

SUBMISSION TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE SECOND ACTION PLAN

under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

Name.Narrate.Navigate (NNN) Program

Centre for Violence, Prevention and Healing

University of Newcastle, Australia

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*This submission is the presented by the lead authors on behalf of the NNN program team named at its conclusion.
It should not be taken as the position of the University of Newcastle, Australia.*

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1. Preamble

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

The Name.Narrate.Navigate (NNN) program is delivered across the lands of the Awabakal, Worimi, Darkinjung, Bundjalung and Yaegl peoples. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, and to all Aboriginal people on whose Country we live, work and learn. We extend that respect to First Nations peoples across all lands this submission may reach. We acknowledge the violent dispossession of land and culture on which this nation was built, and the enduring aftershocks of that violence in the lives of Aboriginal people whose stories feature in this submission.

1.2 On our writing

Readers will note we write in a conversational and reflective voice because we believe that knowledge sharing, like healing, happens best through genuine connection and shared understanding. We have spent years working alongside young people whose experiences have been rendered invisible by the institutional language used to describe them. We do not wish to reproduce that invisibility here. Where we use the words of young people and practitioners, we do so with their consent and with all identifying information removed, except in roles of designated authority and with permission. We use the term 'Aboriginal' throughout this submission, as is common practice in our geographic location. We also use 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander', 'First Nations' and 'Indigenous' in accordance with the original sources we cite.

1.3 Where we speak from

This submission is prepared by practitioner-academics - social workers, social scientists, researchers and educators – reflecting on evidence from the Name.Narrate.Navigate (NNN) program. NNN includes a trauma-informed, culturally responsive preventive-intervention for young people aged 12–18 who use and experience violence, a program of specialist education for workers who support them, alongside tools and resources for practice.

NNN was developed, and is continuously improved, through action research with a consortium of key stakeholder organisations, frontline practitioners, a cultural advisory group facilitated by acknowledged Aboriginal Elder Auntie Elsie Randall and an advisory group of young people impacted by violence. To date, NNN has been delivered to over 500 young people across community, education, custodial and out-of-home care settings and has reached over 3,000 practitioners, with more than 200 trained to deliver NNN in their own work.

NNN generates evidence from, and about, a specific cohort - young people who have used and experienced violence - in the home, in out-of-home care, and in intimate partner and peer relationships – as well as the cross-sector workforce that supports them.

This submission speaks from that evidence base. We respond principally to the consultation questions under Priority Areas 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Consultation Paper (ANROWS & DSS, May 2026), and we address Priority Area 1 where our evidence is direct. We leave questions on which we hold no direct evidence to those better placed to answer them.

2. Delivering on the promise already made?

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 valuably reflects the lived experience and practice reality that violence is complex and multifaceted. The plan recognises family violence as extending beyond intimate partner violence to "violence perpetrated by parents (and guardians) against children, between other family members and in family-like settings" - naming elder abuse, violence perpetrated by children or young people against parents, guardians or siblings, and violence by other family members, and defining 'family' to include adolescent and adult children, siblings, grandparents, kinship networks and carers.

It commits, as a named focus area, to "address adolescent violence in family settings", including expanding support services for children and young people who use violence in the family setting "and other 'family-like' settings such as out-of-home care, to address and change their behaviour and divert them away from the criminal justice system", and to building the evidence base on effective rehabilitation approaches for this cohort. It acknowledges that "in some cases, people are both victim-survivors and perpetrators of violence", who "must be supported to both recover from their experiences of violence and address their own use of violence". Importantly, the plan plainly states that perpetrator interventions must respond to "the unique and varied needs of perpetrators, beyond men's behaviour change programs".

Our concern, and the focus of this submission, is that the Consultation Paper narrows this scope in ways that matter. Its evidence base is weighted to intimate partner violence. Elder abuse and sibling violence are largely absent. The use of violence by women and girls is not acknowledged. Out-of-home care - named in the National Plan itself as a family-like setting for adolescent violence - does not appear at all. And the response continuum for people who use violence is framed around "ending men's use of family violence".

We do not read this as a deliberate retreat, and we recognise the Paper's significant strengths, particularly its recognition of children and young people in their own right and its critique of rigid victim/perpetrator binaries. But an Action Plan built only on the Consultation Paper's footprint would deliver less than the National Plan promises. Our submission asks one thing: that the Second Action Plan recover, operationalise and fund the full scope of the National Plan - as named actions, funded programs and sustained investment - for the young people who use and experience violence.

3. Children and young people in their own right (Priority Area 3)

3.1 Dynamic understandings of violence are necessary

The Consultation Paper's recognition that children and young people are victim-survivors in their own right, its inclusion of "young people who use violence (in the home and/or in intimate partner relationships, including the use of sexual violence)" within this priority, and its statement that "rigid and binary 'victim' or 'perpetrator' frameworks are inadequate in this context and fail to address the root cause of the violence" align precisely with what we see in developing and delivering the NNN program.

We are consistently struck by the reality that young people's relationship with violence is rarely one-dimensional. Research consistently identifies a crossover cohort whose histories of victimisation are

deeply entangled with their use of violence toward others,¹ and almost 90% of justice-involved young people have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience,² at rates up to eight times those reported in the general community. Consistent with this, in our own delivery, violence used against young people almost always preceded the violence they used against others.³ The National Plan itself records that young people's use of violence is "largely retaliatory" and begins, on average, at age 11.

The consequence for the Second Action Plan is that responses to young people who use violence cannot be organised primarily around the harm they have caused. When trauma-related behaviour is met with responses that see only the behaviour, a double penalty emerges - young people are criminalised both for their actions and, implicitly, for their victimisation. We have documented this sequence directly. In one instance recorded through our work, police attended a witnessed assault on a young woman in our program; she became distressed in her dealings with police, was taken to hospital under a mental health schedule, and was then charged with criminal damage to a patient information board. Harmed, then criminalised for her response to being harmed - in a single afternoon, and without anything in the system's response registering the first event as relevant to the second.

Recommendation: *The Second Action Plan should establish, as a national practice principle, that all responses to children and young people who use violence proceed from their status as victim-survivors in their own right - embedding integrated, trauma-informed and culturally responsive practice across assessment, diversion, intervention and throughcare, and evaluating programs against this standard.*

3.2 The protective power of cultural connection

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people experience the dynamics above with particular intensity, within the ongoing aftershocks of colonisation, child removal and structural racism. Aboriginal young people are detained at 21 times the rate of their non-Aboriginal peers⁴ and are heavily over-represented in the crossover cohort with dual child protection and youth justice involvement, at 17 times the rate of their non-Indigenous peers⁵. Evidence from the NNN program is equally consistent on the protective side: where

¹ Baidawi, S., & Sheehan, R. (2019). Crossover kids: Offending by child protection-involved youth. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 582. Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://doi.org/10.52922/ti04138>; Malvaso, C. G., I. Cale, J., Whitten, T., Day, A., Singh, S., Hackett, L., Delfabbro, P. H., & Ross, S. (2021). Associations between adverse childhood experiences and trauma among young people who offend: A systematic literature review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 23(5), 1677–1694. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211013132>

² Malvaso, C., Day, A., Cale, J., Hackett, L., Delfabbro, P., & Ross, S. (2022). *Adverse childhood experiences and trauma among young people in the youth justice system* (Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 651). Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://doi.org/10.52922/ti78610>

³ Blakemore, T., Rak, L., Rayment-McHugh, S., Randall, E., Krogh, C., Katrak Harris, M., Hunt, S., Ebbin, D., Stuart, G., & McCarthy, S. (2026). The Name.Narrate.Navigate (NNN) program: A case study of tertiary intervention for justice-involved youth in regional Australia. *Behavioural Sciences*, 16(5), 679. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs16050679>

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2025). Youth detention population in Australia 2025. AIHW, Australian Government. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-detention-population-in-australia-2025>

⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2019). Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision: 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2018 (Cat. no. CSI 27). AIHW, Australian Government.

cultural connection can be accessed and supported, strong cultural identity is associated with reduced justice involvement, safety and wellbeing⁶.

Recommendation: *We endorse the Consultation Paper’s recognition that First Nations Leadership must guide the National Plan, and note the opportunity for the Second Action Plan to align explicitly with Our Ways- Strong Ways – Our Voices, embedding cultural connection as an intervention target for Aboriginal Young people who use and experience violence.*

4. People who use violence (Priority Area 4)

4.1 Moving beyond ‘Men’s Behaviour Change’

The Consultation Paper’s framing of this priority culminates in “build[ing] and grow[ing] a continuum of appropriate and effective responses to end men’s use of family violence”. We support that continuum. But the National Plan’s own language is broader and, we suggest, correct. Responses must meet “the unique and varied needs of perpetrators, beyond men’s behaviour change programs”.

Adult men’s behaviour change programs - and the cognitive-behavioural assumptions underpinning much of the existing intervention landscape - do not translate to young people, whose use of violence is embedded in developmental trauma, structural disadvantage and cultural dislocation. Evaluations of adolescent-focused adaptations remain limited and conflicting⁷, and effective tertiary interventions for young people most deeply involved in serious and persistent violence remain the least developed and least evidenced tier of the continuum. This is precisely the gap NNN was built to address, and our evaluation evidence - sustained engagement described by caseworkers as distinctly different from other programs, shifts in personal narrative and relationship with violence, re-engagement with education and employment, and reductions in violent behaviour - demonstrates that change is achievable for this cohort when intervention is relational, trauma-informed, culturally responsive and strengths-based⁸

Recommendation: *The Second Action Plan should commit to a differentiated national continuum of interventions for people who use violence - with dedicated, funded streams for (a) children and young people who use violence in family, family-like (including out-of-home care) and intimate partner settings, and (b) women and girls who use violence - and should invest in the validation,*

⁶Murrup-Stewart, C., Whyman, T., Jobson, L., & Adams, K. (2021). “Connection to culture is like a massive lifeline”: Yarning with Aboriginal young people about culture and social and emotional wellbeing. *Qualitative Health Research*, 31(10), 1833–1846. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323211009475> ; Harrison, M., Trounson, J., Shepherd, S., Gubhaju, L., Williamson, A., Ivers, R., Eades, F., Williams, R., & Eades, S. (2024). The relationship between justice system non-involvement and the social and emotional wellbeing of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. *Psychiatry, Psychology, and Law*, 32(4), 532–548. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2024.2330060>

⁷ Boxall, H., Morgan, A., Voce, I. & Coughlan, M. (2020). Responding to adolescent family violence : Findings from an impact evaluation. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 601, Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi601> ; Campbell, E., Richter, J., Howards, J., & Cockburn, H. (2020). *The PIPA Project: Positive interventions for perpetrators of adolescent violence in the home (AVITH)*. Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS). ; Fitz-Gibbon, K., Meyer, S., Boxall, H., Maher, J., & Roberts, S. (2022). *Adolescent family violence in Australia: A national study of service and support needs for young people who use family violence*. Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

⁸ Rayment-McHugh, S., McKillop, N., Adams, D., & Hull, I. (2021). *Name.Narrate.Navigate: An initiative for youth violence. Evaluation report*. Sexual Violence Research and Prevention Unit, University of the Sunshine Coast ; Blakemore, T., Rak, L., Rayment-McHugh, S., Randall, E., Krogh, C., Katrak Harris, M., Hunt, S., Ebbin, D., Stuart, G., & McCarthy, S. (2026). The Name.Narrate.Navigate (NNN) program: A case study of tertiary intervention for justice-involved youth in regional Australia. *Behavioural Sciences*, 16(5), 679. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs16050679>

expansion and embedding of community-developed, evidence-generating Australian models such as NNN, particularly for regional, rural and remote communities.

4.2 When women and girls use violence

Recognising that women and girls can use violence does not require abandoning what we know about the overall gendered pattern of violence; men are charged and convicted at far higher rates, and that fact must remain visible in any national response. But avoiding a blame-based reading of women's violence cannot mean avoiding the topic altogether. Australian and US research has increasingly called for policy and practice to move beyond a strict victim/offender binary when responding to women's use of violence, arguing that this framing has itself become a barrier to appropriate legal and service responses⁹. Policing this binary: 'victim' or 'perpetrator', 'men's violence' or 'women's', has itself become a barrier to good practice and sector response.

Recent Australian research on plea negotiations in family violence matters shows how an incident-focused, binary system contributes to the misidentification and criminalisation of women who are themselves victim-survivors¹⁰. Naming women's use of violence also requires naming that its drivers are frequently different from men's. Established typology research distinguishes coercive controlling violence from situational couple violence and violent resistance, where physical violence arises from escalated conflict or from resisting a controlling partner rather than from a strategy of control¹¹. Women's use of violence disproportionately falls into these latter categories, which is precisely why it cannot be understood in isolation from their experience of violence: the two are frequently entangled.

Population-representative data shows a significant overlap between perpetration and victimisation for both men and women, with childhood adversity a major predictor of both¹². Treating victimisation and use of violence as separate categories has produced the narrow, binary focus the sector currently works within. This is not a hypothetical pattern. In NSW, legal actions against young women aged 10–17 grew by 20% between 2014 and 2023, against relatively stable trends for young men¹³. Our own research with justice-involved young women shows their violence is often relational and situated within reciprocated processes of harm; commonly preceded by childhood neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and exposure to domestic and family violence overwhelmingly perpetrated by males; and sometimes transactional as a means of securing safety, belonging or shelter in conditions of homelessness and exploitation¹⁴. For these young women, justice involvement can reflect the criminalisation of traumatic impact rather than independent criminal intent, intersecting directly with

⁹Larance, L. Y., Kertesz, M., Humphreys, C., Goodmark, L., & Douglas, H. (2022). Beyond the victim-offender binary: Legal and anti-violence intervention considerations with women who have used force in the U.S. and Australia. *Affilia: Feminist Inquiry in Social Work*, 37(3), 466–486. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08861099211060549>

¹⁰Moffa, M., Flynn, A., & Hutton Burns, K. (2025). Misidentified victim-survivors as domestic and family violence perpetrators: Plea negotiations as a tool for justice? *The British Journal of Criminology*, 65(5), 1053–1070. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azae098>

¹¹Kelly, J. B., & Johnson, M. P. (2008). Differentiation among types of intimate partner violence: Research update and implications for interventions. *Family Court Review*, 46(3), 476–499.

¹²Clemens, V., Fegert, J. M., Kavemann, B., Meysen, T., Ziegenhain, U., Brähler, E., & Jud, A. (2023). Epidemiology of intimate partner violence perpetration and victimisation in a representative sample. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, 32, e25. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045796023000069>

¹³Donnelly, N. (2024). Trends in female offending in New South Wales: 2014 to 2023 (Bureau Brief No. 173). Sydney: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

¹⁴Rak, L., Blakemore, T., Randall, E., & Katrak Harris, M. (2026). Don't worry about her; Intersectionality, and the role of systems and structures in the embodied experiences of young women's use of violence. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 61, 62–72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.70016>

the misidentification of victim-survivors as perpetrators that both the National Plan and the Consultation Paper acknowledge for adult women.

This entanglement is particularly acute for young women who go on to become mothers, where the window for intervention is early and time-limited: our research shows how systems and structures intended to protect young women can instead reproduce the gendered disparities that shape their embodied experience of using and surviving violence¹⁵. A recent scoping review of interventions for justice-involved young women found a persistent gap in evidence-based, preventive, rather than responsive, approaches tailored to this cohort¹⁶. If young women's use of violence is not named, it cannot be counted, understood or responded to, and responses will continue to be built for adult men, or the young women concerned will be erased altogether. What is needed instead is intervention that reaches young women before harm patterns consolidate into adulthood, and that is gender-responsive and culturally reflexive rather than an adapted version of a framework built for adult men.

Recommendation: *The Second Action Plan should explicitly name women and girls use of violence, alongside their victimisation history and the distinct motivations that often underlie it. It should commit to building prevalence and contextual evidence about it, and fund early, gender-responsive and culturally reflexive intervention that recognises the entanglement of victimisation and the use of violence in this cohort, including pathways that engage young women as they move into motherhood.*

5. Prevention and early intervention (Priority Area 2)

We make four points from our evidence. First, tertiary intervention is prevention. Working effectively with a 15-year-old who uses violence in the home or in an early intimate relationship prevents the adult perpetration, adult victimisation and intergenerational transmission the National Plan seeks to end - the young men in our program who moved from witnessing their fathers' violence to facing their own stalking and intimidation charges as teenagers illustrate the trajectory with painful clarity. The Second Action Plan's prevention architecture should recognise and resource intervention with young people who use violence as early intervention in the life-course sense, not only as 'response'.

Second, readiness must be treated as something intervention builds, not something it screens for. The design of the NNN program began from an observation made repeatedly by practitioners across policing, justice, health, child protection, out-of-home care, education and Aboriginal-specific services: young people who use and experience violence are referred to multiple supports and yet rarely engage with any of them¹⁷. What became clear in working through why is a structural mismatch at the centre of how services are designed. The indicators by which service systems recognise engagement (punctuality, self-regulation,

¹⁵Rak, L., Blakemore, T., Randall, E., & Katrak Harris, M. (2026). Don't worry about her; Intersectionality, and the role of systems and structures in the embodied experiences of young women's use of violence. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 61, 62–72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.70016>

¹⁶Willoughby, M., Janca, E., Kwon, S., Johnston, B., Collins, T., Kinner, S. A., Johns, D., Gallant, D., Glover-Wright, C., & Borschmann, R. (2024). Interventions to prevent and respond to violence against justice-involved young women: A scoping review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(2), 1036–1052. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380231171183>

¹⁷Blakemore, T., Agllias, K., Howard, A., & McCarthy, S. (2019). The service system challenges of work with juvenile justice involved young people in the Hunter Region, Australia. *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 54(3), 341–356. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.69>; Blakemore, T., Randall, E., Rak, L., & Cocozzoli, F. (2021). Deep listening and relationality: Cross-cultural reflections on practice with young women who use violence, *Australian Social Work*, 75 (3), 304-316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407x.2021.1914697>.

articulacy, the capacity for polite and constructive dialogue with a worker) are precisely the capacities that complex trauma and structural disadvantage routinely undermine¹⁸. Services are, in effect, asking this cohort to arrive already possessing the skills that intervention exists to develop.

The consequence of this is a quiet form of exclusion that does not appear in any dataset. Programs that assume baseline readiness will consistently fail to reach the young people who most need them, and the young people screened out as insufficiently ready, insufficiently motivated or 'too complex' are the same young people whose trajectories the National Plan is most concerned to interrupt. Evaluation evidence from the NNN program so far, indicates that readiness is not a fixed attribute but a capacity that can be actively built - engagement, shifts in young people's narratives of self, and developing skills for self-regulation were most evident where trauma-informed and culturally safe practice was enacted within genuinely relational, strengths-based encounters.

This has direct implications for how the Second Action Plan commissions and funds early intervention. Eligibility criteria that screen for motivation or engagement capacity, funding models that measure success by completion rates, and referral protocols that treat non-attendance as disengagement rather than as information all operate to exclude the highest-need cohort while appearing to serve it.

Third, we strongly endorse the Consultation Paper's recognition that classroom-based prevention places an unfair burden on children who return from consent and respectful relationships education to homes where adults use or normalise violence. We have heard firsthand in NNN, how participants live that contradiction. Respectful relationships education is necessary and will meet the needs of participants with the lowest exposure to interpersonal, family and community violence in our community - but it cannot substitute for tailored interventions with the young people already using and/or experiencing violence. The Paper's own evidence that one-off, poorly contextualised programs can produce backlash, reinforces the need for sustained, relational approaches.

Finally, early intervention pathways must run through the settings where this cohort is actually visible: schools (including in responses to 'behaviour' that is trauma in expression -educational exclusion was near-universal among our participants and functions as a driver, not a symptom), health services, child protection, out-of-home care and police contact. Each of these is currently more likely to eject, pathologise or criminalise than to identify and refer.

Recommendation: *The Second Action Plan should fund early-intervention referral pathways for young people who use and experience violence across education, health, child protection, out-of-home care and policing - with exclusion-reduction obligations in education settings and warm-referral protocols into specialist, developmentally appropriate programs.*

6. System integration and workforce (Priority Area 5)

6.1 A workforce asked to do specialist work without specialist preparation

¹⁸ Blakemore, T., Rak, L., Rayment-McHugh, S., Randall, E., Krogh, C., Katrak Harris, M., Hunt, S., Ebbin, D., Stuart, G., & McCarthy, S. (2026). The Name.Narrate.Navigate (NNN) program: A case study of tertiary intervention for justice-involved youth in regional Australia. *Behavioural Sciences*, 16(5), 679. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs16050679>

Work with young people who use and experience violence occupies what we have described as a triple paradox: a phenomenon well recognised yet poorly understood; work significant in scale yet largely unnamed as a specialised field; and knowledge needed yet absent from core professional training¹⁹. This is not a problem of practitioner effort or motivation. Practitioners in this field often bring their own histories of adversity and trauma, and their narratives show signs that the work itself takes a toll; cynicism, detachment, despondency and disconnection from the young people they serve are well documented in the helping professions, and practitioners working with youth violence are not immune to them²⁰.

Evaluative research of NNN practice pathways training has found that 95% of participants report prior training in violence or trauma work, yet over half (51.3%) identify foundational knowledge gaps about the dynamics and drivers of youth violence including gender and age trends, the biological and psychological markers of violence, and the prevalence of youth violence²¹. Many were unaware that violence peaks between the ages of 10 and 18 before declining, that the rate of violence among young women is increasing, or that trauma plays a significant role in youth violence despite working with this group daily. Many practitioners also entered training operating from a punitive orientation, believing that informing young people of the consequences of their actions would deter violence; training produced a documented shift toward understanding violence as shaped by cultural, structural and relational factors, and toward relational, reciprocal practice. Reflection on Aboriginal overrepresentation in the youth justice system produced either shock, or a more troubling desensitisation, among some practitioners.

These gaps are not explained by lack of effort or commitment; they point to a structural problem in the fragmented nature, variable quality and insufficient depth of current professional development, compounded for practitioners in regional, rural and remote areas by limited access to appropriate training. This potentially indicates that workplace culture, rather than evidence-based professional development, too often becomes the primary source of learning about what works. Research with practitioners undertaking NNN training also found that empathic responses toward young people are shaped by ingroup and outgroup dynamics, socioeconomic distance and emotional labour where practitioners' capacity to empathise with young people whose lives differ markedly from their own is not straightforward, and is itself an important and under-recognised dimension of workforce capacity²².

Pre-qualification education across social work, psychology, youth work and allied health contains no specific or compulsory content on working with violence, meaning practitioners enter this field without foundational preparation for its significant practice demands²³. Post-qualification professional development is fragmented, inconsistent in quality, and, particularly outside major metropolitan areas, often inaccessible in terms of cost and geography. Where training does exist, it has often treated

¹⁹Blakemore, T., Rayment-McHugh, S., McKillop, N., & Rak, L. (in press). "Till today I didn't know...": Cross-sector practitioner reflections on knowledge gaps for working with young people who use and experience violence. *Journal of Forensic Social Work*.

²⁰Blakemore, T., & Krogh, C. (2024). NNN, a (new) way of working. In Name.Narrate.Navigate: Working with youth violence (1st ed., pp. 299–317). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003177883-12>; Jacob, K. M., & Lambert, N. (2021). Trauma exposure response: How secondary trauma affects personal and professional life. *MedEdPORTAL*, 17. https://doi.org/10.15766/mep_2374-8265.11192

²²Blakemore, T., Rak, L., & Krogh, C. (2026). Empathy disrupted?: Reflections on the "fancy-lady" shoebox. In *Trauma-informed and accumulation-aware approaches to child protection* (pp. 69–120). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.

²³Blakemore, T., Rayment-McHugh, S., McKillop, N., & Rak, L. (in press). "Till today I didn't know...": Cross-sector practitioner reflections on knowledge gaps for working with young people who use and experience violence. *Journal of Forensic Social Work*.

trauma-informed and culturally responsive practice as separate, siloed offerings rather than integrated competencies, and has rarely been designed for the diversity of role, qualification level, sector and prior experience that characterises this workforce.

Critical reflection on our experiences in delivering specialist training to this sector has identified key learnings on what effective training requires. Namely, delivering quality information was not sufficient on its own: practitioners learned best, and implemented their learning more readily, when training recreated the same conditions required for effective practice with young people i.e. safety, reciprocity and shared power, and when practitioners participated in the same activities they would go on to deliver²⁴. Beyond training itself, practitioners consistently identified implementation support such as; mentoring, coaching, co-delivery with experienced practitioners and peer support, as the practical strategies needed to sustain change in practice, particularly given limited access to supervision beyond administrative line management. Without organisational conditions that endorse, legitimise and actively support new ways of working, even well-prepared practitioners are likely to default to familiar approaches, not because they are unconvinced by the evidence, but because the conditions for doing otherwise do not exist around them.

The Consultation Paper's calls to strengthen workforce capability, national consistency in standards and training, and skills to “engage with persons who use violence while avoiding collusion” are welcome, but the Second Action Plan must go further: there is currently no minimum standard of education, training or competency for work with young people who use violence, anywhere in the system.

Recommendation: *The Second Action Plan should establish national minimum standards of qualification and competency for practitioners working with people, and specifically young people, who use violence. It should advocate to embed foundational content on violence, abuse and trauma and the crossover of victimisation and the use of violence in pre-qualification curricula across all youth-facing disciplines. It should fund accessibly, experiential and culturally grounded post-qualification training with the implementation supports (supervision, coaching, co-delivery and organisational conditions) that are necessary to bridge knowledge uptake to practice change.*

6.2 People live where the Plans meet

Young people who use and experience violence are, by definition, a multi-system cohort: they are the crossover children of child protection and youth justice, the young people in out-of-home care whose placements have themselves been sources of harm - through abuse in placement, significant instability, and relocation away from existing connections²⁵ - and the adolescents whose family violence sits under this National Plan while their care arrangements sit under Safe and Supported and their offending sits with state youth justice systems.

This is not an administrative inconvenience. Young people in the crossover cohort encounter the criminal justice system earlier, are more often charged with violent offences, and experience poorer outcomes than peers involved with only one system.²⁶ Aboriginal young people are heavily over-represented among them. And the pathway between the systems is well documented: trauma-related behaviour in a residential placement, which in a family home would be managed, becomes a police

²⁵ Rak, L., & Warton, T. (2023). His, hers and theirs: Comparative narratives from young men and women who use violence. *Safer Communities*, 22(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SC-08-2022-0033>

²⁶ Baidawi, S. (2020). Crossover children: Examining initial criminal justice system contact among child protection-involved youth. *Australian Social Work*, 73(3), 280–295.

call-out and then a charge - a process described in the Australian literature as care-criminalisation.³ Out-of-home care is therefore not only a setting where young people have experienced violence; it is a setting that generates their contact with justice systems, and it sits at the exact point where these Action Plans meet or fail to.

We note - and welcome - that this consultation is explicitly informing the Second Action Plans under both the National Plan and Safe and Supported, the Second Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan under Safe and Supported, the First Action Plan under Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices, and the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse, on a 'tell us once' basis. That intent must be matched by mechanisms. The National Plan already names out-of-home care as a setting for adolescent family violence; the Second Action Plan should say so again, and say how.

Recommendation: *The Second Action Plan should include explicit, cross-referenced actions – shared with the Safe and Supported Section Action Plan – for the crossover cohort; join practice standards for young people with dual child protection and justice involvement, recognition of out-of-home care as a setting of both experienced and used violence; diversion from criminal justice responses to trauma-related behaviour in care, including protocols that reduce police call-outs to residential placements, and shared accountability and reporting so this cohort cannot fall between plans*

7. Regional, Rural and Remote Communities

7.1 The place-based promise

The gap between commitments made by the National Plan and delivery potentially indicated by the Consultation Paper is among the widest in relation to regional, rural and remote communities. The National Plan does not treat geography as a qualifier: it commits to place-based approaches, recognises that safety must be built community by community rather than delivered uniformly from the centre, and acknowledges that regional, rural and remote services require funding models reflecting the real cost of operating across dispersed populations and thin markets.

The Consultation Paper carries less of this. Rural and remote location appears under Priority Area 1 as a barrier to access - a characteristic of people who struggle to reach services, rather than a principle governing how services are designed and funded. This is the same narrowing we identified in section 2 above; what the National Plan named as part of the architecture, the Consultation Paper records as a feature of a disadvantaged group.

The differential is not marginal. The Personal Safety Survey in Australia has long recorded that women living outside capital cities experience intimate partner violence at rates higher than those in capital cities (a rate of 21%, compared with 15% of women in capital cities) and rates of family and domestic violence hospitalisation are highest in very remote parts of the country.

7.2 Place is architecture, not backdrop

Evidence from the NNN program consistently notes that place does not sit behind the violence these young people use and experience. It is part of how that violence is produced, held and given meaning.

For the young men in our work, local area functions simultaneously as a source of connection and a constraint on it. They describe the prospect of moving to a new area not as a fresh start but as a loss - of name, of standing, of belonging, and of what would have to be left behind. A response premised on

relocation, or on the assumption that a young person can travel to where the service is, misreads what place means to them.

The regional context in which NNN was built carries its own weight. The Greater Hunter fares worse than the rest of the state on unemployment, youth unemployment and school completion. It carries high rates of child protection reporting, out-of-home care and domestic and family violence, concentrated around sites of declining heavy industry. It is also recognised as an epicentre of historic institutional child sexual abuse, and the intergenerational effects of that abuse remain visible in the socioeconomic conditions of parts of the region. These are not conditions against which violence happens; they are the material through which it is transmitted across generations. An intervention designed for a metropolitan service landscape and delivered into this one will not reach what is holding the violence in place.

7.3 Regions are where the answers are

Regional communities are not only sites of concentrated need - they are sources of solutions, and NNN is evidence of it. Its approach to scale is deliberately regional in logic: rather than relying solely on external resourcing, it builds delivery capability into the workforces already present in young people's lives, adapted across school-based, on Country, one-to-one and custodial modalities. The regional human services workforce is itself an asset in this - large, relatively stable, and staffed by people with real and often longstanding ties to their communities.

We note that place-based design is already being tested in our region. The Supporting Recovery pilot operates in the Hunter New England and Central Coast Primary Health Network as a place-based response built to complement existing regional services, with Local Care Teams embedded in existing organisations and a whole-of-family approach that treats children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right. It concludes in June 2026 with an independent evaluation of scalability - evidence arriving precisely as the Second Action Plan is drafted, and which should inform it.

What the regional workforce lacks is support. The practitioners in our original pilot were blunt about why: training to work in trauma-informed and culturally responsive ways was neither accessible nor affordable to them. A regional practitioner who cannot reach training does not stop working with young people who use and experience violence. They keep working - guided by workplace culture rather than evidence, because workplace culture is what remains available. The national inconsistency in standards that the Consultation Paper identifies has a geographic distribution, and it is regional, rural and remote practitioners who absorb it.

Recommendation: *The Second Action Plan should give effect to the National Plan's place based commitment by adopting sustained, place-based funding for responses to young people who use and experience violence in regional, rural and remote communities, in place of short-term competitive rounds that thin markets cannot sustain; prioritising models that build and retain delivery capacity within local workforces over externally delivered programs; investing in the validation and expansion of community-developed regional models such as NNN.*

8. Summary of recommendations

- ***Extend victim-survivor data, service design and justice-response reform to the National Plan's full family violence definition*** *child-to-parent violence, sibling violence and elder abuse and include justice-involved children and young people within the victim-survivor cohort.*

- ***Establish, as a national practice principle, that all responses to children and young people who use violence proceed from their status as victim-survivors in their own right - embedding integrated, trauma-informed and culturally responsive practice across assessment, diversion, intervention and throughcare, and evaluating programs against this standard.***
- ***Align responses for Aboriginal young people with Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, embedding cultural connection as a protective intervention target.***
- ***Create explicit, cross-referenced actions with the Safe and Supported Second Action Plan— joint practice standards for young people with dual child protection and justice involvement; recognition of out-of-home care as a setting of both experienced and used violence; diversion from criminal justice responses to trauma-related behaviour in care, including protocols reducing police call-outs to residential placements; and shared accountability and reporting so this cohort cannot fall between plans.***
- ***Commit to a differentiated national continuum of interventions for people who use violence with dedicated, funded streams for children and young people who use violence in family, family-like (including out-of-home care) and intimate partner settings, and (b) women and girls who use violence***
- ***Resource tertiary intervention with young people as life-course early intervention, and fund early-intervention referral pathways across education, health, child protection, out-of-home care and policing - with exclusion-reduction obligations in education settings and warm-referral protocols into specialist, developmentally appropriate programs.***
- ***Explicitly name women's use of violence, including by girls and young women, alongside their victimisation history and the distinct motivations that often underlie it; commit to building prevalence and contextual evidence about it; and fund early, gender-responsive and culturally reflexive intervention, including pathways that engage young women as they move into motherhood.***
- ***Require that programs funded for this cohort treat intervention readiness as a capacity to be built rather than a precondition to be screened for, and commission readiness-building intervention as a distinct tier of the continuum, with funding and performance measures that do not penalise services for working with the young people hardest to engage.***
- ***Establish national minimum standards of qualification and competency for work with people, and specifically young people, who use violence; embed foundational content on violence, trauma and the crossover of victimisation and use of violence in pre-qualification curricula across all youth-facing disciplines; and fund accessible post-qualification training with the implementation supports that make training change practice.***
- ***Give effect to the National Plan's place-based commitment through sustained, place-based funding in place of short-term competitive rounds; models that build and retain delivery capability within local workforces; training available and affordable outside metropolitan centres; and investment in community-developed regional models.***

9. Concluding note

The Consultation Paper asks what would make the biggest difference. From where we stand, it is this: that the Second Action Plan hold onto the whole of who these young people are. They are simultaneously harmed and harmful, agentic and vulnerable, known to many systems and understood by few. The National Plan already contains the commitments needed to serve them - to family violence in all its forms, to adolescent violence in family and family-like settings, to responses beyond men's behaviour change programs, to recovery for those who both use and experience violence. Our ask is that the Second Action Plan turn those commitments into named actions, funded programs, a prepared workforce, and data that can see this cohort. We would welcome the opportunity to contribute further to the consultation through roundtables or direct engagement.

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