

Thursday 20 August – 2026

Peak body welcomes Family Violence Act reforms and calls for continued system-wide action

Tasmania's peak body for family and sexual violence has welcomed proposed changes to strengthen the Family Violence Act 2004, saying that the reforms are an important step towards greater accountability for serial and persistent perpetrators and improved safety for many victim-survivors.

The Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance (TFSVA) says several proposed reforms align with recommendations made by the Alliance, including stronger management of serial and persistent perpetrators, behaviour-change interventions and longer-term protections.

However, TFSVA says that legislative reforms must sit alongside broader system reform across prevention, early intervention, behaviour change, specialist support, recovery and long-term safety.

TFSVA CEO Bree Klerck said the Alliance, and our members are looking forward to reviewing the draft legislation and working constructively with government on the detail.

"We welcome stronger accountability for people who repeatedly use violence, but we need to also ensure that we are addressing violence before it reaches crisis," Ms Klerck said.

"We know many victim-survivors never report to police or come into contact with the criminal justice system. That is why we need to keep strengthening the pathways that reach people earlier, before violence escalates to the point that police, courts and prisons become the primary response."

In its April 2026 submission to the review of the Family Violence Act, TFSVA put forward 107 suggested actions informed by evidence, specialist services and the experiences of victim-survivors.

The submission called for investment across prevention, early intervention, crisis response, behaviour change, recovery and long-term safety, as well as fundamental reform to Tasmania's definition of family violence.

Tasmania's Family Violence Act remains unique in Australia in restricting its family violence framework predominantly to violence between spouses and partners, leaving other forms of violence within families outside the framework and failing to adequately recognise children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right.

"When a child lives with family violence, they are not simply witnessing something happening to an adult. They are experiencing family violence," Ms Klerck said.

“How we define family violence matters. It affects who our systems recognise, the protections and services available to them, and ultimately how we design and fund our response.”

TFSVA particularly welcomes the focus on behaviour-change programs, saying legislative requirements must be matched by evidence-based, accessible and appropriately evaluated programs across Tasmania.

“We must ensure that completion of a behaviour-change program is more than a simple box ticked on a court document. The measure must be whether behaviour and attitudes have changed, and whether victim-survivors including children feel, and are, safer as a result.”

Ms Klerck said the reforms were an important part of a broader effort to strengthen Tasmania’s family and sexual violence system.

“Legislative reform and system reform need to work together – across prevention, early intervention, effective perpetrator behaviour change, specialist support, recovery and long-term safety.”

“Ultimately, our measure of success cannot simply be how effectively we punish violence after it occurs. It must be whether fewer Tasmanians experience violence in the first place, whether people can get help before they reach crisis, and whether every victim-survivor – including children and young people – can access the safety and support they need.”

The Alliance also welcomed Parliament’s decision this week to expand the remit of the Joint Sessional Committee on Gender and Equality to expressly include gender-based violence, creating a new pathway for parliamentary scrutiny of family and sexual violence in Tasmania.

TFSVA encourages the Committee to stand up an inquiry into family and sexual violence in Tasmania as soon as possible.

“A parliamentary inquiry on family and sexual violence in Tasmania could provide a space to bring together the significant body of reform, review and evidence already underway across Tasmania.” Ms Klerck Said.

“It could provide greater transparency and accountability, hear directly from victim-survivors and specialist services, and help build a shared reform agenda for Tasmania.”

“We have an opportunity to bring that work together, look at our system as a whole and ask whether we are doing everything we can to prevent violence and keep Tasmanians safe,” Ms Klerck said.

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