

Submission to the Department of Communities, Government of South Australia's Youth Safety Strategy A Framework for Action: Preventing and Responding to Relationship, Family and Sexual Violence.

White Ribbon Australia (White Ribbon) appreciates the opportunity to contribute feedback to the development of South Australian's *Youth Safety Strategy* and is available upon request to speak to or provide additional information in support of this submission.

White Ribbon commends the Government of South Australia's commitment to developing a whole of society response to and prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence, which is inclusive of and amplifies young people's role.

White Ribbon

White Ribbon is the world's largest movement of men and boys, working alongside women, to end men's violence against women and girls, promote gender equality and create a new vision of masculinity.

White Ribbon Australia, as part of this global movement, wants all women in Australia to live in safety, free from violence and abuse. We focus on primary prevention: stopping violence before it starts.

White Ribbon Australia is dedicated to ensuring men are active advocates for changing the social norms, attitudes and behaviours that are the root cause of men's violence against women. We engage men to stand up, speak out and act to influence the actions of men, demand and drive positive social change and drive gender equality.

As one of the five national partners under the *National Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, we are committed to driving change through primary prevention approaches based on best practice, independent research and evaluation. Through education, awareness-raising and creative campaigns, prevention programs, community engagement and partnerships, we highlight the positive role men play in preventing men's violence against women and support them to be part of this social change.

Our vision is *A nation that respects women, in which every woman lives in safety, free from all forms of men's abuse.* We do this by *engaging men to make women's safety a man's issue too.* This involves men and women working alongside each other, using the White Ribbon social change movement and prevention programs as a platform for raising awareness and creating attitudinal and behavioural change.

Overview

The Government of South Australia's commitment to and development of the Youth Safety Strategy (the Strategy) is a positive and practical step towards strengthening the capacity of policy approaches and responses to appropriately identify and address the specific experiences, needs and impacts of men's violence on women as they relate to young people.

As mentioned, White Ribbon's mandate is the primary prevention of men's violence against women, with White Ribbon's programs working as platforms for raising awareness and creating attitudinal and behavioral change to prevent and stop violence before it starts.

As such, this submission will consider the third question detailed in the Youth Safety Strategy "*what will be important for achieving these priorities?*" It will do this by providing a brief outline of the best practice programs White Ribbon is currently implementing in South Australia and other jurisdictions across Australia, which have the potential to be expanded in the South Australian context - including rural and remote settings - and in the youth violence prevention

space.

White Ribbon believes these evidence based and independently evaluated programs can help facilitate the implementation of the Strategy – not only to help keep young people safe from relationship, family and sexual violence, but also empowering them to become active agents of positive change, helping prevent violence among their peers, within their communities and into the future.

Overarching recommendations

While this submission will not speak directly to the other two questions detailed in Youth Safety Strategy¹, it is important to acknowledge that men’s violence against women permeates all levels of society. For example, the harmful impacts of relationship, family and sexual violence not only impact young people directly, but also contribute to many issues young people face, including homelessness, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, and their own use of violence.

Given this, efforts to prevent violence against women should also occur at all levels of society and across many systems, including education, workplaces, homelessness and youth justice. Moreover, integrated and community-wide strategies will help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of access to available resources, helping to minimise duplication and address service gaps while also maximising social impact. It is for this reason that it is important that policy development processes recognise the important and intersecting work, which supports and enables young people within existing structures and helps to address the barriers that inhibit young people from thriving.

- **Recommendation:** The Strategy should recognise that efforts to end violence against women should occur at all levels of society and across many systems; policy development processes and initiatives should recognise and support integrated, intersecting and community-wide strategies that work to prevent violence and promote gender equality and respectful relationships.

In addition, violence prevention initiatives should recognise young people as current and future leaders who can drive positive social change by using their knowledge, power and passion to challenge negative attitudes, gender stereotypes and behaviour that develops early in life and leads to violence. Acknowledging young people not only as targets of change but also agents of change allows initiatives to better harness and build on the capacity and energy of young people, helping to enable and empower them to be active agents of positive change among their peers, within their communities and into the future.

- **Recommendation:** The Youth Safety Strategy should better engage with and prioritise young people as **agents of change**. This can be done by strengthening active engagement and consultation with young people throughout the strategy and within specific initiatives as referred to below.

Likewise, focused prevention and early intervention approaches are recognised as important strategies to lessen the likelihood and potentially transform negative patterns of behaviour becoming entrenched into adulthood. For this reason, it is crucial that violence prevention initiatives start early in life, including for young victims and young perpetrators. Educating and working with young people is vital to helping promote respectful relationships and gender equality.

- **Recommendation:** The Strategy should support violence prevention strategies that start early in life by educating and working with young people to help promote respectful relationships, gender equality and no-tolerance attitudes to violence.

¹ The two questions include: “Is there anything missing from the Strategy that you believe is important?” and “What should the priorities be for the implementation of the strategy?”

White Ribbon Programs: Best-practice Responses to Prevent Violence before it Starts.

The following section provides a brief overview of the White Ribbon social change movement and White Ribbon programs. As mentioned, these programs act as platforms for raising awareness and action to transform and prevent the underlying causes and drivers that lead to domestic, family and sexual violence.

These programs have the potential to be expanded in the South Australian context - including rural and remote settings - and in the youth violence prevention space.

These programs, based on research, best practice and independent evaluation, can help facilitate the implementation of the Strategy, and are key to creating attitudinal and behavioral change required to prevent and stop violence before it starts. They are significant in helping to meet the objectives of the strategy to keep young people safe from relationship, family and sexual violence.

Please find attached the January 2018 Briefing Document and Annual Report, (capturing White Ribbon as at 30 June 2017) providing up to date information on White Ribbon Australia's Programs and other activities.

- **Recommendation:** The strategy should consider supporting the White Ribbon programs detailed in this document as they have the potential to support the implementation of the Strategy to help keep young people safe from relationship, family and sexual violence and empower them to become active agents of positive change, helping prevent violence among their peers, within their communities and into the future.

Youth Engagement Program

The White Ribbon Youth Engagement Program aims to collaborate with and engage young people, and especially boys and young men between the ages of 15 to 24 years to drive change in their communities. This will be done by directly engaging with young people, as well as organisations and institutions providing services to young people, such as education providers and sports clubs.

White Ribbon is working with youth to increase their understanding of the issue and their role in driving change. This is being done through the development and provision of training on understanding men's violence against women, workshops on what it means to be a safe bystander, development of youth-centred resources and information, and identification and creation of opportunities for young people to engage in social change activities, all in collaboration with young people. Attention is being paid to rigorous monitoring and evaluation to contribute to the further development of evidence on what is effective when working with young people in prevention programs and activities.

The program aims to increase the number of young people actively engaged in the White Ribbon social movement through Young Ambassadors and Young Advocates, as well as support for student leaders and other youth groups to develop their own activities around gender equality and the prevention of violence against women.

Working alongside schools: White Ribbon's Breaking the Silence Schools Program

School-based violence prevention programs, including respectful relationships education, play a central role in teaching young people what men's violence against women looks like and how to prevent it. It also provides opportunities to nurture and promote positive attitudes and behaviours that promote gender equality and respectful relationships amongst young people to help prevent undesirable social consequences.

White Ribbon Australia's *Breaking the Silence Schools Program* (Breaking the Silence) is an award-winning, professional learning initiative for Principals and teachers that provides foundational knowledge, tools and strategies to implement respectful relationships education and violence prevention programs in schools.

Breaking the Silence supports schools to bring about a whole of school commitment to stop violence against women. It is suitable for both primary and secondary schools and builds on existing initiatives to strengthen a culture of respect and equality at all levels of the school community - through the curriculum; role modelling from staff; policies and procedures; education programs and strengthened family and community partnerships.

Breaking the Silence is suitable for both primary and secondary schools. Through the program, students learn and experience respectful relationships, gender equality and how to challenge, modify or eliminate the underlying attitudes and drivers that lead to this violence.

For example, an independent evaluation of the program conducted by UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network in 2013/2014² found that:

- Schools described improved behaviour amongst their students following program implementation, including positive changes in the interactions between boys and girls
- Schools agreed that students were more likely to stop others who were being unfair or disruptive.
- Schools were more likely to have procedures in place to promote a culture of non-violence.

White Ribbon continues to engage and collaborate with local and federal government stakeholders, including key personnel in State and Territory Departments of Education to align *Breaking the Silence* with developments in state/territory curriculum and policy frameworks, and to support strategic engagement of school networks.

Breaking the Silence also garners indirect support and buy-in of efforts to prevent violence by the broader community through the continuous engagement with community stakeholders including White Ribbon committees, community organisations and local agencies. This also helps facilitate local, contextualised support that links with tertiary services.

Case Study: Breaking the Silence Schools Program in the Limestone Coast

In South Australia, for example, White Ribbon worked alongside the local White Ribbon Committee and the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) - which is also a White Ribbon Accredited Workplace - to bring the Breaking the Silence Schools Program to the Limestone Coast.

This helped facilitate 30 schools from Mount Gambier and across the Limestone Coast to embark on the Breaking the Silence Schools Program in 2015. This region was the first in Australia to participate in the Program as a whole region community of schools, including primary and secondary schools from across the public and independent sector.

Schools formed partnerships to ensure that, over the long term, children from primary school age through to secondary school received consistent messages of respect and gender equality, non-violence, and build skills to engage in respectful relationships. Schools continue to embed White Ribbon into whole of school initiatives, participate in community events such as the Mount Gambier Loudest Shout, and have delivered curriculum to develop skills in respectful relationships, being an active bystander and more. The community continues to be a leader in violence prevention and has supported DECD SA staff to engage school communities in other regions take part in Breaking the Silence and White Ribbon activities.

Further details about the case study can be found in the attached document *Breaking the Silence School Program in the Limestone Coast, South Australia*.

White Ribbon recommends continued promotion of and support for the implementation of *Breaking the Silence* within South Australian Government and non-government schools. We believe this will support awareness raising and attitudinal and behavioural change among young people that is required to transform and prevent the underlying causes and drivers that lead to domestic, family and sexual violence.

Please refer to our website for more details about *Breaking the Silence*, which can be found here: <https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/stop-violence-against-women/get-school-involved/breaking-silence-program/>

² Breckenridge, J; Browning, L; Wearing, M (2014) *Executive Summary: Breaking the Silence: School-based Primary Prevention of Men's Violence Against Women 2014 Independent Evaluation Report*, Gendered Violence Research Network School of Social Sciences, Arts & Social Sciences UNSW Australia

Other transformative initiatives

Working alongside Workplaces: White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation Program

Workplaces are important sites for preventing and responding to men's violence against women violence. This is because the effects of violence reach workplaces and workplace culture. It is also because attitudes, behaviours and cultures that prevail in workplaces can influence the level to which violence against women is supported, condoned and/or modelled.

It is important that workplaces offer equal opportunity for productive and engaging work for young people entering the workforce, whilst also removing the barriers they may face during employment, such as sexual harassment and discrimination.

The *White Ribbon Australia Workplace Accreditation Program* is a world leading violence-prevention initiative focused on providing organisations with the tools and strategies to actively prevent and effectively respond to violence against women. The Program also acknowledges the importance of workplaces in promoting gender equality; not only does it raise awareness of how workplaces and individuals within workplaces might unintentionally contribute to the problem, but it also practically helps them transform their workplaces to become part of the solution.

Please refer to our website for more details about the *Workplace Accreditation Program*, which can be found here: <https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/stop-violence-against-women/get-workplace-involved/workplace-accreditation/>

White Ribbon commends the Government of South Australia's ongoing participation in the Workplace Accreditation Program (soon to commence reaccreditation) through a whole of government approach to responding to and preventing violence. We believe that this sends a clear message affirming the South Australian Government's commitment to preventing domestic, family and sexual violence.

White Ribbon encourages workplaces, including those supporting entry to work of young people, to become White Ribbon Accredited. This will support the implementation of the strategy and enhance awareness and action to prevent domestic, family and sexual violence. To continue to drive long-term, whole-of-society social change, we strongly urge ongoing support for the program and recommend widespread implementation of White Ribbon's Workplace Accreditation across all government, non-government and private sectors.

Ambassador Program

The *Ambassador Program* was developed in recognition that men and boys are central to achieving the social change necessary to prevent men's violence against women.

The program equips men, as volunteers and Ambassadors, with the necessary knowledge and resources to proactively engage their community in the prevention of men's violence against women. For example, a case study of White Ribbon's Ambassador Program undertaken by Bell and Seaman at the University of Wollongong found that Ambassadors' knowledge of men's violence against women and violence against women increased as a result of their ambassadorship.³

In addition, the program encourages Ambassadors' self-reflection and professional development through community forums, workshops and educational materials. For example, the aforementioned case study showed that 89.2% of Ambassadors felt they were 'more likely to challenge sexist behaviour toward women' as a result of their involvement in White Ribbon Australia's Ambassador Program. Furthermore, almost half of the Ambassadors surveyed in this study reported they were better able to 'question the notion of "boys will be boys"' (47.6%) and have increased their 'ability to self-reflect' as men (45.9%).

As official representatives of the White Ribbon social movement, Ambassadors possess the knowledge, skills and

³ Bell, Kenton and Claire E. Seaman. 2016. 'Public Report: Case Study of White Ribbon Australia's Ambassador Program: Men as Allies to Prevent Men's Violence against Women'. Wollongong: University of Wollongong. doi: 10.6084/m9.figshare.3826764

commitment to undertake the role to the standard expected and use their influence to drive attitudinal and behavioural change among men and the broader community. Our Ambassadors derive from a wide range of backgrounds including different sectors, varying age groups, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Diversity Program

White Ribbon works closely with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and multicultural communities to ensure cultural awareness is at the forefront of everything we do. We also work to highlight the importance of diversity and inclusion throughout all aspects of the White Ribbon social movement. With the support of the Federal Government, White Ribbon reaches out to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and those from multicultural backgrounds to prevent violence against women.

The movement works to empower diverse communities by:

- developing community capacity to prevent domestic violence by organising forums and participating in events;
- organising workshops for men and supporting them to be role models and confront domestic violence;
- providing resources which are relevant and appropriate, including translated factsheets and videos;
- encouraging and supporting communities to organise forums and White Ribbon events to spread the message;
- ensuring that diversity and inclusion are at the forefront when drafting key policies, frameworks and Programs.

Fatherhood Project

Our *Fatherhood Project* aims to ensure fathers and father figures experience and role model respectful relationships with their families, recognising their roles in encouraging gender equality and taking active steps to respond to and prevent men's violence against women. Our project includes educational webinars and training, interactive Fatherhood resources, including practical tips and tools, event activations, social media and marketing campaign activity, an expert reference group and focus group workshops, key collaborations and social impact measurement.

Community Liaison Program

White Ribbon plans to engage several State based Community Liaison Officers to deliver and support key White Ribbon activity, programs, community forums, event activations and engagement to ensure the movement is as far reaching as possible. The officers will support and link with key stakeholders, collaborative partners and local communities to ensure local relevance, cultural appropriateness and alignment with state and territory frameworks.

This project lends itself to a strengths-based model, which is community owned and driven, ensuring engagement is tailored, effective, sustainable and aligns with best-practice violence prevention initiatives.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this inquiry. We welcome the opportunity to elaborate on the information contained in this submission as required and to work closely with the Government to implement prevention action that will focus on youth as active agents of change to stop violence against women.

Yours sincerely`



Libby Davies
CEO