

White Ribbon Australia

Submission to the Department of Communities, Government of Western Australia Youth Strategy, *Better Choices: Youth in WA*. 22 December 2017

White Ribbon Australia (White Ribbon) appreciates the opportunity to contribute this submission to the Western Australia Youth Strategy, *Better Choices: Youth in WA*.

White Ribbon

White Ribbon is the world's largest movement of men and boys working 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 at the root 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 Campaign and Prevention Programs as a platform for raising awareness and creating attitudinal and behavioural change.

Summary

The Government of Western Australia has recognised the extent of domestic, family and sexual violence as a problem in Australian society and is committed to efforts to prevent and respond to this violence.

Young people are disproportionately affected by men's violence against women and are increasingly recognised as critical stakeholders in prevention strategies, particularly as targets for change.

The harmful impacts of men's violence against women on young people - as witnesses, bystanders, and victims and perpetrators - are well-known and documented, and are recognised as contributing to many of the issues young people are facing, such as homelessness, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as their own use of violence. Despite this documented impact of violence against women on young people's lives, young people are often not actively included in prevention strategies. Likewise, policy approaches and responses often fail to appropriately account for and address the specific experiences, needs and impacts of men's violence on women as it relates to young people.

The Western Australia Youth Strategy provides an important opportunity to change this. It also provides an opportunity to harness young people's energy and capacity to drive positive social change in the area of violence prevention, respectful relationships and gender equality among themselves and within their communities in the present and into

the future.

This submission will focus on the:

- **Importance of violence prevention strategies for youth and the need to incorporate primary prevention initiatives** that seek to end violence against women into youth-centric policy and responses.
- **Best-practice programs White Ribbon is currently implementing in Western Australia and other jurisdictions across Australia** that have the potential to be replicated in the Western Australian context, including rural and remote settings and which have application in the youth violence prevention space.
- **Need for violence prevention strategies to start early in life** by educating and working with young people to promote respectful relationships and gender equality.
- **Importance of young people being recognised 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 set in early and lead to violence. We believe that youth policy approaches and responses should also reflect this – helping to enable and empower young people to be active agents of positive change within their communities and into their future.

The issue: Young people and Violence Against Women

Young people are disproportionately affected by men's violence against women.

- Women aged 18-24 are more likely to experience physical or sexual violence than women in any other age group.
- The incident of sexual assault for women aged 18 to 24 is twice as high for all women.¹
- Women 18 to 19 (16-24) is likely to be as much as four times as high.²
- Young men aged 16-24 are at greatest risk of perpetrating violence.³

National Research on young peoples' attitudes has also revealed that some young people hold disturbing violence-supportive attitudes towards women.⁴ This survey found that:

- 1 in 4 young people aged 12 to 24 hold attitudes that put them at risk of perpetrating, excusing or tolerating violence against women. 1 in 4 do not think it is serious when guys insult or verbally harass girls in the street.
- 1 in 4 think it is pretty normal for guys to pressure girls into sex.
- 1 in 4 do not think it's serious if a guy, who's normally gentle, sometimes slaps his girlfriend when he's drunk and they are arguing.

The harmful impacts of this violence on young people, as witnesses, bystanders, and victims and perpetrators, are well documented. They are also recognised as contributing to many of the issues young people are facing, including homelessness, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as their own use of violence.

For example:

- Over one third of adults and children using homeless services sought help due to family and domestic violence, with 48 per cent of all clients assessed as homeless when they presented.⁵
- Intimate partner violence is the leading health risk factor for women, contributing to depression, suicide and self-inflicted injuries and alcohol use disorders, among other things.⁶

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017). Personal Safety, Australia, 2016 (Cat.No, 4906.0). Retrieved from: <http://bit.ly/1OgLEWS>

² Tarczon, Cindy and Quadara, Antonia (2012) The nature and extent of sexual assault and abuse in Australia (ACCSA Resource Sheets) Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, retrieved from: <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/nature-and-extent-sexual-assault-and-abuse-australia>

³ Peters, Jay, Todd K Shackelford and David M Buss, 'Understanding Domestic Violence against Women: Using Evolutionary Psychology to Extend the Feminist Functional Analysis' (2002) 17(2) Violence and Victims 255. Cited in the National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book, <http://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/contents>

⁴ Our Watch. (2015). The Line Campaign. *Survey of Research Findings*. Retrieved from: <http://bit.ly/2jExmrV>

⁵ Domestic and family violence and homelessness 2011–12 to 2013–14. Viewed 18 Nov.

2017, www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/domestic-violence-and-homelessness/

⁶ Ayre, J., Lum On, M., Webster, K., Gourley, M., & Moon, L. (2016). Examination of the burden of disease of intimate partner violence against women in 2011: Final report (ANROWS Horizons, 06/2016). Sydney: ANROWS.

Despite this documented impact of violence against women on young people's lives, youth policy approaches and responses often fail to appropriately recognise and address the specific experiences, needs and impacts of this violence as it relates to young people.

The Policy Landscape: Young People and Violence Against Women.

The Government of Western Australia has recognised the extent of domestic, family and sexual violence as a problem in Australian society and is committed to efforts to prevent and respond to this violence.

Most notably, this commitment has been affirmed through the *Western Australia's Family and Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy to 2022: Creating safer communities (Prevention Strategy)* and its respective implementation plans,⁷ which build on Western Australia's commitment to *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010- 2022 (National Plan)* and the National Action Plans.⁸

Young people are increasingly recognised as critical stakeholders in efforts to prevent and end violence against women. As such, it is crucial that young people are actively engaged efforts to end violence against women. Likewise, it is also crucial that policy agenda's related to youth fit within broader policy agendas, working to build on and strengthen young people's capacity to prevent and end violence against women.

Significant progress has been made by the Western Australia Government to better support young people's experience of violence. This has most recently been highlighted in the release of the *Youth Say no! Dating Violence: Stop living the Nightmare* by the Department of Communities, Child protection and Family Support.⁹ However, while steps have been taken, there is still a need to develop youth-specific policies that recognise young people's unique needs and experiences related to violence.

Stronger, more 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; starting early in life, both for young victims and young perpetrators. Educating and working with young people is vital to helping promote respectful relationships and gender equality.

In addition to being targets of change, young people are increasingly emerging as agents of change in violence prevention strategies - driving change, building gender-equality and more respectful attitudes and behaviours among young people through school, community-wide strategies and other innovative spaces.

It is important that prevention initiatives harness and strengthen young people's capacity, helping to enable and empower them to be active agents of positive change among their peers and within their communities.

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 work as platforms for raising awareness and creating attitudinal and behavioral change to prevent and stop violence before it starts. Please find attached the November Briefing Document providing up to date information on White Ribbon Australia's Programs and the FY 16-17 Annual Report.

However, it is important to note that efforts to prevent violence against women occur at all levels of society and across many systems, including education, workplaces, homelessness and youth justice. As such, integrated and community wide strategies can 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.

⁷ Government of Western Australian. (2015). *Freedom from Fear Action Plan 2015: Working towards the elimination of family and domestic violence in Western Australia*

⁸ Government of Western Australian. (2015). *Freedom from Fear Action Plan 2015: Working towards the elimination of family and domestic violence in Western Australia*; The Council of Australian Governments. (2010). *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their children 2010- 2022*. Retrieved from:

https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2014/national_plan1.pdf

⁹ <https://www.youthsayno.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/YSN-Dating-Violence-SCREEN.pdf>

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.

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.

Among the key activities, 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/or creation of opportunities for young people to engage in social change activities, all in collaboration with young people. As this is a relatively new area, attention will be paid to rigorous monitoring and evaluation to contribute to the further development of evidence on what works when working with young people in prevention 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, can 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, which can 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 curriculum; role modelling from staff; policies and procedures; education programs and strengthened family and community partnerships. 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.

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

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/>

White Ribbon recommends continued promotion of and support for the implementation of ***Breaking the Silence*** within Western 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.

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 raises 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 encourages workplaces, including government departments, to consider becoming White Ribbon Accredited. We believe that this will send a clear message that the Western Australian Government is serious about preventing domestic, family and sexual violence. To continue to drive long-term, whole-of-society social change, we welcome 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.¹⁰

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 nine tenths (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 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.

¹⁰ 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

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

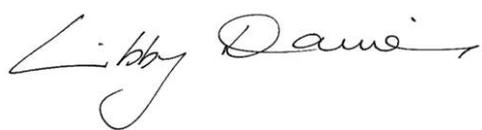
Our Fatherhood Project aims to ensure fathers and father figures experience respectful relationships with their families, recognising their roles in encouraging gender equality and taking active steps to respond to and prevent men's violence against women. Our project includes educational webinars and 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 opportunities throughout.

Community Liaison Program

White Ribbon plans to engage several State based Community Liaison Officers to deliver and support key trainings, community forums, event activations and help translate White Ribbon resources to ensure the movement is as far reaching as possible. The officers will be linked to collaborative partners and be engaged in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities and speak one or more of the following languages: Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi, Vietnamese and Swahili. This project lends itself to a strengths-based model which is community owned and driven ensuring engagement is tailored, effective and culturally relevant.

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