

July 2026

MYAN Australia Submission to the Consultation on the Second National Action Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

Executive Summary

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.

The Second Action Plan is an opportunity to move from fragmented programs to a coordinated, youth-centred and culturally responsive system. For children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence are shaped by migration, settlement, racism, language, education, housing, mental health, family relationships, financial insecurity and community belonging. These intersecting factors affect both experiences of violence and pathways to safety, support and recovery.

MYAN's central message is that children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds must be recognised across the Second Action Plan as victim-survivors, rights-holders, leaders, co-designers and agents of change.

MYAN's recommendations are intended to strengthen the National Plan's full reform architecture across prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing.

MYAN recommends a national wraparound service approach built around three principles:

- **No wrong door:** trusted services respond safely.
- **No wrong person:** trusted people can help.
- **No lost referral:** trusted services coordinate support.

In summary, the Second Action Plan should prioritise:

1. Embedding children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds across every priority area of the Second Action Plan.
2. Establishing a nationally consistent wraparound service framework for children and young people experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence.
3. Investing in specialist multicultural youth work and culturally responsive (intelligent) workforce capability.
4. Strengthening community-led, youth-powered and peer-led primary prevention initiatives.

5. Establishing national standards for genuine co-design with children and young people.
6. Improving data collection and evidence relating to children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
7. Strengthening cross-government governance across social services, health, education, settlement and migration systems.
8. Measuring success through outcomes that reflect young people's experiences of safety, service access, participation and recovery.
9. Ensuring access to safety and recovery supports is determined by need, not migration status, including expanded work rights and service eligibility for women and young people on temporary visas escaping violence.
10. Recognising skilled migrants as an often-overlooked cohort and building early connection pathways between skilled migration processes and trusted multicultural organisations.
11. Developing a dedicated Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Action Plan as an equal addendum to the National Plan, similar to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan, to strengthen visibility, data collection and accountability for CALD communities.
12. Recognising and responding to intersecting forms of abuse, including coercive control, systems abuse, sponsorship-related adult child abuse, guardianship abuse, tech-facilitated abuse and manipulation of family law and migration systems.

The next stage of national reform should focus on implementation that connects systems around children and young people's lives, rather than around program boundaries. For children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, this means ensuring that wherever they first seek help, they encounter a culturally safe, youth-centred and coordinated response that supports safety, recovery and long-term wellbeing.

About MYAN Australia

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) is the national peak body championing the rights and interests of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. MYAN works with young people, governments, researchers, community organisations and service providers to ensure their experiences are recognised in national policy, program design and practice.

MYAN's work spans policy development, research, program modelling for meaningful youth participation, sector development and national advocacy across settlement, education, employment, health, mental health, social cohesion, anti-racism, gender equity and the prevention of family, domestic and sexual violence. Through its National Policy Alliance, Youth Advocates Network and state and territory partners, MYAN brings together lived experience, practice evidence and policy expertise to identify emerging issues and support nationally consistent reform.

Practice evidence from MYAN's national network is a core input to this submission. MYAN's state and territory partners also deliver a wide range of prevention, early intervention, response and recovery programs, including school-based peer education, family-based prevention, healthy masculinities programs, culturally safe crisis and recovery support, and youth-led research and digital storytelling, several of which are referenced throughout this submission and listed in the References section.

Acknowledgment

MYAN acknowledges and pays respects to the traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people. We also acknowledge the traditional Custodians of the various lands on which MYAN partners operate across the country, and pay our respects to all Elders past, and present. We work towards reconciliation with, and self-determination for the First Peoples of this country.

Development of this submission

This submission has been informed by MYAN's engagement in two national consultation processes during the development of the Second Action Plan the consultation led by the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner and the broader consultation led by the Department of Social Services and by a dedicated session that MYAN convened with the Department of Social Services on 23 July 2026. That session brought together state and territory multicultural youth partners to focus specifically on the experiences of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

The insights from these consultations, together with practice evidence from MYAN's national network, are reflected throughout this submission.

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1. Why the Second Action Plan Matters for Children and Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds

As Australia's population becomes increasingly diverse, children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are not a niche population but a significant part of Australia's present and future. Nearly half of Australia's young people have a migrant or refugee background, bringing diverse languages, cultures, migration experiences and community connections. These strengths enrich Australian society, while also shaping experiences of safety, violence, help-seeking and recovery in ways that mainstream policy and service design do not always capture.

Children and young people are not a homogenous group. Children, adolescents and young adults are at very different developmental stages and encounter risk, disclosure, decision-making and recovery in fundamentally different ways. Prevention, early intervention, response and recovery approaches therefore need to be tailored for children, early adolescents, adolescents and young adults rather than relying on a single model for all young people. National reform must move beyond blanket use of 'young people' to design responses that reflect these developmental distinctions.

Children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds may experience barriers including racism and discrimination, language barriers, settlement pressures, visa insecurity, differing understandings of government systems, concerns about child protection involvement, financial dependence, and limited access to culturally safe services. These factors influence whether young people recognise violence, feel safe to disclose abuse, trust services and remain engaged with support.

An important cohort that is often overlooked is skilled migrants during early arrival to Australia. Unlike humanitarian entrants, skilled migrants generally do not engage with settlement or humanitarian services when they arrive in Australia, yet they may still experience family, domestic and sexual violence, social isolation, financial pressure and limited knowledge of available supports. Without a systematic mechanism to connect them with trusted community-based multicultural organisations early in their settlement journey, skilled migrants and their children and young people can fall through service gaps.

MYAN's national network shows that effective responses recognise intersecting experiences while building on the strengths of young people, families and communities. Across Australia, MYAN partners have developed culturally responsive prevention, youth participation, family violence prevention, peer education, settlement support and integrated service models. These approaches demonstrate that prevention is strongest when designed with young people and embedded in trusted community settings.

The Second Action Plan can strengthen national implementation by connecting evidence from youth policy, settlement, multicultural service delivery and family violence reform. This systems perspective highlights the need for coordinated prevention, early intervention, response and recovery pathways that reflect how young people actually encounter services.

The Second Action Plan also provides an opportunity to recognise children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds not only as people who may experience violence, but as rights-holders, leaders, co-designers and partners in creating safer communities.

2. Four Cross-Cutting Reform Priorities

2.1 Reform Priority 1: Recognise children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds as victim-survivors, rights-holders and agents of change

The Second Action Plan rightly identifies children and young people as a priority in their own right. MYAN strongly supports this direction and recommends that this principle become a cross-cutting commitment across the entire Action Plan rather than remaining confined to a single priority area.

Children and young people continue to be understood primarily through adult systems as dependants of parents, witnesses to violence, or future adults. This framing obscures their own experiences of harm, limits opportunities for early intervention and recovery, and reduces opportunities for meaningful participation in policy and service design.

For children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, these challenges can be intensified by migration experiences, racism, language barriers, settlement pressures, family expectations, visa insecurity and differing levels of trust in government institutions. These conditions shape how violence is recognised, whether young people disclose abuse, and how effectively services respond.

Recognising children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds as rights-holders means acknowledging their own experiences of violence, support needs and views of safety. It also means recognising their strengths as leaders, peer educators, advocates and contributors to safer families and communities.

The Second Action Plan should therefore require every priority area including prevention, early intervention, response, recovery, workforce development, evidence and evaluation to consider the experiences and participation of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Recognition must also be understood alongside culture as a strength, not a deficit. Effective responses honour young people's cultural foundations while focusing on behaviour, so that the ecosystem around a child can change without the child being taught to feel shame about their identity or heritage. This framing enables safeguarding to sit alongside cultural belonging rather than requiring young people to choose between them.

2.2 Reform Priority 2: Build a nationally coordinated wraparound service system

Family, domestic and sexual violence responses remain difficult for many young people to navigate because services are organised around organisational responsibilities rather than around people's lives.

A young person from a refugee or migrant background experiencing violence may interact with schools, settlement providers, youth workers, GPs, mental health services, multicultural organisations, legal services, housing providers and specialist family violence services. Each may provide high-quality support, but too often these interactions depend on informal relationships rather than coordinated pathways.

The Second Action Plan should establish a national framework for wraparound service delivery built around three principles:

- **No wrong door** — every trusted service should be able to identify risk, respond appropriately and connect young people to further support.
- **No wrong person** — children and young people should be able to seek help from the people they already know and trust, including teachers, youth workers, settlement practitioners, health professionals, multicultural organisations and community leaders.
- **No lost referral** — responsibility for coordination should remain with services rather than being transferred to children and young people themselves.

This approach would strengthen coordination across family violence, health, education, settlement, housing, legal assistance, mental health and community sectors while recognising that young people's lives do not fit neatly within government portfolios. Rather than creating additional programs, the Second Action Plan should improve how existing systems work together around shared outcomes.

2.3 Reform Priority 3: Invest in specialist capability for children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds

Youth work is a specialised profession. Multicultural youth work requires additional expertise in migration, settlement, language, cultural identity, family dynamics, racism, trauma, safeguarding and community engagement.

This expertise is essential for preventing violence, supporting safe disclosure and improving long-term recovery for children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Mainstream services cannot be expected to hold all the cultural capability, community relationships and trust required to reach every young person effectively.

MYAN's National Youth Settlement Framework Australia's framework for youth-centred, culturally responsive and settlement-informed service design, provides a strong foundation for how workforce capability, service design and multicultural youth expertise can be embedded across systems, including family, domestic and sexual violence responses.

This specialist expertise cannot be assumed to exist within schools or other mainstream settings. Bicultural and bilingual facilitators, embedded within schools and coordinated with on-site school counsellors and student support officers, are essential for effective prevention and early intervention. The Second Action Plan should fund the development and placement of this specialist workforce rather than expecting mainstream services beside training and skilling the current workforce with cultural intelligence.

Across Australia, MYAN's state and territory partners demonstrate effective practice through culturally responsive prevention, peer education, settlement support, family violence initiatives and youth leadership projects. Specialist multicultural youth organisations are not simply referral agencies; they are trusted community infrastructure that strengthens the broader service system.

The Second Action Plan should recognise specialist multicultural youth organisations as essential partners within Australia's family, domestic and sexual violence system and provide sustained investment in workforce capability, interpreter access, cultural responsiveness and partnerships across mainstream and specialist services.

2.4 Reform Priority 4: Move from consultation to genuine co-design

The Second Action Plan presents an opportunity to strengthen how governments work with children and young people.

MYAN welcomes the increasing recognition of youth participation and lived experience in policy development. However, consultation alone is not sufficient. Too often, children and young people are invited to comment on decisions that have already been made rather than participating in defining problems, designing solutions and evaluating outcomes.

Genuine co-design means involving children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds throughout the policy cycle, from identifying priorities and developing service models to implementation, workforce design, evaluation and governance. It also requires recognising that participation is not one-size-fits-all. Children and young people of different ages, cultures, migration experiences and life circumstances require developmentally appropriate, culturally safe and trauma-informed participation approaches.

This is particularly important for children and young people growing up as the first digitally native generation. They navigate online and offline worlds differently and often bring more contemporary understandings of equity, gender, race, diversity and respect. Their insights are therefore essential to identifying practical solutions and best practice through genuine co-design.

University of Melbourne's and MYAN joint initiative, FAIR Project, which uses participatory research approaches including digital storytelling with children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, demonstrates the kind of co-design method the Second Action Plan should embed as standard rather than as a periodic engagement activity.

Embedding genuine co-design within the Second Action Plan will improve policy relevance, strengthen accountability and ensure reforms reflect the realities of children and young people's lives. For children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, meaningful participation also builds trust in institutions, improves access to services and strengthens long-term community leadership.

The Second Action Plan should therefore establish national expectations for child and youth participation, including culturally responsive co-design, ongoing lived-experience governance, remuneration for participation, and evaluation measures that assess whether children and young people have truly influenced policy and service reform rather than simply being consulted.

3. Responding to the Consultation Priorities

3.1 Priority 1 – Victim-survivors

MYAN strongly supports the consultation paper's emphasis on improving outcomes for victim-survivors. For children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, this requires recognising their distinct experiences of violence, help-seeking and recovery. They should not be understood only through adult victim-survivors' experiences or as witnesses to violence.

Children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds may experience additional barriers to disclosure and support, including concerns about visa status, fear of child protection intervention, language barriers, financial dependence, racism, social isolation and limited trust in statutory services.

These barriers can delay help-seeking and reduce access to appropriate support if services are not culturally responsive.

Disclosure rates in formal service data do not reflect actual community need. Many children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds first seek help through peers, trusted community leaders, faith leaders or multicultural organisations long before they engage with police or specialist family violence services. This informal and community-based early intervention is largely absent from current national datasets, despite being critical to how violence is identified and responded to in multicultural communities.

Support pathways for child sexual abuse should be explicit that seeking help will not trigger immigration enforcement action against a child or their family. Language access must also rely on professional, trauma-informed interpreters, not family members, particularly where the alleged perpetrator may be within the family or community.

Young people frequently disclose concerns first to trusted adults outside specialist family violence services, including teachers, youth workers, settlement practitioners, multicultural organisations, community leaders and health professionals. These trusted relationships should be recognised as critical components of Australia's victim-survivor response rather than peripheral referral pathways.

MYAN network in practice — Lived experience

'I Need to Know You're Safe' Framework: Developed by Centre for Multicultural Youth (Victoria's MYAN partner) and Anglicare Victoria, this youth-informed practice framework was built through consultations with 35 young people aged 14–27 from first and second-generation migrant and refugee backgrounds across 21 cultural backgrounds. It identifies practice domains, including creating and establishing safety, building mutual understanding, and exploring family and community, that the family violence service system can use to better engage multicultural young people. The framework is being rolled out through CMY's Working Together project, in which multicultural young leaders deliver workshops directly to sector professionals.

Emerging evidence also shows that children and young people are increasingly turning to large language models and other AI tools for help before disclosing to a practitioner, often because service pathways feel gated by identity documents, mandatory reporting requirements or immigration concerns. Reducing these gates, particularly for young people on temporary or insecure visas, asylum seekers and international students, is essential if formal services are to remain a genuine option for early help-seeking.

The Second Action Plan should also address the way that people using violence can weaponise the system itself to further harm victim-survivors. This includes the misidentification of victim-survivors as perpetrators, the manipulation of family law, migration and child protection processes, and the use of visa dependence and sponsorship arrangements as coercive controls. Closing these gaps requires stronger specialist family violence, legal and multicultural liaison capability, particularly at the points where women and young people on temporary visas first engage with police, courts or immigration systems.

Recognition should also extend to teenagers and young adults experiencing violence, coercive control or abuse in their own intimate relationships. Current service pathways sit between child and family services, youth services and adult specialist family violence responses, leaving a gap in specialised support for young people as victim-survivors in their own right.

Recovery should also be understood beyond crisis intervention. For children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, recovery includes rebuilding safety, education, social connections, identity, cultural belonging and confidence to participate in family and community life.

Culturally safe recovery for children and young people means access to long-term, developmentally appropriate therapeutic support; culturally safe mental health care; reconnection with education, peers and community; and support to rebuild identity, belonging and trust. Where safe and led by the young person's needs and wishes, recovery should also include family and community healing approaches that address the impacts of violence without increasing risk or pressure on the child or young person.

MYAN recommends:

- recognising children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds as victim-survivors in their own right across all areas of the Second Action Plan;
- strengthening culturally safe disclosure pathways through schools, settlement services, multicultural organisations and youth services;
- ensuring specialist family violence responses are connected to broader recovery supports, including education, mental health, housing and settlement services; and
- embedding culturally responsive and intelligent, developmentally appropriate practice within all victim-survivor services.
- ensuring child sexual abuse responses uphold the best interests, rights, safety and voice of the child, including clear firewalls from immigration enforcement.
- developing translated, community-validated screening and prevalence tools so that coercive control, financial abuse and other non-physical forms of violence can be identified across languages and cultural contexts;
- adopting a principle that access to safety and recovery supports is determined by need, not migration status, including expanded work rights and service eligibility for women and young people on temporary visas escaping violence;
- ensuring that access to services does not depend on identity documents, so that young people on temporary or insecure visas, asylum seekers and international students can obtain support;
- developing specialised, age-appropriate service pathways for teenagers and young adults experiencing violence in their own intimate relationships, recognising them as victim-survivors in their own right;

- addressing systems abuse and misidentification of victim-survivors as perpetrators, and closing gaps in family law, migration and child protection systems that people using violence can exploit.

3.2 Priority 2 – Prevention and Early Intervention

MYAN supports a stronger national focus on prevention that addresses the drivers of violence while recognising the diversity of Australian communities.

For children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, prevention is most effective in the places where they already live, learn and connect. Schools, youth organisations, sporting clubs, settlement services, multicultural organisations and online environments all provide opportunities to build respectful relationships, strengthen gender equality and challenge harmful attitudes before violence occurs.

MYAN's partner organisations show that culturally responsive prevention can engage young people through peer education, youth leadership and community partnerships. These initiatives work because they build trust, recognise cultural strengths and position young people as active participants rather than passive recipients of information.

Prevention must be developmentally staged. establishing a national child protection standard so 16 and 17-year-olds from refugee and migrant backgrounds do not fall between child and adult service systems, including where risks such as forced marriage emerge; Content that treats 'young people' as a single group misses these differences and can generate parent and community pushback when material is perceived as age inappropriate. Evidence-informed models such as NAPCAN's Love Bites and MYAN NSW's Elevate demonstrate that light-touch, age-appropriate, strengths-based programs can be delivered effectively at multiple developmental stages when coordinated with school counsellors, student support officers and trusted community organisations. Prevention should also equip students to understand mandatory reporting and its implications, so that fear of unintended consequences does not deter disclosure.

Prevention design should also start from the reality that most young people disclose first to peers, not to systems of power. In a recent MYAN National Policy Alliance consultation with sector and young people showed the impact of family and domestic violence is among top issues for young people. Peer education, youth leadership and safe spaces led by young people themselves are therefore not adjunct activities but central to how prevention actually operates in refugee and migrant communities.

MYAN network in practice — prevention and early intervention

YACWA (MYAN WA) — Roads2Respect: school-based and peer-led family and intimate partner violence peer education with culturally and linguistically diverse young people.

Melaleuca Australia and MYAN NT — Family Harmony Program: family-based, community-led and language-accessible prevention and early intervention across the Northern Territory.

MYAN Australia — Young Champions of Change proposal: asks for a youth-led prevention initiative with young men from refugee and migrant backgrounds, centred on healthy masculinities, respectful relationships and

cultural identity.

MYAN NSW — Elevate (Young Women’s Engagement Program) – is an evidence-informed, developmentally staged prevention models delivered with community and peer facilitators about relationships, love, and violence that affect them and equip them on how to respond.

Prevention should recognise the intergenerational and gendered dimensions of what is often described as culture. Much of what presents as cultural practice is more accurately understood as internalised patriarchy, and young people are already actively deconstructing these dynamics through their own digital and peer networks. Prevention programs that build on this critical capacity, rather than treating culture as a monolith, are more effective and more trusted.

Prevention should include work with boys and young men from refugee and migrant backgrounds that promotes healthy masculinities, respectful relationships, emotional wellbeing and positive peer cultures. This work should avoid deficit-based assumptions and instead build on young people's strengths and aspirations as leaders in their communities.

Prevention should also address child sexual abuse, online child sexual exploitation and harmful online content through culturally grounded consent, respectful relationships, digital safety and healthy masculinities education that is co-designed with young people, families and communities.

Early intervention requires strengthening trusted first points of contact. Schools, youth workers, settlement practitioners, primary health care providers and multicultural organisations should all be equipped to identify concerns early, respond safely and provide supported referrals before violence escalates.

MYAN recommends:

- sustained, long-term investment in culturally responsive, community-led and youth-led prevention initiatives and partnerships;
- expand respectful relationships education through multicultural and settlement settings, as well as schools;
- invest in healthy masculinities and violence prevention initiatives for boys and young men from refugee and migrant backgrounds;
- strengthen workforce capability so trusted first-contact services can identify risk and provide culturally safe early intervention;
- support family-based prevention and early intervention that engages all generations to create lasting change;
- embed digital safety, technology-facilitated abuse, online child sexual abuse, online child sexual exploitation and AI-facilitated harms into multilingual, culturally responsive prevention and online safety education co-designed with children and young people;
- fund bicultural and bilingual prevention facilitators in schools to work alongside counsellors and student support staff;
- resource dedicated safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, delivered by peer and community-of-origin facilitators;

- support evidence-informed, developmentally appropriate prevention programs, such as NAPCAN's *Love Bites* and MYAN NSW's *Elevate*, delivered through community and peer facilitators; and
- invest in peer-led and youth-led disclosure pathways, recognising that young people often disclose to peers before formal services.

3.3 Priority 3 – Children and Young People in Their Own Right

MYAN strongly welcomes the inclusion of children and young people as a dedicated priority area. This represents one of the most significant opportunities within the Second Action Plan.

However, recognising children and young people as a priority requires more than establishing a separate chapter. It requires redesigning systems so that children's rights, voices and developmental needs shape prevention, early intervention, response, recovery, workforce development, governance and evaluation.

This is especially important in relation to child sexual abuse, where the best interests, safety, voice and rights of the child must be the primary consideration in prevention, disclosure, response, healing and system reform.

Child-safe cultures must go beyond translated information and include multilingual, community co-designed awareness raising through trusted youth, settlement, school, faith and community channels. This should build shared understanding of consent, bodily autonomy, healthy relationships and how and where to seek help, without stigmatising refugee and migrant communities.

Child participation and youth participation should be recognised as related but distinct. Children, adolescents and young adults are at different developmental stages and require tailored approaches to safeguarding, communication, consent, decision-making and influence. Participation should therefore be designed in ways that are age-appropriate, culturally safe, trauma-informed and meaningful, rather than assuming that one model of engagement will work for all children and young people. Participation should also be intersectional and reflect cultural identity, language, disability, gender, sexuality, migration experiences and family context, including the distinct experiences of young people with disability, LGBTQIA+ young people, young women and girls, young people on temporary visas, newly arrived young people, young people in regional and rural areas, and young people with child protection or youth justice involvement.

MYAN network in practice — children and young people in their own right

University of Melbourne and MYAN Australia — FAIR Project: participatory research and youth voice methods, including digital storytelling with children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, that can be scaled to inform national policy and service design.

Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) — Working Together project: an example of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds leading co-design directly with sector professionals, with multicultural young leaders trained and supported to design and deliver workshops that shape practitioner practice.

Consultation and service design should also recognise that in many refugee and migrant communities, children are raised within extended family and community networks, and both protection and harm

can come from those broader networks. Some forms of violence, including forced marriage, are frequently driven by extended family or community pressure rather than by the immediate household. Community, extended family and faith leaders therefore need to be engaged as part of both prevention and safeguarding, and the person using violence in a young person's life may sit outside the nuclear family.

A recurring pattern for children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, particularly in regional areas, is prolonged time in youth-at-risk programs because of undiagnosed disability, complex trauma or mental health conditions that services do not have culturally appropriate assessment tools to identify. Investment in culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment tools, and in the workforce to use them, would enable earlier identification and prevent young people from being funnelled into inappropriate service pathways.

Children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds remain underrepresented in research, policy development and service design despite making up a substantial proportion of Australia's youth population. This contributes to systems that often respond to families without fully understanding children's own experiences of violence and recovery.

The Second Action Plan should establish national expectations for genuine co-design with children and young people. Consultation is important, but genuine participation means involving young people in defining problems, designing services, informing workforce capability, evaluating programs and shaping accountability.

Young people should also be recognised as contributors to prevention. Across Australia, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are already leading peer education, promoting respectful relationships, challenging harmful gender norms and strengthening community understanding of violence prevention.

MYAN recommends:

- embedding children and young people's perspectives across every priority area of the Second Action Plan;
- establishing national principles for culturally responsive child and youth participation;
- ensuring participation, service design, data collection and evaluation explicitly include young people with disability, LGBTQIA+ young people, young women and girls, young people on temporary visas, newly arrived young people, young people in regional and rural areas, and young people with child protection or youth justice involvement;
- investing in ongoing advisory and co-design mechanisms for children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds;
- strengthening research and data collection about the experiences of children from refugee and migrant backgrounds, including violence and recovery; and
- recognising young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds as leaders and partners in violence prevention.

- establishing a national minimum standard for child protection so that 16 and 17-year-olds from refugee and migrant backgrounds are not left in the gap between child and adult service systems, particularly given the age at which risks such as forced marriage often peak;
- extending the national coercive control framework to explicitly cover how coercive control affects children and young people, including in their own intimate relationships;
- investing in culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment tools for disability, complex trauma and mental health, and in workforce capability to use them; and
- engaging extended family, community and faith leaders as part of prevention and safeguarding, recognising that in some cases the person using violence may sit within extended family or community networks rather than the nuclear household.

3.4 Priority 4 – People Who Use Violence

MYAN supports early intervention approaches that reduce the use of violence while recognising the importance of culturally responsive engagement.

Young people who use violence require responses that recognise developmental stage, family context, trauma, migration experiences, racism, mental health and social influences alongside accountability for harmful behaviour.

Children and young people who use violence

The scale and urgency of this issue is clear from recent MYAN engagement with young people. A MYAN National Policy Alliance consultation with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in schools identified family and domestic violence as a significant issue affecting them. Any national response to children and young people who use violence must therefore also respond to this same population as victim-survivors and witnesses of violence, rather than treating the two groups as separate.

Many children and young people who use violence have themselves experienced or witnessed violence, racism or institutional harm. Framing them primarily through accountability without recognising this context risks entrenching harm rather than interrupting it. Responses should hold both accountability and healing and should treat the emergence of harmful behaviour in a very young child as an early intervention signal rather than as a reason to route them into adolescent violence programs.

Preventing future violence requires investment in evidence-informed approaches that engage young people before patterns of violence become entrenched. Schools, youth services, settlement organisations and community-based programs all have important roles in supporting healthy relationships, emotional regulation and positive models of masculinity.

Responses should avoid reinforcing stereotypes about multicultural communities while ensuring that services have the cultural intelligence necessary to work effectively with diverse young people and families.

Responses must also avoid the practice of using culture as an explanation for normalised behaviour in place of proper assessment. Where cultural framing substitutes for behavioural and safety assessment, both young people using violence and young people experiencing violence are poorly

served. Assessment should lead with behaviour and safety, with cultural understanding informing how responses are designed and delivered rather than determining whether harm is recognised.

Youth incarceration is not an effective response to young people using violence and disproportionately affects young men from racialised communities. Long-standing evidence from youth peak bodies indicates that incarceration accelerates offending trajectories, embeds recidivism, and is a significant reason young people do not disclose violence in the first place. Fear of a family member being incarcerated is often the line between whether a young person tells someone about violence at home or does not. Structural, therapeutic and community-based responses are needed instead of expanded punitive pathways.

Effective responses also draw on community-led and peer-led restorative and mentoring models, particularly for young people exiting youth justice. Programs such as village-based and community-elder mentoring show how safe circles, cultural connection and wraparound support around education, housing and re-engagement can address root causes such as trauma, institutional abuse and racism, rather than only responding to offending behaviour.

MYAN network in practice — children and young people who use violence

Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) - Multicultural Youth Justice Strategy and YRIPP:

CMY has proposed a Multicultural Youth Justice Strategy to address the over-representation of young multicultural Victorians, including young people from South Sudanese and Pasifika backgrounds, in the youth justice system.

CMY also delivers the Youth Referral and Independent Persons Program (YRIPP) a statewide 24-hour network of staff and volunteers that safeguards young people's rights in police custody and supports diversion away from the criminal justice system. Together these initiatives illustrate how community-led, prevention-focused responses can address underlying drivers of harmful behaviour rather than criminalising young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Melaleuca Australia and MYAN NT - Family Harmony Program: family-based, community-led and language-accessible approaches that engage the whole family unit rather than treating young people using violence in isolation.

The Second Action Plan should address systems abuse, including the weaponisation of legal, migration, family law and child protection systems against victim-survivors through misidentification, visa dependence, sponsorship arrangements and other forms of coercive control. Closing these system gaps is essential to holding people using violence accountable.

Men's behaviour change programs remain concentrated at the crisis end of the system. There is a significant gap in earlier, in-language and in-culture programs designed for men from refugee and migrant backgrounds that engage with the specific migration, settlement, racism and intergenerational trauma dimensions of their experience, alongside accountability for harmful behaviour.

Responses to harmful sexual behaviours displayed by children and young people should be developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed and culturally safe, while centring victim-survivor

safety. Accountability and care should sit together, with early support focused on preventing escalation rather than relying on purely punitive responses.

MYAN recommends:

- strengthening culturally responsive early intervention for young people using violence;
- investing in healthy relationship and healthy masculinity initiatives with young men from refugee and migrant backgrounds;
- improving partnerships between specialist behaviour-change programs, youth services and multicultural organisations; and
- supporting community-led approaches that combine accountability with prevention and long-term behaviour change.
- strengthening culturally safe responses to harmful sexual behaviours that avoid both under-identification of harm and racialised over-identification.
- investing in in-language, in-culture behaviour change and healthy relationships programs for men from refugee and migrant backgrounds that engage with migration, settlement, racism and intergenerational trauma alongside accountability;
- providing sustained funding for age-appropriate therapeutic interventions for children and young people, moving these off short-term philanthropic and pilot cycles and into recurring investment;
- resourcing community-led and peer-led restorative and mentoring approaches, particularly for young people exiting youth justice;
- addressing systems abuse by strengthening protections against misidentification of victim-survivors as perpetrators and closing gaps in family law, migration and child protection systems that people using violence can exploit; and
- shifting responses away from expanded youth incarceration towards structural, therapeutic and community-based interventions that address root causes.

3.5 Priority 5 – System Integration and Workforce

For MYAN, this is the priority area that will determine whether the Second Action Plan succeeds.

Australia already has many effective services. The challenge is that they frequently operate in parallel rather than as a coordinated system. Children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds often move between education, health, settlement, family violence, housing, legal and community services without clear coordination or shared responsibility.

This fragmentation is not neutral. Where systems act on families in disconnected or culturally unsafe ways, word of mouth within communities can then discourage future engagement, so that families avoid services precisely at the points when earlier connection would have helped. Coordination and cultural safety are therefore also community-trust issues, not only design issues.

The Second Action Plan should establish a nationally consistent wraparound approach based on three principles:

- **No wrong door** – every trusted service can recognise risk and respond safely.
- **No wrong person** – young people can seek help through trusted relationships.
- **No lost referral** – services share responsibility for coordinated support.

Achieving this will require stronger collaboration across governments, portfolios and sectors, including social services, education, health, settlement, housing and justice systems.

Workforce capability is equally important. Staff across mainstream and specialist services require greater confidence in culturally responsive and intelligent practice, trauma-informed care, youth participation, anti-racism and working effectively with interpreters and bicultural workers. Investment in specialist multicultural youth organisations should be recognised as investment in national service-system capability rather than stand-alone community programs.

Adolescent violence responses also remain largely standalone rather than integrated into broader family and youth service responses. Effective practice including integrated pilots operating in some jurisdictions, wraps support around the young person using violence, their siblings, and their family unit together, rather than treating the young person in isolation. This whole-of-family approach should be embedded in national frameworks rather than left dependent on individual pilots.

MYAN network in practice — system integration

Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania and Multicultural Youth Tasmania: settlement and multicultural youth services acting as trusted entry points into the broader family, domestic and sexual violence system, particularly for newly arrived children and young people.

Multicultural Hub Canberra: Family Connections and Domestic and Family Violence Support services: place-based, culturally safe coordination between family violence, youth, women's and family services.

MYAN Australia: National Youth Settlement Framework: Australia's framework for youth-centred, culturally responsive and settlement-informed service design, providing a foundation for embedding workforce capability and multicultural youth expertise across systems.

Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) sector development role: demonstrates how a specialist multicultural youth organisation can operate as core service-system infrastructure, providing sector-wide practice frameworks, workforce development, referral pathways and youth-led co-design capability, rather than only stand-alone community programs.

MYAN recommends:

- adopt a national wraparound service framework for children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds;
- strengthen cross-government governance and shared accountability across Commonwealth and state portfolios;
- invest in specialist multicultural youth workforce capacity by embedding culturally responsive, culturally intelligent and youth-centred practice, expanding bilingual and in-language services, and creating career pathways for multicultural workers;

- ensure legal information, reporting pathways and civil remedies are accessible, interpreted and linked to trusted multicultural legal, youth and migration services;
- reform commissioning to provide longer-term, flexible funding for multicultural and ethno-specific organisations, including five-year contracts and co-investment models;
- shift performance reporting from outputs to equity outcomes, with disaggregated data by migration status, language, cultural background and age;
- recognise multicultural and ethno-specific organisations as core partners across prevention, early intervention, response and recovery, including adolescent violence responses; and
- measure success through integrated outcomes, including improved service navigation, referral completion, culturally safe access and young people's recovery experiences.

4. Implementation, Accountability and Measuring Success

The Second Action Plan should focus on implementation as much as policy direction. Australia has established a strong national framework through the National Plan and the First Action Plan and other related strategies. The next stage should strengthen how governments, services and communities work together to deliver coordinated, measurable improvements for victim-survivors.

For children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, implementation should recognise that safety is shaped by multiple systems. Violence prevention, early intervention, response and recovery intersect with health, mental health, education, settlement, housing, justice, migration, child and family services, employment and community participation. Strengthening these connections will require governance arrangements that extend beyond individual programs or portfolios.

4.1 Cross-government leadership

The Department of Social Services should continue to lead implementation of the National Plan, supported by stronger formal collaboration with portfolios responsible for health, education, settlement, migration, child safety and multicultural affairs. Shared governance should be accompanied by clear roles, shared outcomes and mechanisms for coordinated decision-making across Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

This whole-of-government approach should also recognise the expertise of specialist multicultural organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, victim-survivor organisations, researchers and peak bodies as ongoing implementation partners rather than consultation stakeholders.

MYAN also recommends the development of a dedicated Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Action Plan as an equal addendum to the National Plan, structured similarly to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan. A dedicated CALD Action Plan would strengthen national visibility, data collection, workforce accountability and outcomes measurement for multicultural communities, without displacing the mainstreaming commitments in the National Plan itself.

Implementation should also address the specific pathway of skilled migrants, who typically do not engage with humanitarian settlement services and can therefore fall through service gaps when family, domestic or sexual violence occurs. Early connection pathways from skilled migration processes to trusted community-based multicultural organisations, alongside research into skilled migrants' experiences and prevention needs, would help close this gap.

The Second Action Plan should also improve responses to the intersecting forms of abuse that disproportionately affect multicultural communities. These include guardianship abuse; elder abuse and substitute decision-making abuse; sponsorship-related adult child abuse, where older mothers sponsored by adult children may depend on the sponsor for housing, income, transport, English communication and access to services; tech-facilitated abuse; reproductive coercion; and the manipulation of family law, migration and other systems to further disadvantage victim-survivors.

4.2 Investing in community infrastructure

Implementation should build on existing strengths rather than creating parallel systems.

Across Australia, specialist multicultural youth organisations, settlement services and community organisations have established trusted relationships with children, young people and families. These organisations often become the first point of contact when concerns arise and play a critical role in prevention, early intervention, navigation and recovery.

Long-term investment in this community infrastructure will strengthen the effectiveness of the broader family, domestic and sexual violence system by improving access, cultural safety and continuity of support.

This requires moving beyond short-term project funding. Long-term, flexible funding is needed for multicultural youth organisations to build and sustain trust with young people, families and communities; retain skilled staff; and maintain prevention, early intervention and recovery partnerships across service systems.

4.3 Data, evidence and learning

The Second Action Plan should strengthen national evidence relating to children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Current national data does not consistently capture the experiences of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, making it difficult to understand service access, outcomes and unmet need.

Improved national data should include:

- culturally correct demographic information;
- service access and referral pathways;
- outcomes for children and young people;
- workforce skills and cultural intelligence; and
- meaningful measures of participation and co-design.
- child sexual abuse prevalence, disclosure, service access and recovery, disaggregated by cultural and linguistic background, migration pathway and visa status.
- migration status, visa status, ethnicity, language, cultural background, age band and locality as standard fields in national and service-level data collections, rather than the subject of occasional special studies;

- protective factors including social connection, community participation, trusted leadership, health literacy, economic participation and belonging;
- recovery outcomes at six and twelve months after crisis contact, including employment, income, housing stability and wellbeing;
- prevalence and incidence of coercive control, financial abuse, sponsorship-related adult child abuse, guardianship abuse and tech-facilitated abuse, measured using translated and community-validated tools; and
- informal and community-based help-seeking, so that the significant role of peer, community, faith and multicultural organisation disclosure is visible in national data.

Evaluation should include both quantitative outcomes and qualitative evidence from children, young people, families and communities about whether services feel safe, culturally responsive and effective.

Participatory research should also examine the specific experiences, barriers and support needs of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds affected by child sexual abuse, undertaken in genuine partnership with multicultural communities and youth-led organisations.

4.4 Measuring success

The success of the Second Action Plan should be assessed through outcomes that matter to children and young people rather than simply measuring program activity.

MYAN recommends national reporting against indicators such as:

- increased recognition of children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right;
- improved access to culturally safe services for children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds;
- reduced barriers to disclosure and help-seeking;
- improved coordination between health, education, settlement and specialist family violence services;
- increased participation of children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in policy and service co-design;
- strengthened multicultural youth workforce capacity;
- improved referral completion and continuity of care across services; and
- improved wellbeing, safety and recovery outcomes reported by children and young people themselves.
- recovery outcomes measured at six and twelve months after crisis contact, including employment, income, housing stability and wellbeing;
- protective factors including social connection, community participation, trusted leadership, health literacy and belonging;

- equity outcomes reported by migration status, cultural and linguistic background, age band and locality; and
- reductions in system abuse indicators, including misidentification of victim-survivors as perpetrators.

These measures would support greater transparency while helping governments understand whether reforms are improving people's lived experiences rather than simply increasing service activity.

5. Conclusion

The Second Action Plan presents an opportunity to move beyond fragmented responses towards a coordinated national service system that reflects the realities of children's and young people's lives.

For children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, family, domestic and sexual violence cannot be separated from settlement, education, mental health, housing, racism, language, migration and community belonging. Effective responses therefore require more than additional programs; they require systems that work together around children and young people's lives rather than expecting them to navigate disconnected institutions.

MYAN believes the Second Action Plan should establish a national approach that is youth-centred, culturally responsive and grounded in genuine partnership with children, young people and communities. This includes recognising children and young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds as victim-survivors in their own right, strengthening culturally responsive prevention and early intervention, investing in specialist multicultural youth capability, embedding genuine co-design and building nationally consistent wraparound service pathways.

The guiding principle should be simple: **no wrong door, no wrong person and no lost referral**. Every child and young person should be able to seek help through trusted relationships, receive culturally safe support and experience coordinated pathways to safety, recovery and long-term wellbeing.

MYAN welcomes the opportunity to continue working with the Australian Government, state and territory governments, researchers, specialist services and community partners to support implementation of the Second Action Plan and to ensure that all children and young people, regardless of cultural background, migration experience or language, can live free from violence and participate safely, confidently and equally in Australian society.

References / Key resources

The following references provide the key policy, evidence and practice context that informed MYAN Australia's submission.

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