



Friday 21st October 2022

ENDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN ONE GENERATION REQUIRES A FOCUS ON THE NEXT GENERATION

This week the Australian Federal, state and territory governments released the National Plan to end Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032. This 10-year national strategy is framed by the ambitious goal of ending gender based violence in one generation. To do so, the Plan organises the governments commitments across four domains – prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing.

The National Plan acknowledges children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right. Delivering upon this acknowledgement will be critical to achieving the goal of the overarching Plan. Quite simply, ending gender based violence in one generation, necessitates a transformational focus on delivering improved outcomes for the next generation. If we are serious about preventing violence against women, we need to stop violence experienced by children.

The Plan includes clear recognition that children can experience a range of different forms of gender based violence, including domestic and family violence, sexual harassment, technology facilitated abuse, and child sexual abuse. The Plan states:

“A child’s worldview is shaped by the violence they see, hear and experience each day. These experiences affect their perception and understanding of the world, which can have long-term and ongoing impacts.” (p.44)

Children and young people who experience violence are also at heightened risk of using violence. Recent ANROWS research found that 1 in 2 young people who experience domestic and family violence during childhood go on to use violence in the home during adolescence. Of those who report use of violence in the home during adolescence, almost 9 in 10 report childhood experiences of domestic violence and other forms of maltreatment. Other research has signalled that children who experience domestic and family violence are at heightened risk of experiencing intimate partner violence in adulthood. Children and young people with disability, First Nations children and young people, and young people with diverse gender and sexual identities are at higher risk of experiencing violence during childhood.

The commitment to view children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right must be clearly embedded into the first five-year Action Plan, to be delivered in early 2023. Importantly, the rights and needs of children and young people must be considered at each point of the plan – from prevention to early intervention and through to the response and recovery domains.

This requires:

- Consultation with experts, including practitioners, academics and most importantly young lived experience advocates, in the development of the first Action Plan,
- Dedicated actions focused on children and young people in each component of the Action Plan – in the prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing domains,
- The establishment of a children and young people expert advisory group to support the implementation and monitoring of the Plan's commitments to children and young people,
- Funding in each state and territory for dedicated accommodation for children and young people experiencing family violence, including for young people who are fleeing family violence without a parent,
- Mapping of the service support and recovery needs and workforce development required to ensure whole of system child centred responses to children and young people experiencing domestic and family violence, and
- Establishing a national data set on children and young people's deaths in the context of domestic and family violence, including with a view to evidencing the relationship between young people's experiences of domestic and family violence preceding youth suicide.

For too long system responses to domestic and family violence in Australia have seen children only as extensions of their primary carer, failing to recognise and adequately respond to the unique safety, support and recovery needs of the individual young people. As the *Now you have heard us, what will you do?* report led by the ACT Children and Young People Commissioner concluded the voices of children and young people are all too often missing from decisions that impact upon their lives. Actions stemming from the National Plan must not repeat this mistake.

The failure to identify children as victims in their own rights can result in the high risks that children face being missed, leading to serious injury and in some cases, homicide. Approximately one child a fortnight is killed by family violence in Australia. A 2019 investigation by the Victorian Commissioners for Children and Young People into children who died by suicide and were known by child protection, concluded that, 'their lives were marred by family violence, dysfunction and often chronic neglect' (p.3). To date, there is no national study which has examined histories of domestic, family and sexual violence in youth suicide cases.

To develop the first Action Plan governments must consult closely with children and young people experts, including practitioners, advocates and academics. Components of the Action Plan relating to children and young people will require significant resourcing to deliver upon the Plan's commitment of securing a safer future for all children and young people now and in the future.

Statement prepared by:

Silke Meyer, Griffith University

Kate Fitz-Gibbon, Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Monash University

Shorna Moore, Melbourne City Mission

Statement endorsed by:

Rosie Batty, Family Violence Prevention Advocate

Anne Hollonds, National Children's Commissioner

Liana Buchanan, Principle Commissioner for Children and Young People (Vic)

Zoe Robinson, Advocate for Children and Young People NSW

Natalie Lewis, Commissioner of the Queensland Family and Child Commission

Jodie Griffiths-Cook, Public Advocate for Children and Young People Commissioner, ACT Human Rights Commission

Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia

Morgan Cataldo, Social Innovator

Tash Anderson, Children and Young People Advocate

Elvis Martin, Young Survivor Advocate

Grace Tame Foundation

Lula Dembele, Survivor Advocate, Accountability Matters Project

Joe Tucci, Australian Childhood Foundation

Deb Tsorbaris, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

Dominique Coates, The National Center for Action of Child Sexual Abuse

Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation

Matt Gardiner, 54 reasons, part of the Save the Children group

Bianca Johnston, YSAS

Tania Farha, Safe+Equal

Louise Simms, Safe+Equal

Cathy Humphreys, University of Melbourne

Daryl Higgins, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University

Liana Papoutsis, Family Violence Prevention Academic and Advocate

Elena Campbell, Associate Director - Research, Advocacy and Policy, Centre for Innovative Justice

Rebecca Stewart, Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Monash University

Jasmine McGowan, Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Monash University

Steven Roberts, Faculty of Education, Monash University

Jacqui Watt, No to Violence

Renata Field, DVNSW

Amy Conley Wright, Research Centre for Children and Families, The University of Sydney

Heather Lovatt, Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research, CQUniversity

Karen Field, Drummond Street Services

Helen Bolton, Sexual Assault and Family Violence (SAFV) Centre

Lindsay Wegener, Executive Director, PeakCare Queensland Inc.

Michael Perusco, Berry Street

Suggested citation:

Meyer, S., Fitz-Gibbon, K. and Moore, S. (2022) Ending gender based violence in one generation requires a focus on the next generation. Public Statement, 21 October.