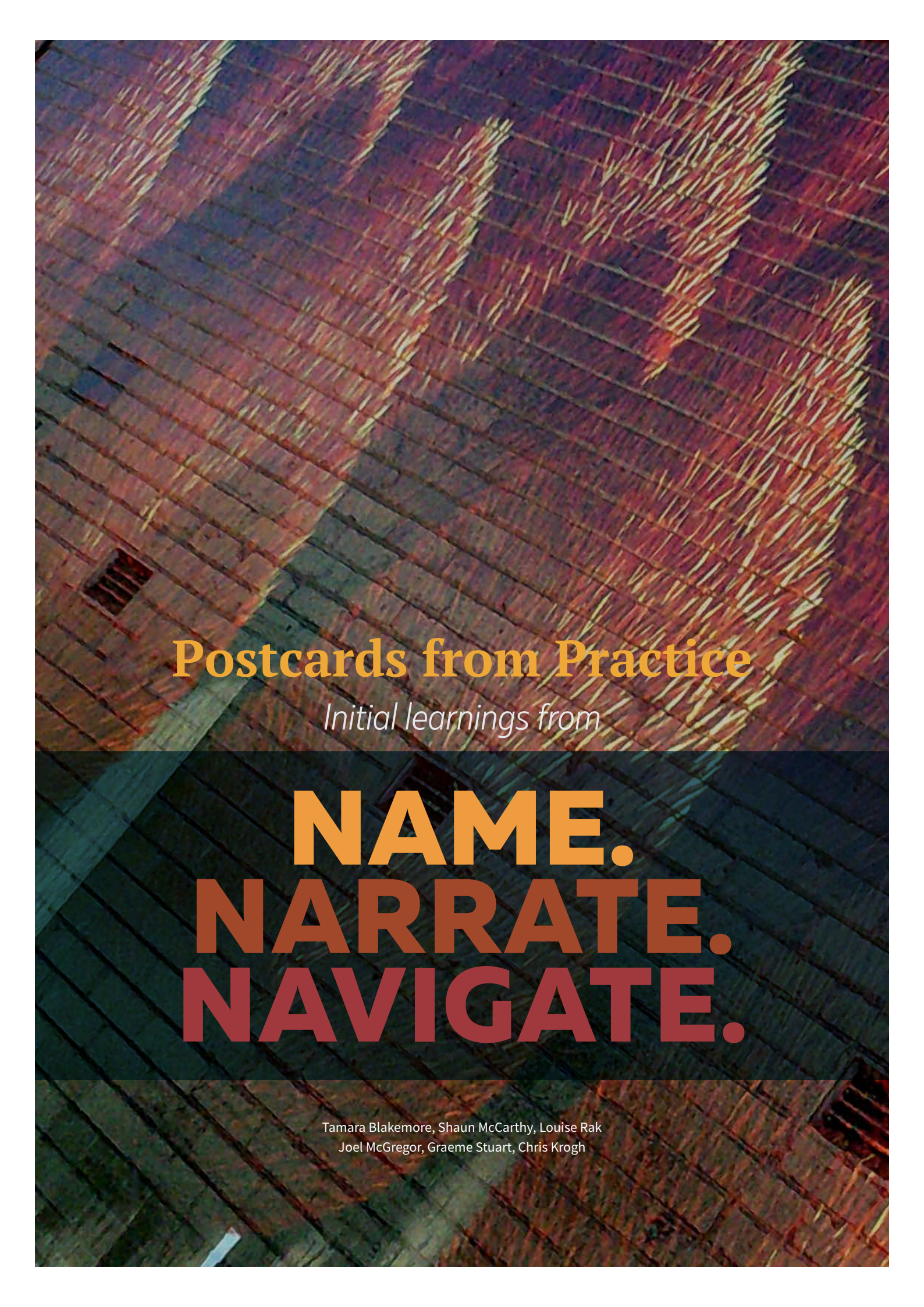




Postcards from Practice

Initial learnings from

**NAME.
NARRATE.
NAVIGATE.**

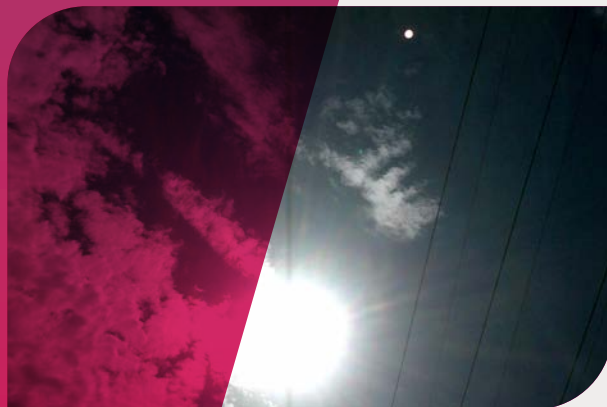
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Postcards from Practice: Initial Learnings from the Name.Narrate.Navigate Program



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This project is only possible with the input of the young people involved together with the collaboration of a community of invested practitioners and members of the steering committee.

To the young people we learn so much from, thank you for taking the time to participate in this project and for sharing your stories and creative works with us. All images in this report are part of the visual data from the pilot program and are produced with the consent of the artist.



This report was prepared as documentation of the interim findings for the project funder. A final report will be completed at the conclusion of the project.

Special thanks to the cultural leadership and guidance of Auntie Elsie Randall and Felicity Cocuzzoli.

The work conducted in this project takes place on Awabakal, Wonnarua and Worimi lands. We wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of these lands and pay our respect to elders past, present and emerging. The project acknowledges cultural trauma past and present, the proud histories of our lands and waters, and that the overrepresentation of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island persons in the criminal justice system is a national crisis.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary and discussion of the initial learnings from the Name.Narrate.Navigate (NNN) pilot program.



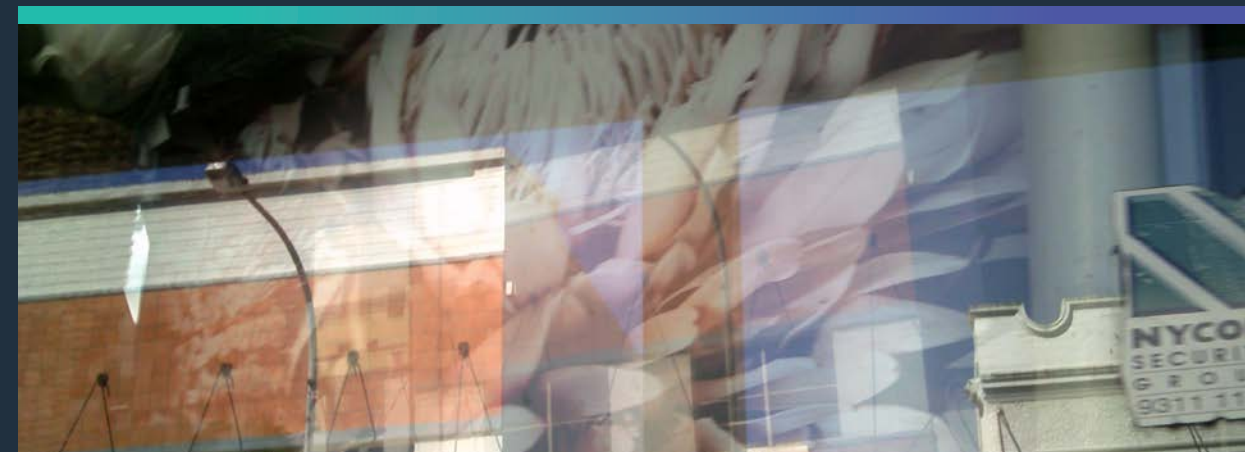
NNN is a preventive intervention program focused on psychoeducation and skill development for young people at increased risk of using violence, those already using violence in their interpersonal, family and domestic relationships, and the cross-sector workers who support them.

It aims to increase knowledge and skills, strengthen adaptive behaviour and build connections for greater confidence and coping.

NNN was developed and is continuously improved by a program of community-based participatory research involving Aboriginal elders, community members, practitioners, peak bodies and young people. It is distinct from other preventive intervention initiatives in its dual focus on working with young people *and* practitioners.

NNN emphasises trauma-informed, culturally responsive and parallel process in practice.

The program is evidence-based and informed by experiential learning, universal design and dialectical behaviour therapy, and it uses creative, participatory methods including mindfulness and photovoice. It explores how young people and workers name, narrate and navigate violence in individual and community life, and how they engage with key drivers of violence, including emotional literacy; communication skills; empathy; power and control; blame, shame and choice.



Young people (referred by justice, education and community service partners) engage in a program of interactive group workshops, while practitioners learn from and alongside young people through engaged professional development themed around program content, emerging findings and feedback.

KEY PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

of the program include emphasis on:

- mindful participation
- reciprocal communication
- validation of trauma
- building new skills.

These practice principles acknowledge the unique, yet seemingly ubiquitous, challenges of working with young people who are at risk of, or already using, violence.

These young people commonly exist as part of a cross-over cohort; they are simultaneously victims and perpetrators, characteristically disadvantaged and disengaged from services, and often described as 'hard to reach' and 'harder to engage'.

METHODS used in the program, such as photovoice, encourage storytelling, are consistent with Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing, and have been demonstrated as effective in supporting vulnerable populations to reveal novel and expressive insights into complex and challenging experiences.

This report details the background of the NNN program, the core practice principles and program components, along with initial learnings from the young people participating in the program. Findings related to practitioner outcomes will be reported in a separate report and peer-reviewed publications.

SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS

Summary of Initial Learnings from Young People

- Participants in NNN identify 'invalidation' as a potential driver of violence. They describe not feeling seen and heard, and their experiences dismissed or diminished by peers, family, workers and systems, which leads them to use violence to communicate and sometimes find a connection with others.
- Exploring empathy with NNN participants highlights that 'putting yourself in someone else's shoes' can be more or less difficult depending on whether someone has put themselves in yours. Between genders, empathy was variously associated with grief, loss and socially sanctioned schemas of what can be talked about.

- For the young people we have worked with, the experience and exercise of power and control is pervasive, structural and systemic in their everyday lives. We have also observed that it is enacted through gendered dynamics in unexpected ways.
- Female participants in NNN experienced naturalistic restoration in their relationships with peer offenders and victims. This was observed in acts of sharing, caring and co-creating.

Participants identified 'invalidation' as a potential driver of violence

- Experiences of naturalistic restoration highlighted the power of place and positionality, and what is possible and permissible in reaching resolution and restoration for these young people.

NAME.NARRATE. NAVIGATE.

The Name.Narrate.Navigate (NNN) pilot program is funded under the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) Community Grants Hub Scheme to address youth-perpetrated violence through collaborative community-engaged response. Consistent with the third and fourth action plans of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*¹, NNN has a dual focus on community-engaged intervention and cross-sector improvement for safer families and communities.

NNN is practice-driven and research-informed.

It builds on cross-sector collaboration² identifying youth-perpetrated family and domestic violence as a key issue in the Hunter Region of NSW. In particular, violence perpetrated by young women is becoming more prevalent and severe in the region.

Despite an engaged service sector, the challenges for those responding to this issue include a lack of appropriate and accessible services, an unmet need for existing service providers and the need for programs that are trauma-informed and culturally appropriate. Unique in the context of violence prevention and intervention programs, NNN holds dual aims of working both with young perpetrators and the service and support sectors surrounding them. In doing so, it addresses an identified gap in the availability of appropriate services by not only providing a service, but also by engaging cross-sector service providers and the community in the design and delivery of the program for sustained outcomes.

NNN simultaneously explores (both with young perpetrators and service providers) naming, narrating and navigating violence.

It examines the role of violence in individual and community life; its roots in trauma, disconnection and invalidation; and how practice with young people who use violence can be transformed by creative, participatory approaches that are trauma-informed,

culturally sensitive and anchored in relationality and reciprocal communication.

NNN HAS SIX MAIN COMPONENTS (see Figure 1): the program for young people, professional development, a practitioner working party (that acts as a community of practice), an engaged steering committee, a cultural reference group and action research.



FIGURE 1 : NNN KEY COMPONENTS

¹ Council of Australian Governments. (2010). *National plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010–2022*. ² Blakemore, 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. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 54, 341–356; ³ Blakemore, T., Rak, L., Agllias, K., Mallett, X., & McCarthy, S. (2018). Crime and context: Understandings of youth perpetrated interpersonal violence among service providers in regional Australia. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, 2, 53–69.

The program for young people is informed in evidence-based practice and process by Kolb’s experiential learning model³, Universal Design⁴, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy⁵ and Radically Open Dialectical Behaviour Therapy⁶, as well as the invitational work of Alan Jenkins⁷ and the photovoice work of Wendy Fitzgibbon⁸.

The theory of change underpinning the program centres around six achievements and change related to knowledge, skills, behaviour, confidence, connection and coping (consistent with the DSS score matrix). To effect the theory of change, both the activities undertaken and the practice and process of the work are trauma-informed, culturally responsive, place-based and relationally driven.

Ethics approval has been granted by the Human Research Committee of the University of Newcastle, NSW Department of Education, NSW Department of Justice and AIATSIS. The program content was developed (and is continuously improved) through an action research process involving subject matter experts, an Indigenous cultural reference group and leadership, collaborative input from cross-sector service providers and, importantly, input of young people in the community. Young people who participate in the program are referred through justice, education and community service providers. Young people who are referred through justice have already pleaded or been found guilty of interpersonal, family and domestic violence charges. Young people who are referred through the education system are identified as being at increased risk of using violence (either through their own experience of

violence or through their exposure to violence in the family, community or school setting). Young people who are referred through the community are engaged with an ongoing service provider and are likely to be at increased risk of using violence, or already using violence but have not been involved with the criminal justice system.

The eight-week program involves young people meeting for an initial assessment and orientation to the program before proceeding to a series of six weekly small-group workshops.

The workshops are run in an active, experiential learning style and focus on emotion, voice, empathy, power and control, and choice.

Learning and exploration occurs through movement, discussion and the production of visual images.

The program is inclusive of a variety of learning styles and abilities, and it is paced to maximise safety and self-regulation. An exit interview in the final week of the program explores achievements and links to ongoing services, supports and community mentoring. The master skills of program graduates are recognised in this process and honoured through opportunities to gain employment with the program in roles that best meet their interests and identified skills and strengths.

Learning from participants in the program is an important part of continuously improving the program’s implementation. A program of community-based participatory

research provides a framework for the NNN project. Information is gathered throughout the program using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, cultural yarning and ethnographic reflections from practitioners and sector staff, pre-post assessments, photovoice work, anonymous postcards to practice and feedback forms from participants. De-identified data are analysed and learnings are shared with the collective practitioner working party, the program steering committee and the cultural reference group to stimulate opportunities for shared learning and informal and peer-to-peer professional development and mentoring. In this aspect of the work, there is a clear and intentional focus on parallel process and building the trauma-informed and culturally responsive skillset of workers by engaging in reciprocal communication processes.



⁴ Kolb, D. (2015). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education Inc. [universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/](https://www.universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/) ⁵ Grohol, J. M. (2020). An overview of dialectical behaviour therapy. *PsychCentral*. Retrieved 1 June 2020 from <https://psychcentral.com/lib/an-overview-of-dialectical-behavior-therapy/> ⁶ Radically Open. (2020). About RO DBT. Radically Open. Retrieved 1 June 2020 from <https://www.radicallyopen.net/about-ro-dbt/> ⁷ Jenkins, A. (1990). *Invitations to responsibility: The therapeutic engagement of men who are violent and abusive*. Dulwich Centre Publications; ⁸ The Howard League for Penal Reform. (2016). *Supervisable. Exploring community supervision using photovoice*. The Howard League for Penal Reform. <https://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Supervisable.pdf>

The steering committee includes representatives from key funders and practice sectors (police, Department of Communities and Justice, Department of Education, Department of Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Regional NSW, CatholicCare, Singleton Family Support and Justiz Social Justice Org).

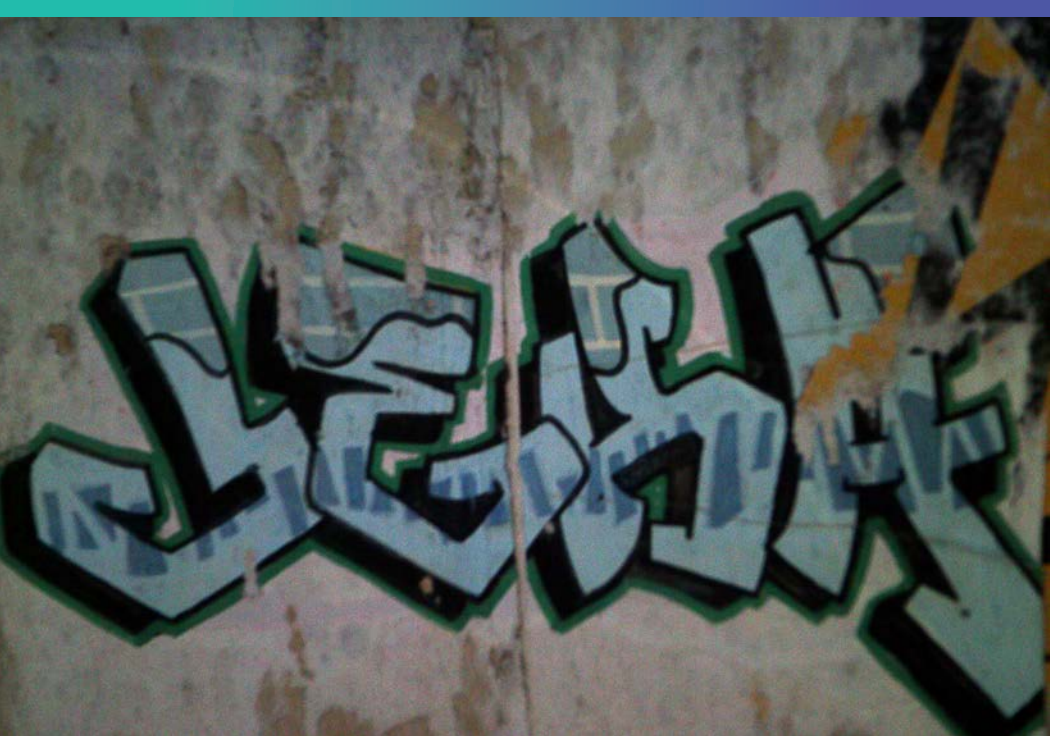
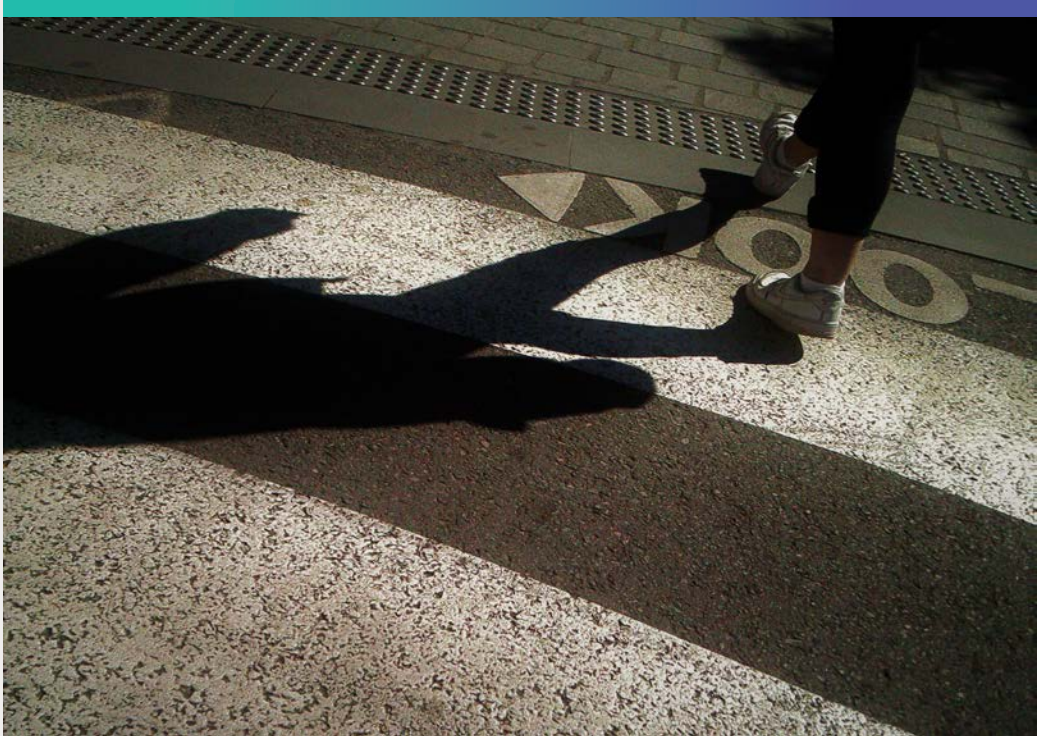
Members provide governance, support and leadership for the program and its incorporation into the practice landscape. Members of the practitioner working party can nominate to be trained as program facilitators and offer priority support to participants and their families upon exiting the program. Members of the practitioner working party, cultural reference group and steering committee are also involved in ongoing action research to support the program's implementation and evaluation.

To date there have been five steering committee meetings, five practitioner working party meetings and five cultural reference group meetings. Opportunities for professional development have included masterclass sessions with international practitioner-academic Wendy Fitzgibbon, community sector showcase and

intensive two-part training for community members and provision of training to DV liaison, education and out-of-home-care sector staff.

Evaluation of the NNN initiative will involve analysis of de-identified information collected (with consent) throughout the course of the program. This will include quantitative data collected from orientation and exit interviews (and tools including the Strengths and Soft Spots Inventory)⁹, as well as session rating scales (using the DSS-endorsed Scott Miller Child Session Rating Scale).¹⁰

It will also involve qualitative analysis of data collected in the orientation and review sessions through the adaptation of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (CAARS) tool.¹¹



In-depth interviews will be conducted by an independent evaluator with consenting participants post-program, and with the sector workers supporting them. In-depth interviews, focus groups and ethnographic reflections from practitioners and workers will also be examined with Louise Rak (Program Manager), who is undertaking a PhD in Social Work that explores the narratives surrounding young women who use violence in their relationships and effective practice in these contexts. A series of collaboratively written practice-oriented publications and accessible media will also be produced in partnership with members of the practitioner working party, steering committee and cultural reference group.

⁹ Based on the work of Egan, G. (2002). *The skilled helper: A problem-management and opportunity-development approach to helping* (7th ed.). Brooks/Cole Publishing Co. ¹⁰ Miller, S. D., & Duncan, B. L. (2000). *The outcome and session rating scales: Administration and scoring manual*. Institute for the Study of Therapeutic Change. <https://www.schillingcts.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Scott-Miller-EnglishManual.pdf> ¹¹ Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. (2013). *The Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (CAARS): Working together to prevent child abuse and neglect—Final report*. <http://www.aracy.org.au/documents/item/127>

The Hunter Region is widely acknowledged as a key test site for new policy initiatives, including the NDIS and integrated service centres

PILOT SITE

HUNTER LOCATION

The Hunter location of the NNN program (in particular the Lower Hunter and Port Stephens and Newcastle areas) is significant. The region is widely acknowledged to be a key test site for new policy initiatives, including the NDIS and integrated service centres. While not unique, the region is characterised by both considerable strengths and challenges and, in comparison to the rest of the country, it fares worse in terms of unemployment, youth unemployment and Year 12 completion rates. High rates of child protection reports, out-of-home-care placements, and domestic and family violence (DFV) in the region, particu-

larly around sites of declining heavy industry, further contextualise a region that is rich in potential but characteristically disconnected from education, early intervention and opportunity. Not unrelatedly, the region is also recognised as an epicentre of historic institutional child sexual abuse.

The intergenerational effects of abuse that occurred across church dioceses in the Hunter are evident in the above socioeconomic outcomes.

Despite these challenges the Hunter region is also characterised by a steely resilient community, with a committed

and skilled human service workforce that has real and long term ties to people and place. The relative stability of the region and its workforce supports community-driven, ground-up solutions to the challenges faced here.

Characteristic differences across the Newcastle, Maitland, Cessnock and Port Stephens communities identify particular needs and intervention opportunities.

With high state-based rankings of DFV, including youth-perpetrated violence, Maitland represents a key site of the pilot intervention.

Within the Maitland local government area (LGA), 9% of domestic violence-related assaults in 2019 were allegedly perpetrated by young people under 18 years (compared with 7% in NSW).

The Cessnock LGA represents the most disadvantaged pilot site, with significant issues of unemployment, school completion, mental health problems and a lack of access to technology. The Cessnock community has an Indigenous population that is higher than the state average (7.2% compared with 2.9% in NSW), making it an ideal site for working with Indigenous young people at risk of experiencing and/or using violence in their relationships.

Interventions in the Port Stephens LGA is likewise sensitive to indicators of poor youth participation and

wellbeing in the context of high state rankings for DFV. In Port Stephens, in-school interventions are being explored in collaboration with education partners.

The Newcastle LGA site represents the least disadvantaged site by demographic indicators but, in its regional context, it is a central hub of service provision, including the location of out-of-home-care placements. The Newcastle implementation site explores partnerships to address complex needs clients through collaboration with in-situ services and supports.

IMPLEMENTATION

When implementing a pilot program, it is important to consider the test and trial sites and the referral pathways towards program participation.



SELECTED SITE

The site was identified as a key partner given the rates of young people reported to have been cautioned and warned by police

The NNN pilot program is funded for delivery across the Hunter Region, including Maitland, Cessnock, Singleton, Newcastle and surrounding communities. In practice and application, these sites differ in characteristics and opportunities (as noted above), with young people sometimes residing in one community but attending schooling, and particularly services and supports, in another community.

To date, pilot work has been conducted in the Maitland community with young people who have perpetrated DFV and are current clients of Juvenile Justice. The young people involved reside in the communities of Maitland (and outskirts), Raymond Terrace (Port Stephens), and Cessnock and its surrounds. The pilot has also been delivered in the Port Stephens community (at a local Primary School) with young people in Year 6.

“There is a strong school community committed to making a difference in young people’s lives.”

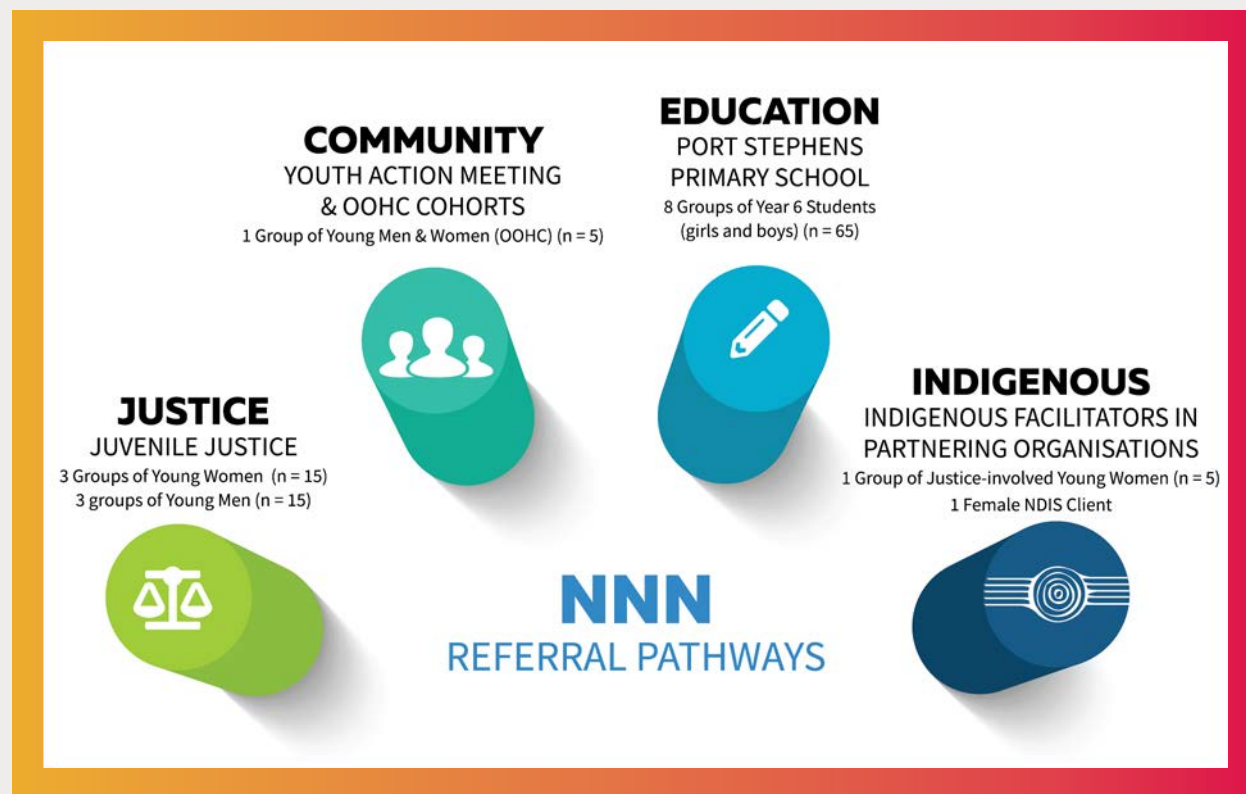
This site was identified as a key partner given the rates of young people reported to have been cautioned and warned by police in relation to violence; the rates of in-school suspensions, cautions and warnings for violence; and the rate of DFV across the community, meaning likely victimisation and lived experience among young people, which increases their assessed risk of using violence.

However, it is also a strong school community that is committed to making a difference in young people’s lives, and it has teachers who were willing to commit to the program.

In collaboration with our Indigenous practitioners and cultural leads, the program has been delivered to young Indigenous women who have both experienced and used violence in their family and domestic relationships.



The program has been held across Maitland and Newcastle sites, and based on community consultation, community-based delivery of the program is being planned for collaborative pilot work with young people who are on cautions and warnings for violence, and who have used violence in community care settings. The following graphic provides indicative numbers of young people seen through each of the pilot work/referral pathways. A geographical breakdown is not presented given the movement across sites by young people in their communities.



NNN REFERRAL PATHWAYS

FIGURE 2 : PATHWAYS OF YOUNG PEOPLE SEEN

BACKGROUND

Across Australian communities, DFV is a complex, serious and growing issue requiring coordinated and contextualised responses.

A recognised unmet need is collaborative community-engaged responses that are specifically targeted at young people who perpetrate violence in their relationships with partners, parents and carers. The term 'adolescent family violence' is used by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare¹² to describe violence perpetrated by young people against family members.

In this definition, violence perpetrated by young people includes physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse, as well as a range of behaviours used to control, coerce and threaten parents, carers, partners and siblings.¹³ It is also acknowledged that behavioural problems associated with violence commonly extend to other contexts, including school, peer groups and the broader community.^{13,14}

¹² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2019). Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: Continuing the national story 2019. Cat. no. FDV 3.
¹³ Fitz-Gibbon, K., Elliott, K., & Maher, J. (2018). Investigating adolescent family violence in Victoria: Understanding experiences and practitioner perspectives. Monash Gender and Family Violence Program. ¹⁴ Henggeler, S. W., Schoenwald, S. K., Borduin, C. M., Rowland, M. D., & Cunningham, P. B. (1998). Multisystemic treatment of antisocial behaviour in children and adolescents. Guilford Press. ¹⁵ Schoenwald, S. K., Brown, T. L., & Henggeler, S. W. (2000a). Inside multisystemic therapy: Therapist, supervisory, and program practices. Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders, 8(2), 113-127

SCOPE & SCALE

Data on the incidence and prevalence of adolescent-perpetrated violence across Australia is limited by jurisdictional differences in data collection and reporting.

ANALYSIS

Analysis of NSW Bureau of Crime (BOSCAR) statistics provides a useful index of the scope, scale and seriousness of the issue. In the period January to December 2019, 3,929 young people aged under 18 years were charged by NSW Police for domestic violence-related offences (including murder; domestic violence-related assault; sexual assault; indecent assault; abduction and kidnapping; intimidation, stalking and harassment; malicious damage to property; and breach apprehended violence order). This represents 7% of all alleged domestic violence-related offences proceeded against by Police in this period. In addition, there are many instances of DFV in which police do not lay charges or where an

apprehended violence order is issued without charges being laid. Consistent with prior reporting, across each type of domestic violence-related offence, the majority of alleged offenders were male, and their victims were female (and usually related to them). For alleged offenders aged under 18 years, 70% were male and 30% were female, whereas for alleged offenders aged over 18 years, 83% were male and 17% were female. Thus, the proportion of female alleged offenders declines in adulthood while the proportion of male alleged offenders increases in adulthood.

¹⁶ NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics, Domestic Violence Statistics for NSW. https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_pages/Domestic-Violence.aspx ¹⁷ Freeman, K. (2018). Domestic and family violence by juvenile offenders: Offender, victim and incident characteristics. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.



INTERVENTION APPROACHES

Effective intervention for youth-perpetrated violence is underpinned by an understanding of risk and protective factors and static and dynamic drivers of offending behaviour.

⁸A Howells, K., & Day, A. (2003). *Readiness for anger management: Clinical and theoretical issues*. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23, 319–337; Howells, K., & Day, A. (2006). *Affective determinants of treatment engagement in violent offenders*. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 50, 174–186; Howells, K., Day, A., Bubner, S., Jauncey, S., Williamson, P., Parker, A., & Heseltine, K. (2002). *Anger management and violence prevention: Improving effectiveness. Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, No. 227. <https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/tandi227.pdf> ¹³Glick, B. (2003). *Aggression replacement training—A comprehensive intervention for aggressive youth*. *Correctional Psychology: Practice, Programming, and Administration* (pp. 14-11-14-20). Civic Research Institute; Glick, B., & Gibbs, J. C. (2011). *Aggression replacement training: A comprehensive intervention for aggressive youth* (3rd ed.). Research Press; Glick, B., & Goldstein, A. P. (1987). *Aggression replacement training*. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 65, 356–362. ²⁰Apsche, J. A., Bass, C. K., & DiMeo, L. (2011). *Mode Deactivation Therapy (MDT) comprehensive meta-analysis*. *The International Journal of Behavioral Consultation and Therapy*, 7, 46–53. ²¹Henggeler, S. W., Schoenwald, S. K., Borduin, C. M., Rowland, M. D., & Cunningham, P. B. (1998). *Multisystemic treatment of antisocial behaviour in children and adolescents*. Guilford Press. ²²Routt, G., & Anderson, L. (2016). *Building respectful family relationships: Partnering restorative practice with cognitive-behavioural skill learning*. In A. Holt (Ed.), *Working with adolescent violence and abuse towards parents: Approaches and contexts for intervention* (pp. 15–33). Routledge. ²³Cultural & Indigenous Research Centre Australia. (2017). *Youth on track: Social outcomes evaluation*. <http://www.youthontrack.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/circa-evaluation-final-report.pdf> ²⁴Changing Habits and Reaching Targets CHART Procedure, Juvenile Justice, NSW Department of Justice. (2012). <http://www.juvenile.justice.nsw.gov.au> ²⁵Flood, M., & Kendrick, V. (2012). *LOVEBITES: An evaluation of the LOVEBITES and Respectful Relationships programs in a Sydney school*. University of Wollongong. <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2969&context=artspapers> ²⁶Thomson, K., Dietrich, K., Daffern, M. D., & Ogloff, J. R. P. (2012). *Adolescent violent intervention program: Moderate intensity*. Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science. ²⁷Ogloff, J. R. P., & Davis, M. R. (2004). *Advances in offender assessment and rehabilitation: Contributions of the risk-needs-responsivity approach*. *Psychology, Crime and Law*, 10, 229–242. ²⁸Lipsey, M. W. (1992a). *The effect of treatment on juvenile delinquents: Results from meta-analysis*. In F. Losel, D. Bender, & T. Bliesener (Eds.), *Psychology and law: International perspectives* (pp. 131–143). Walter De Gruyter; Lipsey, M. W. (1992b). *Juvenile delinquency treatment: A meta-analytic inquiry into the variability of effects*. In T. D. Cook, H. Cooper, D. S. Cordray, H. Hartmann, L. V. Hedges, R. J. Light, T. A. Louis, & F. Mosteller (Eds.), *Meta-analysis for explanation: A casebook* (pp. 83–127). Russell Sage Foundation. ²⁹Wilson, D. B., Bouffard, L. A., & MacKenzie, D. L. (2005). *A quantitative review of structured, group-oriented, cognitive-behavioral programs for offenders*. *Criminal Justice & Behavior*, 32, 172–204. ³⁰Glick, B., & Gibbs, J. C. (2011). *Aggression replacement training: A comprehensive intervention for aggressive youth* (3rd ed.). Research Press. ³¹Swan, S. C., Gambone, L. J., Caldwell, J. E., Sullivan, T. P., & Snow, D. L. (2008). *A review of research on women's use of violence with male intimate partners*. *Violence and Victims*, 23(3), 301–314. ³²Chesney-Lind, M., & Shelden, R. (2014). *Girls, delinquency, and juvenile justice* (3rd ed.). Wadsworth. ³³Moore, E., Gaskin, C., & Indig, D. (2013). *Childhood maltreatment and post-traumatic stress disorder among incarcerated young offenders*. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 37(10), 861–870. ³⁴Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2010). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (5th ed.). Anderson Publishing.

Interventions implemented in Australia have included (but are not limited to) anger management programs¹⁸, aggression replacement training¹⁹, mode deactivation therapy²⁰, multisystemic therapy²¹ and programs such as Step-Up²², Youth on Track²³, CHART²⁴, LOVEBITES²⁵ and Adolescent Violence Intervention Program.²⁶

*Effective programs are underpinned by the principles of risk, need and responsivity,*²⁷

which guide the development of programs that are fit for purpose. They match the approach, content and delivery to the risk posed by the offender, and they attend to modifiable criminogenic needs through cognitive-behavioural intervention. Common elements of effective programs include meaningful and sustained contact; behaviour-oriented, skill-focused and multi-modal delivery; programs evaluated by their developer; delivery of programs external to the justice system; program sensitivity to systemic contexts; and targeting of higher-risk cases.²⁸

*Cognitive-behavioural techniques are a mainstay of most programs*²⁹ and commonly attend to the need for emotional regulation, communication and problem-solving skills.

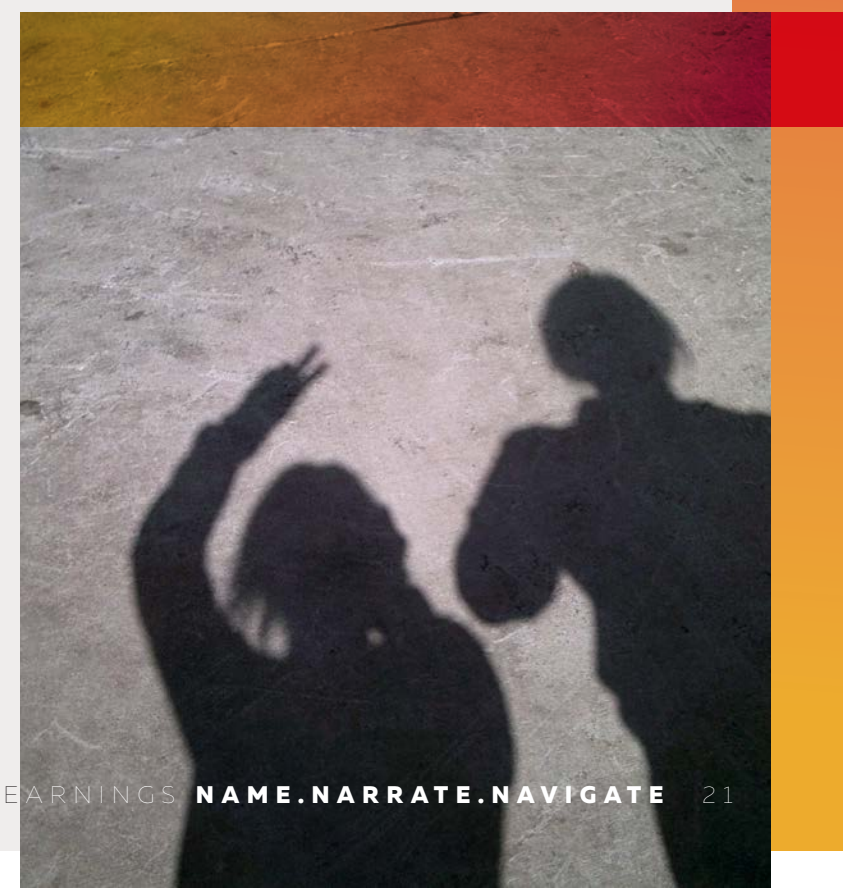
Critical to the effectiveness of all interventions (irrespective of program model, content and structure) are facilitator skill, implementation integrity and program fidelity.³⁰

Among the characteristics of effective programs, a significant gap exists in relation to trauma (including cultural trauma) and how this influences the use of violence by young men and women. This is despite evidence that the majority of young perpetrators have experienced early and sustained trauma at the interpersonal, familial, community and systemic levels throughout their childhood and adolescence.³¹ Rates of punishment for young people who perpetrate violence vary based on their socioeconomic and racial background,³² with those from lower socioeconomic and/or minority racial backgrounds more likely to be charged and incarcerated.³³

Trauma-informed interventions that focus on cognitive-behavioural and mindfulness strategies for improved communication, emotional regulation and interpersonal problem solving have been used with adult offenders across settings with favourable outcomes.³⁴

These approaches deserve exploration with young perpetrators, but doing so requires cross-sector upskilling

on trauma and its impact across gender, age, culture and community. Knowledge of these drivers of occurrence and outcomes of violence can help support the development of ground-up, embedded and engaged approaches to youth-perpetrated violence.



PROGRAM THEORY OF CHANGE

THE THEORY OF CHANGE³⁵
underpinning the NNN pilot program suggests new knowledge, skills and behaviours, together with greater confidence. Coping and a sense of connection can assist young people involved with NNN to improve their life circumstances, wellbeing and safety. Working from a trauma-informed and culturally sensitive ethos, NNN recognises that for this to happen, *“Young people need skills and abilities to recognise, regulate and communicate their emotions, needs and urges; empathy to respond to others and themselves; an understanding of power and control, blame and shame; and opportunities to explore what positive choices might look like in their lives.”*

FIGURE 3 : Traditional program logic assumes that, *‘magic happens’ somewhere between inputs, outputs and outcomes.* Unpacking the theory of change that happens here is important—understanding what changes and what that involves gives focus to the work and its outcomes. The ‘magic’ in NNN (Figure 3) is found in both the content and practice contained in small-group workshops for young people.

- In these workshops, there is a focus on:
- skills to recognise, regulate and communicate emotions, needs and urges (emotional literacy)
 - communication skills
 - empathy to respond to others and themselves
 - an understanding of power and control
 - awareness of the potential impact of blame and shame
 - opportunities to explore what positive choices might look like in their lives, particularly in relation to the use of violence.

³⁵<https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/how-does-theory-of-change-work/>

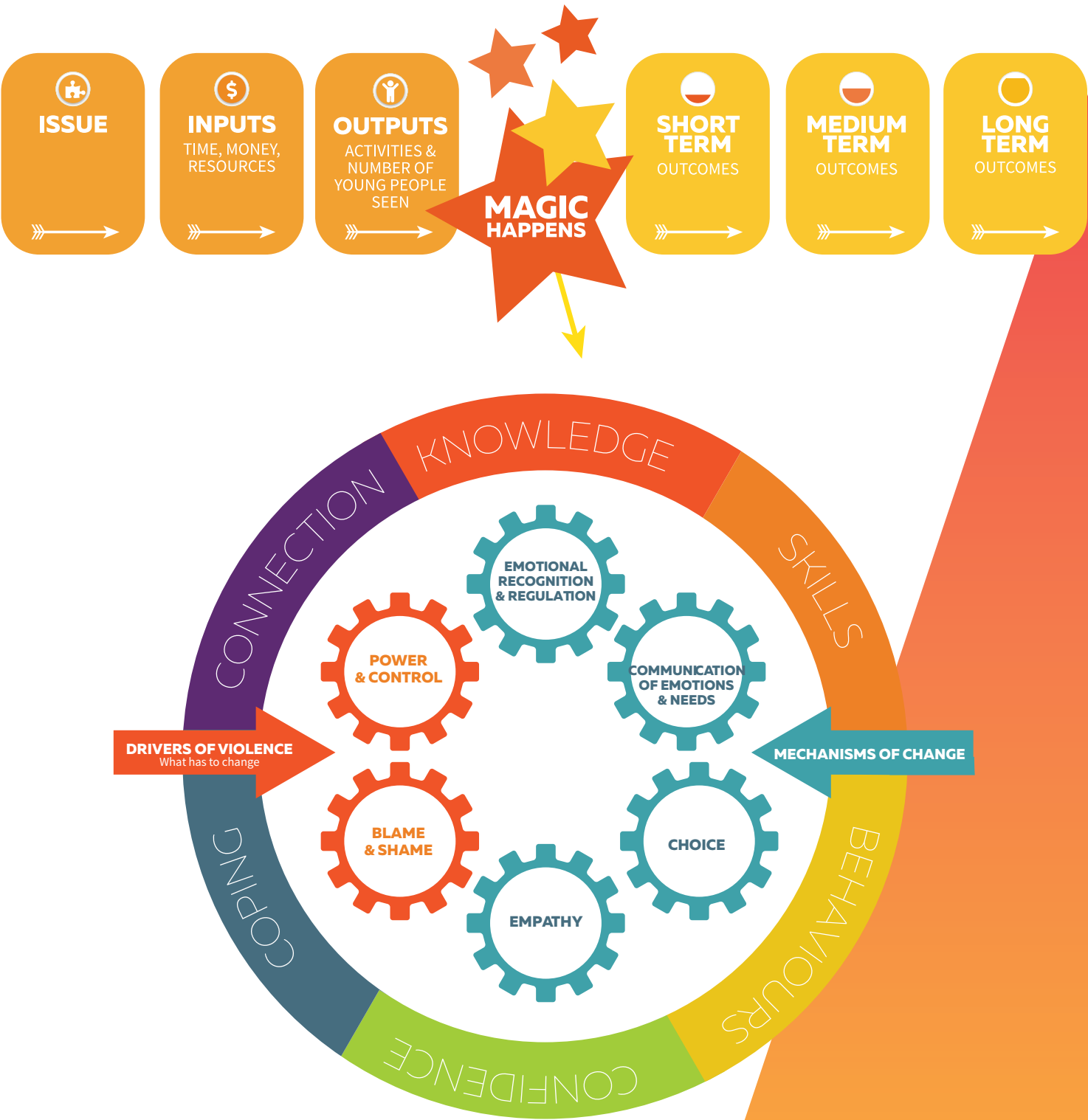


FIGURE 3 : THEORY OF CHANGE

CORE PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

This section identifies the core practice principles of the NNN pilot program



³⁶ Chiesa, A., & Malinowski, P. (2011). Mindfulness-based approaches: Are they all the same? *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 67(4), 404–424. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20776> ³⁷ Coholic, D. A., & Eys, M. (2016). Benefits of an arts-based mindfulness group intervention for vulnerable children. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 33(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-015-0431-3> ³⁸ Lineham, M. M. (2014). *DBT skills training manual* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

ONE

MINDFUL ENGAGEMENT

Although definitions of mindfulness vary and many mindfulness-based interventions employ different mindfulness meditation techniques,³⁶ mindfulness is often taught by helping people become aware of breath, body, thoughts or other present moments, resulting in a subjective experience in a non-judgemental way.³⁷

IN NNN, MINDFUL ENGAGEMENT OCCURS PRIMARILY BY ENCOURAGING PARTICIPANTS TO:

- participate in a range of interactive or experiential activities, including photovoice work (see below)
- take notice of what they observe during the workshop
- describe what they observe through a range of media, including group discussion, taking photos and writing postcards to practice.

TWO

RECIPRICOL COMMUNICATION

Reciprocal communication involves responsiveness, self-disclosure, warm engagement and genuineness. It requires facilitators to make themselves vulnerable to participants and express this vulnerability in ways that can be heard and understood by them.

RECIPROCITY IS IN THE SERVICE OF THE PARTICIPANTS, NOT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE FACILITATORS.

Reciprocal communication is usefully balanced with irreverent communication, which focuses on curiosity, frankness and humour in engaging as a co-learner in the process. In NNN, facilitators share their experiences in relation to the skills and concepts being discussed. It is even better if facilitators can share their own attempts (and especially their failures) with drama and humour. This can provide valuable modelling in how to apply skills and how to respond to vulnerability in a non-judgemental fashion. Irreverent communication can help challenge or change direction in the work by frankly observing or being curious about what is observed in the group.

THREE

VALIDATION PARTICULARLY OF TRAUMA

Validation means acknowledging participants' experiences and perspectives, and acknowledging their perceptions as being true (or at least understandable). It does not necessarily mean agreeing with participants, and it does not mean that perceptions cannot be questioned.

VALIDATION CAN IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH ACTIVE LISTENING AND BY REDUCING NEGATIVE REACTIVITY, DEFUSING ANGER AND REDUCING FEELING THE NEED TO JUSTIFY ACTIONS.

Validation of trauma can help build knowledge that can motivate skill building and self-awareness for participants in managing distress. Four key practices that help validate participants' experiences and emotions are:

- paying attention by being attuned, noticing and responding to cues in context, reflecting back both content and feeling without judgement
- 'reading minds' by sensing and seeking out 'what's underneath' the observed behaviour
- understanding even if you do not agree, and trying to see the roots of behaviour.³⁸

FOUR

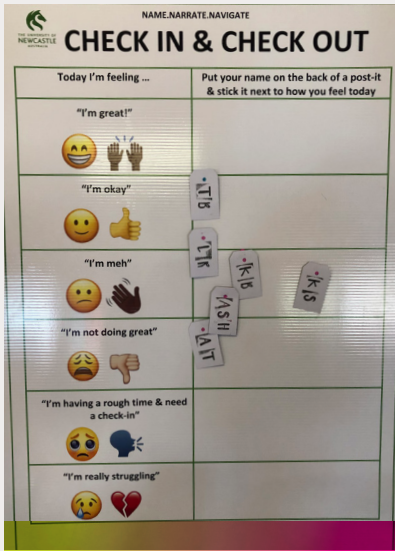
SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Reflecting the theory of change underpinning the program, there is a focus on building new knowledge, skills, behaviour, confidence, connection and coping for participants in the program in relation to the six key topics in Figure 3 on page 26..

CORE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The NNN pilot program with young people involves a one-on-one assessment and orientation session, six group-based workshops and an exit one-on-one review and forward planning meeting.

EACH OF THE SIX GROUP WORK SESSIONS INCLUDE SIX CORE PROGRAM COMPONENTS, AS OUTLINED BELOW.



ONE CHECK IN/CHECK OUT

Each group session starts and finishes with participants and facilitators sharing a check-in and check-out process using a large A1 board.

Participants can choose to keep their check in/check out anonymous or show their check in. Participants know that facilitators will check in with them if they select one of the bottom three ('I'm not doing great', 'I'm having a rough time & need a check in' or 'I'm really struggling'), but they will do so in a way that is safe and non-identifying.



TWO PARTICIPATORY MINDFULNESS

The program includes a key focus on building skills for mindfulness but includes intentional times throughout each group session where participants engage in participatory mindfulness activities.

These involve young people in activity that requires concentration and sustained focus. The activity shown here requires young people to balance an egg on its end. It can be quite frustrating, and some participants question if it can be done, but once some people succeed, there can be pride and congratulations for those who manage to do it.



THREE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The program content for experiential learning, knowledge development and skill building.

The program generally includes three short activities per group session that engage participants in experiential learning for knowledge development and skill building. The photo depicts the shoebox activity in the empathy session.

Young people are presented with a prepared shoebox and asked to think about what it would be like to walk in this person's shoes, what their story might be, what might be happening in their life, how they might feel, and what they might be thinking and doing in their life. In the second part of this activity, the young people build their own shoebox to show what it might be like to walk a day in their shoes (e.g., things about their life, how they feel, what they know about themselves and what they need).

ORIENTATION	
EMOTIONAL RECOGNITION	COMMUNICATION SKILLS
EMPATHY	POWER & CONTROL
SHAME & BLAME	ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE
REVIEW	

FIGURE 4 : STRUCTURE OF NNN PROGRAM



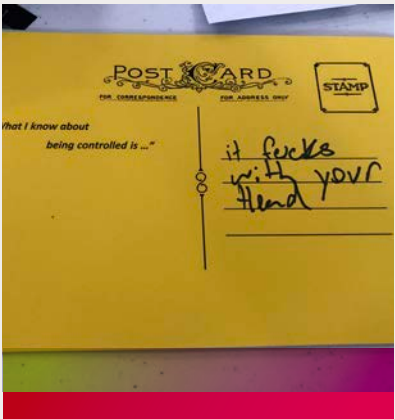
FOUR PHOTOVOICE

Taking and making photos, theming photos and adding narratives.

Photovoice is an important part of the workshops and associated research. Each session includes a photo-making excursion where young people and facilitators take a walking tour of the local area to create photos around themes explored in the session.

The following session starts with inspecting, theming and adding narratives to the photos taken during the previous session.

This activity engages the participants in descriptive and observational mindfulness, models focus, and is a non-judgemental and curious exploration of a product they have made. Narratives of violence and its key component drivers are elicited through exploration and discussion of the photos created.



FIVE POSTCARDS TO PRACTICE

Modelling reciprocal communication.

Each session gives young people an opportunity to anonymously contribute a postcard to practice to tell the practitioners something they wish adults knew (related to the session's focus).



SIX SESSION RATING

Each week, the young people anonymously rate the session, noting whether they felt heard and engaged, and whether the activities were meaningful to their experience.



FINDINGS

These learnings highlight the experiences of young people and the role of violence in their lives, and provide indicative insights into the value of the practice approach piloted.

INITIAL LEARNINGS

INVALIDATION EMPATHY POWER CONTROL

This report presents the initial learnings from the program. The learnings discussed in this report relate to identified drivers of violence (invalidation; empathy; power and control) and provide insights into restorative and place-based practice approaches. Photos made by the participants in the pilot are presented alongside emerging themes, related evidence and implications for policy and practice.

³⁹ Atkinson, J. (2002). *Trauma trails, recreating song lines: The transgenerational effects of trauma in Indigenous Australia*. Spinifex Press. ⁴⁰ Lombard, N. (2013). Young people's temporal and spatial accounts of gendered violence. *Sociology*, 47(6), 1136–1151.

INVALIDATION

Narratives revealing 'invalidation' as a potential driver of violence offer a new insight into youth-perpetrated violence

NNN locates young men and women (for whom violence is both an 'activity' and an 'experience')³⁹ within an epistemological framework designed to prioritise their knowledge, language, understanding and social constructs of violence.⁴⁰

This approach and the participatory nature of the program underscore the importance of hearing narratives of interpersonal violence. In 'feeling heard', young people in the group were better able to gain new skills and build confidence and connections to support change.

Experiences of 'feeling heard' were explored with participants in program content focused on communication skills and adaptive strategies for hearing others and being heard.

Narratives in these sessions identified a common theme of 'not being heard' (and, by extension, having experiences and feelings invalidated) as a driver of violence. Young people (across genders and cohorts) spoke about being invalidated not only by their family and peer groups, but also (too frequently) by the systems and practitioners that were supposed to support them.

They described using violence when they felt invalidated (particularly by systems and those in roles or positions of authority) as a way of 'being heard' (i.e., as a form of communication).

They also described using violence when they felt invalidated (usually by peers or family members) as a way of 'being like', or forming belonging and a connection with, others.

Narratives revealing 'invalidation' as a potential driver of violence offer a new insight into youth-perpetrated violence.



Invalidation has been acknowledged as a neglected dimension of gender-based violence and is expressed through minimisation, denial and disbelief, and embedded in interpersonal and institutional interactions.

However, to date, it has not been identified as a potential driver of violence. Studies of young offenders, commonly identify immediate gratification (and fun), retribution or interpersonal hostility, social conformity, material needs, substance use and boredom as key reasons for crime (although not specifically violence). The emerging findings from NNN may relate to motivations for crime conceptualised in the literature as constructs of ‘vulnerability’ and ‘insecurity’ and being ‘denied agency and respect’.

It is also worth considering how factors including (but not limited to) communication skills and capacities and the privileging of these by systems and services may compound experiences of invalidation.

Hearing and giving voice to narratives of NNN participants may address this

and meet the noted need for practice examples to deepen the understanding of motives for crime related to vulnerability and insecurity.

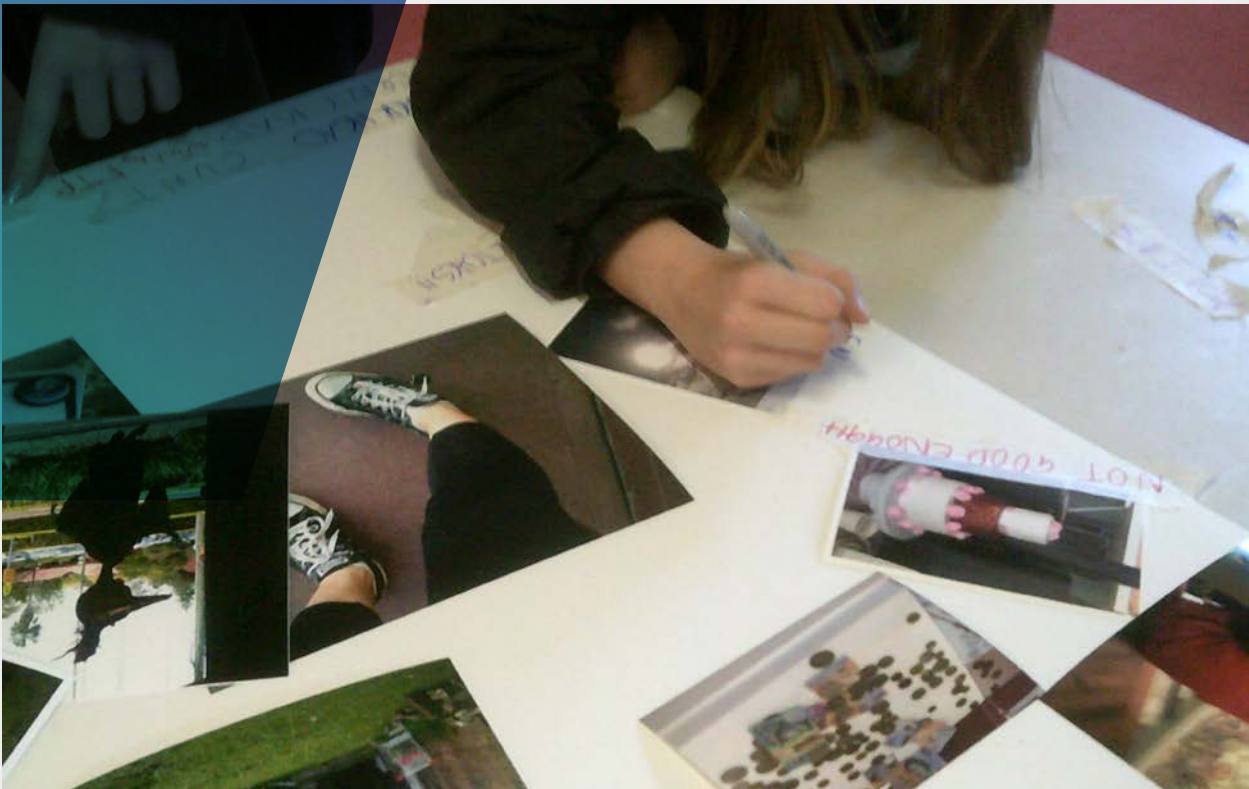
Acknowledging the statistical reality that in youth cohorts, like adult ones, the majority of violence is perpetrated by males, primarily towards women, emerging findings from NNN also provide insights into the experience and use of violence by young women. In work to date, all of the young female perpetrators of violence involved in NNN have also identified themselves as victims of violence.



For many, their earliest recollections of violence against them were of male perpetrators (usually inside the family unit), but the majority of their recent violent offences have been against females.

A large body of practice, wisdom and theoretical analyses suggests that female violence is a manifestation of previously unresolved anger stemming from their own experiences of oppression, powerlessness and violence.

Yet a more nuanced approach, suggests that understanding the female-directed nature of young women’s violence also requires appreciating the social, cultural, community and gendered contexts of their lives.



Consistent with other studies, for young women participating in NNN, these contexts were characterised by multiple and serious disadvantages, psychological distress (and mental illness) and routine exposure to violence.

Family lives were commonly a source of anger, frustration and shame for young women in NNN because family members were perpetrators of, or failed to protect them from, violence and abuse. Young women frequently lived in mother-headed households where fathers were often absent or minimally present. *Narratives from NNN often highlight a gendered sense of the inevitability of victimisation and self-reliance.*

These are exemplified by the quote from one participant:

The sense of not being able to rely on others has been commonly reported for young women who use violence.

For young women in NNN, being ‘let down’ by a woman extended from familial experiences with mothers, grandmothers, sisters and other female kin to teachers, carers and caseworkers (across predominantly female occupations in the social service and support sector). These findings are consistent with

those that highlight being mistreated and let down by friends, family and those around them and being denied agency and respect as key drivers of violence for young women. They also echo the findings of work highlighting that mothers of young female perpetrators are commonly described as emotionally (if not physically) neglectful, and the absence of felt safety and security in the home fuelling an extreme need for connection.

“YOU KNOW A MAN WILL HURT YOU, BUT A WOMAN WILL ALWAYS LET YOU DOWN.”

⁴¹ Salter, M. (2012). Invalidation: A neglected dimension of gender-based violence and inequality. *International Journal for Crime and Justice*, 1(1), 3–13. ⁴² Sampson, A., & Themelis, S. (2009). Working in the community with people who offend. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12, 121–137. ⁴³ Putnins, A. (2010). An exploratory study of young offenders’ self-reported reasons for offending. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 21(6), 950–965. ⁴⁴ Sampson, A., & Themelis, S. (2009). Working in the community with people who offend. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12, 121–137. ⁴⁵ Batchelor, S. (2005). ‘Prove me the bam!’: Victimization and agency in the lives of young women who commit violent offences. *Journal of Community and Criminal Justice*, 52(2), 358–375. ⁴⁶ Putnins, A. (2010). An exploratory study of young offenders’ self-reported reasons for offending. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 21(6), 950–965. ⁴⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: Continuing the national story 2019. Cat. no. FDV 3. ⁴⁸ Fitzroy, L. (2001). Violent women: Questions for feminist theory, practice and policy. *Critical Social Policy*, 21(1), 7–34. ⁴⁹ Featherstone, B., and Trimble, L. (1997). Domestic violence and child welfare. *Child and Family Social Work*, 2, 147–159. ⁵⁰ Sommers, E. (1995). *Voices from within: Women who have broken the law*. University of Toronto Press.

EMPATHY

Increasing the empathic capacities of young people has been shown to decrease anger and aggressive behaviour and improve functioning of young offenders.⁵⁷

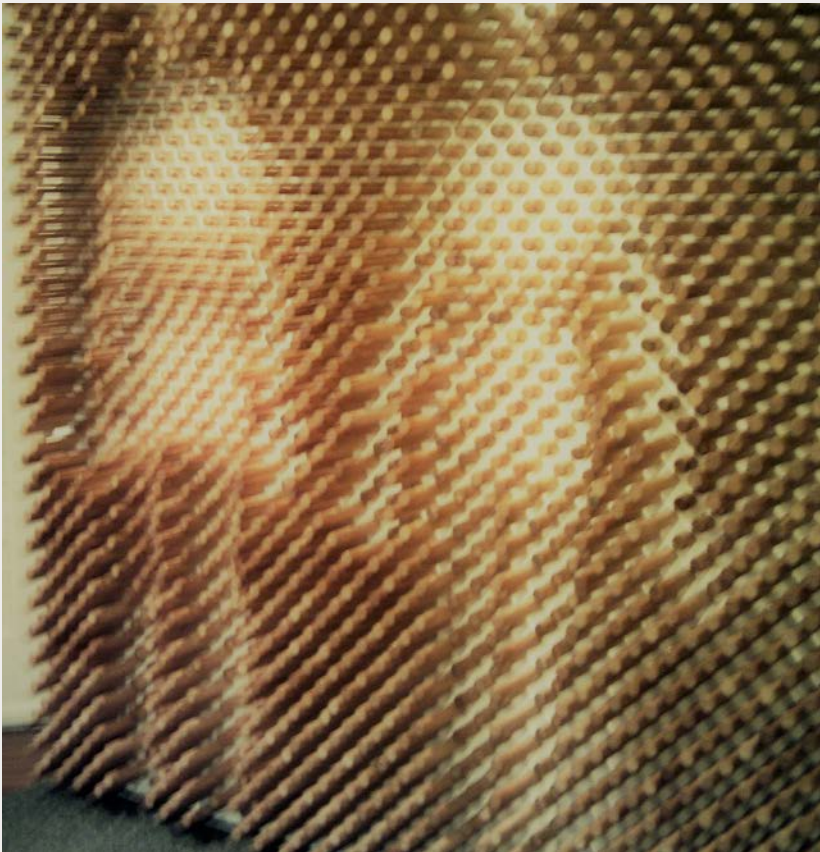
Empathy is associated with pro-social behaviours and is an important factor in assisting young people who perpetrate violence to reduce their aggressive and violent behaviours.⁵⁸

When adolescents feel oppressed and disempowered, their emotional development is negatively affected, resulting in reduced capacity to empathise.

However, the very act of empathy in the world of young people who engage with violence (as both an act and an experience) is complex and multifaceted.⁵⁹

Young people participating in the NNN program engaged with the idea of empathy through a simulated activity that required them to ‘put themselves in someone else’s shoes’.

Presented with a shoebox filled with miscellaneous objects and a pair of shoes, the young people were asked to provide a narrative for the owner of the shoes, and what they might be feeling, thinking and experiencing in their lives.



“For all genders, being vulnerable to empathy is important in reducing shame.”



For all genders, being vulnerable to empathy is important in reducing shame⁶⁰, while the vulnerability itself is difficult and risky and can be the point at which young people who use violence disengage and disconnect from the therapeutic process. This was observed in the implementation of NNN.

Male participants readily expressed and experienced both empathy and sympathy in this activity.

Conversely, young women (again across cohorts and contexts) were less willing or able to engage with the stories of others (particularly other women). Young women participating in the NNN program provided narratives to this experience that highlight:

‘you can’t tell someone else’s story.’

Young women made links between telling someone else’s story and ‘snitching’. For these young women, the act of empathy may have required a loosening of their tight hold on power and control in their relationships and interactions (even symbolically) with others. Evidence suggests that young women who perpetrate violence can be reluctant to do something for others (unless there is a transactional action in return) and reluctant to let go of power and control in their relationships with others.⁶¹



⁵⁷ Penton-Voak, I. S., Thomas, J., Gage, S. H., McMullan, M., McDonald, S., & Munafò, M. R. (2013). Increasing recognition of happiness in ambiguous facial expressions reduces anger and aggressive behavior. *Psychological Science*, 24(5), 688–697. ⁵⁸ Barriga, A. Q., Sullivan-Cosetti, M., & Gibbs, J. C. (2009). Moral cognitive correlates of empathy in juvenile delinquents. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 19(4), 253–264.; Bush, C. A., Mullis, R. L., & Mullis, A. K. (2000). Differences in empathy between offender and nonoffender youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(4), 467–478.; Calley, N. G., & Gerber, S. (2008). Empathy-promoting counseling strategies for juvenile sex offenders: A developmental approach. *Journal of Addictions & Offender Counseling*, 28(2), 68–85.; Llorca-Mestre, A., Malonda-Vidal, E., & Samper-García, P. (2017). Prosocial reasoning and emotions in young offenders and non-offenders. *The European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context*, 9(2), 65–73. ⁵⁹ Atkinson, J. (2002). *Trauma trails, recreating song lines: The transgenerational effects of trauma in Indigenous Australia*. Spinifex Press. ⁶⁰ Holt, A. (Ed.). (2015). *Working with adolescent violence and abuse towards parents: Approaches and contexts for intervention*. Routledge. ⁶¹ Morton, G. A., & Leslie, L. A. (2006). *The adolescent female delinquent*. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 17(1), 17–50.

POWER & CONTROL

Young people who feel oppressed, disempowered and non-efficacious are at significantly higher risk of holding anti-social beliefs and demonstrating anti-social behaviours. Several studies have highlighted that young offenders may display deficits in self-regulation when experiencing psychosocial stress and engage in fewer pro-social behaviours when presented with negative or challenging circumstances.⁶²

Aggressive responses can be understood as being more effective than empathic or perspective-taking responses in getting a young person's needs heard or met.⁶³

Findings from NNN note that young people describe both *explicit* and *implicit* experiences of power and control. They describe *explicit* experiences predominantly in recounting interactions with systems and structures (like school, the police, the court, caseworkers and mental health). These experiences were discussed in detail, highlighting sophisticated knowledge of systemic processes and strategies for navigation.

In contrast, *implicit* experiences of power and control were recounted primarily in relation to accepted (or acculturated) behavioural norms among peers, families, culture and community. Common among young men and women, and consistent with other findings,⁶⁴ was the lived and reported experience of their families and communities as dangerous and hostile places where violence can erupt at any moment. In these contexts, both young men and young women had learned that *violence was an acceptable and necessary means of establishing respect and reputation and ensuring self-preservation.*

Consistent with other findings⁶⁵, work with young women in NNN *has highlighted the experience of some young women joining in violent gang attacks* (with other female peers) to maintain their own safety in the community.

Young men in NNN also reported violence as a necessary means of establishing reputation and gaining respect of peers and family.

Other implicit experiences of power and control are notably gendered in experience. Young women participating in NNN were routinely observed to be 'hum-bugged' or harassed by family members (either by phone or in person) for cash on 'payday'. While noticeably annoyed by the intrusion on their time and space, the young women seemed unsurprised and largely unperturbed by these actions.

In contrast, young men participating in the program were never observed to have, nor did they report having, similar experiences. Similarly, when exploring relationship behaviours and acceptable boundaries of power and control, young men had definite and strong claims to a 'right' to know about their partner's whereabouts, who they spend time with, and access to their phone and social media accounts.

When exploring relationship behaviours and acceptable boundaries of power and control, young men had definite and strong claims to a 'right' to know about their partner's whereabouts, who they spend time with, and access to their phone and social media accounts.

In contrast, young women overall voiced seeming indifference to these actions, with some placing an extreme emphasis on relationships for their sense of identity, belonging, status, safety and/or the security of food and shelter.

While these findings are consistent with established understandings of gendered power and control dynamics in DFV, insights from NNN also highlight how these dynamics operate in female-perpetrated violence. It is noted across the literature that female-perpetrated violence, both in private and public, raises a series of interconnected and challenging questions for policy and practice.⁶⁶

These questions stem from the ways in which female violence has been constructed and understood. In simple terms, women who commit violent offences have, both in traditional and feminist constructions, been positioned as victims either of biology (with violence stemming from illness or inability) or oppression (where the use of violence stems from victimisation).

The problem with these constructions is that they lack attention to young women's agency, choice and accountability, and fail to recognise the complexity and contradictions that exist in everyday life.

As noted, all young women participating in NNN were victims of male-perpetrated abuse; yet they were also perpetrators of violence towards other women (among other crimes). Their narratives around implicit experiences of power and control primarily focused on their interactions with other women.

They recounted (and facilitators were witness to) female 'policing' of what was possible, permissible and probable within the community.

These experiences were heightened for Indigenous young women navigating inherent cultural obligations to kin and community, often in contexts of incomplete or unknown kinship networks.

These findings are consistent with those reported in research with incarcerated young women, where poor female role models and negative values about womanhood were common.⁶⁷

Experiences throughout the program also challenge assumptions and evidence that young people who use violence in their interpersonal relationships do so due to low self-control.⁶⁸

Instead, young people participating in NNN describe using violence in functional ways to respond to a complex array of drivers and needs.

Narratives of violence by young people who participated in NNN include examples of transactional violence⁶⁹ where violence was used as a commodity in exchange for friendship, housing, food and money.

Using violence in a transactional way was recognised and reported more by young women, but was evident in the experiences of young men. When discussing their transactional use of violence, young women commonly expressed grief and loss around their current situation, wellbeing and future prospects.



When discussing their transactional use of violence, young women commonly expressed grief and loss around their current situation, wellbeing and future prospects.

⁶² Barriga, A. Q., Sullivan-Cosetti, M., & Gibbs, J. C. (2009). Moral cognitive correlates of empathy in juvenile delinquents. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 19(4), 253–264.; Bush, C. A., Mullis, R. L., & Mullis, A. K. (2000). Differences in empathy between offender and non-offender youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(4), 467–478. ⁶³ Robinson, R., Roberts, W. L., Strayer, J., & Koopman, R. (2007). Empathy and emotional responsiveness in delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents. *Social Development*, 16(3), 555–579. ⁶⁴ Batchelor, S. (2005). 'Prove me the bam!' Victimisation and agency in the lives of young women who commit violent offences. *The Journal of Community and Criminal Justice*, 52(4), 358–375. ⁶⁵ Morton, G. A., & Leslie, L. A. (2006). The adolescent female delinquent. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 17(1), 17–50.

⁶⁶ P. Fitzroy, L. (2001). Violent women: Questions for feminist theory, practice and policy. *Critical Social Policy*, 21(1), 7–34. ⁶⁷ Morton, G. A., & Leslie, L. A. (2006). The adolescent female delinquent. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 17(1), 17–50. ⁶⁸ Koon-Magnin, S., Bowers, D., Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J., & Arata, C. (2016). Social learning, self-control, gender, and variety of violent delinquency. *Deviant Behavior*, 37(7), 824–836. ⁶⁹ Wilkinson, D. L., & Carr, P. J. (2008). Violent youths' responses to high levels of exposure to community violence: What violent events reveal about youth violence. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(8), 1026–1051.



Participants in NNN also described and evidenced use of coercive violence⁷⁰, where violence was used to control others for the advancement or gain of the offender.

Both the young women and young men used this type of violence, but overt recognition of it was less common among female participants. Finally, young people participating in NNN reported and were observed to commonly engage in explosive violence⁷¹, where violence occurred quickly and was difficult to control.

Participants of both genders used this type of violence, were most aware of this kind of violence and most commonly linked this type of violence to their involvement with the justice system. In narratives of violence (across all implementation sites and cohorts), explosive violence was the most common conception of violence among young people.



⁷⁰ Routt, G., & Anderson, L. (2014). Adolescent violence in the home: Restorative approaches to building healthy, respectful family relationships. Routledge.
⁷¹ Gallagher, E. (2004). Parents victimised by their children. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 25(1), 1–12.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

An unintended outcome of the NNN program was examples of naturalistic restorative outcomes observed for peer participants who have previously used violence against each other.

Restorative justice, from which restorative practice originates, prioritises victims—the people who are affected most by crime—by situating them at the forefront of the process.⁷²

Restorative justice unites individuals who have a stake in a particular offence in order to collectively distinguish and address their damages and needs, with the aim of mending and putting things as right as could be expected under the circumstances.⁷³

Critics of restorative justice argue that outcomes are rarely actualised remedially⁷⁴ and that the traditional process places an undue burden on the victim/survivor of the crime to quickly excuse and forgive the person who caused them harm.⁷⁵ The role of shame in restorative justice is also contested.⁷⁶

Proponents have suggested that shame and shaming are a fundamental aspect⁷⁷ of restorative justice, while critics argue that unskilled facilitators can misunderstand and misuse shame to the detriment of the process and the young person who has committed the offence.⁷⁸

As previously discussed, **shame and empathy can be pivotal points of engagement or disengagement with service and therapeutic practice, indicating that it needs to be carefully managed and considered.**

NNN follows restorative practice principles in the program's design and execution.

THESE PRINCIPLES ARE⁷⁹

1. Respect and Regard for All
2. Collaboration, Community, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
3. Fair Procedure and Reasonable Process.

As depicted in the photo below, collaborative acts of co-creation and learning in a peer environment led to experiences of caring and sharing for program participants.

The participants had often been co-offenders, but also, less frequently, victims and offenders against each other. For these young people, the effects of their own trauma—alongside and among complex community and cultural obligations, norms and expectations—meant that traditional models of restorative justice would only replicate structures of power and control, oppression and loss.

Instead, the participatory action of creative and collaborative action provided these young people with opportunities to make restoration in ways that also increased empathy and care.



⁷² Johnstone, G. (2013). Restorative justice: Ideas, values, debates. Routledge. ⁷³ Van Ness, D. W., & Strong, K. H. (2014). Restoring justice: An introduction to restorative justice. Routledge. ⁷⁴ Acorn, A. E. (2004). Compulsory compassion: A critique of restorative justice. UBC Press. ⁷⁵ Curtis-Fawley, S., & Daly, K. (2005). Gendered violence and restorative justice: The views of victim advocates. Violence Against Women, 11(5), 603–638. ⁷⁶ Harris, N., & Maruna, S. (2005). Shame, shaming and restorative justice: A critical appraisal. In D. Sullivan & L. Tift (Eds.), Handbook of restorative justice: A global perspective (pp. 452–462). Taylor & Francis. ⁷⁷ Van Stokkom, B. (2002). Moral emotions in restorative justice conferences: Managing shame, designing empathy. Theoretical Criminology, 6(3), 339–360. ⁷⁸ Harris, N., & Maruna, S. (2005). Shame, shaming and restorative justice: A critical appraisal. In D. Sullivan & L. Tift (Eds.), Handbook of restorative justice: A global perspective (pp. 452–462). Taylor & Francis. ⁷⁹ Holt, A. (Ed.). (2015). Working with adolescent violence and abuse towards parents: Approaches and contexts for intervention. Routledge.

CONCLUSION

This report has presented an overview of the NNN program, its development and design, and details of its implementation and delivery in the Hunter Region of NSW.

In this conclusion, these learnings are briefly summarised, and future directions for research are identified.

Initial learnings from the NNN program identify that youth violence is far from linear or straightforward in its motive, mechanism and meaning.

The young people demonstrated and shared insights into their use of violence, indicating that its use is far more complex than simply emanating from 'low self-control'. Instead, the young people involved in NNN described using violence in functional (and sometimes transactional) ways to respond to interconnected drivers and needs, many of which are underscored by the effects of their own trauma. Perhaps most powerful for the practitioners involved in NNN was the consistent stark presentation of invalidation as a driver of interpersonal violence.

Once people disclose abuse, if their experience is invalidated, this can exacerbate the impact of the abuse. For many of the young people we have worked with in NNN, experiences of victimisation commonly appeared to have been overshadowed, or even 'taken for granted', by systems and services in the context of their own use of violence. Many of the young women we worked with were aware of this, and some seemed to have assumed this mindset, but all were acutely attuned to any perceived experience of not being seen, heard, respected or believed. Narratives revealing 'invalidation' as a potential driver of violence (particularly for young women) offer a new insight into youth-perpetrated violence.

Fear of invalidation is often reported to be a powerful disincentive against disclosing experiences of violence, abuse and trauma.

While invalidation has been discussed in the literature as a common effect of violence, abuse and trauma (particularly in institutional settings), it has rarely been considered a driver of violence.

Further investigation is needed to explore whether invalidation underscores violence for both young men and young women equally. In the NNN program, the core practice principle of validating trauma and tackling invalidation (without excusing the use of violence) involves building capacity for conscious acts of empathy for the self and others.

As noted in the findings, the initial learnings from NNN suggest that, *empathy may be expressed and experienced differently by young men and young women who use violence.*

Observations made in the program to date—including that young men often expressed sadness, grief and loss more readily when tasked with 'putting themselves in someone else's shoes', whereas young women expressed reluctance to 'tell someone else's story'—raise questions for practice regarding the role of gender in empathy and what impact this has for violence prevention and intervention programs.

Consideration of grief, loss and injustice as drivers of young male violence presents an interesting avenue for further exploration,

especially alongside existing work in the field that is more commonly focused on regulating and managing anger, power and control.

In contrast, a greater emphasis is needed on understanding the role and relevance of power and control for young women and its impact on expressions of empathy. While the observed reluctance of young women involved in NNN to 'tell someone else's story' may have place-based and cultural meanings, it may also speak to the vulnerability that empathy invokes, and how any perceived loss of power and control may make young women living with and through violence feel unsafe.

The potency of place-based understandings of power and control has been highlighted in the initial learnings associated with NNN. Analysis of narratives from discussions and photowork regarding power and control identify that both implicit and explicit dynamics of power and control exist, each with a particular meaning to the community.

INITIAL LEARNINGS

The report has highlighted initial learnings from the program — in particular, the learnings achieved from working with young people at risk of, or already using, interpersonal, domestic and family violence.

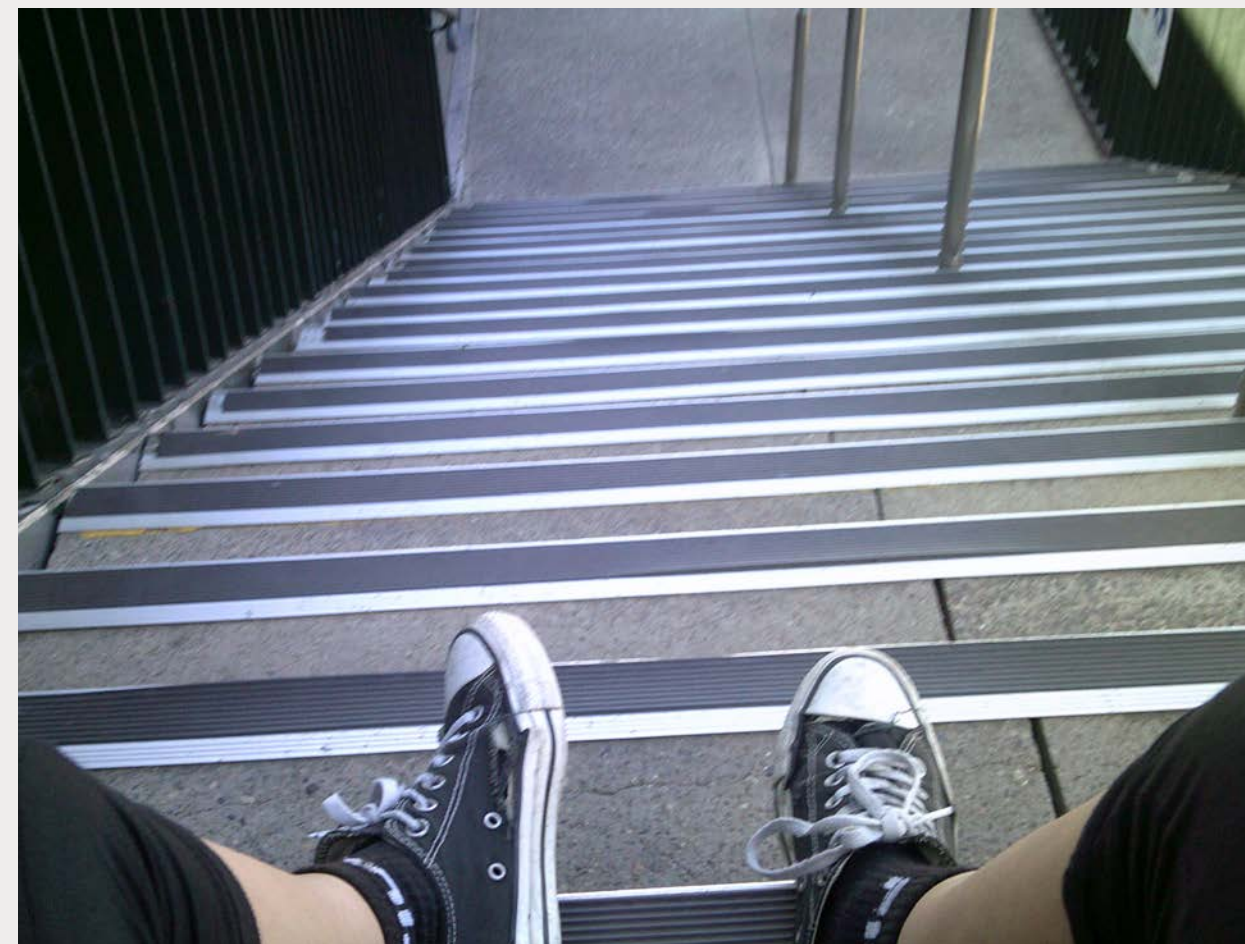


Implicit dynamics of power and control were more commonly discussed by young people in relation to ‘the way things are here’—identifying community norms, cultural practices and interconnections between families as dictating ‘how things happen’. Some of these implicit dynamics were common across genders, while others seemed gendered in their implementation and impact. For example, young women in NNN were routinely hassled for money, attention and time (while young men were not), yet conversely, young women reported that they were responsible for setting community standards and directing acts of retribution for perceived or actual wrongdoing.

Dynamics of power and control also underscore what types of violence are ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ to young perpetrators. *The young people we worked with seemed more able to readily identify and reflect on their experience or use of explosive violence, but less able to identify and discuss coercive or controlling violence.*

⁸⁰ Curtis-Fawley, S., & Daly, K. (2005). *Gendered violence and restorative justice: The views of victim advocates*. *Violence Against Women*, 11(5), 603–638.

Workers often lament that it is ‘hard to reach’ and ‘hard to engage’ these young people. And young people tell us that they often feel ‘unheard’ and ‘unseen’, particularly by services and systems that are there to support them.



How young people name, narrate and navigate violence has important implications for intervention and prevention. For many of the young people we have worked with in NNN thus far, violence seems to be an accepted part of everyday life among their peers, families and in their community. For some young people it was a commodity, for others a necessity, but for very few something unfamiliar or unexpected.

In these contexts, and reflecting on the learnings detailed in relation to invalidation, empathy, power and control, it was unsurprising to us that attempts at restorative justice conferencing had been unsuccessful or deemed unsuitable for the young people involved in NNN.

Critics of traditional restorative justice⁸⁰ conferencing formats note that the process can evoke shame and is built on an assumption that the victim and perpetrator both have

the capacity for articulating and rationalising actions and expressing empathy. An unexpected learning from the initial implementations of NNN is the naturalistic experiences of restoration between peer participants who had previously been victim and offender. Observations of the power of collaborative and creative approaches to bring about opportunities for understanding and connection warrant further investigation.

As highlighted in the executive summary, working with young people who use violence is unique in its challenges, yet seemingly ubiquitous in contemporary human and social services. Workers often lament that it is ‘hard to reach’ and ‘hard to engage’ these young people, and young people tell us that they often feel ‘unheard’ and ‘unseen’, particularly by services and systems that are there to support them. An undeniable challenge in this work is that young people who use

violence often exist as a cross-over cohort; they are simultaneously victims and perpetrators, characteristically disadvantaged, disengaged and developmentally on the precipice of young parenthood and potential (re) entry into the child protection and criminal justice systems.

Trauma-informed and culturally responsive preventive interventions for this cohort are critical

if we are to interrupt the intergenerational cycle of violence, abuse and trauma and address the role played by systems of service and support in that cycle. Tackling this task requires critical reflection on the positionality and privilege that we bring to our work as practitioners, as well as our assumptions, agendas and worldviews about what is possible and probable for young people who use violence.



PILOT PROGRAM

INNN

POSTCARDS FROM PRACTICE
Initial learnings from
NAME. NARRATE. NAVIGATE

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