

16 February 2026

Secretary, Legislative Scrutiny Committee
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Dear Legislative Scrutiny Committee

Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026

On behalf of the directors and members of AMSANT I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026. Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) remains one of the most prevalent and preventable health risks for Aboriginal¹ women in the Northern Territory (NT). AMSANT has long advocated for the rights of Aboriginal women, families and communities to live healthy and safe lives and continues to advocate for reforms grounded in cultural and lived experience.

In direct response to the terms of reference, AMSANT does not support the proposed Sentencing Amendment (Murder) Bill 2026, nor any amendment to the *Sentencing Act 1995* at this time. While we acknowledge the government's intention to recognise the severity and profound harm caused by DFSV we urge consideration of actions that will have a greater impact on reducing violence, strengthening health and safety and preventing homicides in the NT.

In the *Inquests into the deaths of Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja and Kumanjayi Haywood* [2024] NTLC 14, the NT coroner recorded the DFSV homicide rate as seven times higher than the national average. Although the government has cited this statistic to justify the legislative amendment, there is no clear evidence that the proposed change will achieve the intended safety outcomes. Importantly, the inquiry included 35 recommendations which have overwhelmingly support from non-government organisations (NGOs), Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs) and Aboriginal community controlled health

¹ References to Aboriginal people respectfully refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First People of Australia.

services (ACCHSs) which, if implemented, would have a far greater impact on addressing DFSV.


AMSANT's recent *Report Card* on the Northern Territory Government's DFSV strategy 2025-2028 as a response to the coroner's report identified that, despite only three recommendations being explicitly unsupported by the government, 12 have been excluded from the strategy completely. Further, none of the incorporated recommendations can be meaningfully measured, with a reliance on indicators that measure activity rather than outcomes. The absence of robust evaluation and accountability mechanisms raises similar concerns for the proposed legislative amendment whereby without a clear outcomes framework, it is difficult to see how the impact of this amendment will be assessed or meaningfully monitored. AMSANT encourages the better use of research by understanding the evidence within its context, including how evaluation and accountability mechanisms can be included. While the DFSV homicide rate in the Northern Territory is seven times higher than the national average, there are most effective and efficient ways to address DFSV.

The release last week of *Our Ways-Strong Ways-Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026-2036* underscores the need for approaches grounded in Aboriginal leadership, community control and cultural strength. This is the first standalone national plan designed specifically to end DFSV against Aboriginal women and children, developed through extensive community-led processes and endorsed with bi-partisan support, nationally. The plan commits governments to prioritising self-determined, community-controlled responses, strengthen the specialist ACCO sector, and embed shared decision-making across all stages of implementation.

Similarly, also released last week, the Closing the Gap 2025 annual report and 2026 implementation plan reinforces the central role of the priority reforms, particularly priority reform one. These reforms are not optional but are binding commitments that require governments to shift power, build capability and ensure policy and legislative decisions are accountable to Aboriginal communities. The Commonwealth has reaffirmed these obligations in its 2026 implementation plan and has committed to major investments across ACCHSs, strengthening DFSV responses and culturally safe crisis support services.

Together, these national commitments require the NT Government to shift away from punitive, reactive approaches towards prevention, healing and community-led reforms. A reform agenda centred on criminalisation will not produce the outcomes needed to improve the health and safety of Aboriginal women, families and communities in the NT, rather, it risks further entrenching harm.

We look forward to opportunities to work in genuine partnership and shared-decision making with the NT Government to achieve meaningful, evidence based and community-led reform.



Anthony Beven
Acting chief executive officer



Report card

**On the Northern Territory
Governments DFSV strategy 2025-
2028 as a response to the
Coroner's report**

February 2026



Executive summary

Assessment of NT Government response to the Coroner's 35 recommendations

This Report Card centres the lives of four Aboriginal women from across the Northern Territory, their families and their communities, whose deaths were examined through a landmark coronial inquest in 2024. **The lives of Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja and Kumanjayi Haywood** were taken in domestic violence-related deaths and examined by the Coroner over more than 18 months, with input from dedicated community organisations and professionals seeking systemic change. The findings and 35 recommendations handed down in November 2024 exposed a system in the Northern Territory characterised by chronic under-funding and under-resourcing, leading the Coroner to make findings of systemic racism and the silencing of Aboriginal voices.

Coroner Armitage found that the lives of these four Aboriginal women did not receive the same outpouring of grief, outrage and collective response that often follows the deaths of non-Aboriginal women. This absence of response, which frequently drives political and legislative change, reinforced a finding that their lives were treated as less deserving.

Exactly one year after the Coroner's findings were handed down, the Northern Territory Government released the DFSV Strategy 2025–2028. The Strategy makes no reference to the Coroner's recommendations. **This Report Card assesses the alignment between the 35 recommendations and the Northern Territory Government's subsequent response**, including its initial response to Parliament in July 2025.

The analysis finds inconsistent, partial and at times absent alignment between the Coroner's intent and government policy commitments. While some recommendations are reflected in principle or through related initiatives, many lack new or sustained investment and exclude critical elements of the Coroner's findings. Robust evaluation and accountability mechanisms are largely absent with recommendations central to Aboriginal community-led solutions, cultural authority and long-term system reform among those most frequently omitted or inadequately addressed.

While only three recommendations were explicitly not supported by the Northern Territory Government in July 2025, it was found that **a total of 12 recommendations are not included in the DFSV Strategy and a further 16 only partially aligned to the Coroner's recommendations.** Although 23 of the 35 recommendations have correlating initiatives, none are measurable to the extent intended by the Coroner. **Just 17 per cent of the report card is rated green.**

A central barrier to accountability is the Strategy's limited capacity to measure progress against the Coroner's recommendations. Numerous initiatives are omitted from the systems-level program logic and data matrix or rely on indicators that measure activity rather than outcomes. This significantly constrains transparency and accountability and prevents meaningful assessment of whether reforms are improving safety, reducing violence, or addressing the structural drivers identified by the Coroner.

The Coroner continues to draw upon these findings and recommendations in subsequent domestic violence-related coronial inquests since November 2024. This ongoing reliance underscores the importance of ensuring the recommendations remain visible and that those in power are held to account.

The Coroner's recommendations must be re-centred as the foundation of the Northern Territory's DFSV response. This requires genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities, sustained and transparent resourcing, and the embedding of rigorous evaluation and accountability mechanisms. Without these steps, the opportunity presented by the Coroner's findings risks being lost, joining the many coronial inquests, Royal Commissions and parliamentary inquiries that governments have failed to act upon to deliver meaningful change for Aboriginal lives.

AMSANT's final finding is clear. The lives of Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja and Kumanjayi Haywood are deserving and will not be forgotten. Alongside many across the Northern Territory, we are grieving and we are outraged. We will continue to amplify the voices of Aboriginal women, families and communities to expose a system that continues to attempt to silence us.

Wherever there is violence, there is resistance.

Report card key findings: from response to accountability

Assessment of NT Government response to the Coroner's 35 recommendations

RESPONSE

Was the recommendation supported by the NTG?

- 13 supported
- 23 partially supported
- 3 not supported

ALIGNMENT & INITIATIVE

Is the recommendation reflected in the DFSV Strategy?

- 7 aligned
- 16 partially aligned
- 12 excluded

MEASUREMENT

Can progress be meaningfully measured?

- 0 fully measurable
- 9 partially measurable
- 26 not measurable

While many coronial recommendations are supported or on our assessment, partially supported, alignment between the initiative responses and the intent of the recommendations is limited, and none are fully measurable, fundamentally undermining accountability.

About the report card

How this report card was developed, what it assesses, and its limitations.

Purpose

This Report Card assesses the alignment and gaps between the 35 recommendations handed down by the Northern Territory Coroner, Elisabeth Armitage, on 24 November 2024, and the Northern Territory Government's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Strategy 2025–2028.

The recommendations arose from a landmark inquest into the deaths of four Aboriginal women: Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja and Kumanjayi Haywood.

While the DFSV Strategy was released one year after the inquest, the recommendations are not clearly visible throughout it, having been intentionally removed.

AMSANTs purpose is to privilege the voices of Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja and Kumanjayi Haywood by mapping where the Coroners recommendations align across the strategy, aiming to improve transparency, strengthen advocacy, and provide a central reference point for community organisations.

This Report Card is intended as a starting point for action. It is not an exhaustive analysis.

Limitations

- The report card is limited to a desktop review.
- The analysis relies solely on publicly available documents.
- The assessment focuses on policy intent and strategic alignment.
- It does not assess implementation, operational outcomes, delivery risk, or feasibility.

Scope and approach

The analysis is guided by four questions

1. What was the NT Government's formal response to the 35 coronial recommendations (tabled July 2025)?
2. Where do related initiatives appear in the DFSV Strategy?
3. Do those initiatives align with the intent of the recommendations?
4. Are initiatives measurable within the systems-level program logic and data matrix?

A comparative mapping framework has been used. All 35 coronial recommendations were extracted verbatim and mapped against:

- the NT Government's tabled response to the legislative assembly (July 2025)
- the draft DFSV Strategy (referred to as the Refreshed Framework)
- the final DFSVR Strategy 2025-2028, which includes the systems-level program logic and data matrix and the Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan

Included in report card

- Alignment between recommendations and initiatives
- Whether initiatives are measurable using the program logic and data matrix identified in the Strategy

Excluded from the report card

- Detailed budget or resource analysis
- Alternative data source recommendations
- Implementation feasibility or delivery risk
- Impact measurement

How to read the report card

How to interpret the report card

Recommendation:

Lists all 35 recommendations made by the coroner

Column 1 Response:

identifies the NT Government's response to parliament, July 2025. Wording as been taken directly from the tabled report

Column 2 Alignment & Initiative:

rates how aligned the NTG's initiative is to the intent of the Coroner's recommendation and links to the correlating initiative within the strategy

Column 3 Measurement:

assesses inclusion in the strategy's program logic and data matrix and whether the indicators can appropriately measure each initiative.

The systems level program logic and data matrix can be found from page 21 of the [Strategy](#).

Recommendation	Response	Alignment & Initiative	Measurement
Recommendation X	GREEN Yes: A yes rating was given when the NT Government supported the recommendation with a commitment to providing new funding.	GREEN Yes: A yes rating was given when there was strong alignment between the NT Government's initiative and the intent of the Coroner's recommendation.	GREEN Yes: A yes rating was given when the recommendation/initiative was measurable with relevant indicators or data sources.
Recommendation Y	AMBER Partial: A partial rating was given when the recommendation was supported/in principle, but the initiative related to the recommendation relied on existing resources.	AMBER Partial: A partial rating was given when the initiative is partially aligned to the Coroner's recommendation. The report card notes what may be unaligned or excluded.	AMBER Partial: A partial rating was given if only part of the recommendation/initiative was measurable with relevant indicators or data sources. The report card notes what may be unmeasurable or excluded.
Recommendation Z	RED No: A no rating was given when the recommendation was not supported by the NT Government.	RED No: A no rating was given when the NT Government's initiative is not aligned to the intent of the Coroner's recommendation	RED No: A no rating was given if no relevant indicators or data sources were identified.



The report card

On recommendations 1
through to 35



Recommendation	Response	Alignment & Initiative	Measurement
<p>Recommendation 1: Permanent DFSV-ICRO</p>	<p>Supported in principle with <i>existing and new investment</i>.</p>	<p>The DFSV-ICRO was, and recommended to be, a stand-alone interagency body which consists of members from 5 government agencies. The DFSV-ICRO existed for 12 months but no longer exists.</p> <p>The alternative response can be found at initiative 37</p>	<p>No indicators in the data matrix relating to Permanent DFSV-ICRO.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Peak body</p>	<p>Not supported by NT Government.</p>	<p>No alignment.</p> <p>Cannot be found</p>	<p>N/A as unsupported.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Workforce Planning</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources</i>.</p>	<p>Excludes engagement of local communities with no plan to provide an annual report specifically relating to workforce recruitment and retention strategies to address the DFSV workforce crisis.</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 30, 31, 32</p>	<p>Indicators measure participation and feedback in trainings only, requiring a new baseline to be developed to measure tertiary qualifications.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS)</p>	<p>Supported in principle with <i>existing resources</i>.</p>	<p>No commitment from the NTG for an increase in funding as recommended by the coroner.</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 39</p>	<p>No indicators in the data matrix relating to language or interpreter accessibility. The indicators are unable to measure AIS workforce growth, usage or investment.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: Evidence-based alcohol intervention strategy</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources</i>.</p>	<p>No committed from the NTG for an evidence-based strategy reducing alcohol availability.</p> <p>The alternative response can be found at initiative 28</p>	<p>No indicators in the data matrix relating to alcohol.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: Specialist alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources</i>.</p>	<p>No commitment from the NTG for an increase in funding as recommended by the coroner.</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 29</p>	<p>No indicators in the data matrix relating to alcohol and other drugs.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Alignment & Initiative	Measurement
<p>Recommendation 7: Co-responder model</p>	<p>Supported with <i>new resources</i>.</p>	<p>No commitment from the NT Government for an independent, external evaluation or a community-led model to be rolled out in remote communities</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 7</p>	<p>Indicators measure whether someone has been referred and participated in the programs, not whether it has made any impact on their immediate needs as stated in the initiative.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Information sharing through Supportlink</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources</i>.</p>	<p>The initiative is almost entirely reflective of the recommendation made by the coroner</p> <p>Can be found at initiative 44</p>	<p>The initiative has not been included in the systems-level program logic. No indicators in the data matrix relating to information sharing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Multi-agency Protection Service</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources</i>.</p>	<p>The NT Government has not committed to the multi-agency protection service being modelled on the South Australian model as recommended by the coroner</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 25</p>	<p>The initiative has not been included in the systems-level program logic. No indicators in the data matrix relating to a multi-agency protection service.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: Embedding of Interpreters and/or ALO's in JESCC</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources</i>.</p>	<p>The initiative is almost entirely reflective of the recommendation made by the coroner</p> <p>Can be found at initiative 41</p>	<p>No indicators in the data matrix related to the embedding of interpreters and/or ALOs in JESCC.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11: PART training</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources</i>.</p>	<p>No commitment from the NT Government for an increase in funding as recommended by the coroner.</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 42</p>	<p>Indicators measure the number of participants but does not include indicators relevant for the measurement of police participation specifically or for the effectiveness of the training, beyond individual feedback, as stated in the initiative.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12: A permanent NT Police DFSV Command</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources</i>.</p>	<p>The initiative is almost entirely reflective of the recommendation made by the coroner.</p> <p>Can be found at initiative 43</p>	<p>The initiative has not been included in the systems-level program logic. No indicators in the data matrix relating to a permanent police DFSV command.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Alignment & Initiative	Measurement
<p>Recommendation 13: Family Harm Coordination daily auditing program to be expanded</p>	Supported with <i>existing resources</i> .	<p>The initiative is aligned with the coroner's recommendations to continue funding and expand the team across the NT. Now referred to as the DFSV Audit Program.</p> <p>Can be found at initiative 9</p>	The initiative has not been included in the systems-level program logic. No indicators in the data matrix relating to the DFSV Audit program.
<p>Recommendation 14: Continued commitment to Safe and Together Framework</p>	Supported with <i>existing resources</i> .	<p>The initiative is aligned with the coroner's recommendations to conduct an audit into the implementation of the Framework, to ensure the roll out has been effective.</p> <p>Can be found at initiative 45</p>	Indicators measure the number of participants but does not include indicators relevant for the measurement of implementation or effectiveness.
<p>Recommendation 15: Young people engaged in violence</p>	Supported with <i>new investment</i> .	<p>The new program, Circuit Breaker, is not community-led and current plans are for internal evaluations only. The strategy does not indicate continued support of existing programs.</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 6</p>	Indicators measure the number of closed cases due to goal completion but does not include indicators relevant for effectiveness of support, healing, accountability or behaviour change.
<p>Recommendation 16: Community-based approaches to child welfare</p>	Supported with <i>existing resources</i> .	<p>No commitment from the NT Government for an increase in funding as recommended by the coroner.</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 10</p>	No indicators in the data matrix relating to community-based approaches to child welfare. Initiative not included in the systems-level program logic.
<p>Recommendation 17: Specialist DFSV court</p>	Supported with <i>new investment</i> .	<p>The strategy specifically excludes point (iii) of the recommendation</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 17</p>	No indicators in the data matrix relating to the specialist DFV court, or any court in the Northern Territory.
<p>Recommendation 18: Culturally appropriate, trauma informed, mediation/peacekeeping for family and community violence</p>	Supported in principle with <i>no identified funding source</i> .	<p>No alignment</p> <p>Cannot be found</p>	N/A as unsupported

Recommendation	Response	Alignment & Initiative	Measurement
<p>Recommendation 19: ADR recognition for community-led mediation and peacemaker groups</p>	<p>Supported in principle with <i>no identified funding source</i>.</p>	<p>No alignment Cannot be found</p>	<p>N/A as unsupported</p>
<p>Recommendation 20: Alternatives to custody for perpetrators of domestic and family violence</p>	<p>Supported in principle with <i>no identified funding source</i>.</p>	<p>No alignment Cannot be found</p>	<p>N/A as unsupported</p>
<p>Recommendation 21: The NT Victims Register to be an opt-out system</p>	<p>Supported in principle with <i>no identified funding source</i>.</p>	<p>No alignment Cannot be found</p>	<p>N/A as unsupported</p>
<p>Recommendation 22: Update to NT Charter of Victims Rights</p>	<p>Supported in principle with <i>no identified funding source</i>.</p>	<p>No alignment Cannot be found</p>	<p>N/A as unsupported</p>
<p>Recommendation 23: Funding for men’s prison-based behaviour change programs and counselling</p>	<p>Supported with <i>new investment</i>.</p>	<p>No commitment by the NT Government for an independent evaluation. The partial response can be found at initiative 12</p>	<p>Indicators in the data matrix measure the number of referrals and program completions but does not include cultural safety or program effectiveness.</p>
<p>Recommendation 24: Criteria for men’s prison-based behaviour change programs and counselling</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources and new investment</i>.</p>	<p>No commitment by the NT Government in relation to accessibility for inmates with disabilities as recommended by the coroner. The partial response can be found at initiative 11</p>	<p>Indicators in the data matrix measure the number of referrals to programs but does not include referrals for people on remand or people with disabilities</p>

Recommendation	Response	Alignment & Initiative	Measurement
<p>Recommendation 25: Men’s prison-based behaviour programs for deniers</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources and new investment</i>.</p>	<p>The initiative is aligned with the coroner’s recommendation to fund the development and delivery of programs targeting ‘deniers’</p> <p>Can be found at initiative 12</p>	<p>Indicators in the data matrix measure the number of referrals and program completions but does not include indicators specific for those who deny their use of violence</p>
<p>Recommendation 26: DFSV specific throughcare and reintegration</p>	<p>Supported with <i>no identified funding source</i>.</p>	<p>No commitment by the NT Government for increased, long-term funding as recommended by the coroner</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 15</p>	<p>No indicators in the data matrix relevant for measuring throughcare or reintegration programs.</p>
<p>Recommendation 27: DFSV screening and assessment of health clients</p>	<p>Supported in principle with <i>new investment*</i></p> <p><small>*support specifically excludes point (iv) of the recommendation but has been rated green due to allocation of new investment</small></p>	<p>The strategy specifically excludes point (iv) of the recommendation.</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 23</p>	<p>No indicators in the data matrix relevant for measuring health system responses.</p>
<p>Recommendation 28: Aboriginal Liaison Officers in hospitals and clinics</p>	<p>Supported in principle with <i>existing resources</i></p>	<p>No commitment by the NT Government to increase the remuneration and supports for ALOs in recognition of their unique expertise and crucial role as recommended by the coroner</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 40</p>	<p>The initiative has not been included in the systems-level program logic. No indicators in the data matrix relevant for measuring the intended review of the remuneration and support for ALOs.</p>
<p>Recommendation 29: Men’s community-based programs and prevention related activities</p>	<p>Supported with <i>existing resources and new investment*</i></p> <p><small>*The strategy indicates only existing resources committed but has been rated green as new investment was allocated at the time of the tabled report to parliament.</small></p>	<p>No commitment by the NT Government for increased funding, expansion of programs to addition locations (including remote communities), an independent evaluation nor a commitment to partner with ACCOs as recommended by the coroner</p> <p>The partial response can be found at initiative 14</p>	<p>The initiative has not been included in the systems-level program logic. No indicators in the data matrix relevant for measuring community-based programs for men.</p>
<p>Recommendation 30: Education</p>	<p>Supported in principle with <i>new investment</i>.</p>	<p>The initiative is aligned with the coroner's recommendation to invest in prevention and education programs.</p> <p>Can be found at initiatives 1 & 2</p>	<p>The indicators in the data matrix measure the number of people reached through the prevention programs only. The data matrix excludes a measurement of community activities and events.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">10</p>

Recommendation	Response	Alignment & Initiative	Measurement
Recommendation 31: DFSV training for clubs and pubs	Supported in principle with <i>existing resources and new investment</i>	No alignment Cannot be found	N/A as unsupported
Recommendation 32: Banned Drinkers Register	Not supported.	No alignment	N/A as unsupported
Recommendation 33: Full implementation of NT DFSV Action Plan 2	Supported with <i>existing resources and new investment.</i>	There is no single correlating initiative, nor is there documentation and transparency regarding any completion of Action Plan 2 publicly documented.	There is no clear references to Action Plan 2 included in the systems-level program logic or data matrix
Recommendation 34: Increase to core funding	Supported with <i>existing resources and new investment.</i>	It is not clear whether the 10% increase to core funding has recommended by the coroner has been applied.	The initiative has not been included in the systems-level program logic or data matrix
Recommendation 35: Indexation	Not supported	No alignment	N/A as unsupported