
October 2023



Roundtable into

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence & Young People

Summary Report

Background

There is now growing recognition and evidence that many of the systems and structures in place to support people experiencing violence are not designed for or with young people. The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 (the National Plan) calls out the need to recognise children in their own right and Action 8 under the First Action Plan is to “Develop and implement age appropriate, culturally safe programs across all four domains, informed by children and young people, that support recovery and healing from trauma, and intervene early to address violence supportive behaviours.”

In light of this, on 20 October 2023 the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (the Commission) and the Global Institute for Women Leadership (GIWL) Youth Committee co-convened a roundtable with approximately 20 young leaders on their priorities in relation to domestic, family and sexual violence and young people. A small number of representatives from the Department of Social Services, Attorney General’s Department and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet were invited as observers.

This summary report is an overview of the conversation at the roundtable.

Key Themes

Key insights from roundtable that the Commission will examine further in its advice to Government include:

- Building the capacity of young advocates with platforms and resources to amplify their voices.
- Co-producing new approaches and solutions with young people.
- Deeper engagement with young people from different marginalised communities and cohorts to understand their experiences.

Participants were asked to share their perspectives on **how governments should engage with young people** to ensure that they are informing the development of age appropriate, culturally safe programs across all four domains of the National Plan. Key themes that emerged from this discussion include:

- Fundamentally, governments must recognise the agency of children and young people; as one attendee notes, *“Treat children like people.”*
- It was noted that some young people already have a distrust of government that will need to be overcome in order for agencies to effectively engage with these communities. Critical to this is clear links between consultation and action by governments.
- It is the responsibility of government to facilitate engagement with and by young people by removing barriers. Further, governments should create documents that are accessible to young people and make it clear that what they will mean for young people.
- This is particularly the case for marginalised communities; as one participant stated, *“The people who will nominate to put their hands up will be the most articulate.”* Related to this,

governments must recognise the intersectionality of people and their experiences; young people can exist across multiple identities, communities, and experiences.

- Survivors of violence must be centred.
- Governments should create multiple avenues and mechanisms for engagement for young people. Often there is a focus on written submissions, and which is not always within the means of young people.
- Engagement needs to be an ongoing process, not just something that occurs at one stage of policy/program development.

“Treat children like people”

Funding and grants for organisations being led by young people emerged as a theme during the discussion. Participants noted:

- Government funding decisions indicate a lack of trust when it comes to funding and grants for young people, which is a barrier to these young people being engaged in the work of government.
- Funding and investment are critical for advancing work being led by young people but the application process can be incredibly overwhelming: *“There is bureaucracy and red tape that needs to be simplified.”*
- Funding and reporting structures do not always align with the implementation of programs and activities.

Participants discussed the **engagement of the broader community**, stating:

- Young boys and men must be part of the conversation on ending gender based violence.
- There is more work to do on the public conversation around family violence and sexual violence. Participants raised reporting by media as a critical issue, stating that reports on domestic violence are framed in a way that blames the victim and does not hold perpetrators accountable.
- The public conversation around consent needs to continue because understanding and expectations are informed by what is seen in mainstream media, entertainment, and pornography.
- In order to encourage reporting by young people, there needs to be broader youth services that can encourage safe disclosures.

Attendees also called out the needs of priority populations:

- Attendees recognised the success of place-based interventions.
- Participants called on governments to think not only about Australian citizens but also people on temporary visas and the specific risks and challenges they have in relation of reporting, seeking support, and healing from violence.

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- The work of Sisters Inside was explicitly raised as a positive example of working with a marginalised group, that being women in prison.

Participants asked the Commission to continue to engage with young people, particularly those from marginalised communities:

“We need to have these roundtables with every community to have focused conversations about how we all experience family and sexual violence. We want a First Nations forum, we want a LGBTQIA+ forum, we want a disability forum; we want a forum with each and every community in Australia.”

What's next?

These roundtables are part of the Commission's commitment to a genuine ongoing conversation with the community in relation to domestic, family, and sexual violence. It is the intention that these be ongoing conversations that mature over the coming years into shared collaborative work and projects to accelerate change.

This particular roundtable was part of an ongoing program of engagement ahead of the Commission's inaugural yearly report to parliament in August 2024.

The Commission and GIWL are grateful for the expertise and contribution of all of the participants who took part in the roundtable.