



Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee

WATCHING BRIEF 21-5: Australia's 2nd National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security

As Quakers we seek a world without war. We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government, we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and to take away the occasion for war.

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This Watching Brief provides information which we hope will assist Friends in knowing about an important driver of Australian Government policy and program development on issues of women, peace and security between 2021 and 2031.

In a nutshell

On 12 April 2021, the *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2031* (NAP WPS) was jointly announced by Peter Dutton, Minister for Defence and Karen Andrews, Minister for Home Affairs. It builds on the Government's *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2018*.

The new Plan identifies four outcomes that will guide Australia's international peace and security efforts, and support coordinated action across all parts of government:

- Supporting women's meaningful participation and needs in peace processes;
- Reducing sexual and gender-based violence;
- Supporting resilience, crisis, and security, law and justice efforts to meet the needs and rights of all women and girls, and
- Demonstrating leadership and accountability for Women, Peace and Security.

Implementation of the NAP-WPS will be led by DFAT and include the Departments of Home Affairs and Defence, the Australian Federal Police, Australian Civil-Military Centre as well as the Office of Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

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The Independent Final Review will be completed by 30 December 2030, and its recommendations will help to inform the third NAP-WPS. This is a public commitment by the Government to resource and implement NAP-WPS policies and programs beyond 2031.

The full publication of the National Action Plan is at <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/australias-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-2021-2031>

Intended impact:

'By 2031, diverse women and girls realize their human rights and achieve meaningful participation in all of Australia's work to prevent and resolve conflict, and establish enduring peace.

The first National Action Plan 2012-2018

The Government's first National Action Plan (2012-2018) was a whole of government policy, coordinated through the Office of Women. It had responsibility, both internationally and domestically, for implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (see below). This Plan set out Australia's actions in domestic and international areas to integrate gender into peace and security efforts, protect women's and girl's human rights and promote their participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Reports from the first Action Plan (2014, 2016, 2018), and two independent reviews (in 2016 and 2018) are available on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet <https://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/international-forums/australian-national-action-plan-women-peace-and-security-2012-2018>

UNSC 1325

National Action Plans are developed by various countries as a way to deliver a whole-of-government collaborative approach to meet their international obligations. In this case, the first and second action plans assist Australia to meet its obligations under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSC 1325).

The Resolution recognises that the experiences, needs and concerns of women and girls differ from those of men and boys in conflict and post-conflict situations. It also addresses under-representation of women in conflict prevention, management and resolution. It was adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council in October 2000. Two Security Council presidential statements (2004, 2005) encouraged countries to develop National Action Plans as a means of implementing UNSC 1325.

Since 2000, an additional nine UNSC Resolutions have been passed, making up the Women, Peace and Security Agenda which provides more detailed guidance on specific aspects of war and its impact on women. This includes: sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking and the gendered aspects of peacekeeping efforts.

Concern that the NAP focuses fails to focus on Australian domestic needs

Concerns have been raised by some women's groups that the second National Action Plan does not deal with domestic priorities related to peace and security. While this plan primarily focuses on matter overseas, Outcome Four notes the need for Australia to increase gender equality in its own defence, security and diplomatic sectors. Advancements in this area were made under the First NAP-WPS, but there is still progress to be made. The need for improved gender awareness and enforcement against gender crimes is increasingly highlighted, particularly since announcement of the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces in March 2021 (the report is scheduled to be tabled in Parliament in November 2021).

The Diplomat (19 April 2021) similarly notes that 'Canberra further developing its own programs that seek to counteract negative gender norms and destructive behavioural patterns should be an essential components of [WPS] and a more prominent arm of Australia's humanitarian assistance and overall foreign policy'. The article raises the point that domestic violence is the world's primary security issue and should not be siloed from the WPS agenda because Australia is not seen as a conflict zone. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/examining-australias-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security/>

It is worth noting that the 12-year National Plan to Reduce Violence Towards Women and Their Children (2010-2022) is in its fourth Action Plan cycle. This cycle includes five priority areas: primary prevention, support Aboriginal and Torres Strait women and children, respect-listen-respond to the diverse lived experience and knowledge of women and their children affected by violence, respond to sexual violence and harassment, and improve support and service system response. Unfortunately, progress in this area has lagged, with Australian Bureau of Statistics showing that intimate partner violence increased between 2014-2019 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/recorded-crime-victims/latest-release#data-download>

Civil society engagement

Under the section on 'Australia's partners', the National Action Plan states:

We will also identify local civil society actors and support their priorities, particularly women's rights organisations, women human rights defenders, women-led peacebuilding organisations, faith-based organisations and civil society peace networks.

The Australian Civil-Military Centre will have the lead in collaborating with civil society. <https://www.acmc.gov.au/search/topics/women-peace-and-security>