estimate: Every A\$ 1 invested can yield up to A\$ 5 in benefits (Strang et al., 2013; Australian Institute of Criminology, 2025).

4. Enhancing Reporting and Access to Justice (A\$ 40 million)

Federal Expansion of anonymous and third-party reporting systems, such as SARO (Sexual Assault Reporting Option), has demonstrated significant effectiveness, increasing case resolution rates by approximately 30–40% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This expansion must include:

- Increased training for law enforcement and institutional staff in handling anonymous reports.
- Enhanced data analytics facility and management capabilities for large volumes of data ensuring comprehensive and useful analysis.

Reducing barriers to reporting enables victim-survivors or witnesses to share information safely, without fear of immediate repercussions or stigma. Increase data collection, providing law enforcement or institutions with critical information that might otherwise remain unreported. Enhance victim trust and empowerment, which encourages subsequent cooperation and comprehensive reporting.

SROI Estimate: Every A\$ 1 invested result in an estimated A\$ 3.50 return (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022; Australian Institute of Criminology, 2025).

5. Addressing Workplace Sexual Harassment (A\$ 20 million)

Expanding Fair Work Commission services empowers more victim-survivors to speak up and ensures stronger employer accountability. Economic savings will be made through reduced absenteeism, turnover, legal costs, and improved productivity (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020; ALRC Report, 2025).

SROI Estimate: Every A\$ 1 invested can save up to A\$ 7 in costs associated with absenteeism, legal expenses, and productivity loss (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020; ALRC Report, 2025).

Overall Fiscal and Economic Impact Summary on Victim-Survivor Centred Initiatives

The long-term economic and social benefits of investing in justice system improvements and victim-survivor support are substantial. By applying federal government economic modelling principles, this analysis estimates that every dollar invested yields four dollars in economic returns (Productivity Commission, 2014). These returns materialise through reduced costs in the

legal and health systems, increased workforce participation, and a strengthened justice framework that reduces crime rates and enhances public safety.

To ensure the reliability of these estimates, sensitivity analysis was conducted to model economic fluctuations, demonstrating that even under conservative projections, these investments remain fiscally beneficial. The Treasury Department's fiscal multiplier effect was also incorporated, showing how investment in legal and workplace protections contributes to GDP growth by improving workforce stability and productivity (Treasury Department, 2025).

Investing in victim-survivor support, justice system improvements, alternative justice pathways, and workplace protections yields significant economic and social benefits. For every dollar allocated, approximately four dollars in economic returns are generated, demonstrating the high efficiency of these investments (Productivity Commission, 2014). Strengthening the justice system leads to long-term savings by reducing costs associated with courts, corrections, and policing, ensuring a more effective and responsive legal framework (ALRC, 2025). Furthermore, preventive interventions, such as workplace sexual harassment initiatives and alternative justice pathways, provide some of the highest returns, addressing systemic issues before they escalate into costly legal and social burdens. These targeted investments not only alleviate financial strain on government services but also contribute to a safer, more equitable society where victim-survivors receive the support and justice they deserve.

Implementation Solutions

This requires a whole-of-government response. To address the challenges of federation, National Cabinet agreement, and lack of legal harmonisation, a multi-pronged approach is needed. Below are practical solutions that align with Australian governance structures and policy frameworks. Implementation will require significant national investment and commitment.

1. National Cabinet & COAG Strategy

Solution: Binding National Agreement via SCAG (Standing Council of Attorneys-General)

- Develop a Model National Framework
 - Create a Model Law on Alternative Reporting (SARO) & Restorative Justice to guide harmonisation across states and territories.
 - Establish minimum national standards for:
 - Victim-survivor-led investigation models
 - Admissibility of alternative reports in court
 - Restorative justice mechanisms
- Leverage Federal Funding Incentives
 - Use tied grants to encourage states to implement reforms, linking funding to adoption of alternative reporting laws.

- Implement performance-based funding models, providing additional resources for states meeting justice reform targets.

Solution: COAG Justice Reform Taskforce

- Establish a COAG Working Group on sexual violence justice reforms under the National Cabinet.
- Strengthen cross-government commitment through joint funding agreements between federal, state, and territory governments.

2. Legal Harmonisation Across States & Territories

Solution: Uniform Criminal Code Reforms

- Work through SCAG to create uniform definitions of sexual violence, and alternative justice pathways, aligning with existing National Principles to Address Coercive Control.
- Implement consistent evidentiary standards for the acceptance of alternative reports in legal proceedings.

Solution: National Benchmarking of Justice Responses

- Mandate annual public reporting on sexual violence justice outcomes.
- Expand the remit of the National Commissioner for Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence to monitor state compliance.

3. Police & Judicial Training Standardisation

Solution: National Trauma-Informed Training Mandate

- Mandate trauma-informed policing and prosecution training through federal funding conditions.
- Judicial and prosecutorial training in handling alternative reports, restorative justice cases, in line with the training of coercive control criminal legislation, leveraging existing current national resources.

Solution: Cross-Jurisdictional Training & Knowledge Sharing

- Develop a national training framework including:
 - Sharing best practices across state and federal agencies.
 - Online training modules co-designed with victim-survivors, frontline service and policy advocacy groups.

4. National Data & Intelligence-Sharing Infrastructure

Solution: Integrated National Alternative Reporting System

- Expand existing SARO (Sexual Assault Reporting Option) into a unified national database.
- Ensure real-time access to alternative reports for all police jurisdictions, enhancing intelligence gathering.

Solution: Data-Sharing Agreement Between States

- Establish a robust legal framework for cross-jurisdictional data sharing on sexual violence cases.
- Implement federal privacy and security protections ensuring victim-survivor anonymity alongside law enforcement access.

5. Addressing Regional & Service Delivery Gaps

Solution: Federal Investment in Local Service Hubs

- Coordinate expansion of community-based support services with existing regional, rural, and remote service initiatives under the National Plan.
- Utilise existing telehealth and digital reporting platforms to enhance accessibility outside metropolitan areas.

Solution: First Nations-Led Justice Programs

- Partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, leveraging existing community-controlled initiatives to establish culturally safe reporting and support services.
- Legally recognise and expand Indigenous-led restorative justice initiatives.

6. Restorative Justice Expansion

Solution: National Accreditation & Standards for Restorative Justice

- Conduct a global environmental scan to analyse and adapt restorative justice programs suitable for the Australian context.
- Introduce legally binding restorative justice agreements ensuring offender accountability.
- Expand restorative justice pilot programs integrated into formal criminal justice pathways.

Solution: Victim-Survivor Choice Model

- Enable victim-survivors to determine how their reports are utilised, choosing from criminal justice, restorative justice, or anonymous reporting pathways.

- Establish independent oversight to prevent coercion in alternative justice processes, aligning closely with existing National Principles on coercive control and consistent national education campaigns.

Estimated Costs of Implementation Solutions

Solution Area	Proposed Investment	Rationale & Cost Basis
National Cabinet & SCAG Reform Implementation SCAG Reform Implementation	\$30M	Establishing a SCAG-led taskforce and legislative drafting for national model laws. Includes administration and policy coordination. Drafting for national model laws. Includes administration and policy coordination.
Legal Harmonisation & Evidence Law Reforms	\$50M	Standardising sexual violence laws, alternative reporting, and evidentiary standards across states and territories. Includes legal analysis, legislative drafting, and legal training.
National Trauma-Informed Policing & Judicial Training	\$80M	Mandatory training for police, prosecutors, and judicial officers on alternative reports and restorative justice. Based on similar workforce training costs from Respect@Work reforms.
Alternative Reporting & National Data Integration System	\$100M	Expanding SARO into a federally integrated national database and improving data-sharing agreements between police jurisdictions. Includes IT development and data security infrastructure.
Regional & Indigenous-Led Justice Service Expansion	\$120M	Expanding community-based support hubs for victim-survivors, particularly in rural, regional, and remote areas. Includes First Nations-led justice initiatives.
Restorative Justice & Alternative Pathways Pilot Programs	\$70M	Establishing restorative justice pilot programs across jurisdictions, providing legal accreditation and funding victim-survivor led justice models.
Federal Investment in Survivor Support & Justice Access (as outlined above)	\$250M	Expanding trauma-informed victim services, legal advocacy programs, and crisis support for victim-survivors.
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST	\$700M	

Economic Justification & Return on Investment (ROI)

- Projected ROI: Using an estimated 4:1 Social Return on Investment (SROI) model (Productivity Commission 2014), an initial \$700M investment could yield \$2.8 billion in long-term economic and social benefits.
- Key Savings Areas:
 - Reduced criminal justice costs (fewer court cases, lower prison costs).
 - Increased workforce participation (less absenteeism, victim-survivor economic empowerment).
 - Lower healthcare and welfare costs (early intervention and trauma recovery services reduce long-term dependence on government support).

Limitations on implementation

- Implementation Challenges – Delays in policy rollout, legal harmonisation, and training programs.
- Economic Variability – Recession, inflation, or workforce participation shifts.
- Service Delivery Risks – Issues with scaling trauma-informed services or alternative justice models.
- Public & Political Resistance – Delays due to lack of cross-government agreement.

Implementation Strategy

1. Phased Implementation Over Five Years:
 - Year 1: Legislative harmonisation, SCAG policy framework, national training rollout (\$150M).
 - Years 2-3: Database development, service hub expansion, pilot restorative justice programs (\$350M).
 - Years 4-5: Full national rollout, evaluation, and long-term sustainability planning (\$200M).

With a \$700M investment, Australia could transform its response to sexual violence, harmonise laws, and improve victim-survivor outcomes. The cost is low compared to long-term government savings and the broader \$26 billion annual cost of gender-based violence in Australia (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2021).

Intersection with the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children

The proposed implementation solutions align closely with Australia's National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032, which serves as the overarching framework and guiding actions to eliminate gender-based violence within a generation (Department of Social Services [DSS], 2022). The National Plan emphasises the need for consistent policies and practices across jurisdictions. Implementing uniform criminal code reforms and standardising evidence laws, as proposed, directly supports this objective by ensuring a cohesive legal approach nationwide (Department of Social Services [DSS], 2022). The Plan highlights the importance of strengthening the capabilities of frontline responders. The proposed national trauma-informed training for police and judicial officers aligns with this goal, enhancing the effectiveness of those responding to gender-based violence (National Cabinet, 2024). Developing integrated data systems is a priority in the National Plan. Establishing a national alternative reporting system and enhancing data-sharing agreements would improve the collection and analysis of information, leading to more evidence-informed policy decisions (Department of Social Services [DSS], 2022).

Conclusion

Ending sexual violence is not just a moral obligation—it is an economic imperative. The current system fails too many victim-survivors, leaving justice out of reach and driving up costs across health, welfare, and legal sectors. The numbers are undeniable: for every \$1 invested, Australia stands to gain at least \$4 in economic and social returns.

This is not just about funding—it's about political will. Without a nationally coordinated, victim-survivor centred response, the justice system will continue to exclude the most vulnerable. This integrated reform approach will deliver real change, real accountability, and real economic gains.

The path forward is clear. Invest now—or future generations will be paying an immeasurable cost for years to come.

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Working with Women Alliance

