

HOME BASE

Walking alongside young Tasmanians

31 July 2026

Director, Second Action Plan Taskforce

Department of Social Services

Submitted via engage.dss.gov.au and by email: Secondactionplan@dss.gov.au

Re: Formal submission - Consultation on the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

Dear Director,

Home Base Tasmania (Home Base) welcomes the opportunity to make a formal submission to the consultation on the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 (the National Plan). We commend the Australian Government and state and territory governments for undertaking this broad, evidence-informed consultation and for the commitment to a coordinated, five-year plan of action.

Home Base is a Tasmanian, for-purpose organisation with more than 50 years of history (formerly Colony 47), dedicated to ensuring every young Tasmanian has safety, belonging and a future they can believe in. We walk alongside young people aged 5-25 across prevention, early intervention, crisis response and long-term support, working in and out of the home on the things that matter most to young people, including relationships, mental health, education and housing. In 2024-25 alone, Home Base provided 3,422 nights of safe accommodation, engaged 889 young Tasmanians in education, training, housing, counselling and community-building, and delivered violence-prevention programming to young people across Tasmania.

This submission draws on Home Base's direct service delivery experience, our 2025-2028 Strategy, our Theory of Change, our 2024-25 Impact Report, our current research partnership with the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University, and the independent 2026 evaluation of our Education Support Pilot. It also draws on comparable, independently evaluated Tasmanian evidence from Karinya Youth Services' Karinya Youth Transitional Tenancy (KYTT) program in Launceston, which reinforces several of the points made below.

Executive Summary

Home Base's central message to this consultation is that ending gender-based violence in Australia cannot be achieved without a much stronger, better-resourced focus on prevention and early intervention with children and young people, recognised as both potential victim-survivors and, in a small number of cases, as people who use violence in their own right. Housing instability and homelessness are inseparable from this work: young people cannot engage with school, therapeutic support or violence-prevention programs without a safe, stable place to live, and homelessness is frequently both a cause and a consequence of family and gender-based violence.

Home Base recommends that the Second Action Plan:

- Significantly increase investment in early intervention programs that work directly with adolescent boys and young men before harmful attitudes and behaviours become entrenched, building on promising local models such as Home Base's Merge and Step Up programs.
- Fund the integration of homelessness and housing services with family, domestic and sexual violence responses for young people, recognising couch surfing and crisis accommodation as high-risk settings for exploitation and abuse.
- Resource youth-specific, developmentally appropriate response and recovery pathways that treat children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right, rather than only as secondary victims attached to a parent.
- Invest in and evaluate trauma-informed, relationally based transitional housing models for young people, recognising that stable housing paired with intensive, relationship-based case management is foundational to safety and recovery for young victim-survivors, as demonstrated by Home Base's own Education Support Pilot and by comparable Tasmanian evidence from Karinya Youth Services' KYTT program.
- Invest in practice-based evidence generation, including funding for community-sector research partnerships (such as Home Base's ARC Linkage collaboration with La Trobe University) that centre young people's own experiences of relationships, safety and violence.
- Strengthen the specialist youth workforce, including funded training, secondary consultation and supervision for the community organisations delivering this work in regional and smaller jurisdictions such as Tasmania.

Priority Area 2: Prevention and Early Intervention

Home Base's Theory of Change identifies the prevention of violence, mental ill-health and homelessness as the first line of our work with young Tasmanians, and our practice experience aligns closely with the evidence set out in the Consultation Paper, particularly the finding that long-term, consistent prevention programs starting early are most effective, and that most people who use violence never reach a formal behaviour-change program.

What would make the biggest difference in preventing and ultimately ending violence?

Home Base's experience is that early, sustained, relationship-based work with boys and young men is one of the most effective levers available. Our Merge program was developed over three years of community consultation, training and local trial-and-error, and works with small groups of 11-year-old boys in primary schools to explore rigid, intergenerational gender stereotypes and their links to the future use of violence, before those attitudes are entrenched. Since launching in 2025, Merge has reached capacity almost immediately, with school social workers describing an urgent, unmet need for this kind of group-work intervention. To date it has been delivered in 8 schools to 48 young men.

Home Base's award-winning Step Up program works with young people and their families to build safe, respectful relationships and break generational cycles of family violence, following early, largely unsuccessful attempts to address adolescent intimate partner violence through one-on-one intervention alone. We have also partnered with the Department on the Supporting Adolescent Boys Trial (SABT) across Hobart and Launceston and our Strong and Resilient Communities programme, Flow, extending this early-intervention model.

These programs demonstrate that a whole-of-community approach of working with boys and young men in schools, alongside families and alongside broader community awareness campaigns such as Youth Homelessness Matters Day, can shift attitudes before violence occurs. The Second Action Plan should fund the scaling of this kind of programming nationally, with dedicated investment in translating locally-developed, evaluated models into other jurisdictions rather than requiring every community organisation to build this evidence base from scratch.

How can existing prevention efforts be strengthened or built upon?

- Fund multi-year (not single-year) prevention contracts, recognising that Merge took three years of consultation and trialling before it was ready to deliver, and that programs starting in primary school need to be sustained through adolescence to be effective. It was also only possible because of work with a local philanthropist who provided us with unrestricted funding to design and deliver this program.

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- Support cross-sector partnerships between the family violence, homelessness and education sectors, so that prevention and early intervention are not siloed by funding stream.
- Collaboration between services, which requires an organisation to convene partners, listen to local voices, translate community priorities into action, identify gaps, share evidence and keep everyone focused on the shared outcome: ending gendered violence. Without this function, collaboration relies on goodwill and is often short-lived. With it, communities develop the capability to solve problems together over the long term.

What emerging issues should the Second Action Plan address?

Home Base is a partner organisation on a newly funded Australian Research Council Linkage project, led by researchers at La Trobe University's ARCSHS in partnership with Dr Carmel Hobbs (University of Tasmania), examining how young people aged 14-19 experience safe, respectful and enjoyable sexual and romantic relationships. This project responds directly to gaps identified in the Consultation Paper: the tension between consent-focused movements and the growing influence of anti-feminist online figures on young men; the need for strengths-based research that looks beyond outcome measures such as STI rates or violence reports; and the need for Relationships and Sexuality Education that is genuinely informed by young people's own experiences. Home Base will support this research by helping recruit and interview 15 young Tasmanians, including young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and by contributing our frontline expertise to the project's co-design of youth-facing resources.

We encourage the Second Action Plan to recognise and resource this kind of applied, community-partnered research as a distinct prevention and early intervention mechanism, not only as an evaluation add-on.

PRIORITY AREA 3: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

Home Base strongly supports the Consultation Paper's recognition that children and young people are victim-survivors of violence in their own right, and that an adult-centric response system can leave young people without the tailored, developmentally appropriate support they need.

What would make the biggest difference to safety, recovery and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people?

- A 'no wrong door' approach, so that any young Tasmanian experiencing family, domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence, mental ill-health, or homelessness can access Home Base and be supported through personalised service navigation and case management, rather than being turned away or redirected between fragmented services.
- Recognition that housing instability compounds every other risk young people face. Home Base's data shows young people presenting alone to specialist homelessness services are

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more likely than any other client group to be couch surfing, a living situation that leaves them vulnerable to servitude, exploitation and abuse. Nationally, half of young people who sought a bed in a crisis refuge in 2024–25 were turned away because services are not sufficiently funded to accommodate them.

- Needs-based, trauma-informed programs across the full continuum from capacity-building and peer support through to crisis and transitional accommodation and long-term housing support.

How can children and young people be meaningfully involved in shaping the policies, programs and services that affect them?

Home Base's Education Support Pilot (ESP) is a clear example of what meaningful youth engagement can look like in practice. ESP is a targeted, multidisciplinary program that pairs unaccompanied children and young people aged 12–25 with lived experience of homelessness, living at our Mara House or Colville Place residences, with an Engagement Coach for up to two years. From the outset, many elements of the model were deliberately co-produced with participants, including their preferences for the intake process, how they are spoken and written about, and other core components of the design.

An independent 2026 evaluation of ESP, involving interviews with young people and parents and a facilitated staff workshop, found this co-produced, relational approach to be central to the program's impact. Young people consistently described their coach as different from other services they had encountered: attuned to their individual triggers and communication style, non-judgemental, and genuinely invested rather than, as one participant put it, *“just working for their job.”* Coaches were deliberately positioned as coaches rather than mentors or case managers, a distinction staff said was central to building young people's own agency rather than dependence, with support intentionally reduced as confidence grew. The evaluation also found coaches performed an important “translator” function, helping young people navigate multiple, often overwhelming services, and that generous, flexible time (particularly accompanying young people to early appointments) was itself a critical enabler of trust and long-term change.

Young people described concrete outcomes flowing from this relational, co-produced model, including re-engagement with education, improved mental health, and a shift in self-concept from seeing themselves as a “drop out” to feeling they belonged at school and had a future. Home Base's earlier brand consultation, in which we engaged more than 215 young Tasmanians through focus groups, surveys and conversations in schools and residential settings, and ultimately adopted the name “Home Base” after it was suggested by a young resident, reflects the same underlying commitment to genuine co-design rather than consultation alone.

We recommend the Second Action Plan require and resource genuine youth co-design (not consultation alone) in the development of any programs, resources or research intended for children and young people, and that funding for youth-facing initiatives explicitly include the cost of engaging young people as partners, including appropriate remuneration for their time and expertise,

consistent with our own practice of providing participants with a gift voucher in recognition of their contribution to program evaluation.

What approaches are most effective in supporting young people who use violence to take accountability and change behaviour?

Home Base's Merge and Step Up programs indicate that structured, group-based and relationship-based interventions, delivered early, in schools and communities, before behaviours escalate, are more effective than one-on-one crisis-driven intervention alone. We caution against frameworks that treat young people's use of violence purely through a criminal-justice lens; in our experience, many young people who use violence have also experienced violence in the home, and effective response requires both accountability and trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate support.

PRIORITY AREA 1: VICTIM-SURVIVORS

Home Base's frontline experience reinforces the Consultation Paper's finding that coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse and system fragmentation remain significant barriers for victim-survivors, and adds a further dimension specific to young people: the compounding relationship between violence and housing insecurity.

- Across Tasmania in 2024–25, 1,407 children and young people under 25 presented on their own to a specialist homelessness service, with domestic and family violence, housing crisis and relationship or family breakdown the most common reasons for seeking assistance.
- A quarter of young people presenting alone to specialist homelessness services in Tasmania identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, underscoring the need for culturally safe, First Nations-led responses within any youth-focused violence and homelessness strategy.
- Home Base's Step Up program, delivered with the support of partner St Lukes Health, works specifically to help young people and families build safe relationships and break generational cycles of violence, recognising that one-third of Australian teenagers aged 18–19 have experienced intimate partner violence in the past year.

Comparable, independently evaluated Tasmanian evidence reinforces this picture. A 2026 impact review of Karinya Youth Services' Karinya Youth Transitional Tenancy (KYTT) program, a transitional housing and intensive case-management program for young people aged 16–24 in Launceston, found that family, partner and social relationship breakdown was the second most common reason young people sought support (22% of participants), that domestic, family and sexual violence was a further significant presenting concern, and that non-family violence featured in 22% of all reasons for seeking assistance recorded across the cohort. The KYTT evaluation identified “felt safety”, a subjective, embodied sense of security rather than merely the absence of threat, as one of the most significant and transformative impacts of stable, relationally supported housing for young victim-survivors, enabling improved sleep, reduced hypervigilance and the

capacity to begin recovering from trauma. No young person was evicted from the KYTT program, and none exited into homelessness, over its first two years of operation.

We recommend the Second Action Plan explicitly fund the integration of crisis and transitional housing responses with family, domestic and sexual violence services for young people, recognising trauma-informed, relationally based transitional housing (of the kind delivered through Home Base's ESP and Karinya's KYTT program) as an evidence-based response for young victim-survivors, and support jurisdictions such as Tasmania, where specialist services operate at a smaller scale, to access national investment on an equitable basis.

PRIORITY AREA 5: SYSTEM INTEGRATION AND WORKFORCE

Home Base's Theory of Change identifies building a specialist, youth-focused workforce as an essential enabler of change. As a community-based organisation operating in a smaller jurisdiction, Home Base experiences workforce capability challenges that may be less visible in national data, including access to specialist training, secondary consultation and clinical supervision, and the practical difficulty of sustaining multi-year prevention programs (such as Merge and Step Up) on typically short-term funding cycles.

Both the independent ESP evaluation and the comparable Karinya KYTT evaluation identify workforce capability, particularly reflective practice, clinical supervision and protection against vicarious trauma, as critical yet under-resourced. The KYTT program's practice framework draws together trauma-informed practice, Housing First for Youth principles and the ARACY "Nest" wellbeing domains that also underpin Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, illustrating how national and jurisdictional wellbeing frameworks can be operationalised at the frontline when workforce capability is adequately resourced.

- Fund national access to specialist training and secondary consultation for smaller, regional and Tasmanian-based organisations, so that workforce capability-building is not concentrated only in larger jurisdictions.
- Support long-term (multi-year) funding models for community-sector prevention and early intervention programs, recognising the multi-year development and evaluation cycle required to build and sustain effective, locally-tailored programs.
- Strengthen data, monitoring and evaluation partnerships between community organisations and universities, building on models such as Home Base's long-standing collaboration with Dr Carmel Hobbs (University of Tasmania) on adolescent intimate partner violence, our ARC Linkage partnership with La Trobe University, and the University of Tasmania's Trauma Informed Practice Research Lab, which has independently evaluated both Home Base's ESP and Karinya's KYTT program as a cost-effective mechanism for generating practice-based evidence in a smaller jurisdiction.

CONCLUSION

Home Base thanks the Department for the opportunity to contribute to the Second Action Plan. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission further, and to contribute our practice experience, our Theory of Change, and our emerging research evidence to the ongoing development of the Plan.

Yours sincerely,
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