

**SYSTEMS ABUSE AND
FAMILY VIOLENCE
IN TASMANIA:
EVIDENCE AND
RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR ACTION**

August 2025



Engender
Equality

Too many of us are being re-traumatised trying to engage with systems that are meant to 'protect' us but fail. Systems that create barriers to access and have costs beyond our means because services are not designed for the realities of our lives. Instead, they perpetuate the same dynamics of power and control as our abusers... This is not safety.

Statement from victim-survivors, Members of the Independent Collective of Survivors
National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 (p9)

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1. Acknowledgements

Engender Equality acknowledges Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners of the land, water and air of Lutruwita/Tasmania. Engender Equality acknowledges that Aboriginal sovereignty was never ceded, and the continuing hurt caused by colonisation. Engender Equality acknowledges the ongoing leadership role of Tasmanian Aboriginal community in addressing and preventing family violence.

Engender Equality acknowledges all people who have experienced family violence, and all forms of violence against women and children. We recognise the importance of system changes being guided by their experiences, expertise and advocacy. We thank them for their generous contributions to this report. We also remember and pay respects to those who did not survive and all of those who have lost loved ones to family violence.

Engender Equality acknowledges the work of the Southern Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee in facilitating a systems abuse forum in October 2024, which led to this report. The forum provided a platform for victim-survivors to share their experiences of systems abuse, alongside specialists from the family violence sector.

In this report, we use the term women deliberately, to recognise the distinct experiences of women in the context of family, domestic and sexual violence. Women are subjected to misogyny in ways that shape both the violence they experience and the responses they receive from systems. This includes blaming women for the violence used against them, harshly judging mothers, and holding women to different levels of accountability than men.

We also acknowledge that gender diverse people experience family, domestic and sexual violence, and may face unique forms of systemic discrimination. Their experiences are valid and important, though the focus of this report is on women's experiences of misogyny within systems.

Throughout the report, we use the terms "victim-survivor," "perpetrator" or "person who uses violence," and "systems actor" (to refer to people working within systems that interact with victim-survivors). We recognise that no single set of terms can capture the full diversity of identities or experiences, and that language continues to evolve.

2. Executive Summary

This report aims to contribute to a better understanding of the systems abuse experienced by Tasmanian victim-survivors of family violence. Systems abuse has long been recognised in Australia as a form of family violence, often experienced in the post-separation context. In this report we provide preliminary insights into the extent and complexity of these often opaque practices which are commonly faced by victim-survivors. It highlights the need for a more in-depth and extensive study of systems abuse in this State.

Our findings draw on data from a survey of Engender Equality therapeutic practitioners conducted in March 2025. The results are based on their analysis of case notes of 207 current clients, victim-survivor accounts and a review of current literature. The report shows that Tasmanian women are experiencing systems abuse across a wide range of public and private institutional and administrative systems, which is not recognised or well-understood.

Systems abuse is generally defined by focusing on the perpetrator, with an emphasis on the legal system. For example, as *“the manipulation of legal and other systems by perpetrators of family violence, done so in order to exert control over, threaten and/or harass a current or former partner.”*¹ However, a more extensive definition includes multiple tactics and systems perpetrators use to deplete the victim’s finances, emotional well-being and affect her capacity to care for children or work.² This report proposes a framework for deeper understanding of the ways systems themselves enable or enact abusive practices that negatively impact on victim-survivors. We argue this broader approach will more effectively prevent perpetrators from weaponising systems, prevent the re-traumatisation of victim-survivors, improve accountability for people who use abuse as well as the systems that enable the abuse to occur and create a supportive environment for victim-survivors.

Key Findings

This report finds that systems abuse is a common experience for victim-survivors of family violence in Tasmania. At least one form of systems abuse has been experienced by 75% of people engaging with Engender Equality's specialist family violence therapeutic counselling services. On average, each of these victim-survivors experienced 3.44 incidents of systems abuse.

Half of all victim-survivors experienced systems abuse in relation to Tasmania Police (50%) and family law proceedings in Tasmania (49%). Our analysis shows that systems abuse is also regularly experienced by victim-survivors across non-legal service systems. This includes public and private housing (27%); primary care providers (19%); child safety (16%); mental health providers (12%); church or religious groups (9%); and education providers (8%).

The evidence shows that while perpetrators do actively exploit these systems, the systems themselves are experienced as abusive by victim-survivors (systems harm). This is largely due to structural and organisational processes and cultural attitudes that fail to recognise and respond to family violence, consequently emulating the views, values and beliefs of the perpetrator. This process replicates the abuse of power and discrimination against victim-survivors. It is reflected in practices and attitudes that are discriminatory on the basis of gender, financial impost, administrative requirements, time and mental load and emotional well-being. Often this experience is intensified by the actions of individuals in positions of power within systems ('system actors') who can actively or passively aid and enable systems abuse (systems collusion).

Similar to their experience of family violence, victim-survivors find these systems are largely inaccessible and unaccountable when they try to voice their concerns. As illustrated in the case studies shared in this report, victim-survivors describe feeling disempowered or powerless, unable to understand or articulate what was happening to them often over years and across a range of different systems. When they tried to raise their concerns, they were disbelieved, ignored or dismissed. They relate being isolated, confused and emotionally and physically exhausted by the process of constantly battling the relentless demands made by systems and individuals within those systems.

This report demonstrates that the experience of a victim-survivor navigating systems is shaped by the interactions between the individual, the institutional response (informed by organisational structures and policies) and the system actors and service providers who interpret and apply the policies, procedures and rules. When a woman seeks help, she brings with her the trauma of abuse and the hope of being heard. The systems she encounters, through design, culture, and policies, either opens a door or builds another wall. The interplay between victim, system, and service provider or actor is not neutral, it is a dynamic space where power, rights, justice, recognition, and harm are negotiated in real time. Whether that space becomes protective or punishing depends on the service provider's ability to see beyond the surface and respond with both skill and humanity.

Recommendations

To address the ongoing abuse experienced by victim-survivors of family and sexual violence as they engage in systems and services post-separation, it is necessary to build our knowledge and understanding of systems abuse. With more information it is possible to identify, dismantle and redress the systemic elements that enable and enact systems abuse. In line with the Tasmanian Government's *Survivors at the centre: Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027*:

- 1.** Fund research into systems abuse experienced by victim-survivors to build an in-depth, qualitative understanding of the nature, extent and processes of systems abuse in Tasmania, prioritising the impact on children.
- 2.** Adopt a co-ordinated approach to systems abuse data collection, analysis and reporting, including an annual report of victim-survivor experience of systems abuse (by sector, agency and type) collected and collated by family violence specialist services to be included in the Annual Report of the Action Plan.
- 3.** Work with a self-determining victim-survivor group or network to develop and implement an audit tool for agencies and services to identify and address systemic flaws within the design, process and procedures of their business.
- 4.** Build knowledge and understanding of systems abuse into family and sexual violence training for all Tasmanian government employees.
- 5.** Develop and implement a family violence impact audit tool to evaluate all services provided or funded by government, including statutory bodies, and state-run enterprises. The tool will assess the potential contribution to or mitigation of family violence, applying a gender equality and human rights lens, centring victim-survivor perspectives, and informing government accountability, investment decisions, and systemic reform.

3. Evidence of systems abuse prevalence

This data is based on a survey of Engender Equality therapeutic practitioners conducted in March 2025 (see Appendix A). To complete the survey, practitioners were asked to review the case notes of each client in their current caseload to identify every reference made to a type of system abuse, citing examples where the perpetrator manipulated the system and/or the victim-survivor felt the system let them down or exacerbated the abusive experience. Twelve practitioners completed the survey. All clients of Engender Equality's Therapeutic Services have lived experience of family violence and reside in Tasmania.

In total, case notes for 207 clients were reviewed. Of these clients, 95% are women, 3% are men, and 2% are gender diverse. A significant majority of the clients (approximately 72%) had children under 18.

At least one type of systems abuse was reported by 156 clients (75%). Of these, 559 instances of systems abuse were recorded across multiple types. The average number of systems abuse types experienced by each victim-survivor was 3.44.

Clients with intersecting presentations were reviewed against additional forms of systems abuse. A high proportion of LGBTIQ+ clients (38%) experienced transphobia and/or homophobia as part of their systems abuse. Around half of the clients with disability and/or neurodiversity (49%) experienced ableism as part of their systems abuse.

Types of systems abuse

The survey included a list of system types that victim-survivors of family and sexual violence commonly are engaged with. Practitioners could add any that were not listed. The following table sets out the survey results, showing the type of system and the percentage of incident types reported by victim-survivors who experienced abuse in each. It also includes an indicative example of system abuse provided from the case notes to illustrate how each system can work against the victim-survivor by enabling the perpetrator and/or enacting policies or practices that discriminate against or disadvantage her.

System type	Percentage of reported incidents	Indicative example of system abuse
Police	50%	Police misidentify the victim-survivor as the predominant aggressor in family violence incidents.
Family Law – financial separation and divorce	49%	Perpetrator deliberately delays divorce proceedings to prolong control and abuse of victim-survivor. The court system facilitates these delays.
Family Law – Parenting Orders	37%	Perpetrator repeatedly tries to have parenting orders amended in their favour. Or victim-survivor tries to get parenting orders changed but is unsuccessful despite evidence provided.
Family Violence Orders	33%	Perpetrator applies for FVO against victim-survivor to position themselves as the victim of abuse.
Family Law – compulsory mediation	31%	Perpetrator uses compulsory mediation to psychologically abuse victim-survivor. Mediators fail to identify tactics of abuse
Child Support Payments	28%	Perpetrator hides assets and income via family members in order to avoid or minimise parenting payments.
Housing	27%	Perpetrator uses a range of tactics that result in the victim-survivor being unable to maintain her tenancy. For example, causing property damage and reporting victim-survivor to the landlord, and convincing the real estate agent that the victim-survivor is a bad tenant.
Legal system - criminal law proceedings	24%	Perpetrator chooses to be self-represented in order to delay criminal proceedings. Courts are required to facilitate the legal rights of self-represented litigants.
Primary health care	19%	Perpetrator with same GP as victim-survivor convinces the GP that victim-survivor is lying about family violence by positioning himself as trustworthy and stable and the victim-survivor as dishonest and irrational.
Legal system - civil law proceedings	16%	Perpetrator with significant financial resources files multiple 'cross-claims' in civil proceedings in order to exhaust financial resources of victim-survivor.
Family law - child protection	16%	Perpetrator instructs lawyer to question the victim-survivor about false claims of child neglect in court.
Child safety	16%	Perpetrator makes false claims of child neglect about victim-survivor and her children.

System type	Percentage of reported incidents	Indicative example of system abuse
Mental health providers	12%	Mental health service providers dismissing victim-survivor's experience of family violence because of her experiences of mental illness. The victim-survivor was subject to involuntary treatment when experiencing distress resulting from violence.
Commonwealth Income Support	11%	Victim-survivor has income support payments suspended after false, 'anonymous' reports submitted by perpetrator.
Legal system - court appearances	11%	Victim-survivor seated in close proximity to perpetrator's family or associates before, during and after court proceedings, despite requests to be separated.
Legal system - family violence prosecution	10%	Police Prosecutor agreed with defence lawyers to not proceed with a family violence matter without consulting with victim-survivor.
Church or religious group	9%	Church leaders collude with perpetrator to ostracise victim-survivor from church community if she proceeds with legal action for family violence.
Education providers	8%	Perpetrator convinces school to provide information about victim-survivor and children's residential address and then stalks and harasses victim-survivor.
Prison system	8%	Perpetrator of serious violence orchestrates regular intimidating contact with victim-survivor in rural town because of lenient prison release conditions.
Banking	7%	Perpetrator sends threatening messages to the victim-survivor through the description on transfer of funds. The victim-survivor has no way of blocking this form of communication other than close her bank account.
Community service	6%	Youth service provider colludes with perpetrator to undermine relationship between victim-survivor and their son.
Legal system - bail conditions	3%	Bail conditions imposed on perpetrator do not prevent the perpetrator from threatening and intimidating the victim-survivor via third parties.
NDIS	3%	Perpetrator makes false claims about victim-survivor with disability misusing NDIS funds, resulting in traumatic investigation by authorities and disruption to essential supports.

The case notes analysis identified a range of additional types of systems abuse reported by clients. This is indicative of the extent of this form of abuse and the need for further qualitative research to properly investigate it. Additional types of systems abuse related to:

- Australia Post
- The Australian Passport Office
- pet ownership and interactions with veterinarians
- workplace interventions
- insurance policies
- local government
- The Australian Tax Office
- Psychologists who provide court reports to Family Courts
- Independent Children Lawyers
- guardianship of people with disability.

4. Accounts of systems abuse from Tasmanian victim-survivors

The following section contains four accounts of systems abuse experienced by Tasmanian women, in their own words, as presented to a systems abuse forum organised by the Southern Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee in October 2024. These victim-survivors have courageously given permission for these stories to be shared. We have used pseudonyms, made minor grammatical changes to transcriptions, and edited for brevity and anonymity.

Natalie's story

When I share my story you might hear the biases that were held against me as a young mother who came from a background of trauma; and how systems that are meant to protect us, ended up emboldening my ex to continue threatening and stalking me.

I grew up in a household with abuse and violence, where there were weapons in the home. I met my ex when I was 14 and became pregnant at 15. I believed that he was safer than the home I grew up in.

Together, we had three children. My children were removed, and I was told the reason they needed to be removed from me was because of my ex's abuse. Just four days after giving birth to our last daughter, she was taken away from me. The systems abuse only got worse from here.

I'll skip ahead in my story to update you all that I have been separated from him for over a year and have an indefinite protection order which protects me in all states and territories of Australia. I work full time and have completed three parenting courses; however, my children have not been reunified with me. The reason I was told that they were removed from my care, is because of their dad's abuse, however he is not in my life now and I continue to be blamed for his choice to use violence.

Let me loop back to a few years ago so I can share how many systems have colluded in his

abuse along the way. I escaped to a women's shelter, where he continued to harass me and pursue me relentlessly, forcing me back into a relationship with him. Finally, I was placed in a Housing Tasmania unit, where he found me within a week. A neighbour phoned the police when he forced his way into my unit. The police arrived after my neighbour called, and they arrested him as he had breached the Police Family Violence Order (FVO). The police warned me that we were both in breach of the FVO, which was confusing because I did not invite him over and I didn't want him to force his way into my unit, but I was blamed for him being there. When I sought help from the police, I expected support but instead faced blame. Once, they even shoved me onto a couch and accused me of lying about his abuse. Each interaction with them left me feeling more alone and scared.

After this same situation of him stalking me and forcing his way into my unit, Housing Tasmania were angry with me because my neighbour has called the police and they alleged that I should have been the one to call the police, and because I didn't, they assumed that I must have wanted him there. I couldn't call the police in front of him because I was afraid that if I did, he would do something to me. Instead of giving support, the police and Housing Tasmania blamed me. His stalking meant that my lease with Housing Tasmania was at risk.

I was already marginalised by Child Safety Services (CSS), and viewed poorly because I was a young mother, but I quickly realised on top of that, my ex was able to deceive them. He pretended to be sorry, making promises to stop his abuse and they believed him. As a result, I was labelled an unsafe parent and instead of keeping him accountable for his choice to use violence, I have been characterised as unable to protect my children from his abuse and still do not have my children in my care.

Meanwhile, he continues even now to use Snapchat, TikTok and Facebook to stalk and threaten me. You might wonder, why haven't I blocked him? I have – he makes fake profiles and even abuses my friends, and recently, he threatened my boss. With no help from the police, his constant harassment has made me increasingly scared. The police largely treated me as if I were part of the problem, and CSS's lack of understanding of family violence always seemed to make my life more difficult and complicated. Child Safety even asked me to find out where my ex was to let them know his whereabouts, a request that not only jeopardised my safety but violated the protective orders in place.

No one would protect me. I wasn't even safe when he was in prison. He manipulated and lied to the staff so he could keep calling, stalking, and threatening me. He sent me letters addressed to a different name but had my address. In the letters he would grovel and try to convince me to return to the relationship, which I could see by this time was an obvious part of the cycle of violence. He even got his friends to keep tabs on me, report back to him, and threaten me from the outside.

Despite all this, I have found strength within myself. I still live in fear of my ex but am determined to push for change and am advocating for survivors of family violence to stop being blamed by CSS, police and systems, for someone else's choice to abuse us.

I am motivated to recover from the trauma and abuse that I have lived through. I am sharing my story because I would like the opportunity to be with my three children and actively support their healing.

Kate's story

I am an Aboriginal woman living and working in Hobart. I am going to share my experience of 9-year abusive marriage and explain how the abuse did not stop at the end of our marriage and continued throughout four-year court proceedings, which only finished in August 2024.

The systems that are meant to offer impartiality and serve justice amplified my ex's abuse.

I will start my story by firstly sharing with you the deeply awful impact of my ex-husband using systems abuse against me, however, I was not the only person impacted by the systems abuse towards me.

My ex-partner would often threaten me by telling me I couldn't leave because he would target the people around me. He would say *"you can go, there's the door, but it won't just affect you"* and he was right – his abuse didn't just affect me. My children and my parents' experienced deterioration in their health and wellbeing, and many of our social networks isolated themselves from me and my family.

The impact of his abuse and his collusion with systems resulted in a rupture between myself and my children. My ex-partner convinced my children that I was causing the violence and colonised their brains into thinking that I was the source of violence. It may take years to recover from how his abuse impacted my relationship with my children which I am dedicated to healing.

I have always been a confident and strong person, but during the court proceedings, my confidence was diminished to almost nothing. I found it difficult to make even small decisions

and would find myself doubting all the decisions I made. I struggled to find joy in every life but somehow, I kept finding a semblance of strength to push through the dreadful days that lay ahead.

In the end, I just needed the court proceedings to be over and for him to stop being able to use Family Court and the Magistrates Court to intimidate, humiliate and emotionally abuse me.

Take a breath as I share some of the ways that my ex-husband colluded with the justice system to abuse me. I know it is not easy for you to hear these examples today, but it's even harder to live through.

I realise now that my lawyer did not understand family violence and coercive control, and therefore, took the approach of backing down rather than advocating for me which meant that my ex-husband was emboldened to use the legal process to abuse me. Here are just some of the ways:

- He would make false accusations, telling his lawyer things like my parents stole from his property, which meant that instead of using my finances on legitimate issues that required court input, I was forced to spend my money using lawyers to defend me against false accusations.
- He positioned himself as the victim to police, Magistrates Court and Family Court. His way of persuading our justice systems that he was a victim was so convincing that police wouldn't even check his name in their system. If they had checked his name in their systems, they would have identified that he was a person who had a history and pattern

of using violence before they called me and questioned me about my movements, believing his accusations that I was the violent one.

- He would wait outside the courthouse to intimidate and stalk me, which meant that I needed to be escorted in and out of the courthouse by security and court support.
- He would use avoid and delay tactics, like not responding to emails from my lawyer and delaying proceedings by not preparing the required documents. I endured months and months, turning into years of rescheduled hearings and sleepless nights. My life was suspended, and I lived in anxiety driven limbo.
- The court process felt like it would never end – I reported his violence to police [in 2020] and between then and the final court date [in 2024], the matter was listed in court 28 times and then listed for hearing 8 times, the decision was listed 8 times, and the sentence was listed 4 times. Even reading these numbers out to you is exhausting, I am sure you can imagine how exhausting and anxiety provoking it was to survive through.
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- Some days I couldn't imagine that the court processes would ever be finalised and I just needed to it be over. It had to be over before I lost myself to despair and exhaustion. I lost out significantly in financial worth through property settlement and he was awarded our property, because I could not bear any more of his abuse through the court proceedings.

It has been four years since our relationship ended, and I am still recovering. I have been diagnosed with Complex-Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and my psychologist estimates another 2 years of weekly sessions being necessary with another 2 years of monthly sessions to follow.

I have shared my story to help others to understand the isolating, exhausting and confusing place that systems abuse leaves you in.

It's a hard story to share and I know it can be a hard story to understand, as even my very close family and friends have had difficulty understanding the unbelievable reality of what I have lived through.

I am hopeful that sharing my story supports change within our justice system and helps other people who are in a similar situation. I don't want anyone to experience the abuse that I experienced through the court process.

Susan's story

I had been thrown out again, told to sleep in the car. His violent outbursts, my fault.

I was told I was harming the children by not complying with his unreasonable requests of being told to over-eat, lose weight, dress appropriately, sexy but not too sexy, available, fulfil every one of his requests, not to question.

Told to go to the mental health professionals - he had studied Jungian psychology, checked the star signs, watched endless podcasts and had determined my mental health was the problem. I would later learn I wasn't the problem.

Leaving my appointment with the psychologist, who told me I was experiencing family violence, my head was spinning, family violence, what do I do now?

I sat with the new found information for a long time, then following an assault that resulted in physical injury I found myself talking with a domestic violence service before heading to the forensic nurse for photos of my injuries. This was the beginning of a long and enduring journey that has resulted in endless systems abuse, older children living with their father and refusing to come home, countless times being misidentified as the abusive partner by community and systems, numerous occasions of collusion with my abuser. Feeling helpless, disempowered and exhausted. Entrapment, despite no longer being with the abuser.

The length and depth of the systems that have been used to further harm me are overwhelming.

I believe the first system that let me down emboldened my abuser and from that point forward he felt invincible. This system was the Magistrates Court. Despite having forensic

evidence and being charged with six counts of assault and breaches of the PFVO...and after delaying the court appearance and trying to weaponise the DV service to attend court... the Magistrate decided to only issue a fine of \$1200 and non-conviction...due to him wanting to work in community services at some point.

Whilst I was protected by the PFVO my children weren't, failing to be returned to my care. Scared for their wellbeing and with no response to my calls I discovered after 3 days of anguish that he had removed them from the State and refused to bring them home. This was the beginning of a still ongoing long drawn out case of trying to have my children returned to me.

Whilst they were returned to Tasmania, the church supported my abuser to find housing and other supports to enable him to continue to emotionally manipulate the children against me. Child Safety tried to intervene however the children had been instructed to run away each time, making them less safe.

The children had been removed from school in their early years as their father deemed that it wasn't good for them, however I now think he was fearful they would tell someone what was really happening at home.

The ongoing relentless nature of fighting systems, trying to be heard, believed, validated has impacted on me, I feel tired and exhausted but still required to rally more strength and spend more time attending appointments, engaging lawyers and going to family law court.

I only hope that my story and experiences can affect systems change so that other people in my position don't have to go through this horrific system.

Carol's story

I am a migrant woman living in Tasmania and I am a person with disabilities, including General Anxiety Disorder, CPSTD (C-PTSD), ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder. I took a chance, and I moved here to Tasmania to be with my ex-husband after meeting online. My ex-husband is a local Tasmanian man. I endured nine years of coercive control and family violence. This included mental, emotional, physical, financial and systems abuse.

My ex-partner manipulated and colluded with multiple systems to exert his control over me and abuse me. It wasn't until writing my story, that I sat down and acknowledged just how many systems he used to perpetrate his abuse. This realisation was overwhelming and deeply disheartening, as it highlighted how many systems encouraged his abusive tactics.

I will provide some insights into how he infiltrated our social support systems, used the public transport system, our church, the police and housing. These examples illustrate the pervasive nature of his control and the extensive reach of his manipulative tactics.

One example where he used our social support system is how he convinced friends of ours to stalk me on social media platforms after separation, despite my best efforts at keeping myself safe online by blocking him. He combed through my church's Facebook page to find out information about me. He then used this information against me, adding it to his false narratives which he told our friends and family to make me look bad and portray himself as the victim in our community. This manipulation placed me in a double bind: if I defended myself against his false accusations, I looked guilty, and

if I remained silent, I also looked guilty.

The impact of my ex targeting my social support system has been profound. I am now separated from family members who remain living in my original country, and I have been isolated from a support network in Tasmania. This isolation has made it even more challenging to recover and rebuild my life after enduring years of abuse.

That is not the only example of how he infiltrated my social support system. Unbeknownst to me, over time, he also colluded with our pastor, initiating small and regular conversations that painted me in a poor light. As a result, when I eventually shared the abuse with our pastor, the church was already predisposed to disbelieve me. This was very confusing to have my pastor blame me, and I believed I was the one in the wrong. My gut was telling me that something was off, but I couldn't articulate or fully understand what was happening.

This manipulation significantly impacted my ability to connect with my church, which had previously been a place of refuge for me. It eroded my sense of safety and limited the places where I felt I could seek support. The church, which should have been a source of comfort and support, became yet another environment where I felt isolated and misunderstood. This deepened my sense of isolation and made it even harder to find the help and understanding I needed during such a difficult time.

In addition to manipulating our pastor and the church, he positioned himself favourably with the police by making sure he spoke to them first and told them lies and false information about me and our relationship. The police believed him, and I felt ignored.

It's very sly and insidious how perpetrators slowly and strategically position you poorly to the broader systems around you.

My ex refused to include my name on our rental agreement, effectively giving him sole control over decisions regarding our living arrangements. This left me in a vulnerable position, especially after our separation, as it appeared I had no rental history spanning over nine years of living in Tasmania. This made finding new accommodation significantly harder.

It has been years since our relationship ended, and I continue to remember certain behaviours from our relationship and recognise them only now, years on, as forms of abuse. It is incredibly difficult to recognise what is abusive behaviour when you are stuck in survival mode, surviving your abuser. It is even more difficult to recognise abusive behaviour when the perpetrator of

violence has colluded with the systems around you and left you in a state of confusion, feeling like you're the one in the wrong.

I want to share my experience and let victim-survivors know that your body knows. During our relationship, I felt something was wrong but couldn't quite pinpoint it. Now, looking back, I realise that our bodies have a way of sensing when something isn't right.

5. A structural analysis of systems abuse

Systems abuse occurs not only when perpetrators manipulate institutions to continue exerting control over their victims, it also occurs when those institutions, structurally and/or culturally, enable or enact the abuse. This dynamic is deeply embedded in the design and function of many legal, social, and cultural systems.

Systems are not neutral. There is general acknowledgement that systems have historically been designed in a way that operationalises racism, ageism, ableism, financial and educational advantage and misogyny.³ While there has been, and continues to be, reforms to address systematic forms of discrimination, it remains deeply embedded and largely invisible. This makes systems abuse particularly difficult to identify and address. Underpinning much of the systems abuse experienced by victim-survivors of family violence is the highly gendered nature of many social systems and institutions they are forced to engage with, especially post-separation. This systems abuse is experienced primarily as a form of systemic misogyny, as exemplified in the experiences of Carol, Natalie, Kate and Susan.

Gender bias in systems

Patriarchal power structures underpin many institutional structures, allowing systemic biases to persist and manifest in family and sexual violence. Male privilege often feels invisible to those who hold it, because it aligns with dominant norms of authority, logic, and control. These stereotyped male gender norms of competency, objectivity and credibility reinforce the privilege and entitlement men experience in interpersonal and institutional settings.

A key exemplar of this is the institutional preference for stereotypically 'masculine' styles of presentation, viewed as assertive and rational while problematising presentations that are more commonly exhibited by women (which may include impacts of trauma). In courts, for example, an apparently composed man may be seen as more credible and relatable to

the court, while an overwhelmed woman may be seen as unstable and unrelatable to the court. This assessment is the result of embedded, and often unconscious, gender bias which routinely impacts negatively on victim-survivors. This is highlighted in recent Australian research which shows that victim-survivors often find their credibility not only undermined in court but the perpetrator is able to convince the court that he is in fact the victim of her abuse; *'In many instances, ...the abuser was successful in shaping themselves as the predominant victim in the relationship, whereas the women were not believed.'*⁴

The four women in the case studies described various examples in different systems of how their account of events were dismissed in favour of the perpetrators' description of what occurred. Their experiences demonstrate how community and social biases compound to produce repeated patterns of women being discredited and disbelieved, thereby mirroring a common tactic employed by people who use violence.

Natalie describes how hard it has been for her, as a young mother, to overcome the perpetrator's narrative of her as a neglectful parent. Child Safety Services accepted her partner's promises to change while labelling her as an unsafe parent. As Natalie states, *"Instead of keeping him accountable for his choice to use violence, I have been characterised as unable to protect my children from his abuse.* She also tells of not being believed by Housing Tasmania or the police, highlighting how the burden of proof is repeatedly placed on the victim-survivor while the perpetrator's assertion is accepted as fact.

Kate's story reveals how deeply this operates within policing and legal contexts. As she says, *"Police wouldn't even check his name in their system. If they had, they would have identified his pattern of violence."* Her lawyer's lack of understanding about coercive control further reinforced the bias, enabling her ex-husband to weaponise the legal process. Carol experienced the cycle of discrediting and

disbelief in her personal relationships when she was stalked online by mutual 'friends' on behalf of her ex-partner. She said, *"If I defended myself against his false accusations, I looked guilty, and if I remained silent, I also looked guilty."*

Judging women as mothers

Women are judged not just as individuals but as mothers and this creates particular tensions in the post-separation context for victim-survivors of family and sexual violence. As mothers, they are expected to conform to particular behaviours, specifically nurturing and protective actions. However, if they are resistant to shared parenting, their response is interpreted as instability or alienation. Men are rarely assessed as fathers for their emotional state or capacity to nurture. This creates a double standard in which women must prove their fitness as parents under extreme stress, while men are given the benefit of the doubt.

The social and systemic pressure experienced by women to conform to post-separation norms is demonstrated in Zoe Rathus' research. She finds that the system prioritises father's involvement, often at the expense of recognising the mother's primary caregiving roles as well as safety concerns. As Rathus states, *'Although she is still the same woman, and mother, she is now expected to behave differently to be a 'good' post-separation mother citizen. While she must still love her children, she is expected to willingly and graciously relinquish time with them in favour of the father.'*¹⁵

Kate, Natalie and Susan all describe the devastating effect of systems abuse on their relationship with their children after being accused of being 'bad mothers'. Natalie was held responsible for the abuse committed by her partner, while he was given further opportunities to parent based on superficial displays of remorse. Kate's relationship with her children was 'ruptured' after the perpetrator 'colonised their brains' to believe that she was the abuser. Susan has had to fight through different

systems to be reunited with her children after their father exploited a gap in the system to remove them from her care. These experiences show how systems abuse not only harms women but also profoundly disrupts children's sense of safety, stability, and trust. Children are left vulnerable when systems legitimise the perpetrator's narrative, deepening their exposure to coercion and undermining their relationship with the protective parent.

Moral judgement of women

Women who experience family violence are frequently judged not only for their actions, but for their perceived morality. Systems and social responses often position women as either "good" or "bad" victims, with credibility and support contingent on how well they conform to narrow, moralistic expectations. As ANROWS research on sexual assault demonstrates, victim-survivors are frequently subject to gendered moral scrutiny, where their credibility is judged in relation to their perceived sexual respectability or compliance with societal norms.⁶ Women are expected to be calm, composed, self-sacrificing, sober, and unwaveringly maternal. They are held responsible for the connection and health of their relationship and are blamed for its failure. If they deviate from these standards, if they express anger, use substances, seek autonomy, or resist contact with an abusive partner, they are often seen as morally deficient rather than acting well within the range of normal human behaviour for the circumstances they have been subjected to.

This moral lens fails to account for the survival strategies women employ under coercive control and ongoing violence. It reframes a human response to systemic injustice as a personal deficiency. As Rathus observes, post-separation mothers are judged by an entirely different moral framework, expected to 'willingly and graciously' relinquish care to fathers while simultaneously upholding maternal ideals. Consequently, women are not only navigating risk and safety (for themselves and their children) and complex

trauma but also trying to prove their worthiness of protection in systems that equate acquiescence with credibility, and complexity with guilt.

Natalie's experience reveals how systems judge women through a lens of morality and conformity. Despite being a young woman subjected to abuse, she was labelled an "unsafe parent" by Child Safety Services. Her partner, meanwhile, was believed when he expressed remorse and promised to stop the violence. Natalie shared, *"Instead of keeping him accountable for his choice to use violence, I have been characterised as unable to protect my children from his abuse."* This framing describes a judgement, that her inability to prevent his ongoing abuse reflected her character, rather than positioning his abuse as the problem. Similarly, when he broke into her home, the police warned her that she was in

breach of the family violence order, despite being the one under threat. These responses did not simply reflect procedural failures; they morally positioned her as complicit in her own abuse, and as a mother who had failed a duty of care, standards rarely applied to perpetrators. In doing so, the system abandoned its protective role and reinforced the very harm it was designed to address.

6. Institutional complicity - How systems extend the abuse

The failure of institutions to recognise entrenched gender inequality or systemic misogyny within their operations can result in institutional complicity which perpetuates abusive practices. The case studies in this report illustrate the failure of systems - the legal, police, child support and safety, religious and housing - to acknowledge patterns of abuse and focus on procedural 'neutrality', results in negative outcomes for victim-survivors.

Family law has been a key area of focus for systems abuse, with half of the victim-survivors in this report experiencing abuse in the family law system. Rathus, for example, identifies institutional complicity in family law can perpetuate abuse, *'When mother's allegations of violence in the family are disbelieved, minimised or dismissed, they are transformed from victims of abuse into perpetrators of abuse, alienators of children from their fathers.'*⁷ The historically systemic discriminatory practices in the Federal Circuit and Family Court is now well recognised and major changes are being implemented to address many of the processes and practices that have facilitated systems abuse by perpetrators.⁸ However, the institutional barriers faced by victim-survivors as women and mothers in the arcane and patriarchal system of family law will not easily be removed.

Financial abuse is another widespread form of family violence enabled through the systems in which it operates. Manipulation of the child support system is a common form of abuse, with almost one-third of victim-survivors in our study reporting this form of abuse. Extensive research has shown that child support systems are often weaponised to inflict ongoing financial and psychological harm, demonstrating institutional complicity in extending abuse.⁹ Systems abuse also occurs in other financial institutions such as banking, superannuation, taxation, Centrelink, insurance and essential and telecommunications. These systems extend the abuse through 'multiple, often opaque pathways' enabling systems-based tactics that are 'inconsistently visible'¹⁰

Systems abuse is also reinforced by non-state institutions such as churches, extended family, and social communities, where male authority and privilege is deeply entrenched. There is growing recognition of the systemic practices of faith-based institutions to enable the abuse by perpetrators and control of women through fear of exclusion and isolation from their faith, family and community.^{11,12} As Carol described, *"He colluded with our pastor... when I eventually shared the abuse, the church was already predisposed to disbelieve me."* This betrayal of trust by her spiritual leader left her confused and isolated, believing she was the one at fault. These institutions and networks can exemplify complicity through maintaining loyalty to male perpetrators, offering them reputational protection, and applying social pressure to women to remain silent or forgiving.

The experiences described in the case studies illustrate repeatedly when victim-survivors seek protection but instead face surveillance, disbelief, or blame, systems become complicit. What began as interpersonal abuse becomes institutional. The perpetrator's tactics of gaslighting, control, intimidation are replicated through processes like repeated litigation, character assessments, or the erasure of contextual violence. Susan's experience with the Magistrates Court demonstrates the impact of institutional complicity. Despite forensic evidence and multiple charges, the perpetrator received only a small fine and no conviction. As she explains, *"This system let me down and emboldened my abuser. From that point forward, he felt invincible."* Natalie and Kate's stories highlight the compounding effect of institutional complicity across systems. Natalie was failed when police wrongly accused her of breaching an order, and again when correctional services allowed her abuser to maintain contact, stalk, and threaten her even from prison. Both women vividly describe how their interactions with systems left them feeling powerless, isolated, exhausted and confused, with debilitating financial costs.

Where the system structure, policies and practices do not demonstrate understanding of family violence, victim-survivors can be systematically disadvantaged and abused through their engagement with that system. Often victim-survivors are required to promote their rights within systems that ignore their inherent power imbalance and inequality. Victim-survivors are commonly expected to provide evidence to challenge the perpetrator's wrongful claims or make their case while the perpetrator's assertions are accepted as fact. This means that the burden of proof falls on them, requiring them to assemble often extensive amounts of documentation, with corresponding demands on their time, resources and finances.

The exorbitant costs of the legal system are well understood, but the time, costs and emotional toll of gathering documentation, court adjournments and learning the workings of different systems are less familiar but no less exhausting and damaging to victim-survivors. As this report highlights, women are commonly subjected to abuse across a number of systems, which compounds the debilitating impact exponentially.

7. The dynamics of systems that perpetuate abuse

This section of the report sets out a framework to explain the dynamics that enables systems abuse. The framework illustrates the inter-related ways in which systems can be manipulated by perpetrators to abuse victim-survivors and simultaneously reinforce or replicate the abusive behaviours in their policies, processes and practices.

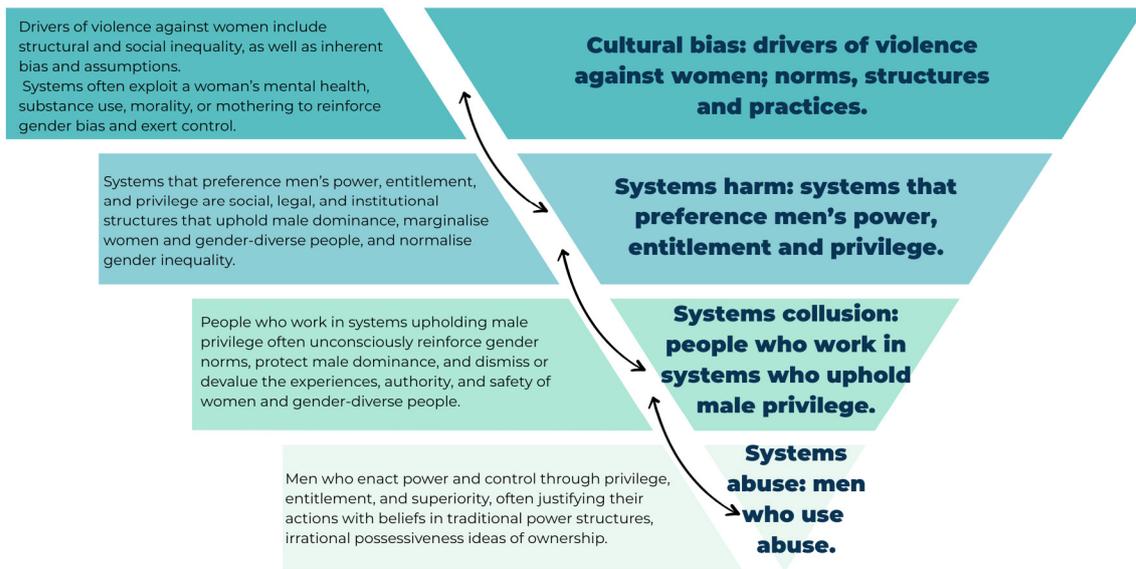


Figure 1. Causal layered analysis of systems abuse

The framework illustrates how systems abuse is an outcomes of the complex interplay between individual actions (the perpetrator's tactics of abuse), the societal drivers of violence against women and the societal norms, institutional structures and systems and everyday practices. The interaction between these levels is mutually reinforcing. It remains largely unconscious and invisible to system actors and service providers.

Tactics of Abuse

Perpetrators of violence against women often centre themselves in system responses by strategically using tactics of abuse that exploit institutional processes. After separation, perpetrators often continue their tactics of control by manipulating institutional systems, including police, courts, child protection, housing, health services and community support systems, to extend their abuse. These tactics are not random; they are calculated efforts to discredit, isolate, and marginalise women in the eyes of system actors, and the community.

Perpetrators are often able to present as calm, reasonable, or remorseful, positioning themselves as the victim or the “concerned parent,” while framing the woman as unstable, manipulative and/or vindictive. These behaviours align with systemic biases that reward composure and penalise trauma. For example, a man may breach a protection order by showing up at a woman's home uninvited, then claim he was checking on the welfare of their children. If he presents well, and she is distressed, the system may treat the incident as mutual conflict, allowing him to manipulate the narrative and shift scrutiny away from his ongoing control.

Drivers of Violence Against Women

The four key drivers that enable violence against women also shape how systems respond to women who seek help, often replicating the dynamics of abuse they are meant to interrupt. Our Watch (an Australian Organisation dedicated to the primary prevention of violence against women) identifies the key drivers at a societal level as:

1. Condoning violence against women
2. Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
3. Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity
4. Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.¹³

As Our Watch notes, these drivers are reinforced by institutional practices. Together, these drivers don't just shape social attitudes, they become embedded in system design and decision-making, ensuring that the gendered nature of violence is reproduced rather than redressed.

This is reflected in an analysis of systems abuse in numerous ways. For example, when violence is condoned, minimised, normalised, or reframed as a relationship issue, institutions may overlook coercive control or downplay it as mutual conflict and pressure women into mediation or reconciliation. Systems that reflect men's control over decision-making result in perpetrators being granted access to children or legal leverage, even when it poses safety risks, prioritising his authority over her safety. As described

in the previous section, rigid gender stereotyping can unconsciously inform institutional assessments about 'good' victims and 'good' mothers'. Finally, male peer relations that disrespect women are evident in institutional cultures where sexist attitudes are normalised, survivors are doubted, and abusers are believed. An example of this is when police dismiss a woman's fears as overreactions while treating a perpetrator's denial as fact.

Norms, Practices and Structures

As stated by ANROWS in the 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey '*...cohesive effort nationally is required at all levels of the social ecology to disrupt misconceptions and problematic attitudes that reflect broader norms, practices, systems and structures that are embedded throughout our society and facilitate and maintain violence against women.*'¹⁴

Systems abuse does not occur in isolation, it is the product of a reinforcing cycle between societal norms, institutional systems, and everyday practices. Social norms that excuse male entitlement, minimise violence, or blame women for their own victimisation are embedded into the very structures that govern public life. These norms shape the design of systems and the system actors within them. For example, when a woman's distress is interpreted as instability, or when a man's calmness is mistaken for credibility, it reflects cultural beliefs about gender and power that have been absorbed into policy and protocol.

These system responses validate and reproduce the very social norms that cause harm, sending a message to communities about whose voices matter and whose safety is negotiable. In this way, norms, systems, and practices become mutually reinforcing, creating a feedback loop where abuse is not only tolerated but institutionalised and replicated by system actors, such as judges, case workers, police officers, and even bystanders who believe they are simply following the rules.

Interplay between victim-survivors, the system, and system actors

The experience of a victim-survivor navigating systems is shaped not only by the structures and policies of those systems, but by the interactions between the individual, the institutional response, and the system actors who interpret and apply the rules. When a woman seeks help, she brings with her the trauma of abuse and the hope of being heard. The system she encounters; its design, culture, and thresholds, either opens a door or builds another wall. Practitioners become the face of that system. Their responses are shaped by policies, professional norms, personal beliefs, and systemic biases. A practitioner who listens with empathy and understands coercive control can become a point of safety and validation; but one who minimises harm, rushes to judgement, or applies procedures rigidly can reinforce the perpetrator's tactics and compound the woman's trauma. In this way, the interplay between victim, system, and practitioner is not neutral, it is a dynamic space where power, recognition, and harm are negotiated in real time. Whether that space becomes protective or punishing depends on the practitioner's ability to see beyond the surface and respond with both skill and humanity.

Natalie's experience - an illustration of the systems abuse dynamic

Natalie's story illustrates how a system response is shaped not just by policy, but by how practitioners interpret a woman's circumstances through their own lens. As a young mother with a background of trauma, experiencing coercive control, Natalie reached out for help only to be met with suspicion, scrutiny, and blame. Despite her partner's ongoing violence, Child Safety Services chose to believe his displays of remorse and promises to change. Practitioners interpreted his behaviour as cooperative and her trauma as instability. She was labelled an "unsafe parent" and denied care of her children. When police were called after he forced his way into her housing unit, she was told she, too, had breached the Family Violence Order, despite doing nothing to invite him. The system's design failed to account for coercive control, but the practitioners' decisions gave that failure form. By misjudging her distress and giving weight to the perpetrator's narrative, those within the system became instruments of continued abuse, leaving Natalie retraumatised, disempowered, and blamed by the institutions meant to "protect" her.

8. Recognising and responding to systems abuse

Expanding definitions and understanding of systems abuse

Currently, the most widely accepted definition of systems abuse is focused on the perpetrator, with an emphasis on the legal system. For example, *the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* defines systems abuse as “the manipulation of legal and other systems by perpetrators of family violence, done so in order to exert control over, threaten and/or harass a current or former partner.” This definition reflects that ‘systems abuse’ has long been recognised as a form of family violence within legal systems. To this end, the *National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book* includes a more comprehensive definition that includes the multiple tactics and systems perpetrators use to deplete the victim’s finances, emotional well-being and affect her capacity to care for children or work.¹⁵

The findings of this report and Engender Equality’s experience working with hundreds of Tasmanian victim-survivors every year suggests that these definitions are too narrowly focused on the perpetrator and should shift to the systems themselves. This report sets out an explanation for the complex interplay of factors and dynamics that underpin systems abuse. We argue that it is not possible to understand and redress this systemic dynamic by focusing on the actions of the perpetrator in isolation. Additionally, an overly narrow definitions present real risks. Systems abuse is often a key feature of coercive control, which if unrecognised undermines the spectrum of prevention, intervention, response, and recovery/healing from family violence. It can embolden people who use violence and increase their sense of power and control. As a result, survivors and their children feel increasingly powerless and may be discouraged or prevented from reporting this form of abuse.

There is growing recognition of both the broader scope of systems abuse and the ways it operates

to enable and reinforce abusive behaviours. For example, the misidentification of victim-survivors as predominant aggressors by police and the courts is increasingly understood as systems abuse.¹⁶ Misidentification of victim-survivors as predominant aggressors is caused by a system failure in which police respond to violence as a series of single incidents, rather than part of a pattern of coercive control over time or a certain context, such as leaving. Other factors also influence misidentification, such as biases including gender, racism and other forms of social discrimination. This results in compounding consequences for victim-survivor including legal sanctions, safety risks, involvement of child protection, loss of housing and income support.¹⁷

Recent research into financial abuse at the Australian Taxation Office revealed an example of systems abuse which penalised victim-survivors for company tax debts created by the perpetrator. This case graphically illustrated our gendered analysis framework for systems abuse, with one ATO officer telling a victim-survivor that “the men never pay, and women do, so we always go after the women”.¹⁸ The recent whitepaper “Making financial abuse visible”¹⁹ also brings attention to the extent of abuse across the range of financial institutions and systems in ways which have previously been invisible.

The National Bench Book recognises that legal system actors, and the Court system itself, can be abusive, without manipulation by the perpetrator. This includes the victim-survivor having to sit in proximity to the perpetrator and their family and friends in the courtroom; experiencing condescending, reproachful or diminishing language or demeanour from defence lawyers or judicial officers; feeling unable to effectively advocate on behalf of children in their care; or the Court giving insufficient weight to the economic impact on the victim-survivor of being a party to judicial proceedings. Self-represented perpetrators are no longer able to cross examine victim-survivors in court. A similar level of understanding and

responsiveness to victim-survivors of family violence is needed across all systems in which they and their children engage. Particular attention should be paid to the compounding systems abuses experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, victim-survivors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with disability and LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors of family violence.

A framework for systems change

As this report has highlighted systems abuse is experienced by victim-survivors across a range of systems beyond police and legal systems. The extent of this form of abuse should be incorporated explicitly into a meaningful definition. It should also include reference to the ways that systems themselves (policies, procedures and practices) and the system actors (service providers, administrators, judicial and police officers, public servants) facilitate or enact abuse within a system. For example, manipulation by primary perpetrator that is not identified and counteracted by the system actor;

deliberate collusion with the perpetrator by the system actor; and inadvertent collusion due to system design failure.

The following framework for change provides a layered analysis that articulates the interplay between victim-survivors, system-actors, systems and the broader societal norms and beliefs that underpin systems abuse. This framework, in conjunction with Figure 1, forms the basis for a training model and mechanism to audit and monitor systemic discrimination.

Systems change starts with bringing victim-survivors and system actors into conversation to create awareness and understanding of systems abuse in the context of family and sexual violence. Working to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence is work that requires the collaboration of services across every sector, including government services, community services (both specialist and generalist) and community organisations and groups.

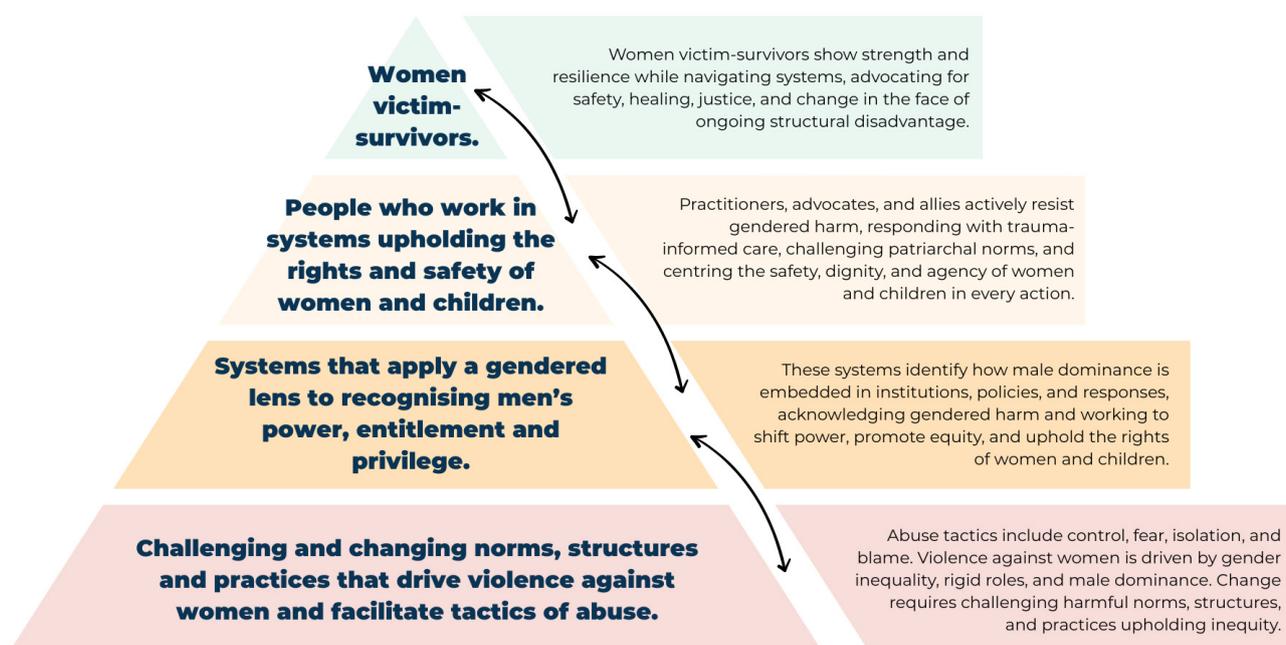


Figure 2. Causal layered analysis for change

The key step towards addressing systems abuse and better supporting victim-survivors is to build our knowledge and understanding; to make the complex and often unconscious and invisible operations of systems abuse visible. This includes:

- 1.** Building an evidence base by collating and analysing data from victim-survivors' experiences collected by specialist family violence services to build a comprehensive picture of where, how and why systems abuse is occurring.

- 2.** Undertaking qualitative research, informed by victim-survivors, across a range of systems and services, including journey-mapping to identify and examine the pressure points in different systems where there is a risk or reality of abuse.

- 3.** Developing an audit tool for systems, agencies, organisations and workplaces to assess, monitor and address elements (policies, processes, practices and practitioners) that enable or enact systems abuse

- 4.** Undertaking systems abuse training, based on the framework outlined in this report, across government and non-government agencies and services, and community organisations, led by specialist family and sexual violence services and victim-survivors.

This approach is consistent with the Tasmanian Government's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027. A government committed to justice, safety, and equity must confront and dismantle the gendered and institutional biases that enable systems abuse. The legitimacy of our institutions depends on their ability to preserve victim-survivors dignity and uphold legitimate justice, not perpetuate harm. It's about understanding that our systems are focused on procedures and patterns of default positions we can challenge and change.

It is time to hold to account systems that "perpetuate the same dynamics of power and control" as the primary perpetrators of gendered violence. Tasmania should lead the way in making this happen.

9. Recommendations

To address the ongoing abuse experienced by victim-survivors of family and sexual violence as they engage in systems and services post-separation, it is necessary to build our knowledge and understanding of systems abuse. With more information it is possible to identify, dismantle and redress the systemic elements that enable and enact systems abuse. In line with the Tasmanian Government's *Survivors at the centre: Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027*:

- 1.** Fund research into systems abuse experienced by victim-survivors to build an in-depth, qualitative understanding of the nature, extent and processes of systems abuse in Tasmania, prioritising the impact on children.
- 2.** Adopt a co-ordinated approach to systems abuse data collection, analysis and reporting, including an annual report of victim-survivor experience of systems abuse (by sector, agency and type) collected and collated by family violence specialist services to be included in the Annual Report of the Action Plan.
- 3.** Work with a self-determining victim-survivor group or network to develop and implement an audit tool for agencies and services to identify and address systemic flaws within the design, process and procedures of their business.
- 4.** Build knowledge and understanding of systems abuse into family and sexual violence training for all Tasmanian government employees.
- 5.** Develop and implement a family violence impact audit tool to evaluate all services provided or funded by government, including statutory bodies, and state-run enterprises. The tool will assess the potential contribution to or mitigation of family violence, applying a gender equality and human rights lens, centring victim-survivor perspectives, and informing government accountability, investment decisions, and systemic reform.

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11. APPENDIX A: Practitioner Survey

1. How many clients do you currently have?
2. How many of your current case load have experienced at least one form of systems abuse?
3. How many of those clients have experienced abuse under the following systems?
Please type the number of clients according to gender below each system.
 - 1) Tasmania Police
 - 2) Family Violence Orders
 - 3) Housing (including public housing, private tenancy and home ownership)
 - 4) Family law – financial separation and divorce
 - 5) Family law – compulsory mediation
 - 6) Commonwealth income support (including Centrelink)
 - 7) Delays and/or costs associated with civil law proceedings
 - 8) Delays and/or costs associated with criminal law proceedings
 - 9) Actions of State prosecutors
 - 10) Actions of perpetrator defence lawyers
 - 11) Actions of judges
 - 12) Actions of other court officials
 - 13) Perpetrator bail conditions
 - 14) Perpetrator prison release conditions
 - 15) A church or religious grouping
 - 16) The NDIS
 - 17) Migration and asylum seeking (including visa status)
 - 18) Primary care providers (including GP, clinic, hospital emergency)
 - 19) Mental health providers (including psychologist, counsellor, psychiatrist, AOD service)
 - 20) Family/community services providers (including family case workers)
 - 21) Financial services providers (including bank, accountant)
4. How many clients do you currently have who have children under 18?
 - 4.1 Of those clients, how many have experienced systems abuse under:
 - 1) Child Safety Services
 - 2) Family law – parenting orders
 - 3) Family law – child support payments
 - 4) Education providers (including schools and early learning centres attended by children)
 5. Systems abuse and intersectionality:
 - 5.1 How many of your clients identify as LGBTQIA+?
Of those, how many have experienced systems abuse combined with homophobia and/or transphobia?
 - 5.2 How many of your clients identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or CALD?
Of those, how many have experienced systems abuse combined with racism?
 - 5.3 How many of your clients identify as neurodiverse or as a person with a disability?
Of those, how many have experienced systems abuse combined with ablistm?
 - 6 Have any of your clients experienced systems abuse in a way not captured above? Please detail the systems under which the abuse was experienced and the number of clients for each.
- 7 Any other comments?

Endnotes

- 1 Commonwealth of Australia (2022) *The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* footnote p60
- 2 Glossary of the National Plan p133 Perpetrators of domestic and family violence who seek to control the victim before, during or after separation may make multiple applications and complaints in multiple systems (for example the courts, Child Support, Centrelink) in relation to a protection order, breach, parenting, divorce, property, child and welfare support and other matters with the intention of interrupting, deferring, prolonging or dismissing judicial and administrative processes, which may result in depleting the victim's financial resources and emotional well-being, and adversely impacting the victim's capacity to maintain employment or to care for children (citing *the National domestic and family violence bench book*, Australian Government, 2022)
- 3 For example, *The Australian Human Rights Commission*
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