

# **Department of Social Services Domestic and Family Violence**

Consultation on the Second Action Plan (National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032)

23 July 2026

## **About the Submission**

The Multicultural Youth Affairs Network of NSW (MYAN NSW) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Department of Social Services National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

As a multicultural youth specialist organisation, our submission emphasises the need for youth-specific, culturally-responsive and trauma-informed approaches that address the specific needs of all young people, including humanitarian entrants, asylum-seekers, and temporary visa holders.

## **About MYAN NSW**

MYAN NSW is the state's leading multicultural youth specialist organisation.

We provide support and expertise to ensure that young people who arrive to Australia on humanitarian grounds are able to build the skills, knowledge and networks they need to be an active participant in Australian society.

We work with young people as partners and support them to identify their strengths and advocate for solutions.

## **Contact Details:**

Please direct enquiries about this submission to:



Email: [hello@myannsw.org.au](mailto:hello@myannsw.org.au)

Website: <https://myannsw.org.au/contact-us/>

## 1. Prevention

Preventing family, domestic and sexual violence requires sustained investment in primary prevention and early intervention, particularly for children and young people. Young people need the knowledge, skills and confidence to recognise unhealthy relationship behaviours including coercive control, psychological abuse, possessiveness, aggression and manipulation.

Age-appropriate respectful relationships education should be embedded across all secondary schools and delivered using evidence-informed programs such as *Love Bites* and the MYAN NSW Elevate program. These programs should extend beyond consent education to include healthy communication, emotional regulation, digital relationships, recognising coercive control, and practical information about how and where to seek help.

Prevention initiatives should also prepare young people for the realities of help-seeking. This includes providing clear, age-appropriate information about confidentiality, mandatory reporting obligations and the circumstances in which information may need to be shared. Young people consistently report uncertainty about these issues and fear consequences of disclosure such as child removal or further harm, which can discourage them from seeking support.

Schools and youth services should be resourced to deliver prevention programs using trauma-informed, culturally responsive approaches. This includes:

- bicultural and bilingual youth workers and facilitators;
- collaboration with school counsellors and student support staff;
- structured debrief opportunities for students following program delivery, particularly for those who may be ready to disclose violence; and
- tailored delivery for different cohorts, including gender-specific and LGBTQIA+ groups where appropriate.

Prevention efforts must also reflect the diverse realities of young people's lives. There are significant gaps in education and support relating to:

- violence perpetrated by mothers or female caregivers;

- living with parents experiencing mental illness or alcohol and other drug (AOD) dependence;
- coercive control within culturally specific or high-demand religious settings, including dynamics such as fear, obligation and guilt (FOG);
- helping girls and young women develop self-authority and healthy autonomy without framing relationships as either submission or rebellion; and
- peer cultures that normalise violence, including harmful gender stereotypes such as "mean girl" dynamics and toxic masculinity.

Children and young people arriving in Australia through humanitarian pathways also require targeted education about Australian support systems, legal protections, confidentiality and available services through culturally appropriate settlement programs such as the MYAN NSW New Beginnings Program.

## 2. Services and Support

Services must be designed around the diverse needs of young people rather than assuming a "default" service user. Young people experience family, domestic and sexual violence within varied cultural, linguistic, migration and family contexts, and services must be flexible enough to respond accordingly.

Migrants and humanitarian entrants deserve recognition as a mainstream policy cohort rather than a niche or temporary service group. Young people on temporary visas, humanitarian visas, bridging visas, asylum seekers, international students and those without Medicare often face significant barriers to accessing safe and confidential support. These barriers increase vulnerability and leave many young people relying on informal sources of information, including language learning models (LLMs), which cannot replace professional, culturally informed support.

Services should:

- provide culturally safe and trauma-informed care;
- employ bicultural and bilingual staff;
- ensure confidential and anonymous pathways to support;
- recognise the unique needs of young people navigating migration, settlement and family violence simultaneously; and
- provide consistent information regardless of visa status.

Young people should be able to seek support independently without being required to engage through their local community or culturally specific networks where this may compromise privacy or safety. This is particularly important where family violence is heavily stigmatised, normalised or hidden, or where young people fear community judgement, family repercussions or social isolation.

### 3. Children and Young People

Children and young people require services specifically designed around their developmental needs and lived experiences rather than adaptations of adult service models. To prevent people from falling through gaps between services, sectors, or jurisdictions, governments should provide resourcing for youth-specific organisations to deliver evidence-informed prevention programs.

Young people fall through the cracks because youth-specific approaches by trained and qualified specialists are limited. Youth specialists are trained in the developmental stages of a child and young person. They understand the milestones vary widely within age groups. Content delivery for a 8-12 year old cohort will vary significantly from a 15-17 year old age cohort to a 18-21 age cohort and so on.

For multicultural children and young people, these harms can be harder to name and harder to disclose. Some may be acting as interpreters or carers for their family members, navigating services on behalf of family members or community, or carrying responsibility for siblings while their own safety needs remain unseen.

Barriers to disclosure can include language, fear of not being believed, concern about family separation or visa consequences, shame, racism, distrust of police or statutory services, lack of culturally safe workers, limited knowledge of rights and services, and fear that seeking help will be seen as betraying family or community. Systems must understand how culture, migration, racism, age, gender, disability, faith, settlement stress and legal status shape safety, choice and access to support.

It is of note that young people from cultural communities may not always get their unique needs met in workshops delivered to a mainstream audience. These groups can include but are not limited to young people raised within high-control faith communities and girls raised in purity culture.

LGBTQIA+ youth still lack adequate safe spaces to be able to disclose their unique challenges in spaces that are actively anti-homophobic and anti-transphobic at school or in community.

Resourcing queer, non-binary and trans cultural facilitators could save young people's lives, especially those experiencing violence related to conversion therapy that still may be under-reported despite the recent legislative changes making conversion therapy illegal in NSW.

This includes funding both trained facilitators and the operational costs required to deliver programs such as the MYAN NSW Elevate program, MYAN NSW New Beginnings program, or NAPCAN Love Bites.

Consistent investment enables organisations to build staff expertise, maintain program quality, establish referral pathways with local support services and community groups, and provide ongoing education to young people, reducing the risk that individuals miss out on early intervention or appropriate support.

Support should help children and young people understand:

- what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like;
- how to identify coercive and controlling behaviours;
- what confidentiality means;
- when adults are legally required to report concerns; and
- how to safely access help for themselves, friends or family members.

## 4. People Who Use Violence

Strong accountability for people who use violence requires both clear responsibility for harmful behaviour and access to evidence-informed interventions that support lasting behavioural change. Responsibility for violence must always remain with the person using violence.

Behaviour change should include accessible interventions such as:

- Gender-specific, LGBTQIA+ specific young people's behaviour change programs;
- anger management and emotional regulation counselling;
- structured group programs that build accountability; and
- ongoing monitoring (where appropriate) to reinforce responsibility and reduce the risk of further violence.

For young people who use violence, prevention and early intervention should remain the priority. Youth violence is often largely shaped by trauma, disadvantage, family violence, social exclusion and disrupted development. While criminal sanctions remain appropriate for serious offending, incarceration should be used as a last resort, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Evidence suggests that punitive responses alone do not reduce violence and may instead reinforce the conditions associated with future offending. Criminalisation disproportionately affects First Nations young people and other marginalised communities, contributing to further disadvantage and disengagement from institutions.

A one-size-fits-all approach to accountability risks undermining positive settlement outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse young people. Responses should instead balance accountability with opportunities for rehabilitation, connection and community participation.

At MYAN NSW we offer youth led community engagement opportunities that engage young people. We do this through public facing youth events, facilitated listening circles, facilitated debriefing, clinical and cultural supervision, youth co-design of programs, peer facilitated programs, and network building social events.

Data from the MYAN NSW Elevate program demonstrates the positive impact that facilitated, gender-specific interactions have for young people. For example, when we create spaces that allow community organisations and youth services to hold conversations with young people in safe spaces, young people from under represented groups are more likely to present themselves authentically and share their experiences without vilification, often leading to help-seeking behaviours.

The work we do at MYAN NSW is focused on supporting safe spaces for young people to address matters important to them but we cannot do this work alone.

Our work can be strengthened by a stronger investment in youth programs and services that create spaces where young people navigating the complexities of their identities can live together in this country with its rich history and cultural tapestry.

## 5. Recovery and Healing

Recovery requires more than crisis intervention. Young people and families need long-term, culturally responsive supports that recognise the ongoing impacts of trauma, migration, family conflict and social isolation.

Healing is strengthened when services provide:

- consistent therapeutic support;
- culturally safe practice;
- opportunities for peer connection;
- trusted relationships with youth workers; and
- pathways that support education, community participation and social belonging.

Investment in community-based youth programs creates protective environments where young people can process their experiences, rebuild trust and develop healthy relationships. These programs also strengthen community resilience by reducing isolation and fostering inclusion.

For example, the MYAN NSW Statewide Network connects emerging cultural leaders across metropolitan and regional NSW together to build a strong sense of belonging and community, upskill in leadership and advocacy, and advocate for a future where everyone is welcomed.

The Network has three key focuses:

1. Facilitated relational building
2. Leadership and advocacy training
3. Opportunities to directly engage with service providers and government

This Network provides young people with an avenue to develop stronger peer networks, regain their sense of agency and power, and participate in Australian society.

## 6. Access to Support

Young people should be able to access confidential support regardless of visa status, Medicare eligibility, cultural background or family circumstances. This includes ensuring equitable access for asylum seekers, international students and young people on temporary visas.

Services should be available through schools, youth organisations and trusted community settings, with multiple options for engagement including anonymous and confidential pathways where appropriate.

Improving access also requires greater investment in youth-specific services that are culturally responsive, trauma-informed and co-designed with young people themselves. Young people are more likely to seek help when they trust that services understand their experiences, protect their privacy and respond without judgement.

No single organisation can achieve this alone. Sustained investment in youth organisations, community partnerships and culturally responsive prevention programs is essential to strengthening Australia's response to family, domestic and sexual violence and ensuring that all young people can access support when they need it.