



CITY OF BALLARAT

Social Policy Position Statement



May 2024

Prevention of Family Violence

Context

Family violence affects all communities. The impacts are felt across families, workplaces, communities and the economy, and consequences are seen in mortality rates, employment, housing, and the physical and mental health of individuals. Violence in families, against minority groups and against women is a serious social justice issue. Local government plays a role in raising awareness and supporting the social change needed to prevent gendered violence, and to advocate for gender equality.

The Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* defines family violence as:

“(a) behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person that is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive; threatening or coercive; or in any way controls or dominates the family member and causes them to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or (b) behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to in paragraph (a).”

The Victorian Government established the Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2015, in acknowledgement of the seriousness of family violence and consequences for individuals, families and communities. The government has accepted all 227 recommendations of this report, with actions for implementation outlined in *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*. Recommendation 94 is that Councils “report on the measures they propose to take to reduce family violence and respond to the needs of victims” within their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans.

The Gender Equality Act 2020 requires each Council, as a prescribed entity, to address its obligations to promote gender equality in the workplace, consider gender equality when developing policies and programs and delivering services to the public.

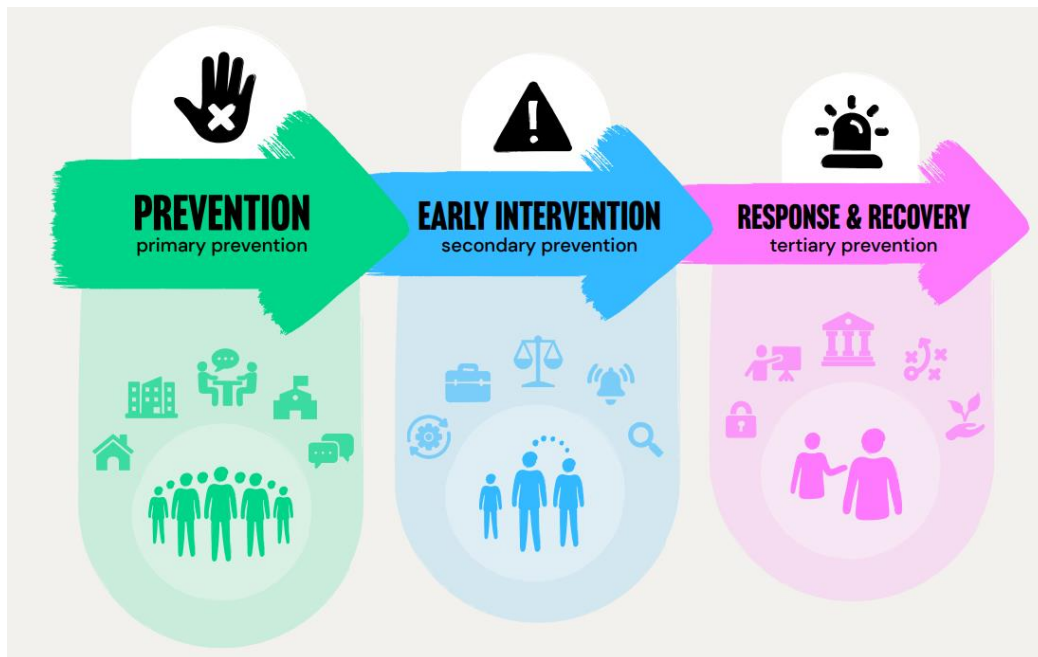
Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women, girls and gender diverse individuals. The 2015 national framework, *Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, clearly articulates the link between gendered violence and gender inequality.

Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) is the regional plan for prevention of violence against women and children initiated by Women’s Health Grampians. CoRE supports strategies at a primary prevention level, targeting change at the population, and addressing underlying gendered drivers and conditions in which violence occurs. The City of Ballarat is a CoRE Alliance member, alongside over 120 organisations working towards a shared vision of preventing violence against women.

The City of Ballarat has zero tolerance for violence. Certain groups within our population experience higher rates of family violence, including women and girls, gender diverse individuals, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, older people, women from culturally diverse backgrounds, and those within LGBTIQ+ communities.

The City of Ballarat’s role in preventing family violence

The prevention and response to family violence can be represented using a continuum. According to Safe and Equal, “Ending family and gender-based violence is long-term work that must occur at all levels and all settings across the community”.¹ This continuum of interconnected and concurrent activities is often grouped into three broad categories:



(Safe and Equal. [What is Primary Prevention.](#))


Prevention – or primary prevention: Primary prevention describes work done across communities, organisations and society in settings where people live, learn, work, socialise and play to stop violence from happening in the first place.¹

Early intervention – or secondary prevention: Early intervention describes initiatives designed to stop early signs of abuse from escalating, and targeted interventions to shift attitudes and behaviours in ways that minimise immediate and long-term risk.¹

Response and recovery – or tertiary prevention: Response and recovery describe initiatives that involve supporting victim survivors during and after their experiences of violence and intervening to stop violence from reoccurring.¹

Local government’s role is best placed within the primary prevention and early intervention categories. They have particular value in amplifying local messages as a trusted service provider. They also have obligations to respond to individual disclosures of family violence both as a workplace and as a service provider and seek training and advice to meet these obligations, in close alignment with those related to child safety.

The City of Ballarat has a **shared** role in relation to prevention of family violence.

	<p>Shared: The City of Ballarat is one of many responsible stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for some aspects • Some capacity to act • Moderate City of Ballarat role required to improve community wellbeing outcomes
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The City of Ballarat undertakes a range of primary prevention and early intervention actions to prevent family violence and these are listed below.

Leadership and advocacy

- Support, promote and act on the regional Women’s Health Grampians CoRE (Communities of Respect and Equality) Plan for prevention of violence against women and children, including providing financial support for workshops sessions, forums and mens initiatives, with reporting requirements met through *Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-25* and Gender Impact Assessment work.
- Develop and implement the actions set out in the *Council Gender Equality Action Plan 2021- 2025*.
- Signatory to the Victorian Local Government Women’s Charter.
- Commitment within City of Ballarat *Council Plan 2021-25* to play a leadership role in working to prevent all forms of violence, and partnering with industry, government and across the City of Ballarat to address the systemic and local factors that contribute to the vulnerability of children and families, such as through partnerships with family violence organisations and health promotion organisations.
- Recognise November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.
- Participate in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence
- Recognise March 8 as International Women’s Day by celebrating the achievements of women, and celebrating gender equality.
- Adoption of a Violence Against Women Leadership Statement in 2021.
- Introduction of a Fair Access Policy to improve the access to, and use of, community sports infrastructure for women and girls (to be adopted in 2024).
- Support staff with a zero-tolerance approach to occupational violence and aggression through the United Workplace initiative.
- Promote local services that support victims of family violence, including those within City of Ballarat direct care programs.
- Establishment of a Gender Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
- Council representation on the Central Highlands Integrated Family Violence Committee (CHIFVC).
- Council representation on the Central Highlands Elder Abuse Prevention Network and Community of Practice.

- Adoption of the City of Ballarat Inclusion Framework 2022-2026 and association Plans.

Planner/ regulator

- Provide a framework for family violence prevention and response across Council units through the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.
- Inclusion of the goal, '*Valued loved and Safe*' within the Municipal Early Years Plan, including priorities, '*Home is a safe place for children*' and '*Children are safe in their communities*'.
- Promote gender equity within sports clubs through the *Active Women and Girls Strategy 2018* (to be updated in 2024/25).
- Research local evidence of factors reinforcing family violence (such as alcohol and other drugs, mental illness, harm from gambling, financial pressures and social and economic exclusion).
- Implementation of local government requirements set out under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.
- Introduction of Workplace Gender Audits.
- Embedding of Gender Impact Assessments, including an Inclusion Statement, for all programs, policies and services (including plans and strategies).

Facilitator

- Berry Street Family Violence Practitioner working onsite one day per week at Parent Place.
- Grampians Community Legal Service providing onsite services at Parent Place and Sebastopol library, and accepting referrals when not at the facilities.
- Partner with local organisations to address issues of community safety through the Ballarat Community Safety Alliance.
- Undertake initiatives that highlight issues and barriers in relation to community safety.

Enabler

- Delivery of Free from Violence Project 2024-2027
- Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into all new and upgraded community spaces and facilities.
- Ensure all council staff and contractors are aware of and adhere to the Victorian Child Safet Standards.
- Family Violence Leave clause has been incorporated into Enterprise Bargaining Agreements
- Provide flexible parental, carer and family violence leave regardless of gender.
- Support workplace-based initiatives and capacity building opportunities to build a respectful and gender-equitable workplace culture, ensuring people of all genders have the resources and opportunities they need to succeed at the City of Ballarat.
- Creation of a gender-balanced workforce composition, ensuring pay equality and addressing gender equality and inclusion through embedding a gender lens into workforce policies, procedures and practice, and through implementation of the Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Supporting community initiatives focused on family violence through our Community Impact and Partnership grants programs and contributions to local funds including the Ballarat Women's Fund administered by Ballarat Foundation.

- Development of a City of Ballarat directory which will provide contact information for local Family Violence service providers.
- Youth Strategy 2022-26 priority of 'Family conflict/violence', with associated action ensuring that young people have access to programs that increase their confidence, resilience and coping mechanisms and know where to seek support in relation to family conflict / violence.
Support young people to contribute to local social issues that they identify as a priority, including family conflict and all forms of violence.

Educator

- Provide gender awareness training to Council staff to improve knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour with respect to gender equity.
- Work with schools and other youth services to provide programs which educate and inform on issues of gender equity, alcohol and other drugs and community safety.
- Incorporate an understanding of gender equality and intersectional factors into Council staff induction program, and provide regular and ongoing training across the areas of being an active bystander, unconscious bias, and preventing violence against women.
- Education and training of staff in recognising and handling incidents, and responding to the needs of victims (who may be members of the public or other staff), providing quality, gender-informed professional development to staff providing care to families at risk of family violence.
- Work with schools and other youth services to provide programs which educate and inform on issues of gender equity, alcohol and other drugs and community safety including Respectful Relationships and Expect Respect programs.
- Work with culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse groups within the community to understand and respond to family violence, including reinforcing factors.
- Engagement with City of Ballarat Intercultural Ambassadors to identify local CALD groups for involvement in any community training or projects relating to family violence.

Service Delivery

- Undertake obligations to respond to individual disclosures of family violence under the Multi-agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) and seek training and advice to meet these obligations as both a workplace and a service provider.
- Acknowledge the perinatal period is a known increased risk period of escalation in family violence.
- Support victim survivors and children through additional Maternal and Child Health visits and specialist referral for families at risk of family violence, whilst keeping the perpetrator in view.
- Co-location of an Enhanced Maternal Child Health nurse with The Orange Door one day per week providing secondary consultations to the Family Violence Practitioners and assisting with referring families to universal services in the community.
- Build strong partnerships with local family violence services to support specialist referral of families accessing Family and Children's Services (including Parent Place, Supported Playgroups, Children's Centres and Family Day Care), Immunisation and MCH programs.
- Model and build respectful relationships with children in early childhood settings, with Early Childhood teachers supported to undertake Respectful Relationships training.

- Support education and training of staff in recognising and handling incidents, and responding to the needs of victims (who may be members of the public or other staff)
- Support delivery of the Western Bulldogs Sons of the West and Daughters of the West programs.
- Embed alignment in Council to the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework, and adherence to the legislated responsibilities set out in the framework.
- Partnerships, collaboration, and support for local CALD groups within the Ballarat community in delivering any services relating to prevention or responses to family violence.
- Acknowledge family violence occurs across all demographics - discussion, training and specialist family violence support work will have an impact on City of Ballarat staff.

Key messages- Prevention of family violence

- Family violence is widely recognised in Australia as a major health and wellbeing problem. Gendered violence is an issue that also affects any children involved. Growing up with violence can have a profound effect on a child's capacity to learn, future relationships, health, emotional wellbeing and engagement in work and community life.
- In addressing the impacts of family violence, the City of Ballarat acknowledges that it is limited in what it can achieve and relies on a wide range of partners working together to implement effective strategies.
- Local government's role is best placed within primary prevention and early intervention actions to prevent family violence. They have particular value in amplifying local messages as a trusted service provider.
- The City of Ballarat has legislative responsibilities in relation to prevention of violence towards women and children, which are defined by the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, *Gender Equality Act 2020* and the *Victorian Local Government Act 2020*.
- Certain groups experience particularly high rates of violence, including women and girls, pregnant women, gender diverse individuals, people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, older women, women from culturally diverse backgrounds and people from LGBTIQ+ communities.
- Elder abuse is a form of family or domestic violence that is experienced by older people. Elder abuse comes in many forms.² It can be financial, emotional or psychological, physical, sexual, or neglect.³

Key data and trends

National Data

- The total annual cost of violence against women and their children in Australia was estimated to be \$13.6 billion in 2022.⁴
- One woman was killed **every 15 days** and one man was killed every 28 days by an intimate partner on average in 2020–21¹⁷
- 1 in 4 women (27%) has experienced violence, emotional abuse, or economic abuse by a cohabitating partner since the age of 15.⁵
- Intimate partner violence is the third greatest health risk factor for women aged 25-44, with the first being childhood abuse and neglect.⁶

- Domestic and family violence is a leading driver of homelessness for women.⁷
- Every two hours a woman was admitted to hospital as a result of family violence in 2019.⁵
- Australian women are nearly three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner.⁹
- 1 in 3 LGBTIQ+ people have experienced violence from a partner, ex-partner or family member. For intersex, transgender and gender diverse people, these numbers are even higher.¹¹
- 1 in 3 refugee and migrant women living in Australia have experienced domestic or family violence; those on temporary visas report much higher levels of abuse.¹²
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionately high rates of violence and are 31 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence-related assaults. Anecdotal evidence suggests that non-Indigenous men make up a significant proportion of perpetrators.⁵
- Women with disability in Australia are twice as likely to have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 years than women without disabilities.⁵
- Australia's gender pay gap is 21.7%. On average, women are paid \$26,400 less than men a year.¹⁵
- Australian's attitudinal rejection of gender inequality continues to improve. However, there are still concerning proportions of people whose attitudes undermine women's leadership, reinforce rigid gender roles, limit women's personal autonomy, normalise sexism and deny gender inequality is a problem.¹⁶

Local Data

- Family incidents (an incident attended by Victoria Police where a Victoria Police Risk Assessment and Risk Management Report was completed) in Ballarat increased by 3.2% in the year ending December 2023, compared with the previous year (increase from 2,117 in 2022 to 2,200 in 2023).¹⁰
- Ballarat's family violence incident rate was 26.1% higher than the Victorian average in 2022-2023 (per 100,000 population).¹⁰
- A child was present as a victim or a witness at 45.4% of reported family violence incidents in Ballarat in 2022-23.¹⁰
- In 2022-23, 1029 clients received support from homelessness services because of Family Violence.¹⁰
- There were 1516 victims on Family Violence Intervention Order applications through the Magistrates' Court and 57 victims through the Children's Court in Ballarat in 2022-23.¹⁰
- Family conflict / violence was identified by 24% of young people who participated in consultation for the City of Ballarat Youth Strategy 2022-26 as a concern.¹⁷

Services and support

Call 000 if you or someone you know is in immediate danger.

The Orange Door

- The Orange Door is an integrated support service for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence. It also provides extra support to families who need help with the care of their children. It is the first point of contact when seeking support for family violence.

- To contact The Central Highlands Orange Door, phone 1800 219 819, visit orangedoor.vic.gov.au or email cha@orangedoor.vic.gov.au

Child and Family Services (CAFS)

- Offer support programs for adults, children and young people who are experiencing, or have experienced family violence.
- For more information, visit cafs.org.au/family-violence

WRISC

- WRISC provides free & confidential support, advocacy, court support, housing support and case management services for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence across the Central Highlands region of Victoria.
- Visit wrisc.org.au, email wrisc@wrisc.org.au or call (03) 5333 3666

Rainbow Door

- [Rainbow Door](http://rainbowdoor.org.au) Rainbow Door is a free specialist LGBTIQ+ (Lesbian, Gay , Bisexual, Transgender and Gender Diverse, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, BrotherBoys, SisterGirls) helpline providing information, support, and referral to all LGBTIQ+ Victorians, their friends and family. This service is run by Switchboard Victoria.
- Call 1800 729 367, Text 0480 017 246, or visit <https://www.rainbowdoor.org.au/>

Berry Street

- Berry Street offers free family violence services. They also provide after-hours support to people who live in the Central Highlands.
- For crisis support, contact (03) 5331 3558 Monday to Thursday, 5pm to 9am, and Friday from 5pm through to Monday 9am.
- For more information, visit berrystreet.org.au/what-we-do/family-violence-services/central-highlands-in-western-victoria

Safe Steps

- Safe Steps is Victoria's 24/7 family violence response centre
- Call 1800 015 188, email safesteps@safesteps.org.au, or visit safesteps.org.au for more information.

1800 RESPECT

- The National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line
- Call 1800 737 732 or visit 1800respect.org.au

InTouch

- Support services and programs for migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence.
- Call 1800 755 988 or visit intouch.org.au

BADAC (Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative)

- Services include Family Violence Therapeutic Programs, Men's Case Management, and Community Connections workers (Men and Women's)

- For any further inquiries call (03) 5331 5344 or visit badac.net.au/services

Djirra

- An Aboriginal community-controlled organisation providing support to Aboriginal people experiencing family violence
- Visit djirra.org.au. Outside of business hours, contact Yarning SafeNStrong on 1800 959 563 (free and confidential 24/7 crisis line)

Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) Ballarat

- Free, confidential counselling and advocacy for people who have experienced either past or present sexual assault. Includes crisis counselling support, and support to access to forensic medical care and legal processes.
- Call (03) 5320 3933 (9am to 5.30pm); Sexual Assault Crisis Line (24 hours) 1800 806 292 or visit ballaratcasa.org.au

How Community Members Can Get Involved

Advocacy

Community members can take opportunities to advocate for the prevention of family violence. This could include:

- Sports clubs, organisations, businesses and community groups can join Women Health Grampians' Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) and play an active role in preventing violence against women. Visit whg.org.au/our-work/violence-against-women/communities-of-respect-equality-core/ for more information.
- Staying up to date with reforms across government and the family violence sector and receiving opportunities to get involved by signing up to the Family Safety Victoria newsletter. Visit vic.gov.au/latest-news-family-violence-reform
- Taking steps to increase gender equality and encouraging respectful relationships by challenging stereotypes and harmful attitudes towards women. Learn more about how gender inequality drives the prevalence of gendered violence here: ourwatch.org.au/the-issue

Related City of Ballarat policy documents

- Council Plan 2021-2025
ballarat.vic.gov.au/city/about-us/council-plan
- Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021- 2031
ballarat.vic.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing-plan
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025
ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/Gender%20Equality%202021-2025.pdf
- Active Women and Girls Strategy 2018
ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/201904/Active%20Women%20and%20Girls%20Strategy%202018.pdf
- Municipal Early Years Plan 2022-2026
<https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-07/Municipal%20Early%20Years%20Plan%202022%E2%80%932026.pdf>

- Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022-2026
<https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/Disability%20Access%20and%20Inclusion%20Plan%202022%E2%80%932026.pdf>
- Inclusion Framework 2022-2026
https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-10/COB_Inclusion_Framework.pdf
- Fair Access Policy (currently in draft) <https://mysay.ballarat.vic.gov.au/fair-access-sport-and-rec>
- Workforce Plan 2021-2025 <https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-10/Workforce%20Plan%202021-2025.pdf>
- Youth Strategy 2022-2026 - <https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-10/Youth%20Strategy%202022%E2%80%932026.pdf>

Further Information

Legislation information

- Family Violence Protection Act 2008: legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/family-violence-protection-act-2008/053
- Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008: legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/public-health-and-wellbeing-act-2008/043
- Gender Equality Act 2020: legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/gender-equality-act-2020
- Victorian Local Government Act 2020: legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020/008

Research, data and publications

- Ending Family Violence: Victoria's 10 Year Plan for Change: vic.gov.au/ending-family-violence-victorias-10-year-plan-change
- Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women: vic.gov.au/free-violence-victorias-strategy-prevent-family-violence
- Dhelk Dja: Aboriginal 10 Year Family Violence Agreement: vic.gov.au/dhelk-dja-partnership-aboriginal-communities-address-family-violence
- Family Violence Data Portal: Crime Statistics Agency Victoria: crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data/family-violence-dashboard
- The Lookout: Family Violence Research & Statistics: thelookout.org.au/other-professionals/about-family-violence/family-violence-research-statistics
- Safe and Equal: peak body for specialist family violence services: safeandequal.org.au/policy-and-advocacy/research-reports/

Other Information

- Victoria Police: police.vic.gov.au/family-violence
- Our Watch: ourwatch.org.au
- The Lookout: thelookout.org.au
- Safe and Equal: safeandequal.org.au

- Victorian Government Family Violence Reform: vic.gov.au/family-violence-support

Contact

City of Ballarat

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Position Statement review by December 2024

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3. Senior Rights Victoria. Everybody deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. <https://seniorsrights.org.au/>
4. Australian Government. Department of Social Services. The Cost of Violence Against Women and Their Children in Australia. 2022. [Economic cost of violence against women and their children | Department of Social Services, Australian Government \(dss.gov.au\)](#) OurWatch. Quick Facts. 2021. <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts/>
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9. Crime Statistics Agency Victoria. Crime By Area – Data visualisation: Family Violence Dashboard. December 2023. <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data/family-violence-dashboard>
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14. Workplace Gender Equality Agency. Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard. <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022-23%20WGEA%20Gender%20Equality%20Scorecard.pdf>

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16. City of Ballarat. Youth Strategy 2022-2026. <https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-10/Youth%20Strategy%202022%E2%80%932026.pdf>
17. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2024. Domestic Homicide. [Domestic homicide - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)