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NT Sexual Violence Surge Sparks Alarm Among Victims, Services

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The Northern Territory's escalating sexual violence crisis, with the highest rates in Australia, has victims like Schyler Kennedy and frontline services demanding urgent action to address the scourge.

The Northern Territory (NT) faces a dire sexual violence crisis, with Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data identifying it as having the nation's highest victim rates despite its small population, as reported by ABC News on August 4, 2025. Schyler Kennedy, a 21-year-old survivor of childhood sexual abuse, shared her harrowing experience with ABC News, describing how abuse from age seven left her grappling with guilt and confusion. Now a youth project officer at the Darwin Centre Against Sexual Violence, Kennedy credits the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) for her recovery, emphasizing its

critical role in supporting survivors through counseling and forensic services. She called for stronger community action to prevent re-victimization, noting that early trauma distorted her understanding of right and wrong.

Frontline services are overwhelmed, with SARC's senior counselor Nicole Davis, quoted by ABC News on August 4, 2025, highlighting a sharp rise in children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviors. A 2023 ABS survey revealed 19,200 women under 15 in the NT reported sexual violence, underscoring the crisis's scale. The Northern Territory Government's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework (SVPRF) 2020-2028, outlined on the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities website, aims to address this through community engagement and accountability. Yet, posts on X, like @NTConcerned on August 3, 2025, criticize the Australian Labor Government for underfunding services, leaving SARC stretched despite handling daily referrals from police and self-referrals.

The framework's Priority Actions 2020-2021 focus on prevention, justice, and healing, but Kennedy and others argue enforcement lags. The NT's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Advisory Forum (DFSV Advisory Forum), established in 2016, has pushed for systemic reforms, per the NT Government's 2024 biannual report. Shadow Minister for Territory Families Joshua Burgoyne, in a Sky News interview on August 3, 2025, called for tougher penalties and better police resourcing, arguing that the government's response fails victims. With services like SARC pivotal yet strained, the NT's crisis demands immediate, robust action to protect vulnerable communities and ensure justice.