



embolden

Strategic Plan

2027–2030

**Leading Lasting
Change**



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Kaurna people as the Traditional and ongoing Custodians of the lands on which Embolden is based and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge the many Aboriginal Nations and communities across South Australia on whose lands Embolden members live and work. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. It always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

We acknowledge Aboriginal peoples' enduring spiritual relationship with Country and the ongoing importance of culture, heritage, languages, laws and traditions. We recognise the right of Aboriginal peoples to self-determination and honour their continuing connections to land, waters and community.

Acknowledging victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence

Embolden acknowledges the strength, courage and resilience of people with lived experience of domestic, family and sexual violence. We honour those whose lives have been taken and pay our respects to the families and loved ones who continue to carry that loss.

We value the diverse perspectives, knowledge and expertise of victim-survivors and are committed to ensuring that lived experience meaningfully informs our work. We amplify victim-survivors' voices, learn from their experiences and place their interests at the centre of everything we do. We also acknowledge the members of the specialist workforce who bring both professional expertise and insight gained through their own lived experience of violence.

We recognise that the insights, leadership and advocacy of victim-survivors have always been the driving force behind progress in the specialist sector. Learning from people with lived experience remains essential to ending domestic, family and sexual violence and creating a future in which women, children and all people can live free from violence, thrive and reach their full potential.



Embolden is South Australia's peak body for specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services, across the continuum of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

Our vision

A world free from domestic, family and sexual violence, where women, children and all people are valued, respected and able to flourish.

Our purpose

A strong collective voice for specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services, to better prevent violence and improve the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors.

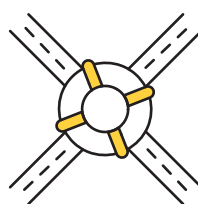
Our values

Underpinning our vision and purpose, Embolden's values are:



Safety

Women, children and all people have a fundamental right to be and feel safe.



Equity

Equitable access to domestic, family and sexual violence services, no matter who you are or where you live.



Dignity

Recognition of the inherent value of all people and their right to respect and agency.



Justice

People using violence are accountable, within systems that uphold the safety, dignity and rights of victim-survivors.

Chairpersons' message



Across South Australia, specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services have spent decades working alongside victim-survivors and communities, building the knowledge, evidence and practice wisdom that must shape the path ahead.

Embolden was established to harness that collective expertise and provide a strong, collective voice for the specialist sector. As South Australia's peak body for domestic, family and sexual violence services, Embolden plays a critical role in elevating the knowledge of specialist services, influencing policy and reform, and fostering collaboration across the sector. At a time of significant opportunity and change, this role has never been more important.

Following South Australia's Royal Commission into domestic, family and sexual violence in 2025, the South Australian Government committed to deliver a suite of reforms to improve responses to domestic, family and sexual violence. Embolden's members are fully committed to its success, and foundations are in place for meaningful progress.

For victim-survivors, communities and specialist services, progress is measured not by recommendations or commitments alone, but by outcomes. It is measured by whether victim-survivors can live free from violence and thrive; whether children and young people grow up safe, supported and connected to family, kin and community; whether people are supported and held accountable to change their use of violence; and whether communities are empowered to drive lasting change.

Embolden's Strategic Plan 2027–2030 is designed to build on the specialist sector's expertise to help shape the reforms ahead. It will guide our efforts to strengthen our collective voice, support our members, and champion the changes needed to achieve a future free from violence.

As this new chapter begins, our time as the Co-Chairs of Embolden's Board is coming to an end. Having been involved since the earliest days of the Coalition of Women's Domestic Violence Services in the 1990s, which later became Embolden, we have witnessed how far the sector has come. This progress has been driven by victim-survivors, dedicated workers, advocates and feminist activists whose determination has shaped the sector we know today.

In our last year on Embolden's Board, we feel pride in what has been achieved and confidence in what can still be accomplished. Embolden is well placed to continue to be a strong collective voice for specialist services and those most impacted by violence, helping to drive the change that South Australia needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maria Hagias'.

Maria Hagias

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susie Smith'.

Susie Smith

Co-chairs of Embolden's Board

CEO's message

South Australia stands at a pivotal moment in its response to domestic, family and sexual violence. We have a genuine opportunity to turn the tide and create lasting change. The Royal Commission into domestic, family and sexual violence has provided a blueprint for transformative reform, and Embolden members played a significant role in shaping that vision through their expertise, advocacy and commitment.

Embolden was proud to lead the call for a Royal Commission. Now, our focus turns to the equally important task of contributing to the design and implementation of the Government's reform agenda, ensuring the Commission's recommendations deliver meaningful and enduring outcomes for those impacted by violence.

At the heart of effective reform is a simple truth: the strongest foundations for change are built from lived experience and frontline expertise. Every day, specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services work alongside victim-survivors, responding to complex needs, identifying systemic barriers, and developing practical solutions. We are indebted to the specialist workforce and lived experience advocates whose knowledge, leadership and practice wisdom continue to drive progress across the sector.

Embolden is committed to leading and representing the sector in a way that is collaborative, inclusive and focused on collective impact. We work to strengthen the specialist sector's capacity to share expertise, build strong and responsive systems, and provide governments with informed, evidence-based advice through a unified voice. We recognise that ending violence requires collaboration across many sectors and communities, and we are committed to building partnerships with lived

experience advocates, response services, government and allied sectors to advance shared solutions.

Our vision is for service systems and workforces that are genuinely equipped to respond with confidence, expertise and compassion. By strengthening these systems and supporting the people who work within them, we can contribute to a safer South Australia where all people can live free from violence.

We are rolling up our sleeves for the work ahead. Embolden's Strategic Plan 2027–2030 sets out our priorities and direction over the next four years. It reflects our commitment to championing the specialist sector, elevating the voices of people impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence, and driving the systemic change needed to achieve lasting reform.

Together, we have an unprecedented opportunity to shape a safer future. This Strategic Plan is our commitment to helping realise that future.



Mary Leaker

Chief Executive Officer



A proud history

For more than 40 years, Embolden has been advocating for the safety and wellbeing of women, children and all people impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence.

Embolden is proud of its origins in the women's safety movement when, in the early 1990s, local women's shelters from across the South Australia formed the Coalition of Women's Domestic Violence Services. The Coalition was an unfunded grassroots collective, where members came together to share practice wisdom and to advocate for the needs of victim-survivors, including specialist services.

We acknowledge the leadership of those women and Coalition members since, on whose shoulders Embolden stands today.

In 2019, the Coalition received funding for the first time from the Marshall Liberal government, and Embolden was launched. Until 2025, Embolden was supported by and co-located with Women's Safety Services

SA, the state's largest provider of specialist domestic and family violence services.

Since July 2025, Embolden has proudly operated as an independent peak body representing providers of specialist services in South Australia's domestic, family and sexual violence sector. Embolden's membership now includes specialist sexual violence services and services working with people who use violence, as well as Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations delivering Aboriginal community-led responses. Embolden recognises the longstanding leadership of Aboriginal communities in responding to violence within a context of the ongoing impacts of colonisation and the vital importance of self-determination for Aboriginal people.

We acknowledge the leadership of the members of the Coalition of Women's Domestic Violence Services, on whose shoulders Embolden stands today.

Our commitment

Embolden works with and for members: organisations in South Australia that deliver specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services, across the continuum of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

In the current reform context, we aim to shape systems and services to transform how we prevent and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence. Embolden members bring over 40 years of specialist expertise to this task.

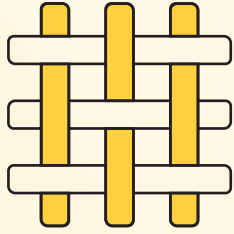
Embolden is committed to:

- the value of specialist expertise, and upholding and strengthening the specialist sector.
- centring victim-survivors, including children and young people, and continuing to learn from and act on lived expertise.
- maintaining our tradition of feminist advocacy, recognising structural gender inequality and gendered dynamics of power as key drivers of gender-based violence.
- cultural safety and actively supporting Aboriginal leadership and self-determination in our sector.
- responding to the unique experiences and disproportionate impacts of domestic, family and sexual violence for Aboriginal people, LGBTIQ+ people, people from migrant, refugee and multicultural backgrounds, people with disability and people living regionally/remotely, and supporting community-led solutions.
- recognising and addressing systemic barriers and inequalities experienced by diverse community members.



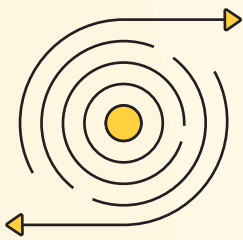


Strategic priorities 2027–2030



Strategic Priority 1

A strong and capable specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services sector for South Australia.



Strategic Priority 2

Specialist expertise informs system reform in preventing and responding to domestic, family and sexual violence.



Strategic Priority 3

Lived experience engagement is strengthened.



Strategic Priority 4

An effective and sustainable peak body for South Australia's specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services sector.

Strategic Priority 1

A strong and capable specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services sector for South Australia.

The specialist sector plays a unique and vital role in preventing violence and supporting victim-survivors to navigate a pathway to safety and recovery.

Embolden's key strategic priority is to support and develop the capacity, capability and sustainability of our sector in the current reform context, to ensure that we can meet the evolving needs of communities.

“The specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services sector supports victim-survivors to establish safety and to rebuild their lives, and helps people causing harm to address their use of violence. A thriving and sustainable specialist sector is vital for a safer future for South Australians.

Louise Kelly

*CEO, OARS Community Transitions
and Embolden Board Deputy Chair*



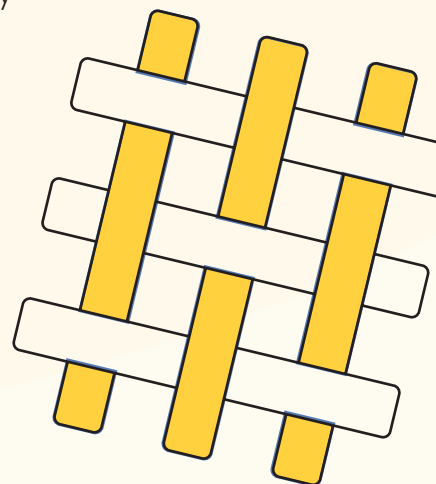
Key actions

- Improve the evidence-base for specialist service demand, supply, gaps and outcomes, to strengthen our advocacy and support of members statewide
- Make representations to government to inform the SA domestic, family and sexual violence workforce strategy and workforce-related initiatives. We'll start by undertaking a comparative jurisdictional scan of specialist DFSV workforce and sector development initiatives and investment
- Attract project funding to support and strengthen specialist domestic, family and sexual violence practice and capability, for example; communities of practice, practice frameworks, tertiary course content, professional development, new model role descriptions
- Partner and collaborate with other peaks and organisations to strengthen cultural safety across our sector and services' capacity to meet the needs of diverse community members

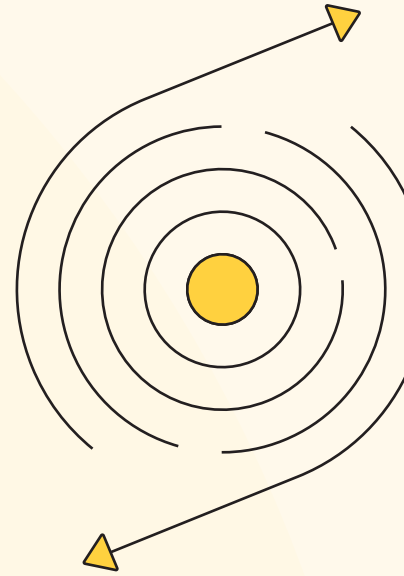
Outcomes

In the short to medium term, our actions under Strategic Priority 1 will result in:

- ✓ a stronger SA-specific evidence base for our policy and advocacy positions
- ✓ a DFSV workforce strategy with clear commitments and actions targeted to the specialist sector
- ✓ Embolden contributing to improved specialist service practice, capability and cultural safety



Specialist expertise informs system reform in preventing and responding to domestic, family and sexual violence.



We know the 'what' of system reform. The 'how' must centre the practice expertise of specialist services working every day with people experiencing and using violence.



“ The diversity of the specialist sector and people with lived experience is a strength. Collectively, we know what is needed to create services and responses that are genuinely inclusive, accessible and effective for all community members.

Chris Chalubek

CEO, Australian Refugee Association

Key actions

- As a representative body, develop an engagement approach that maximises members' opportunities to influence Royal Commission implementation
- Support and amplify the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and other specialist services working with diverse communities, including migrant, refugee and multicultural communities and LGBTIQA+ South Australians
- Drive and support opportunities to leverage specialist expertise to strengthen non-specialist practice with people experiencing and using violence
- Develop a clear position, informed by members, on the requirements for sector and broader system readiness for the commencement of coercive control criminal offences

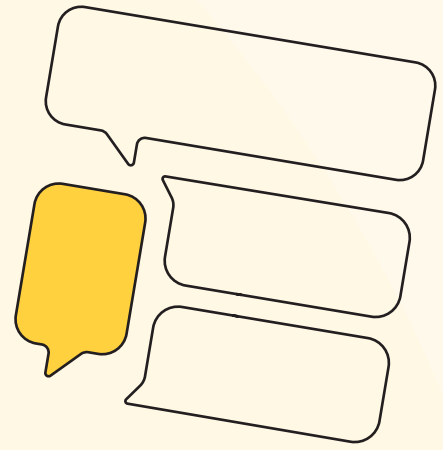
Outcomes

In the short to medium term, our actions under Strategic Priority 2 will result in:

- ✓ Specialist expertise effectively informing system and service reforms
- ✓ Embolden maintaining or increasing members' confidence that we understand their 'on the ground' experiences and accurately represent their perspectives
- ✓ Embolden being in a stronger position to influence the state's approach to coercive control offence implementation and review

Strategic Priority 3

Lived experience engagement is strengthened.



Embolden is privileged to support the Lived Experience Advisory Network (LEAN), a community of South Australians aged over 18 years with lived experience of domestic, family and/or sexual violence.

LEAN members contribute their diverse experiences and expertise to influence DFSV system and service reforms and improve policy and practice.

Embolden will partner with LEAN members and other lived experience leaders to strengthen the quality and sustainability of our lived experience engagement over time.

“As an Aboriginal woman with lived experience of domestic violence, I am motivated by the possibility of contributing to meaningful, lasting reform. The Lived Experience Advisory Network offers a genuine opportunity to shift how systems respond.

Sareena Saunders

*Practice Lead Family and Domestic Violence,
Relationships Australia (SA) and LEAN member*



Key actions

- Establish and convene the LEAN Advisory Group, a mechanism to guide the ongoing development of the LEAN, with a majority of members drawn from the network
- Progress formal evaluation of the LEAN, with guidance on evaluation approach from the LEAN Advisory Group
- Build capacity and opportunity for engagement with the LEAN, including through implementation of a fee-for-service model
- Increase representation within the LEAN of some groups of South Australians with lived experience who are currently under-represented

Outcomes

In the short to medium term, our actions under Strategic Priority 3 will result in:

- ✓ Improved lived experience engagement practices and identified opportunities for further development
- ✓ An increase in lived experience engagement through the LEAN
- ✓ Stronger representation within the LEAN for some groups of victim-survivors who face additional barriers to inclusion

Strategic Priority 4

An effective and sustainable peak body for South Australia's specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services sector.

Embolden supports and develops the specialist sector, ensures that our collective expertise shapes systemic solutions, and strengthens capacity across adjacent sectors and the broader community in meeting the needs of people impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence.

Over the next three years we will continue to evolve sustainably as a peak body and amplify our impact.



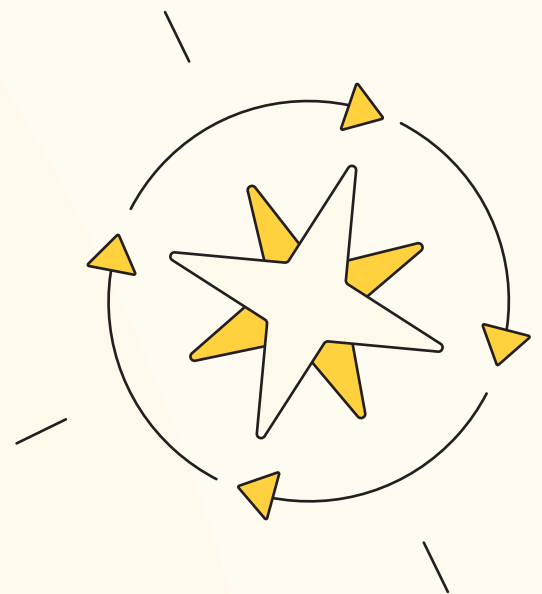
Key actions

- Improve Embolden's position to attract funding for discrete projects, including through applying for registration with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.
- Increase cross-sector partnerships and collaborative action, through joint research, projects and advocacy initiatives
- Strengthen Embolden's influence as a 'thought leader' through new and refined policy positions, developed with our members, and a refreshed media and communications strategy
- Develop a framework to evaluate Embolden's impact as a peak body over the longer term and identify areas for future development

Outcomes

In the short to medium term, our actions under Strategic Priority 4 will result in:

- ✓ Embolden undertaking more projects for the benefit of the specialist sector
- ✓ An increase in cross-sector collaboration and partnership
- ✓ Enhanced influence and impact through our media and communications



“ The expertise of specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services informed many of the Royal Commission's recommendations. Embolden's role as a strong collective voice for the specialist sector will be critical to successful implementation.

Natasha Stott Despoja AC

Former Royal Commissioner and Embolden Patron

Embolden members

Act for Kids

Anglicare SA

Australian Refugee Association

Cedar Health Service, SA Health

Ceduna Regional Domestic Violence
and Aboriginal Family Violence Services,
Centacare Catholic Country Services

Coober Pedy Regional Domestic
Violence and Aboriginal Family
Violence Service, Uniting Country SA

Family Violence Legal Service
Aboriginal Corporation

54 Reasons

First Nations Healing

Fleurieu and KI Domestic Violence
Service, Junction SA

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

GRIT, Uniting Communities

Kornar Winmil Yunti
Aboriginal Cooperation

Lutheran Care

Mt Gambier and Limestone Coast
Domestic Violence Service, Centacare
Catholic Community Services

Murray Mallee and Adelaide Hills
Domestic Violence Service, Centacare
Catholic Community Services

No to Violence

NPY Women's Council Domestic
and Family Violence Service

OARS Community Transitions

Port Augusta Regional Domestic
Violence and Aboriginal Family
Violence Service, Uniting Country SA

Relationships Australia (SA)

Riverland Domestic Violence Service,
Centacare Catholic Community Services

Sanctuary House, The Salvation Army

SHINE SA

The Yellow Gate

Thorne Harbour Health

Whyalla Regional Domestic Violence
Service, Centacare Catholic
Community Services

Women's Legal Service SA

Women's Safety Services SA

Yarredi Services

Yarrow Place, SA Health

Yorke and Mid North Domestic Violence
Service, Uniting Country SA

Zahra Foundation Australia

@September 2026.

Visit ***embolden.org.au/***
sector-members for updates.

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