



LYRA TAYLOR  
**SOCIAL WORK**  
**IMPACT SUMMIT**

# Beyond response: proactive social work in family violence

20 November 2025  
InterContinental Sydney



## Delegate handbook

# ABOUT THE AASW

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is the professional body for social workers in Australia. As well as representing and supporting social workers in their essential work, we set the benchmarks for professional education and practice in social work.

## VISION

Wellbeing and social justice in Australia

## PURPOSE

Empowering social workers to make a difference

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### Join the conversation



#LyraTaylorSummit

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Australian Association of Social Workers respectfully acknowledges the past and present traditional owners and ongoing custodians of the lands on which we live and operate. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, their ancestors and their families.



# Welcome from the National President



Welcome to the 2025 Lyra Taylor Social Work Impact Summit, a premiere event organised by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW).

The Lyra Taylor Social Work Impact Summit is the AASW's new national platform for transformative social work. Proudly named after Lyra Taylor, each summit honours her legacy of perseverance, innovation and an unwavering dedication to social justice.

A founding member of the AASW, Taylor was instrumental in shaping social work practices in Australia through her work in policy reform and advocacy. Her contributions to the Commonwealth Department of Social Services in 1944 established progressive community-driven practices, and shaped social work in this country.

I would like to introduce myself as the new National President of the AASW. I am proud to belong to a profession whose core value is the betterment of the human condition. Social work has given me a strong ethical foundation, deep knowledge, and the courage to stand up for social justice and drive social change. Its unique capacity to engage individuals, families, communities, organisations, and governments makes it unlike any other profession.

As we approach the AASW's 80th anniversary, this inaugural summit, *Beyond response: proactive social work in family violence*, brings together social workers, policymakers, advocates, researchers, and community voices to address one of Australia's most urgent issues: family and domestic violence (FDV).

One in five Australian adults have experienced physical or sexual family violence, with women and children disproportionately affected. We need urgent reform that is not reactive, but preventative and grounded in social justice.

The day unfolds through a rich program of panels and presentations, including discussions such as *Children as victim-survivors: navigating risk, trauma and complexity*, which centres on the lived experiences of children, *Responding to people who cause harm: holding complexity, holding space*, which challenges practitioners to engage ethically and responsibly, and *Designing safer digital ecosystems*, which explores the intersections of technology and family safety. These, along with sessions on innovative responses and structural perspectives, ensure a comprehensive exploration of the issues at hand.

We look forward to seeing you throughout the day and also being able to come together to celebrate the AASW National Excellence Awards at the evening cocktail reception.

We invite you to engage fully, challenge ideas, and leave inspired to lead proactive change. Together, we can shape safer systems and a stronger future for social work in Australia.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz Little".

Liz Little  
AASW National President

# Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of our advisory group, speakers, and supporting partners who made this summit possible.

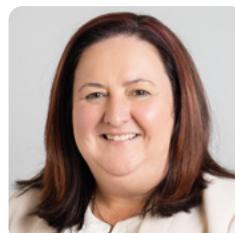
## Advisory group



**Deirdre Cheers**

CEO

Barnardos Australia



**Simone Czech**

CEO

Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA)



**Tara Hunter**

Director

Clinical and Client Services,  
Full Stop Australia



**Anthony M Schembri AM**

Chief Executive

Northern Sydney Local Health District

## Sponsors and supporters



# Sponsors and exhibitors

## Exhibitors

We are proud to showcase our exhibitors. Each exhibitor will have a table in the foyer area.



### Corporate Traveller

With Corporate Traveller, you get a travel management company that blends the best in tech with over 30 years of travel expertise, plus:

- a team of travel agents that grow with your business
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- traveller tracking and duty of care dashboard
- exclusive deals, negotiated rates, linked loyalty programs, and more.



### DV-alert (Lifeline Australia)

DV-alert is a nationally recognised training program with training and assessment delivered by Lifeline Australia and approved third parties on behalf of Lifeline Australia (RTO 88036). The program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services as a key initiative under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

Since 2007, we have been working to build the knowledge and capability of frontline workers to reduce and prevent domestic and family violence. DV-alert is led by experienced trainers dedicated to ending violence against women and children. Our workshops provide a safe space for frontline workers to learn, connect and be empowered to recognise and respond confidently to those in crisis.



### Harvey Norman Technology for Business

Harvey Norman Technology for Business specialises in complete IT solutions designed to enhance cyber security, protect critical data, and maximise IT system efficiency for small businesses. We understand the challenges of staying ahead of evolving cyber threats and compliance regulations. With years of experience and a dedicated team, we provide advanced solutions to keep your IT systems secure, compliant with Australian regulations, and operating at optimum performance. As a trusted partner, we provide 24/7 monitoring, proactive management, expert support, and deliver big business IT services & cybersecurity at small business prices.

## Sponsors and exhibitors (continued)



### 1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT is Australia's national domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service. We are a free and confidential service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

1800RESPECT is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Social Services to provide support for:

- people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, domestic, family and sexual violence
- people supporting someone affected by domestic, family and sexual violence
- professionals supporting someone affected by domestic, family and sexual violence.

1800RESPECT counsellors can only be contacted by call on 1800 737 732, text on 0458 737 732 or by visiting [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au) for online chat and video call services.



### Welfare Recruitment Solutions

Welfare Recruitment Solutions are a leading recruitment agency in the human services sector. Since our inception we have partnered with many child and family support services to recruit from entry-level to executive positions. Our purpose isn't just about placing people, we strive to help shape the futures of both the candidate and the organisation. As most of our clients are not-for-profit organisations, we have highly competitive rates understanding that resources need to be used in the most efficient way.



### Free Wi-Fi access

Delegates attending the 2025 Lyra Taylor Social Work Impact Summit can access complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the venue by using the following details:

**Network name: IHG ONE REWARDS Free WI-FI**  
**Access code: SYDHA**

If you experience any issues connecting to the Wi-Fi, please see a staff member for assistance.

# Program

Time	Session	Speakers
8:30am – 8:45am	<b>Welcome to Country</b>	Binowee Bayles
8:45am – 9:00am	<b>Welcome address</b>	Liz Little, AASW National President
9:00am – 9:10am	<b>Opening address</b> Honouring Lyra Taylor	Rosanna Arena, Services Australia
9:10am – 9:30am	<b>Government representative presentation</b>	Micaela Cronin, Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner
9:30am – 10:30am	<b>Keynote presentation</b>	Amani Haydar, award-winning writer, visual artist, lawyer, and advocate for women's health and safety
10:30am – 11:00am	<b>Morning tea break</b>	
11:00am – 12:00pm	<b>Panel discussion</b> Children as victim-survivors: navigating risk, trauma & complexity	Chaired by Dierdre Cheers, Barnardos Australia Kate Alexander, Life Without Barriers Simone Czech, Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) Richard Ayoub, community services/lived-experience advocate
12:00pm – 12:30pm	<b>Presentation</b> Responding to people who cause harm: holding complexity, holding space	Tori Cooke, Pandora Projects
12:30pm – 1:30pm	<b>Lunch break</b>	
1:30pm – 2:30pm	<b>Panel discussion</b> Innovative responses for real-world impact	Chaired by Anthony Schembri AM, Northern Sydney Local Health District Professor Jan Breckenridge, UNSW Shannon Harvey, The Benevolent Society Rebecca Latham, Mater Hospital Brandy Murphy, NSW Health
2:30pm – 3:00pm	<b>Presentation</b> The critical role of a structural lens in recovery work	Dr Christine Craik AM, AASW Accredited Family Violence Social Worker Jess Findling, AASW Accredited Family Violence Social Worker
3:00pm – 3:30pm	<b>Afternoon tea break</b>	
3:30pm – 4:30pm	<b>Panel discussion</b> Designing safer digital ecosystems	Chaired by Carolyn Cousins, Tuned In Consulting Hayley Foster, Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia Niko Milić, Services Australia Catherine Plunkett, Safety Net Australia Heidi Snell, Regulatory Operations Division, eSafety
4:30pm – 5:00pm	<b>Presentation</b> Proactive social work: harnessing wisdom, driving change	Tara Hunter, Full Stop Australia
5:00pm – 5:15pm	<b>Closing remarks</b>	Liz Little, AASW National President
5:30pm – 7:30pm	<b>AASW National Excellence Awards cocktail reception</b>	

# Introductions

## Master of Ceremonies



Carolyn Cousins

Director, Tuned In Consulting

Carolyn Cousins from Tuned In Consulting (BSW, MSW, MEd(Adult), MSc(App. Neuroscience) has previously worked in and managed teams in the DFV sector, as well as provided specialist training for the Education Centre Against Violence. She has been involved in the Staying Home Leaving Violence Program since its early days, facilitating specialist training and undertaking policy writing and updates. In 2019 Carolyn developed DFV training for the NSW Police Force, both for General Duties and DVLO Policing roles. She currently supervises professionals in a range of DFV related roles and continues to provide specialist training, having hosted forums for

Safer Pathways and other specialist DFV programs. Most recently, Carolyn has been involved in the roll out of the new DVSAT resources.

## Welcome to Country



Binowee Bayles

Binowee is a proud Aboriginal woman born on Gadigal land in Redfern, Sydney. She has cultural and community connections to many First Nations across Australia, she has been part of cultural ceremonies, performed traditional song and dance, and continues to share her knowledge to bring indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and world views together.



Building strategic leadership for a better social work future

Step into the future of social work leadership

Accelerate your leadership journey with this high-impact program designed for mid-career social work leaders (5+ years' experience).

Over five transformative weeks – including a three-day, in-person workshop in Melbourne (11–13 March 2026) – you'll strengthen your strategic thinking, deepen your self-awareness, and build the relationships you need to lead with clarity, confidence, and purpose.

Places are limited — apply now  
[aasw.asn.au/norma-parker-leadership-program](http://aasw.asn.au/norma-parker-leadership-program)

## Welcome address



**Liz Little**  
AASW National President

Elizabeth "Liz" Little is a distinguished Tasmanian social work leader whose career has been defined by advocacy, reform and compassion. With more than four decades of experience spanning government, community, education and international collaboration, Liz has consistently worked to advance equality, human rights and the wellbeing of vulnerable communities.

After earning a Bachelor of Social Studies from the University of Sydney and a Master of Social Science (Administration) from the University of Tasmania, Liz began her career in community development and youth work before moving into leadership roles in social policy and justice reform. In 1990, she became the inaugural Director of Tasmania's Office of the Status of Women, where she played a central role in shaping government policy for women's equality. Five years later, she was appointed Tasmania's first Sex Discrimination Commissioner, implementing the new Sex Discrimination Act and strengthening protections for women's rights. During this time, she was recognised with a United Nations Day Certificate of Recognition for furthering the rights of women.

From 2001 to 2009, Liz served as Principal Consultant for Strategic Policy and Projects with the Department of Justice, where she was instrumental in developing Tasmania's landmark Safe at Home initiative, an integrated, whole-of-government response to family violence. Her expertise and leadership also saw her invited by the Chinese Government to deliver domestic violence training to senior officials and by Cambridge University to speak on gender equality at the House of Lords.

As Chief Executive Officer of the Sexual Assault Support Service (2010–2015), Liz championed trauma-informed practice, improved support for survivors of sexual assault, and contributed advice to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. She later served as CEO of Rural Alive & Well (2016–2019), supporting rural communities through mental health, crisis and suicide prevention services.

Liz has also served in multiple national and advisory capacities, including as Chair of the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (2012–2015), AASW National Case Reviewer, Official Visitor to the Tasmanian Prison Service, and Ethics Committee Member for the University of Tasmania.

In recognition of her enduring contribution to gender equality, justice and community wellbeing, Liz was inducted into the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women in 2023. In November 2025, she was elected National President of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). As National President Liz will continue to champion professional integrity, ethical practice, and the transformative power of social work to engage individuals, communities and systems in the pursuit of a more just and compassionate society.

# Government and keynote speakers

## Honouring Lyra Taylor



**Rosanna Arena**

National Manager, Social Work Services, Services Australia

Rosanna Arena was appointed National Manager of Social Work Services at Services Australia in October 2023, leading the branch as it navigates changes in leadership, ways of working with and assisting customers, and strengthening the group's ability to work more collaboratively.

Rosanna practiced as a Senior Social Worker across New South Wales and Victorian Health, specialising in neurology and stroke care, crisis intervention, short term counselling, on-call emergency response, discharge planning and aged care safety intervention.

Since joining Services Australia in 2006, Rosanna has held a range of senior leadership roles, including Business Manager for Social Work Services, Program Manager Customer Service Delivery, Region Manager, and Acting National Manager. In this time, she worked on a number of initiatives including self service (early years), implementation of customer liaison officers and national emergency management.

### Presentation abstract

A tribute to one of Australia's earliest professionally qualified social workers, whose visionary leadership in policy, advocacy, and community care helped shape the nation's welfare system and continues to inspire the profession today.

## Government representation presentation



**Micaela Cronin**

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner

Micaela Cronin commenced as Australia's first Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner on 1 November 2022. She began her career as a social worker in family violence and sexual assault services. Since then, she has held leadership roles across the social service sector in Australia and internationally, including as President of the Australian Council of Social Services.

Micaela was also CEO of an international non-government organisation based in Asia, working to build global service delivery and strategic partnerships to tackle human trafficking and human rights abuses.

In 2014, Micaela was awarded the Robin Clark Leadership Award – Victoria's most prestigious children's protection award – in recognition of her leadership in inspiring others to achieve the best outcomes for children, young people, and their families.

### Presentation abstract

In her address, Commissioner Micaela Cronin will highlight the urgent need for coordinated national action on family violence, and reflect on the National Plan's role in prevention, early intervention, justice responses, and recovery, as well as the genuine inclusion of lived experience in shaping responses.

## Keynote presentation



**Amani Haydar**

Award-winning writer, visual artist, lawyer, and advocate for women's health and safety.

Amani's debut memoir *The Mother Wound* was recently awarded the 2022 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Non-fiction. She is also the recipient of the 2021 UTS Faculty of Law Alumni Award, 2021 FBi Radio Sydney Music, Art and Culture Award and was named Local Woman of the Year for Bankstown at the 2020 NSW Premier's Woman of the Year Awards in recognition of her advocacy against domestic violence.

Amani is a former Archibald Prize finalist and has had both her writing and art featured in collections such as *Racism, Arab Australian Other, Sweatshop Women Volume Two*, and the upcoming anthology *After Australia*.

### Presentation abstract

Drawing on her lived experience as a survivor and having lost her mother to domestic violence in 2015, Amani will reflect on how systems and services can fail to protect survivors and discuss pathways for transformative, survivor-centred practice.

Her address invites social workers to engage deeply with the structural and personal dimensions of family violence and to champion proactive, justice-oriented responses.

## Expert Employment and Industrial Law Support for AASW Members

**Hall Payne Lawyers is a leading Australian firm with over 30 years of experience in employment and industrial law. HPL is committed to social justice and now offers tailored legal support to AASW members across the not-for-profit, health, and social services sectors.**

### What services are available?

AASW members can access legal support across a broad range of workplace matters, including:

- Employment disputes and unfair dismissals;
- Disciplinary and performance management issues;
- Employment contracts and negotiations;
- Discrimination, harassment, and bullying;
- Breaches of the Fair Work Act or state-based industrial legislation.

### What benefits are available to members of AASW?

- One free 45-minute consultation per financial year for eligible AASW members.

### How to access these services

AASW members wishing to access a complimentary legal consultation with HPL should contact AASW to obtain a referral.



# Sessions and speakers

## Panel discussion

### *Children as victim-survivors: navigating risk, trauma & complexity*

Chaired by Deirdre Cheers, CEO, Barnardos Australia

Highlighting what truly child-centred practice looks like in high-risk contexts, this discussion addresses the impacts of cumulative harm and explores approaches that prioritise children's safety, voice and recovery.



**Kate Alexander**

Project Lead – Practice and Strategic Governance, Life Without Barriers

Kate Alexander is a social worker who has worked in child protection for over 30 years spanning frontline, research and executive leadership roles. She is currently working with Life Without Barriers, leading a project on practice governance across the whole agency.

Kate held the role of Senior Practitioner in the NSW statutory child protection system for over 13 years and was responsible for caseworker learning and child death reviews and quality assurance. She recently completed a PhD which investigated the attitudes of the child protection workforce toward domestic violence, determined the impact of worker attitudes on their assessment of children's safety, and found that combining a therapeutic approach for understanding violence with a standard safety assessment significantly reduced the likelihood of children being removed from their mothers.

Kate was awarded a NSW Public Service Medal in 2019 for outstanding service to families and community, and a Churchill Fellowship in 2010 which saw her travel to Norway, the UK and the USA researching child protection systems.



**Richard Ayoub**

Community services/lived-experience advocate

With over 25 years of lived experience informing his work, Richard brings personal insight and professional expertise to homelessness and community services. His personal journey includes surviving homelessness caused by domestic violence, which has fueled his lifelong commitment to supporting those facing similar challenges.

Richard began his career in out-of-home care before moving into refugee and asylum seeker support, including four years working offshore with displaced communities. He has since held roles across specialist homelessness services, the Homeless Youth Assistance Program and bail beds, and alternative care arrangements, always with a focus on walking alongside children, young people and families experiencing crisis.

Progressing into senior leadership, Richard has overseen projects, budgets, staff development, and service delivery, while remaining grounded in direct engagement. Today, as a foster parent to two boys with lived experience of domestic violence, he continues to champion safety, belonging, and hope for the next generation.



**Simone Czech**

CEO, Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA)

Simone Czech is the Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA), the NSW peak body representing the voice of non-government community organisations that deliver services to children, young people and their families experiencing vulnerability.

Holding a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Master's in Public Administration, Simone has extensive operational experience in the disability sector, child protection and out of home care programs, as well as demonstrated skills and knowledge in the development of policy and reform initiatives gained over 25 years' working in a variety of roles within what is now the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

In her most recent role as Deputy Secretary of Child Protection and Permanency, District and Youth Justice Services in NSW, Simone oversaw the delivery of high quality child protection, and out of home care services and held responsibility for a number of state-wide services including the Child Protection Helpline, Joint Child Protection Response Program, Adoption and Permanency Services, Psychological Services, Engagement and Family Support, Intensive Support Services, Information Exchange and Access, and Interstate Liaison. She also oversaw Youth Justice NSW, ChildStory and the NSW Office of the Senior Practitioner.

Simone is passionate about delivering high quality services to vulnerable children, young people and their families. She is particularly dedicated to ensuring children and young people who are in out-of-home care have the best possible outcomes.

## Presentation

### *Responding to people who cause harm: holding complexity, holding space*

This presentation explores how social workers can ethically engage people who cause harm while prioritising victim-survivor safety. Drawing on feminist, person-centred, and accountability-based approaches, it offers strategies for fostering change without replicating punitive systems.



**Tori Cooke**  
Director, Pandora Projects

Victoria (Tori) provides consultation and subject matter specialism in family violence programs and projects and is a skilled clinical supervisor and TAE40116 trained educator in private practice. Tori is a social worker experienced in working with women experiencing family violence, suicide

bereavement counselling, alcohol and other drugs (AOD) counselling and working directly with men using violence and abuse. She has developed and implemented women's healing programs and is well known in designing Men's Behaviour Change Program (MBCP) responses (individual, case management and groupwork programs) for men's groups in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria.

In the last five years, Tori has worked on a range of initiatives in the men's family violence space in Victoria as part of the Victorian Family Violence Royal Commission reforms, working as the practice specialist at Relationships Australia Victoria and Head of Workforce Development at No to Violence in the last five years.

Now based in Perth, Tori continues to support best practice responses, and the health and wellbeing of practitioners in private practice through Pandora Enterprise Projects. Tori contributed as a subject matter expert in the innovative Victorian Orange Door Hubs induction training and a subject matter contributor in the design of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework training in Victoria. She currently teaches part time at South Metro TAFE, lectures at the University of Western Australia and provides external supervision and mentoring to frontline practitioners.

## Panel discussion

### *Innovative responses for real-world impact and change*

Chaired by Anthony Schembri AM, Chief Executive, Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD)

This panel showcases creative, evidence-informed approaches driving tangible change in family violence prevention and response, highlighting strategies that translate vision into practical, lasting impact.



**Professor Jan Breckenridge**  
Head of the School of Social Sciences, UNSW

Professor Jan Breckenridge is an internationally recognised interdisciplinary social sciences scholar

## Sessions and speakers (continued)

in areas of gendered violence, and her research and engagement activities are oriented towards maximum impact in innovative social policy development, best practice service provision and outcome measurement of effectiveness.

Jan's research delivers academic excellence by combining the goals of quality and impact enacted through extensive engagement activities to create a more just society and produce demonstrable social benefits.

Jan currently manages a philanthropic grant as part of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia's Next Chapter and Next Chapter Innovations programs. As part of this program, the Gendered Violence Research Network (GVRN) received funding to support and advance research into economic and financial abuse, building an evidence base for best practice responses by financial institutions and opportunities for knowledge exchange between community partners.

Jan is a chief investigator on an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant 2025 which aims to address the ways in which the tax and transfer system in Australia can be used by perpetrators of intimate partner financial abuse. Jan is currently an invited member of the Social Services Advisory Board providing advice to the Department and Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Government Services.



**Shannon Harvey**

Director, Impact Data & Evaluation, The Benevolent Society and Doctoral Candidate, UNSW Social Policy Research Centre

Shannon Harvey (they/them) is a social policy researcher, working between academia and the not-for-profit sector. At the Benevolent Society, they lead on data and evaluation, collaborating with social work and allied health colleagues to translate evidence into practice that improves the lives of children and families, older people, and people with disabilities. Alongside this, their PhD study at UNSW investigates non-binary people's experiences of family violence and their engagement with a service system commonly segregated by binary gender.



**Rebecca Latham**

Domestic and Family Violence Health Workforce Specialist (Qld), Mater Health Qld

With a deep commitment to lives lived in freedom and safety, Rebecca Latham is a social worker notching 25 years of service to the profession. Currently employed with Mater Health Qld, Rebecca has been involved in implementation of Queensland's DFV reform agenda ensuring health systems are skilled and poised to play their part.

Rebecca's background spans child protection, crisis counselling, research, career guidance and practice across a range of public health settings, as both a clinician and social work educator. Rebecca enjoys bolstering the capacity of health systems to respond to patient psychosocial complexity and is tenacious at infusing values of courage, dignity, empathy, and justice in her efforts to improve quality of care and service, to those who need it most.



**Brandy Murphy**

Senior Social Worker/Senior Aboriginal Counsellor, New Street and Sexual Assault Services, NSW Health

Brandy is a Wiradjuri woman and works in the PARVAN space with NSW Health as a social worker. Brandy weaves a unique clinical and cultural skill set when working with children and adolescents that have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour and in her role with sexual assault services.

Brandy is passionate and a strong advocate for social justice, human rights, fairness, healing, and dismantling systems that participate in causing further harm to people and communities. Brandy is a proud member of the Yamurrah Collective and is committed to ongoing learning and development to ensure her practice continues to make a meaningful difference with the people and communities she is connected to.

## Presentation

### ***The critical role of a structural lens in recovery work***

Drawing on interviews, practitioner insights, and literature, this presentation examines recovery work in Australia's family violence system – its distinction from crisis response, its role in informing practice, and the essential elements of effective, trauma-informed recovery.



**Dr Christine Craik AM**  
AASW Accredited Family Violence  
Social Worker

Dr Christine Craik AM is an Accredited Family Violence Social Worker and has worked in family violence for over 30 years in practice (casework, counselling and advocacy), alongside teaching and research.

Christine's current research and practice involves advocacy in the Courts for victims of family violence, making clear the way systems are biased along gendered, racial and class lines, and therefore easily weaponized by perpetrators and their advocates.

Christine is a senior lecturer in the social work undergraduate and postgraduate programs at RMIT University, where she has developed, coordinates and teaches into the Working with Violence and Abuse courses (among others). Christine is a past National President of the AASW, and volunteers as a survivor/advocate for Safe Steps.



**Jessica Findling**  
AASW Accredited Family Violence  
Social Worker

Jess is a lecturer in Criminology and Justice Studies at RMIT University. She is an Accredited Family Violence Social Worker and criminologist. Her experience in direct practice includes ten years in community organisations as a counsellor, caseworker and advocate, with a focus on survivors of domestic and family violence and disability.

Jess currently coordinates case management practice and teaches in the Inside Out program, where students from RMIT (outside) learn alongside students who are incarcerated (inside). Jess has also taught in the Graduate Certificate of Domestic and Family Violence, and coordinated and taught into various subjects in social work and human services.

## Panel discussion

### ***Designing safer digital ecosystems***

Chaired by Carolyn Cousins, Director, Tuned In Consulting

A discussion on how technology can both facilitate abuse and enhance safety. Topics include smart devices, tracking, digital safety planning, legal gaps, and using practice wisdom to shape better policy and system responses.



**Hayley Foster**  
Director, Family Violence &  
Director, Access, Equity and  
Inclusion, Federal Circuit and  
Family Court of Australia

Hayley Foster, BBus (Ec) LLB (Hons) GDLP GDFDRP GAICD, is the Director of Family Violence and Access, Equity, and Inclusion at the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, charged with advising the Chief Justice and CEO on enhancing the Court's response to family violence and increasing accessibility for diverse populations.

Hayley is a recognised leader in family, domestic, and sexual violence prevention and response efforts, with a career spanning frontline services, behaviour change, law practice, policy development, and executive leadership.

Hayley has played a key part in shaping policy and law reforms at state and federal levels, including the criminalisation of coercive control, affirmative sexual consent laws, a national curriculum on respectful relationships, paid domestic violence leave, Respect@Work, and the prioritisation of safety in family law. Hayley Foster was a member of the Commonwealth Advisory Group for the current 10-year National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children.

## Sessions and speakers (continued)



**Niko Milić**

Social Work Manager, Services Australia

Niko Milić is a social worker with over 25 years of experience across service delivery, leadership, and program development. He currently leads the Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement team within Services Australia's Social Work Services Branch, guiding a service that supports people experiencing complex challenges, advocates for fair access to government support, and ensures social work practice remains responsive within a large service system. He plays a key role in ensuring the voices of social workers contribute to agency-wide decisions, helping shape services that are inclusive, trauma-informed, and grounded in real-world experience.

Niko's professional focus includes working with individuals at risk of suicide or self-harm, people impacted by family and domestic violence, young people without adequate support, and communities affected by disasters and emergencies. His leadership spans the delivery of social work services across face-to-face, telephony, and online platforms.

He has played a key role in domestic and international emergency response efforts by government and is a long-standing member of Services Australia's Family Support Team. Niko was awarded the Australian Public Service Medal for his outstanding contribution to the government's response to the aged care crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Heidi Snell**

Acting General Manager,  
Regulatory Operations Division,  
eSafety

Heidi has been with eSafety's Regulatory Operations Division since December 2024, acting as General Manager and leading the compliance and enforcement work against the most extreme forms of online harm. The Division also incorporates the complaints schemes for harmful online content directed at individuals, eSafety's training and

educational programs and resources, and the implementation of age restrictions for certain social media services.

Prior to this role Heidi led the establishment of the National Anti-Scam Centre at the ACCC and has overseen numerous investigations and litigation relating to anti-competitive conduct and consumer protection matters.

Heidi has a Bachelor of Law and an Executive Master of Public Administration and is a Vincent Fairfax Fellow and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



**Catherine Plunkett**

Director, Safety Net Australia

Catherine is the Director of Safety Net Australia at Wesnet, leading a team that works at the intersection of technology facilitated abuse and gender-based violence, providing training, knowledge resources and expert advice to service providers, government and technology companies.

She is a subject matter expert with more than thirty years of experience working with and for specialist domestic/family services, including state and national peak bodies.

Catherine has extensive experience in leading the design and implementation of workforce development initiatives, service models and practice frameworks, including the Code of Practice for Specialist Family Violence Services for Women and Children in Victoria.

In 2017, Catherine was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship to investigate how multi-agency responses to family violence can generate positive systemic change.

Catherine works on behalf of survivors and the sector in structural development activities using intersectional feminist, human rights, and anti-oppressive frameworks to address and prevent gender-based violence.

## Presentation

### *Proactive social work: harnessing wisdom, driving change*

Social workers have a key role to play in being part of working towards ending domestic, family and sexual violence in one generation. This presentation weaves together the day's themes and calls on us to turn practice wisdom into collective action, positioning social work to shape safer systems, foster community wellbeing, and drive lasting change.



Tara Hunter

Director, Clinical and Client Services, Full Stop Australia

Tara Hunter is the Director of Clinical and Client Services at Full Stop Australia providing leadership for all the helplines, sexual abuse and fee-for-service counselling services. She also oversees the national training and consulting practice and holds executive responsibility for Full Stop's clinical governance framework.

With a Master of Social Work and various certifications in workplace training and family dispute resolution, Tara brings a wealth of expertise to her role. As a member of the NSW Women's Advisory Council, Tara represents Full Stop on various government and non-government advisory bodies

Her background in managing sexual assault support services within the public health network system, guiding teams through complex caseloads, and advocating on key law reform matters, such as sexual consent, positions her as a valuable contributor to the national conversation on ending gender-based violence and abuse.

Committed to a client-centred approach, Tara aims to build stable and reliable trauma-specialist systems that support clients and front-line workers. Simultaneously, she actively addresses the underlying systemic and social causes of gender-based violence.



**SUPERVISION**

**SAVE THE DATE**

Join us in Adelaide for the 2026 Social Work Impact Summit – a national gathering dedicated to advancing excellence in social work practice through the power of **professional supervision**.

The Summit will bring together leaders, practitioners, and educators to explore innovative models, reflective practice, and strategies that strengthen the social work workforce and improve outcomes for the communities we serve.

**7 May 2026 – Adelaide**



# AASW National Excellence Awards cocktail reception



Each year, the AASW National Excellence Awards celebrate outstanding social workers, researchers, and students who exemplify the best of our profession's values and achievements. These prestigious awards honour AASW members making an enduring difference, whether they're engaged directly with the delivery of services to clients or making innovative contributions to social work research and education.

Winners of the AASW National Excellence Awards will be announced at the post-summit cocktail reception. This evening offers a relaxed and welcoming setting to connect with colleagues, expand your professional network, and recognise the work and achievements of peers across the profession. Inclusive with all registration types, the cocktail reception includes drinks and a curated selection of canapés.

## CPD points and digital badges

Raise your professional profile with an exclusive AASW Lyra Taylor Social Work Impact Summit digital badge.

All attendees and presenters at the summit will earn an AASW digital badge, providing an effective way to showcase your expertise and accomplishments online.

Each badge is certified by the AASW and includes detailed metadata outlining your professional qualifications, as well as the education, training and experience required to earn it.





## Latest Continuing Professional Development: looking forward through innovation



These upcoming workshops delve into emerging knowledge and innovative approaches that are shaping the future of social work. Designed for social workers across all career stages, these events offer opportunities to stay ahead in a rapidly evolving profession.

### **From Silence to Strength – Supporting Mental Health in Men from CaLD Backgrounds**

- Date: 17 March 2026
- Time: 2:00pm – 3:30pm (AEST)
- CPD Hours: 1.5 hrs

Despite experiencing high levels of psychological distress, CaLD men are significantly less likely to access mental health support – often presenting only at crisis points or through involuntary services.

### **Betting on Balance – Understanding and Overcoming Gambling Addiction**

- Date: 23 April 2026 and 30 April 2026
- Time: 10:00am – 1:30pm (AEST)
- CPD Hours: 6 hrs

Gambling harm intersects with financial stress, family violence, trauma, substance use, and suicidal risk – issues social workers confront daily. Yet many practitioners still feel uncertain about how to raise the topic, conduct effective screening, or deliver evidence-based interventions once a problem is identified.

### **When They Hurt The Ones We Love: Animals, Interpersonal Violence and Coercive Control**

- Date: 14 April 2026
- Time: 2:00pm – 3:30pm (AEST)
- CPD Hours: 1.5 hrs

Pets are more than companions – they are part of the family. In the context of interpersonal violence (IPV), they can become targets, tools of control, and barriers to safety. As social workers, recognising this link is vital to supporting the whole family.

Our commitment to professional development has transformed traditional webinars into engaging, high-quality resources that empower social workers. Crafted by social workers for social workers, and guided by our learning and development staff, our training programs are designed to enhance the professional toolkit, enabling practitioners to continue their life-changing work within the community.

# Support services and resources

This event may explore challenging or sensitive topics. Please be mindful of your own reactions and wellbeing throughout. Take breaks, step out if you need to, and seek support if required.

In Australia, a range of free and confidential services are available:

## **Lifeline**

**13 11 14**

Available 24/7 for anyone experiencing emotional distress, crisis, or suicidal thoughts. Online chat support is also offered via [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au).

## **1800RESPECT**

**1800 737 732**

The national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service. It provides phone and online support 24/7 to people experiencing or at risk of violence, as well as to professionals supporting them.

## **Beyond Blue**

**1300 22 4636**

Offering round-the-clock mental health support, resources, and referral pathways for people experiencing anxiety, depression, or related concerns.

## **Suicide Call Back Service**

**1300 659 467**

Provides free nationwide phone and online counselling for people affected by suicide.

## **Kids Helpline**

**1800 55 1800**

A confidential service for children and young people aged 5–25, available by phone, webchat, or email.

## **MensLine Australia**

**1300 78 99 78**

A 24/7 service for men dealing with relationship or family issues, offering counselling and referral to further support.

In addition, many states and territories have local domestic violence hotlines, mental health triage services, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support services. Delegates are encouraged to reach out to their GP or Employee Assistance Program (if available) for tailored professional care.

We value your wellbeing. Support is always within reach if you need it.

# Sector update

The AASW continues to take a leadership role in addressing family and domestic violence, emphasising its gendered nature rooted in systemic inequality. This focus aligns with social justice values and international frameworks, including the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

**Credentialing and workforce development** remain central to AASW's efforts. The Family Violence Credential recognises social workers with specialist expertise, providing public recognition, professional standing, and access to targeted CPD training and a peer community of practice.

**Education and training opportunities** are extensive. AASW offers on-demand modules such as *Still Hidden From Sight* and *Honour-based Violence in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities*, alongside webinars exploring coercive control, perpetrator accountability, and ethical survivor engagement. The CPD package *Responding to Family Violence – A Social Work Approach* provides a comprehensive 10-hour program on case formulation and intervention.

**Advocacy and policy engagement** are equally strong. The AASW has contributed to a number of key national and state inquiries and strategies, including submissions to the *Draft National Plan to End the Mistreatment and Abuse of Older People* (2025), the *South Australian Royal Commission on Family Violence* (2024), *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices – Family Safety Plan* (2024), the *Co-design of a family and domestic violence capability framework* (2025), and *Continuing Professional Development for Legal Practitioners on Coercive Control* (2023). These initiatives, alongside this inaugural summit, demonstrate AASW's commitment to advancing systemic change, building workforce capability, and ensuring social workers remain at the forefront of national FDV response and prevention.

## Notes





SOCIAL WORK  
CONGRESS

# 80 Years of Leadership

*Shaping Tomorrow Together*

**Save the date**

Gold Coast Convention & Exhibition Centre  
18 – 20 November 2026

[www.socialworkcongress.com.au](http://www.socialworkcongress.com.au)