

WE CAN HELP

NAPCAN
PREVENT CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

**NAPCAN's
RESPONSE TO:**

**IT STOPS HERE:
THE DOMESTIC AND FAMILY
VIOLENCE FRAMEWORK FOR
REFORM**

PUBLIC CONSULTATION PAPER

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: It Stops Here - the Domestic and Family Violence Framework for Reform

NAPCAN (National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) welcomes the opportunity to participate in this consultation by Women NSW to inform a blueprint for the domestic and family violence (DFV) response in NSW.

We commend the Minister for Women for prioritising the safety and wellbeing of women and children through a continued commitment to improving the service system in relation to DFV, particularly with a focus on meeting clients needs from prevention strategies to crisis support.

NAPCAN is a national not for profit organisation that advocates on behalf of children and young people to promote positive change in attitudes, behaviour, policies, practices and the law to prevent abuse and neglect, and ensure the safety and wellbeing of all Australian children.

NAPCAN's strategy is to bring about the changes necessary in individual and community behaviour to stop child abuse and neglect before it starts by:

Promoting quality child abuse prevention research:

Promoting quality research so that the causes and impact of child abuse and neglect can be better understood, and effective ways to prevent it can be developed and measured.

Advocating for child safe policies and strategies:

Advocating for changes in policies and strategies that place the wellbeing of children and young people first.

Coordinating National Child Protection Week and promoting the PLAY YOUR PART initiative:

Increasing public awareness of, and informing attitudes towards, the creation safe communities for children and young people. Providing educational information and resources so individuals and organisations have access to the knowledge and skills needed to support children and families, and reduce child abuse and neglect in Australia.

Demonstrating good practice:

Developing and promoting place based community led prevention programs and initiatives to increase community capacity in promoting the wellbeing and safety of children.

This submission is informed by NAPCAN's work with communities across Australia and the knowledge and expertise of staff. It also draws on NAPCAN's work with children and young people through our suite of school-based respectful relationship programming.

Since 2006, a key strategy in NAPCAN's mission to prevent child abuse and neglect focused on the development of respectful relationship programming for children and young people with the aim of bringing about inter-generational change. Over this ten year period we have contributed greatly to the knowledge, practice and capacity building of local programming across Australia, most notably our Love Bites program.

This response does not respond to all aspects of the proposals put forward by Women NSW but only those for which NAPCAN can provide specific advice based on our expertise. Included in this document is an outline of the collaborative development of a detailed, evidence-informed implementation and evaluation framework for NAPCAN's violence prevention initiatives.

NAPCAN's key comments and recommendations in relation to the consultation:

Firstly, we would like to highlight the importance of primary prevention work in relation to shifting social norms around domestic and family violence and in advocating for greater work that is inclusive of children and young people to achieve generational change on this issue. In saying this, we recognise the invaluable and essential role that tertiary services play in supporting victims and the dire need for more specialist services that are inclusive of children and young people, around the state. There's also a significant gap in services and behaviour change programs available for perpetrators. As NAPCAN's core business is in primary prevention this is how our responses will be informed.

1. Thinking about PREVENTION, what kinds of messages and/or communication channels would be most effective in encouraging positive attitudes and behaviours in relation to DFV?

In NAPCAN's experience in implanting respectful relationship programming and community awareness campaigns, the communication channels that are most effective in encouraging positive attitudes and behaviours include:

- Local initiatives that are responsive to local needs (informed by the demographics/local services/emerging concerns/inclusive language) including posters, brochures, community forums, coasters in cafés and pubs and so forth to reiterate messaging
- Social media
- TV less effective unless married up with other communication channels
- Traditional media and sensitive informed reporting about cases of DFV
- Popular culture - movies; TV-Shows; radio programs; video games - encouraging community conversation around violence depicted in popular culture

A related suggestion would be to utilise places and forums where individuals already congregate as a communication 'channel' – such as:

- workplaces having access to evidence-based approved programming
- supported playgroups and other groups for expectant and new parents Channels that may have specific relevance for children and young people:
- School-based programming
- Sporting clubs (particularly with young men)
- Social and recreational clubs (where there are role modelling opportunities)
- Youth groups/religious organisations
- Dance and theatre groups

Factors related to effective messaging:

- Any communication needs to be inclusive of men and boys while acknowledging the gendered nature of DFV (language carefully considered to avoid polarising males)
- Should be de-stigmatising and encourage help seeking for perpetrators
- Needs to support victims in seeking help earlier
- Should emphasise and raise awareness of the fact that 'everyone' has a part to play in preventing DFV, including recognising the impacts of 'every-day' behaviour (sexist jokes, gendered marketing)
- Requires male role models that can stand up and lead the way;
- Needs to encourage empathy with victims to personalise the 'crime' and the experience of the victim
- Include intersecting issues in materials to increase awareness of factors that can impact DFV - mental health issues; substance abuse (not as an 'excuse')
- Promote responsibility for yourself; particularly as a perpetrator - don't be 'provoked' by situations, there is strength in self-control
- Challenge the normalisation of violence and sexism in community and culture

Factors related to effective messaging specific to children and young people:

- Violence is a choice
- Promoting the idea you can 'choose' how you want to be in the world; there's strength in being in control of yourself (how to NOT use violence when angered)
- Explore alternatives to use of violence and 'abuse'
- Explore alternative narratives of masculinity and femininity

2. Can you think of any messages relating to DFV that you have read or heard? Were they effective? Why/why not?

- Working in the area of respectful relationship education, NAPCAN have found that clear positive messaging appears to be most effective with young people.
- In recent times, the introduction of the The Line website has produced some very useful material and messaging for young people. Promoting the idea that young people have choice in how they want their relationships to be, encourages both rights and responsibility. The language of "Crossing the Line and "Where do you draw your line?" in the context of relationships helps to promote this idea of choice and enable young people to make informed decisions.
- It is important to acknowledge that some of the gendered content can be polarising for audiences. The recent Our Watch 'You can't undo violence', which seems to be counter to core messages to be inclusive of men. It is not strength based and sends the message that you can not change your behaviour.
- Prominent figures can capture the attention of many people within the community and promote the idea that preventing violence against women is everybody's business.
- White Ribbon has been very effective in utilising ambassadors and leading messaging about violence against women being a men's issue and needing men to be part of the solution. High profile men leading this is an effective way to communicate with other men.
- The recent impact Rosie Batty has had on the the profile of Domestic and Family violence can not be underestimated. Her voice and tireless work in this area has seen a dramatic increase in the public's awareness of the issue. This highlights that when people can relate to a personal story or experience they are more likely to become involved. We saw this again with the recent case in Queensland involving Allison Baden-Clay.

3. Thinking about EARLY INTERVENTION, what should be done to best recognise and support those at risk of experiencing or perpetrating DFV?

- There needs to be a greater awareness of the dynamics of DFV and how to recognise it and respond to it across the community. In NAPCAN's experience working with child care services and schools there is a clear gap in educators understanding around recognising DFV but also how they can respond to it.
- School systems need to be skilled so they can recognise, report and support their children and young people.

- Service providers needed to be able to to recognise symptoms and signs earlier
- A greater understanding of the escalation and 'cycle of DFV' so people can reach out to those in their social circle.

4. What could be done to respond to those who deny or do not recognise that they are at risk?

- Increase community knowledge around the cycle of violence - and what that can look like - including real life case studies.
- Educate parents on the impact of DFV on children and young people.
- Educate parents on trauma and the impacts of DFV on children and young people.

5. Thinking about SUPPORTING VICTIMS' SAFETY AND RECOVERY, what should be done to make it easier for people in crisis to identify, access and understand DFV services?

- There needs to be a greater investment in services - particularly ones that are targeted providers.
- Greater investment in children's workers and resources for children in refuges.
- More outreach services and workers that can go out into the community.
- Specialised workers with training to respond to victims in crisis.
- Culturally specific resources and tools.

6. What should be done to ensure those affected by DFV are supported to recover from immediate trauma and its long-term effects?

- Provide more soft entry options via mothers groups, health centres, child care centres, home visiting nurses post-natal care and GP's.
- Specialised skilled workers who can offer therapeutic services that are trauma informed.

7. Thinking about PERPETRATOR ACCOUNTABILITY, what should be done to hold perpetrators to account for their actions and help them change their behaviour?

- More services for men with specialist DFV workers.
- More access to well researched and evaluated programs which provide insight and promote and support behaviour change.
- Better responses from the judicial system.

8. What features of the current DFV service system do you think work well, and why?

- Prevention programming such RRE in schools, including; having conversations with children and young people early and linking them with service providers.
- Community campaigns that are youth-led.

9. What features of the current DFV service system do you think could be improved, and why?

- Increase specialised services and resources – including those with workers trained in cultural sensitivity.
- Lack of education for children and young people - there is a lack of investment in his area. RRE needs to be a key component of the curriculum for every age group, from K-12.
- Changes to include DFV in NSW curriculum are not sufficient and are unlikely to bring long term change continuing to leave children vulnerable. There is clear evidence of what works and can be effective in this area. Government need to invest in this and in evaluation.
- The system needs better coordination to improve information sharing between agencies.
- Funding processes are competitive and impede better coordination between agencies.
- More investment in child and youth focussed responses across the board that recognise children as clients in their own right.

10. What could be done to encourage cooperation and coordination between government, business, NGOs and the community to improve responses to DFV?

- Getting people together at a local level to encourage joint ownership of DFV, starting with prevention through the spectrum. This is one of the positive outcomes of the Love Bites program, it brings local service providers together.
- Government not imposing on NGO time and resources unless there's meaningful engagement - with funded programming or evaluation models etc.
- Leadership from government to bring players together to facilitate innovative initiatives that are responsive to community needs and informed by evidence and best available research.
- Government's alignment with frameworks and national plans - State and Territories should be working together under a national plan. Consolidating research best practice models.

NAPCAN appreciates the opportunity to contribute our knowledge and expertise in this consultation process. With respect to Questions raised in Points 3, 8, 9 and 10, we would like to take this opportunity to inform the Minister of the developing initiative NAPCAN is undertaking to address the gaps, challenges and effectiveness in implementing a whole of school/community violence prevention education program.

In partnership with the Western Sydney University School of Education research team, NAPCAN is working on the collaborative development of a detailed, evidence-informed implementation and evaluation framework for NAPCAN's violence prevention initiatives, incorporating input from departmental, school and community-based stakeholders including local schools, businesses, churches, sporting clubs and other civic organisations in a united effort.

NAPCAN is also collaborating with State and Local Governments who have expressed interest in leading the implementation of this education framework across their communities, contributing to the development of a transferable model across LGA regions.

The following is an excerpt from the Western Sydney University – School of Education Research proposal:

Playing our part: Building community engagement and sharing capacity for implementing resilience and violence prevention programs in schools

Evidence points to the need for holistic, integrated initiatives in order to improve service delivery and build the social capital necessary for effective prevention work in the community. Schools operating as community hubs play an important role in prevention and in facilitating service delivery (Sanjeevan, McDonald & Moore, 2012).

Correspondingly, interventions within schools for enhancing student wellbeing increasingly reflect a whole school health promotion emphasis encompassing school ethos, teaching and learning, partnerships with community agencies, and the provision of effective support to students and staff experiencing difficulties (Barrett, Eber, & Weist, 2013; Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg & Gullotta, 2015; Flaspohler, Meehan, Maras & Keller, 2012; Graetz, Littlefield, Trinder, Dobia, Souter, Champion, et al., 2008).

The effectiveness of such school-based programs depends on the efficacy and fit of the selected program as well as the quality of the implementation processes undertaken (Dix, Slee, Lawson, & Keeves, 2012; Meyers, Durlak & Wandersman, 2012). A focus on professional development and support to enable regular, programmatic teaching and learning of social and emotional skills has been found to lead to significant developmental and academic improvements (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011). Further salient features of quality implementation include proactive leadership, staff buy-in and collaboration, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and access to appropriate tools and technical implementation support (Dobia, Power, Mooney & Hibbert, forthcoming; Meyers et al., 2012).

Violence prevention in schools

Education, community engagement and inter-agency collaboration are advocated as key strategies in developing national and state-based approaches to address the 'epidemic' of gendered domestic violence (Edwards, 2015; NSW Public Schools, 2015; Our Watch, 2015; Women NSW, 2014). It would appear, however, that while there is growing recognition of the need to approach violence prevention systemically, there are few, if any, evidence-based violence prevention initiatives that successfully integrate all these elements (Carmody, 2015; DeGue, Holt, Massetti, Matjasko, Tharp & Valle, 2012; MacVean, Humphreys, Healey, Albers, Mildon, Connolly et al., 2015). The difficulty of mobilising large-scale change is attributed to the predominance of hegemonic gender stereotypes that condone men's violence against women (Jewkes, Flood & Lang, 2014) and the difficulty of changing societal norms (Quadara & Wall, 2012). Against this, the increasing involvement of men in challenging gendered violence is seen as encouraging (Carmody, Salter, Presterudstuen, Ovenden & Hudson, 2014).

In 2009 national standards for the primary prevention of sexual assault through education were established to inform best practice in program design and implementation (Carmody, Evans, Krogh, Flood, Heenan & Ovenden, 2009). The Department of Education in Victoria also outlined more specific recommendations for respectful relationships education in Victorian high schools (Flood, Fergus & Heenan, 2009). The first of these emphasises the need for a whole school approach based on the health promoting schools model (WHO, 1994). An updated resource (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2014) expands somewhat on the model, adding school leadership and professional learning strategy to teaching and learning, community partnerships, support for students and staff, and school culture. However, there appear to be few implementation supports to enable schools to fully engage with what a whole school approach might mean for violence prevention, and the focus of the document remains on the specific lesson plans it provides. Ollis's (2014) account of mixed responses by teachers to the program trial suggests that the whole school emphasis was indeed lost in translation with a resultant compromise in staff ownership and limited possibilities for cultural change.

Following an evaluation of the Love Bites program (Flood & Kendrick, 2012) NAPCAN enhanced its implementation strategy by undertaking revisions to the format and adjusting the content and 'dosage' of sessions to maximise assimilation and retention. It has also carefully sequenced its range of respectful relationships programs from K-10 years to create a comprehensive set of lessons that are tailored to meet the developmental needs of students at different stages. This is very helpful for showing schools how they can integrate respectful relationships into the curriculum; however, further steps will be needed to build an approach that will enable schools to play their part in challenging stereotypes, building partnerships, engaging their communities and becoming hubs for violence prevention efforts.

A significant issue in relation to existing educational programs for violence prevention is the paucity of effectiveness evaluation. Increasingly, however, program funding is tied to a requirement for robust evaluation that clearly demonstrates the evidence base for specific interventions (Our Watch, 2015).

Accordingly, the Western Sydney University School of Education research team is working with NAPCAN on the collaborative development of a detailed, evidence-informed implementation and evaluation framework for NAPCAN's violence prevention initiatives, incorporating input from departmental, school and community-based stakeholders.

The proposed approach to research and evaluation for this project draws on findings from implementation science, in particular research on the Integrated Systems Framework, to design, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the planned initiative across a number of diverse school/community clusters in the greater Sydney region.

As indicated above, this project emphasises the development of effective implementation methods and resources in collaboration with key stakeholders and community members. Implementation research has found that attention to the development of effective and reflective collaborative engagement is a key factor influencing the quality and reach of program implementation.

We would be pleased to provide more information on request, and to participate in any further discussions on the development of the blueprint for DFV in NSW. If you have any specific questions regarding this submission please contact Madelene McGrath, National Stakeholder Manager on Madelene.McGrath@napcan.org.au

Yours Sincerely,



Richard Cooke
CEO