



Review of the **Amplifying Voices** Program, Northern Territory

December 2025

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Opening Doors.
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Acknowledgement of Country

We wish to acknowledge that the Amplifying Voices Program took place on the traditional lands of the Larrakia people and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We recognise First Nations people as the custodians of the lands, seas and skies, with more than 60,000 years of wisdom, connection and relationship in caring for Country.

We work and live on stolen land and recognise that YWCA Australia has, and continues, to benefit from colonisation. We have a responsibility to acknowledge harm done and to work towards respect, recognition and self-determination of all First Peoples.

Acknowledgment of Living and Lived Experience of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and Homelessness, as created by Amplifying Voices participants:

"We acknowledge the individual and collective expertise of those with a living or lived experience of domestic, family and sexual violence, and homelessness.

We stand together as proud survivors with diverse experiences that reflect the resilience, compassion, creativity and bravery of other women and children who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence and homelessness.

We understand the complexity of each survivor's journey and the value of exchanging the knowledge from our experiences to lead and advocate for meaningful change.

Together we can be the most powerful agents for preventing and responding to family, domestic and sexual violence, and homelessness. Because personal is political and our personal commitment is to end violence, by ending our silence."

Thank you to all who contributed to this review

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the participants, stakeholders and YWCA staff who contributed to this review. Your insights have been invaluable, and they will guide future iterations of this project to ensure the experiences of those who follow are safer, better supported, and more meaningful.

We gratefully acknowledge the contributors listed below. Some others who supported this work have chosen not to be named, and we respect their decision.

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Definitions

Victim-Survivors

People who have experienced domestic, family or sexual violence and who identify with both surviving and reclaiming power beyond victimhood. This term acknowledges both the harm experienced and the resilience shown.

Program Participants

Individuals engaged in Amplifying Voices activities, including co-design, leadership training, advocacy projects and consultations. Participants may be victim-survivors, professional/experienced advocates, or sector stakeholders.

DFSV (Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence)

A broad term describing patterns of abusive behaviour including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and financial abuse, occurring in family, intimate or domestic relationships.

GBV (Gender-Based Violence)

Violence directed at someone because of their gender, gender identity, or gender expression. GBV is rooted in gender inequality and power imbalances and disproportionately affects women, girls and gender-diverse people.

Primary Prevention (of Gender-Based Violence)

Action taken to stop violence before it occurs by addressing the underlying drivers, such as gender inequality, harmful social norms, and discriminatory structures.

Co-design

A collaborative process where participants and stakeholders, especially those with lived experience, are actively involved in shaping, designing and improving programs, policies or services.

Lived Experience

Direct, first-hand experience, past or present, of a social issue(s) and/or injustice(s).

Lived Experience Leadership

Change-makers, innovators and leaders who have activated their lived expertise to inform, shape and lead their social purpose work (often in combination with their learned and practice experience) to directly benefit the communities they share those experiences with.

Lived Expertise

The knowledge and insights developed through lived experience, which provide unique understanding and solutions beyond academic or professional knowledge.

Lived Experience Leaders

Individuals who activate their lived expertise to lead advocacy, innovation, and change within their communities.

Advocacy vs. Activism

Advocacy: Working *inside* systems (e.g. government, services) to influence policy, practice and decision-making.

Activism: Driving change *outside* systems through grassroots organising, protest, or community action. Both are forms of lived experience leadership.

Abbreviations

AV – Amplifying Voices

AVP – Amplifying Voices Program

DFSV – Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

GBV – Gender-Based Violence

FDV – Family and Domestic Violence

NT – Northern Territory

CALD - Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

SRFV – Safe, Respected and Free from Violence (NT Government Prevention Grants Program)

ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics

AIHW – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

AIC – Australian Institute of Criminology

NCAS – National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Amplifying Voices Program is an advocacy and leadership program delivered by YWCA Australia in the Darwin and Palmerston region, Northern Territory. It was funded in 2022 by the Northern Territory Government as part of the Safe, Respected and Free from Violence (SRFV) Grants Program. The Program centres the voices of women and gender diverse people with lived experience of family and domestic violence in co-designed primary prevention activities, advocacy and leadership pathways.

In 2025, YWCA Australia conducted a review of the Program. The Review aimed to document the Amplifying Voices model, learn from participant and stakeholder perspectives, assess key achievements and outcomes, and inform future directions. The review was informed by a review of existing data and documentation, a literature review, participant surveys, semi-structured interviews, a sense-checking workshop, analysis and reporting. The review was conducted internally by the Amplifying Voices project team and the YWCA Australia Research and Evaluation Specialist. The draft report was peer reviewed by Dr Gretchen Ennis, prior to the final report.

Program overview

Amplifying Voices aimed to provide advocacy and leadership training for women and gender diverse people with lived experience of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSX) and homelessness. This included fostering culturally safe and inclusive spaces for First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) participants through collaborative partnerships. The Program aimed to build capability and supportive pathways for lived experience voices into advocacy, policy, and service design spaces, and challenge systemic barriers that do not consider the experiences of Victim Survivors.

The Program applied a highly intentional and carefully structured approach across three distinct streams:

1. Leadership and Advocacy Program
2. CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) Stream
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stream – Strong Mind Strong Spirit.

Key perspectives and insights

Participants and stakeholders shared the following perspectives of the Program:

- Participants and stakeholders described the Program as strengths-based, powerful and transformational

- Program achievements included the approach to design and development, stakeholder engagement and support, and sector learning and development
- Program influence was enhanced by co-designed activities and advocacy, that prioritised participant agency, choice and control
- Participant advocacy to NT Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence informed a subsequent announcement to explore the feasibility of a new DFV Service Hub to be co-designed with lived experience and sector representatives.

Amplifying Voices was described as carefully designed, structured and evidence informed. The model was deeply researched and provided a guiding framework that enabled space for co-designed iteration, flexibility and change. The Program effectively managed complexity across diverse individual and stakeholder requirements, power dynamics, and support needs.

Amplifying Voices participants exercised influence with agency and expertise across a range of different settings, including service planning and design, assessment of Safe Houses, the development of social work education resources, regional and national conference presentations, media engagement, research and advocacy, and a Ministerial briefing.

Outcomes

Program outcomes and impacts include:

- Increased participant knowledge and understanding of the structural and systemic drivers of DFSV
- Increased participant confidence and skills in lived expertise, advocacy and leadership
- Positive impacts for participants regarding personal safety, connection, agency and wellbeing
- Increased stakeholder knowledge, understanding and awareness
- Informed service design and planning
- A suite of co-designed tools and resources for continuing use
- Identified significant personal and professional change for participants and stakeholders.

The Program suggests key practice insights to inform other lived experience initiatives more broadly:

- Design takes time, research and support – one size does not fit all
- Relationships are key
- An integrated focus on participant strengths, agency and power, underpinned by feminist and trauma informed ways of working
- These ways of working require key staff supports
- Participant engagement is supported by embedded practices that enhance connection, safety, clarity, trust, respect, healing, and action.

Amplifying Voices has built impact over time, through:

- Engagement: to develop new relationships, increase knowledge, confidence and skills, and co-design the program
- Connection: with key stakeholders, advocacy and leadership pathways, and primary prevention initiatives
- Leading for change: where lived expertise leadership is recognised and valued, primary prevention initiatives and networks are strengthened, and participant advocacy informs and influences decision-makers for positive change.

Conclusion

Amplifying Voices is a highly valued and innovative lived expertise and advocacy program. The model demonstrates key principles and insights in practice, shaped by the Northern Territory context and requirements. The Program offers significant learnings for application more broadly.

1. Introduction

The Amplifying Voices Program is delivered by YWCA Australia in Darwin. The Program was funded in 2021 by the Northern Territory Government as part of the Safe, Respected and Free from Violence (SRFV) Prevention Program.

Amplifying Voices centres the voices of women with lived experience of family and domestic violence in co-designed activities, advocacy and leadership pathways. The Program has grown through learning alongside participants and builds on the foundations laid by other lived-experience-led initiatives in the Northern Territory, such as the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group and the NT Lived Experience Network. In addition, we acknowledge the breadth and depth of lived experience leadership across the Northern Territory that exists outside of formal programs, as well as the years of co-design and advocacy led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities, well before these terms were recognised and used within institutions.

1.1 Review aims and objectives

The Review aimed to:

- Document the Amplifying Voices model
- Learn from the perspectives and insights of participants and stakeholders
- Inform our practice and continuous improvement
- Understand program achievements and develop recommendations for the future.

1.2 Methodology

The Review employed a mixed methods approach, including:

- Review of existing program data and documentation. This included funding documentation, program logic and program plan, activity and workshop attendance figures, point-in-time participant and stakeholder feedback and reflections, meeting agendas and minutes
- Review of Baseline Assessment conducted by Her Story Consulting (including baseline surveys of 10 program participants and 13 program stakeholders)
- A review of relevant research and literature published in the last 5 years, with a focus on the role of lived experience in primary prevention, gender based violence and housing and homelessness. The review was conducted through an internet search for publicly available reports on research clearing houses such as ANROWS and APO Online, as well as a search of key government policy, peak body and practice publications
- Participant surveys, including point-in-time feedback (n = 16), and an online survey inviting participants to reflect on key questions for the review (n = 15)
- Stakeholder surveys, including surveys to reflect on key resources (n = 12)

- Semi-structured interviews (30 minutes) with participants (n = 4), stakeholders (n = 11) and the project team (n = 3), exploring key questions for the review
- Data collation and thematic analysis, tested through a sense-checking workshop with the Amplifying Voices Project Team, YWCA Data Analyst, YWCA Research and Evaluation Specialist, and Northern Territory General Manager
- Further analysis and drafting
- External peer review of the draft and final review reports by Dr Gretchen Ennes from Useful Projects.

1.3 This document

This document outlines key learnings and insights from an internal review of the Amplifying Voices Program. It is structured as follows

1. Introduction – this section
2. Program context and background
3. Amplifying Voices Program overview
4. Strong Mind Strong Spirit
5. Key perspectives and insights
6. Findings
7. Implications and conclusions.

Limitations of the Review

This Review is not an external program evaluation. It is an internal Review conducted by the Amplifying Voices Program team and YWCA Australia's Evaluation and Research Specialist. As such, there may be a risk of internal researcher bias. To mitigate risk, the Review was informed by a range of data sources and methods including a Baseline Assessment conducted by Her Story Consulting and participant and stakeholder surveys and interviews. Data was collated, analysed, and assessed in a 'sense checking' workshop by the Review Team. The Research and Evaluation Specialist developed the final analysis and report. The draft and final reports were peer reviewed by Dr Gretchen Ennes.

The following limitations are also noted:

- Baseline assessment was completed by external providers
- Respondents have had varying levels of engagement with the program
- The program model has engaged different cohorts at different timepoints over three years. The data used for this review is informed by participant cohorts engaged in the last year
- Some stakeholders are no longer in the same professional roles and could not be contacted for the Review
- Some data was collected at different timepoints, for different purposes.

- The Strong Mind Strong Spirit component was conducted externally, with limited ability to coordinate data collection methods.

2. Program context and background

Headlines:

- Domestic, family and sexual violence is a critical issue in the Northern Territory. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, and women from CALD backgrounds face particularly high risks due to intersecting structural inequalities.
- The research literature demonstrates the principles, values and potential of lived experience leadership, but there remains limited evaluation evidence about how this work is best supported, sustained and embedded in practice.
- Amplifying Voices and similar initiatives can help shift the system towards one that not only listens to people with lived experience, but is led by them, ensuring prevention efforts are both effective and just.

2.1 Introduction

People with lived experiences of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) and/or homelessness are at the heart of the Amplifying Voices Program. Lived Experience Leadership, Codesign and Primary Prevention are core components of the program that ensure the voices of those with lived experience are at the forefront of leading change in addressing domestic, family and sexual violence.

The following provides an overview of relevant context, research and evidence. It considers:

- Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) and primary prevention in the NT
- The role of lived experience leadership in leading change
- Key principles, practices and requirements to amplify lived experience leadership.

This overview was informed by literature from the last 3 – 5 years with a focus on the Australian context. Sources included government reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, web-based reports from research institutes and non-government organisations.

2.2 Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence in the Northern Territory

Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) is a fundamental human rights issue rooted in discriminatory systems and structures. Despite sustained prevention efforts, it remains a national crisis in Australia, affecting an estimated 8 million adults, or 41 per cent of the adult population (ABS 2023a), and contributing to a rise in homicides of women and children (AIC 2024). While DFSV occurs across all demographics and socioeconomic groups, it predominantly affects women, is most often perpetrated by men, and continues to disproportionately impact certain groups, particularly in the Northern Territory.

The NT has long experienced the highest rates of DFSV in the country. In 2021, the rate of domestic, family and sexual violence was three times higher than the national average and five times higher than in most other jurisdictions, while homicide linked to domestic and family violence was recorded at seven times the national average (Brown & Leung 2023). These figures reflect not only the severity of violence but also the limits of the system to respond, with services across the Territory reporting demand that exceeds capacity.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the Northern Territory experience domestic and family violence at rates far higher than non-Indigenous women and are more likely to experience severe forms of violence leading to hospitalisation or fatality (AIHW 2025a; Brown & Leung 2023). Intimate partner homicide is particularly pronounced, with the majority of victims in the NT being Indigenous women. These disproportionate impacts are the result of intersecting structural inequalities, including colonisation, systemic racism, and entrenched socioeconomic disadvantage, which shape both the prevalence of violence and access to appropriate supports.

Women with disability also face significantly higher risks in the NT. In 2021–22, 65 per cent of women with a disability reported experiencing domestic or family violence since the age of 15, compared with much lower rates nationally (AIHW 2025). Women with disability are more likely to experience repeated abuse, abuse from a greater range of people, and often face substantial barriers to accessing safe and appropriate services (AIHW 2023b).

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in the NT also face particular vulnerabilities. While NT-specific data is limited, national research shows that visa dependency, language barriers, social isolation and lack of culturally safe services can increase exposure to violence and limit help-seeking (AIHW 2024). The NT's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework identifies women and children from CALD communities as at elevated risk, acknowledging the need for more inclusive and culturally competent service responses (NT Government 2018).

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that DFSV in the Northern Territory is both more prevalent and more lethal than elsewhere in Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, and CALD women are among those most at risk, facing intersecting barriers that heighten their vulnerability and limit their access to safety.

2.3 Primary Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

DFSV is preventable. Research shows that societal attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality influence a culture that accepts, tolerates, or worse- actively encourages violence (Webster et al 2018; Cripps et al 2019). At the same time, promoting attitudes that normalise gender equality, in public and private life, can protect against DFSV (Webster et al 2018). According to Webster et al 2018, in findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS), the Northern Territory has not shown significant

improvements in attitudes rejecting gender inequality, compared to the rest of Australia. However, more recent analysis of the NT responses to the 2021 survey show that attitudes towards the rejection of violence against women and gender equality are improving in line with the rest of the country (ANROWS 2023).

‘Change the Story’ is a national framework for guiding approaches to preventing DFSV (Our Watch 2015). ‘Change the Story’ addresses gender inequality through a whole-of-population approach focused on ‘primary prevention’, which aims to prevent violence before it occurs (Our Watch 2021). ‘Changing the Picture’ emphasises underlying intersectional and discriminatory drivers of DFSV, and primary prevention principles that value self-determination, cultural safety, trauma informed practice and self-care, healing, holistic and strengths focussed approaches, intersectional disadvantage and allyship (Our Watch, 2018).

Our Watch has most recently advocated for primary prevention in the Northern Territory to address the underlying drivers of violence, by “changing the social conditions that give rise to this violence, reforming the institutions and systems that excuse, justify or even promote such violence, and shifting the power imbalances and social norms, structures and practices that drive and normalise it” (Our Watch, 2024).

2.4 Primary prevention and lived experience

Prevention initiatives have become more important than ever, and the Australian Government has called for new approaches (Campbell et al 2024). This coincides with a pivotal time for the lived experience movement across the social sector, with increasing demand to involve people with lived experience in social change initiatives (Cataldo et al 2024).

A Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches was conducted by a review panel to expand and strengthen prevention efforts with a particular focus on preventing homicides (Campbell et al 2024). The Review underlines the importance of prioritising the voices of people with lived experience, particularly the voices of people and communities from marginalised backgrounds including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrant and refugee communities, women and children with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ people, young people, older women and regional and remote communities. The Review recommended expanding ‘Change the Story’ beyond primary prevention, with a focus on accommodating evolving global evidence around prevention of violence across early intervention, response and recovery’ (Campbell et al 2024).

Gender inequality cannot be isolated from other forms of inequality because not all women experience DFSV the same. Women experiencing intersections of inequality based on discrimination such as racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and ageism have increased risk of violence overall, types of violence, and even more severe forms of violence. There is growing evidence to understand the systemic nature of the different experiences amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, children and young women, LGBTIQ+ people, and women with disability (Our Watch 2021, AIHW 2025a).

It is important that approaches to address DFSV amongst marginalised communities are led by these communities because mainstream approaches can be inappropriate, inadequate or even harmful. Unfortunately, these voices are often unheard, dismissed or tokenised, when they should be valued, amplified and legitimised. This is evident in literature documenting the experiences of people with lived experience in leadership and advocacy.

2.5 Lived experience leadership

Lived Experience Leadership is an emerging concept developed to give recognition to lived experience leaders. It is often misunderstood because it is not defined in the same way traditional leadership is used in mainstream settings where power is positioned over others and exists on a hierarchical continuum (Cataldo et al 2024).

Table 1: Key definitions

<i>Lived Experience</i>	Direct, first-hand experience, past or present, of a social issue(s) and/or injustice(s) (Sandhu 2019).
<i>Lived Expertise</i>	The knowledge and insights developed through lived experience, which provide unique understanding and solutions beyond academic or professional knowledge.
<i>Lived Experience Leaders</i>	Change-makers, innovators and leaders who have activated their lived expertise to inform, shape and lead their social purpose work (often in combination with their learned and practice experience) to directly benefit the communities they share those experiences with. (Sandhu 2019).

To fully understand Lived Experience Leadership, it is crucial to understand the relationship between power and lived experience leadership. People working within a Lived Experience Framework challenge the idea of ‘power over others’ and instead they embrace a type of power, termed ‘power of self’, grounded in self-agency and self-knowledge (Stewart et al 2022). ‘Power of self’ is foundational for developing lived experience leadership and often described by lived experience leaders as reclaiming power of self and using this power to uphold the principles and values of lived experience leadership (Stewart et al 2022).

Lived experience leadership is defined by the collective principles and values of the lived experience movement (Loughhead et al, 2020). ‘The Model of Lived Experience Leadership’ (The Model) developed by South Australian Lived Experience Leadership and Advocacy Network (LELAN) helps to conceptualise this definition (Hodges et al 2021).

Figure 1: The Model of Lived Experience Leadership (Hodges et al 2021)



The Model embeds six leadership themes and six values for effective lived experience leadership.

The six values (outer layer) reflect the way leaders from lived experience movements lead.

1. Integrity
2. Authenticity
3. Mutuality
4. Intersectionality
5. Stays peers
6. Shares power

The six themes define characteristics, qualities and skills for lived experience leadership.

The characteristics, qualities and skills for lived experience leadership are developed from broad experiential learnings from the victim-survivor journey, recovery, being part of the lived experience movement, engaging as a leader, as well as other domains of life (Loughhead et al, 2020).

Advocating Inside vs Activism Outside

While Lived Experience Leadership is increasingly being explored in research literature, it is not 'new'. It can apply both outside and inside systems to influence change. 'Activism' is a form of lived experience leadership which occurs outside systems and 'advocacy' is a form of lived experience leadership occurring inside systems (Wheildon 2022).

'Activism' is recognised as the roots of lived experience leadership witnessed throughout major historical social justice movements, which have made significant contributions to the development of health and social sectors. Some

Lived Experience Leaders report it is possible to achieve greater influence outside of the system, due to the systemic barriers they experience advocating for change within the system (Wheildon 2022; Stewart et al 2022).

The dynamics between institutional power and lived experience leadership inside and outside of systems is reflected in the history of the DFSV specialist sector. Early grassroots activism and direct action led to the establishment of women's refuges, recognition of DFSV as a social justice issue, and the development of specialist services and supports.

Over time, the specialist DFSV sector has become professionalised and shifted away from grassroots activism, resulting in lived experience becoming less visible within the sector and even devalued or stigmatised (Safe & Equal, 2025). This created a system shift away from community-led solutions towards an institutionalised approach that positions people with lived experience as service users and not decision-makers.

There are four common systemic barriers for people with lived experience engaged with systems:

Power and privilege replicating inequalities

- Sector-level and organisational cultures and practices that do not recognise their implicit and explicit power and privilege. This may lead to practices that control and oppress people with lived experience, limiting their ability to influence change and replicating inequalities and power imbalance (Wheildon et al, 2023)
- Privileging professional and technical knowledge and perspectives over lived experience and expertise (Lamb et al, 2020), thereby creating environments that limit understanding and contributions outside narrowly defined parameters (Sandhu 2017; Loughhead et al 2020).
- Pathways and opportunities that centre the voices of privilege and reflect their assumptions, without considering the need to tailor for more diverse perspectives and interests. (Cataldo et al 2024, Leaker et al 2024). This can mean those who do not 'fit' are excluded, while those who do are offered greater opportunities. (Wheildon et al 2023).

Stigma

Stigma is the most common barrier reported by people with lived experience, including workers who have lived experience. Stigma is experienced in different ways including concerns about risk and reputation, paternalistic practices, prejudice about lived experience knowledge and capacity, and lack of perceived value for lived experience engagement (Loughhead et al 2020).

Language used within organisations to describe people with lived experience and the way stories are framed and shared can stigmatise them as victims instead of experts and change makers (Sandhu 2017). Harmful language can reinforce societal stigma and further deter people with lived experience from engaging in lived experience activities and initiatives.

Disempowering structures and practices

Disempowerment is another common barrier recognised by people with lived experience and workers involved in lived experience leadership initiatives. Initiatives that are vague about the roles, processes, timelines, level of influence and expectations for people with lived experience cause feelings of uncertainty and incompetence (Lamb et al 2020; Wheildon et al 2023), which result in high levels of stress and burnout (Loughhead et al 2020).

People with lived experience report feeling disempowered to effectively influence policy and planning discussions because they are not adequately supported and resourced to engage in these activities. Advocacy for systems change requires leadership skills, deep knowledge, experience and resilience. However, lived experience initiatives often fail to provide adequate training, time and support for people with lived experience to develop lived experience leadership (Loughhead et al 2020).

Inadequate resourcing and unsustainable funding

The most common barrier reported by workers involved in lived experience initiatives is the lack of resources to do this type of work in a sustainable and ethical way. Lived experience initiatives often start as innovative pilot projects that are discontinued prematurely because of challenges securing long-term funding (Lamb et al 2020). Lived experience initiatives are resource intensive because they take time and extensive collaboration (Sandhu 2017), which requires adequate staffing and remuneration for the people with lived experience involved (Lamb et al 2020). Under-resourced initiatives can result in re-traumatisation for people with lived experience and burnout for staff (Leaker et al 2024). The biggest investment in this work is people. People with lived experience must be recognised for the value of their knowledge and expertise through consistent remuneration (Lamb et al 2020).

Conclusion

Domestic, family and sexual violence is a critical issue in the Northern Territory. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, and women from CALD backgrounds face particularly high risks due to intersecting structural inequalities.

Primary prevention frameworks, such as *Change the Story* and *Changing the Picture*, highlight the importance of shifting social norms, dismantling discriminatory structures, and centring self-determination, cultural safety and intersectional practice. These frameworks will only be fully effective if they are shaped and led by people with lived experience.

The literature demonstrates the principles, values and potential of lived experience leadership, but there remains limited evaluation evidence about how this work is best supported, sustained and embedded in practice.

Amplifying Voices and similar initiatives can help shift the system towards one that not only listens to people with lived experience, but is led by people with lived experience, ensuring prevention efforts are both effective and just.

3. Amplifying Voices Program Overview

Headlines:

- Amplifying Voices is a highly structured program co-designed with victim survivors
- The Program included three streams – the Leadership and Advocacy program, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse program, and Strong Mind Strong Spirit, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- Amplifying Voices participants co-designed the programs, as well as advocacy activities, tools and resources for use more broadly
- Participants engaged in a range of advocacy activities, at individual, service and sector levels.
- Participants also established an advocacy group that met with the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence to advocate for a women's DFSV Hub in Darwin, and continuing lived experience input into policy and program design going forward.

Amplifying Voices aims to engage young women and gender diverse people to exercise their lived expertise of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) in leading advocacy and influencing systems reforms through primary prevention activities, across the Darwin and Palmerston region.

Amplifying Voices was funded in 2022 by the Northern Territory Government as part of the Safe, Respected and Free from Violence (SRFV) Grants Program. SRFV aims to increase primary prevention capacity in the NT by investing in services and programs that challenge community attitudes and socio-political structures that enable the use of violence.

3.1 Program aims and objectives

By collaborating with victim-survivors and the community sector, Amplifying Voices aims to meet the following objectives:

- Provide advocacy and leadership training for women and gender diverse people with lived experience of DFSV and homelessness.
- Foster culturally safe and inclusive spaces for First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) participants through collaborative partnerships.
- Build supportive pathways for lived experience voices into advocacy, policy, and service design spaces.
- Challenge systemic barriers and policy and service models that are not working for Victim Survivors.
- Mutually learn and elevate the strengths of people with lived experience of DFSV and homelessness, to challenge and shift social norms and beliefs that drive DFSV.

3.2 Program components

Amplifying Voices is built around co-design, leadership development, and ongoing advocacy, with tailored streams for CALD communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The following outlines the three distinct program streams (see Appendix A for a detailed outline).

1. Leadership and Advocacy Program

- a. Co-design Group 1 – developed the design of the Leadership and Advocacy Program.
- b. Leadership and Advocacy Program Participants – women and gender-diverse people who completed the program to gain skills in advocacy.
- c. Advocacy Group – a group of program graduates who continue to lead advocacy actions and support community campaigns.

2. CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) Stream

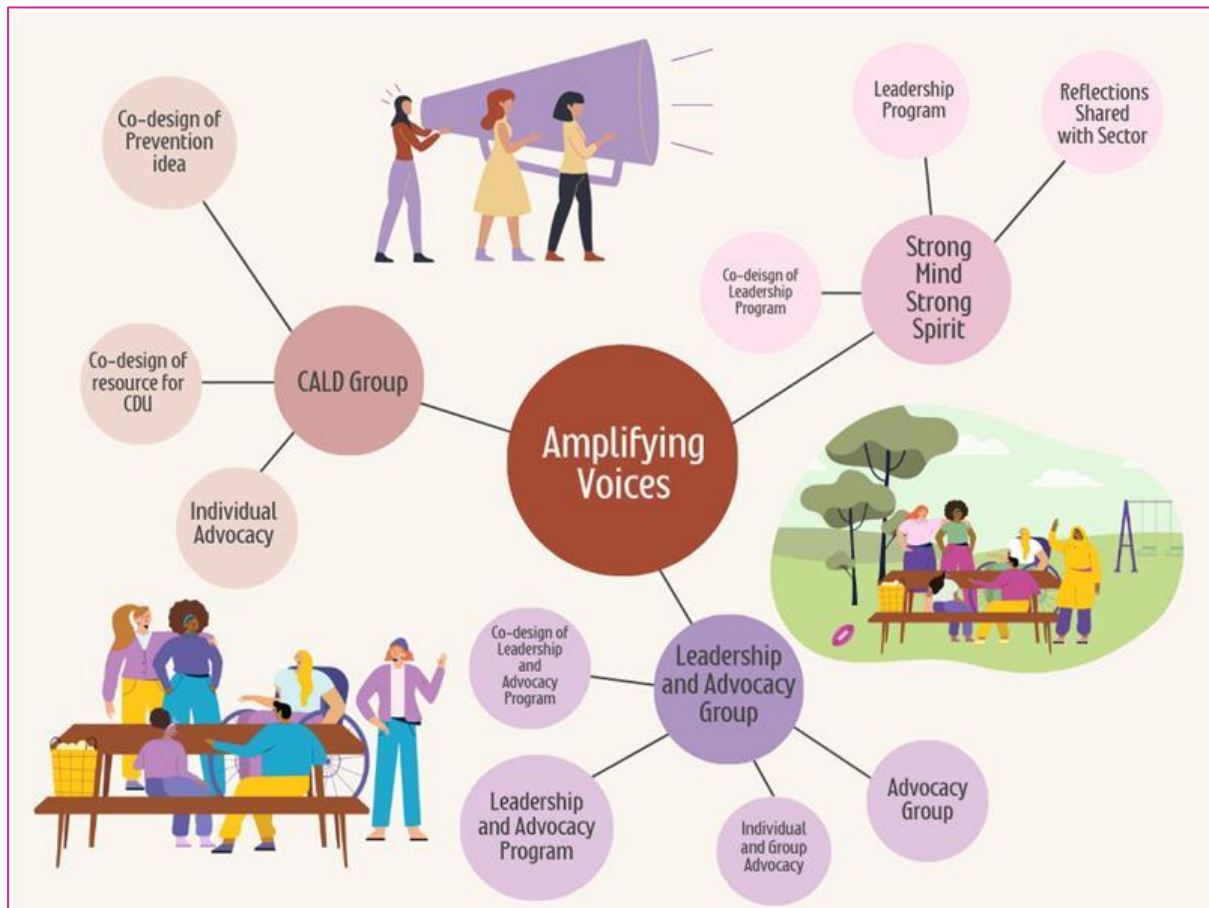
- a. CALD Co-design Group 1 – developed a *Primary Prevention Intervention* to address domestic, family, and sexual violence within CALD communities.
- b. CALD Co-design Group 2 – created a *training resource* to strengthen service responses and community awareness.

3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stream

- a. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Co-design Group – Led by Tanyah Nasir, co-created *Strong Mind Strong Spirit*, a culturally grounded leadership and empowerment initiative.
- b. Strong Mind Strong Spirit Leadership Program Group – Young Aboriginal participants undertaking leadership development, healing, and empowerment activities to lead community change.

The following is a visual outline of Amplifying Voices. A more detailed description is provided in Appendix A.

Figure 2 Overview of Amplifying Voices



3.3 Key principles

Amplifying Voices was created to intentionally honour the following key principles when working with people with lived experience and communities that experience marginalisation.

1. Lived Experience-led social change
2. Nothing about us without us/ self-determination
3. Privileging intersectionality and diversity
4. Trauma-informed practice
5. Focus on wellbeing, support and healing
6. Strengths focussed
7. Co-design
8. Iterative learning and evaluation
9. Intentionality (when selecting safe and supported advocacy opportunities)
10. Participant remuneration.

As part of the program's focus on **trauma-informed practice**, Amplifying Voices used the following approaches, among others:

- Self- assessment of readiness through a screening process that included self-readiness questions
- Clear role descriptions outlined in consent forms and discussed in first meeting
- Terms of reference established for group work
- Structured plan for working together outlined in the first and second sessions
- Being clear that participants may leave at any time, for any reason (or no reason)
- Safe and private spaces always available close by for emotional regulation
- Self-regulation fidgets provided on tables
- Discussion of the window of tolerance and self-regulation strategies, with opportunities to practice them
- Normalising moments and periods of dysregulation
- Group agreements about what is safe and not safe to share, in relation to sharing lived experiences of DFSV and homelessness
- Debriefing after sessions and advocacy events
- Careful selection of advocacy opportunities based on participant safety
- Careful selection of presenters, with requirement they read the Code of Care before entering the space
- Ongoing clarity around consent, with explicit permission sought each time a name or photo is used
- Training provided on legal safety, self-care and understanding trauma
- Intentional framing of participants' experiences within the broader context of violence against women and LGBTQI+ people
- Creating space for peer-to-peer connection and support.

Spotlight- Code of Care

Participants in each group developed a unique 'Code of Care' (adapted from KA McKercher, 2020). This was a co-created document designed to help participants establish an environment that felt safe and comfortable for everyone to take part in, considering each individual group member's needs.

The Code of Care was used in several ways:

- It set expectations for how participants could show care for one another, as well as what behaviors made people feel safe and unsafe.
- The group referred to it whenever something did not feel right.
- It was shared with guest presenters to communicate the group's needs and expectations, before they came into the space.
- As a living document, it evolved with the group, adapting to changing needs and incorporating new perspectives.

The Code of Care addressed the following areas:

- Safety in the physical space
- Emotional safety
- Safe disclosure
- Serious disclosure and duty of care
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Behaviours that were not acceptable.

3.4 An overview of activities and timeline

The following provides an overview of key activities over time for each Group. The Groups co-designed and tailored their own approach.

Figure 3 Amplifying Voices Timeline



3.5 Program resources

Program participants and staff developed a range of resources (available on request), including:

Table 2: Amplifying Voices Resources

Category	Who Produced It?	Outputs
Program Co-design	Co-design Group 1	Amplifying Voices 2024 Program.pdf Amplifying Voices Sessions Flyer.pdf
CALD Resource Development	Co-design Group 2	CDU Resources
Advocacy & Identity Resources	Leadership and Advocacy Program and Advocacy Group	Advocate Videos Acknowledgement of Living and Lived Experience of DFSV_Homelessness.pdf Insights from Lived Experience.pdf Collaborative art.jpg TShirt design.png Amplifying Voices Group Identity.png Amplifying Voices_Our Voices Our Influence
Participant Support Tools	Staff	Flowchart- Responding to DFV Disclosures.pdf Need To Talk_Support Hotlines.pdf Self-Care Plan.pdf Sharing Cards_AV.pdf Window of Tolerance-Self-Regulate - Small.pdf

3.6 A key focus on Advocacy

Amplifying Voices participants engaged in a range of advocacy activities, as summarised below.

Table 3: Advocacy Activities

Advocacy Action	Summary
Leadership and Advocacy Program Graduation at Parliament House	42 guests attended the NT Parliament House graduation, supported by Minister Worden. Five graduates spoke, with two gaining immediate advocacy opportunities (national conference + NT Govt. meeting).
Sharing and Strengthening our Practice Conference	A graduate presented on the Lived Experience Panel and co-presented in the project showcase at the 2024 DFSV Conference.

Formation of the Advocacy Group	10 of 11 graduates formed a monthly advocacy group aiming to establish a lived experience voice in NT decision-making.
Attending community rallies and marches	Advocates attended DFSV rallies and marches together, gaining exposure to advocacy and building confidence and solidarity.
Children's and Young Person's Worker Program consultation	Six Advocates contributed to YWCA's program consultation; a report was created and shared with CDU for curriculum development.
National Research Project "We've Been Robbed"	One member participated in YWCA's national research on housing and safety for young women and gender-diverse people.
SARC Consumer Consultation	Three participants advised the Sexual Assault Resource Centre, shaping improvements to survivor-centred service design.
YWCA DFSV Safehouse Consultation	Three participants gave feedback on security, rules, and homeliness during safehouse walkthroughs to improve survivor experience.
CDU Student Resource Co-Design	Four participants co-designed and recorded a resource highlighting CALD experiences of DFSV, now used for CDU student learning (for the TAFE Case Management Course).
Advocacy Videos	Four advocates created short films on personal advocacy goals and program experiences; to be shared nationally on the YWCA website and social media and for future advocacy use.
PARt Case Studies	Two participants contributed anonymised stories for the PARt Project to train police, healthcare, and frontline workers.
YWCA Youth Advocates Group	Amplifying Voices Advocates contributed to YWCA's <i>Safe Homes, Equal Futures</i> campaign, ensuring youth lived experience shapes housing advocacy.
Broader sharing of CALD Short Films	CALD short films, initially for CDU TAFE, are shared more broadly across multiple CDU University units.
Meeting with Minister for the prevention of Domestic Violence, Robin Cahill	The Advocacy Group met with Minister Robin Cahill, sharing their advocacy goals of ensuring lived experience voices are integrated into policy and program design and the need for a co-designed DFSV Hub.

4. Strong Mind Strong Spirit Project

Headlines:

- A key component of Amplifying Voices was the Strong Mind Strong Spirit (SMSS) Project, a collaboration between YWCA Australia and Tanyah Nasir Consulting Services.
- Strong Mind Strong Spirit aimed to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young women with a culturally safe space to explore identity, resilience, and leadership.
- The following is a summary of Tanyah Nasir's Report on the Strong Mind Strong Spirit Program (see Appendix B)
- To be true to Tanyah's Report, we have not added commentary and kept many of the participants' and Tanyah's reflections.

4.1 Introducing Strong Mind Strong Spirit

"At the heart of the project the aim was to listen deeply - not to fix, not to impose but to try to understand their thoughts and their reality from their perspective." Tanyah Nasir

"They dreamed aloud of better lives- ones they could shape themselves, filled with family, love, safety, and purpose. A life with choices. A life where healing and happiness are possible. A life with a nice house, two kids, and understanding at home. A life that is theirs to create - "big and bright.""
Tanyah Nasir

The purpose of Strong Mind Strong Spirit Project was to:

- Empower young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to express themselves freely.
- Create a culturally grounded environment for truth-telling, connection, and healing.
- Strengthen self-belief, confidence, and awareness.
- Build a peer support network.

Project objectives included:

- To conduct workshops promoting connection, identity, confidence, and resilience.
- Explore issues like violence, respect, belonging, and empowerment.
- Identify gaps in systems and services through the lens of young people's experiences.
- Create space for young women to lead conversations about their futures.
- Develop insights and recommendations for better support.

4.2 Key Messages from program participants

1. "See us for who we are, not what you assume we are"

*"They aren't good kids." "They're lazy." "They all do the same thing."
 "Talking back is ungrateful." Program Participants*

"Young women are painfully aware of the stereotypes and assumptions that surround them. They want to be seen, heard, and valued, not judged or boxed in." Tanyah Nasir

2. "We want support not shame"

"If you're too shame, you're not gonna get anywhere – you need to step out of the box." Program Participant

"Shame is a barrier. Culturally safe, shame-free, trust-building environments are essential." Tanyah Nasir

3. "Fighting is often the only response we've been taught".

"We don't have anyone to show us how to do it different." Program Participant

"Violence is learned behaviour – but it's not who they want to be. They want tools, role models, and support to choose other paths." Tanyah Nasir

4. "Life is hard- but we still have hope".

"There is a way out... you're not stuck forever." Program Participant

*"These young women are fighting to believe in a better future. Programs that help them imagine that future — and walk towards it are critical".
 Tanyah Nasir*

5. "We want to be ourselves, not who others expect us to be".

"Take off the mask – stop hiding behind it." Program Participant

"Strength lies in cultural identity. Programs must ensure cultural pride and personal truth telling are embedded in the learning". Tanyah Nasir

4.3 Workshop Summaries

Workshop 1: Focused on identity, strengths, and challenges of being young. Key themes included stereotypes, social anxiety, and the importance of resilience.

Participants shared their hopes for their community, such as "more opportunities. and "less shaming with unconventional choices."

"That my mob don't feel shame to talk about and speak up more so we can be heard for who we truly are. Let our hopes and dreams be known so we can get the support we need to achieve them."

Program Participant

Workshop 2: Explored violence, emotional regulation, and the need for supportive environments. Participants discussed the normalization of fighting and shared strategies like breathing techniques to stay calm.

Workshop 3: Focused on self-reflection, affirming identity, and envisioning change. Creative activities like poster-making highlighted their values, dreams, and strengths. Participants expressed pride in themselves for things like "my personality" and "making myself happy."

"Proud to be me."

"Strong, funny, real."

"My culture is powerful."

"Love my skin."

"Learning how to talk better to myself."

Program Participants

Key Learnings for Future Programs

- Systems, services and mindsets can better support young people's journey.
- Build trust and relationships over time and allow enough time to do this.
- Let young people lead and co-design programs.
- Ensure cultural safety and trauma-aware facilitation.
"Every facilitator must be trauma-aware and actively anti-racist in language, policy and action" Tanyah Nasir
- Focus on identity, culture and confidence before addressing behaviour.
- Systems and services need to listen, evolve, and provide consistent, empathetic support.

4.4 Challenges Identified

- Normalisation of violence and lack of emotional regulation tools.
- Barriers like shame, racism, and assumptions.
- Lack of role models, and supportive systems.
- Community issues like alcohol abuse, violence, and limited opportunities.

4.5 Hopes and Solutions

- More supportive communities and programs for young people.
- Education on life skills, resilience, and emotional regulation.
- Opportunities for growth, healing, and creating a better future.
- Participants emphasized the importance of stepping out of their comfort zones with support

4.6 Conclusion

The SMSS Project demonstrated the power of listening to young women and creating culturally safe spaces for them to share their voices.

The (full) report is a call to action for educators, service providers, and policymakers to rethink youth engagement and prioritise respect, authenticity, and co-creation.

The young women's contributions highlight their leadership, resilience, and desire to be part of the solution. Their words and insights serve as a reminder that real change is possible when we listen with respect, lead with heart, and walk alongside them.

“Let this be our moment to listen more deeply, act more intentionally, and walk beside young people - not ahead of them. Because when we do, the possibilities are not only visible - they become real, tangible and positive long-lasting change becomes more attainable.” Tanyah Nasir

5. Key perspectives and insights

Headlines:

- Participants and stakeholders described the Program as strengths-based, powerful, healing and transformational
- Program achievements included the approach to design and development, stakeholder engagement and support, and sector learning and development
- Program influence was enhanced by co-designed activities and advocacy, that prioritised participant agency, choice and control
- Participant advocacy to NT Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence informed subsequent announcement to explore the feasibility of a new DFV Service Hub to be co-designed with lived experience and sector representatives.

Amplifying Voices participants and stakeholders shared rich perspectives and insights about the Program in surveys and interviews for the review. While people had different experiences based on roles and participation, clear themes emerge regarding the nature of the Program, key achievements, outcomes and impacts, and implications for the future.

The following is based on perspectives from:

- Program participants (point-in-time feedback n = 16, surveys n = 15 and interviews n = 4)
- Program stakeholders (surveys n = 12, and interviews n = 11)
- YWCA Amplifying Voices team members (n = 3).

YWCA team members brought additional perspectives in the sense-checking workshop, based on their holistic understanding of the Program across initial concept, design, delivery and iteration. They documented key learnings along the way, and enabled triangulation across different data sources.

5.1 How would you describe Amplifying Voices?

The Program was described as powerful, inspiring, healing and transformational. It was clearly not perceived in traditional terms of a service delivered to and received by participants. It was highly valued as a connected, safe, community of peers, supported by skilled facilitators and leadership, enabling significant growth and lived experience advocacy. In describing Amplifying Voices, Program stakeholders also identified change and growth for themselves and the DFSV sector, not just for Program participants.

Amplifying Voices was frequently described in the following terms:

Strengths-based:

- Creating strength between women, women and services, women and systems
- Challenging deficit lens and misconceptions of lived experience
- Exposing participant strengths, to shine.

Real people, real stories

Legitimising

- Reclaiming power
- Empowering
- Providing voice
- Raising credibility.

Connecting

- Collective healing
- Solidarity in leadership
- Supportive
- We are family
- Built strong community of women
- A group of women who empower one another.

Transformative

- Renewed hope
- Life changing
- Building the capacity of each individual woman.

Supporting social and structural change

- Social action
- Demonstrates that gender based violence is a structural issue of gender inequality
- Foundations of good primary prevention.

"It was a legitimising experience ... [I could] make some kind of sense of all that had happened and use it for a better purpose." (Participant)

"[It was] Empowerment Through reclaiming power by breaking internalised shame whilst we had collective healing and solidarity for leadership development." (Participant)

"A platform for lived experience people to speak up...to feel good, confident and safe." (Participant)

"[A] catalyst for creating space of [sic] people with Lived Experience to become leaders of change – in programs, practices, policies, systems, [and] their own lives." (YWCA)

"More than a Buzz word: Amplifying Voices leads by doing trauma-informed practice well. Including structure, certainty, building relationships and trust with participants, [a] strength-based program. Supporting the internal journey from lived experience to lived expertise: identifying that what happened to me wasn't okay and it's okay to advocate for what I needed at that time because you want to make sure it doesn't happen to other women. Three streams to recognise the different pathways and intersectional identities that people bring with them: open stream, CALD stream and First Nations stream." (YWCA)

"A good program, harnessing lived experience, [for] good outcomes and very tangible benefits." (Stakeholder)

"Women healing and giving back to other women." (Stakeholder)

5.2 Key achievements

Participants and stakeholders identified a range of Program achievements regarding design and development, stakeholder engagement and support, and sector learning and development. The Program was also described as influential, in facilitating key advocacy to decision-makers for change.

Program design and development

Amplifying Voices was recognised by stakeholders and participants as carefully designed, structured and evidence informed. The Program model was deeply researched, to inform program design and support structure and clarity. This initial research also enabled space and flexibility for iteration.

"There was solid literature and guiding documents from Our Watch, ANROWS, KA McKercher. [The team] did the reading and reflected on it, so it was really well-informed and considered". (YWCA)

"Having the prevention framework wrapped around [the Program] was helpful so we didn't lose focus from 'Safe, Respected and Free from Violence.' [We could] step into it with the framework, while allowing space to be open and flexible [during co-design], where participants wanted to take it." (YWCA)

Program design and development was additionally supported by co-design supervision provided by KA McKercher during the co-design of the Leadership and Advocacy Program. YWCA Australia's Client Participation and Lived Experience Manager provided additional support through YWCA Lived Experience policies and procedures, and the YWCA Lived Experience Community of Practice.

Stakeholder engagement and support

The Program engaged early with stakeholders during design and development. This supported the development of new relationships and shared learning together. Proactive stakeholder engagement also offered transparency and invited support, which was important given the developmental and co-designed nature of the Program.

"We allowed the time initially ... to do the design, get really well-informed, engage with experts and stakeholders." (YWCA)

"The community in Darwin wanted it to be successful, including those in government. {We were} all figuring it out together. Reflecting on the first KPIs, [it was] lets talk this out." (YWCA)

"There was lots of goodwill and intent, but [we] had to work so hard to get bums on seats, [it was] such hard work getting referrals. There is so much chaos and crisis – the focus is on critical response." (YWCA)

"It achieved what it set out to do, which not all programs do." (Stakeholder)

The Program effectively managed complexity across diverse requirements, power dynamics, and support needs. The project team took time to listen, learn and think things through, and this helped to appropriately focus and structure the process, whilst supporting co-design and delivery outcomes.

"The establishment and consolidation [process] – it was unwieldy, complex, difficult ... to turn it into something coherent. They delivered it, they were able to contain it." (YWCA)

"Balancing co-design with clarity, containment, structure and support, will strengthen how the program does things, and how it is shared more broadly." (YWCA)

Sector learning and development

Amplifying Voices did not develop in a vacuum – sector readiness and capability to engage and support with lived experience leadership and expertise was a key Program consideration. The project team invested in significant stakeholder engagement and relationship development from the outset. This included an initial Reference Group to inform initial considerations, as well as continuing stakeholder engagement, network participation and sector briefings. Stakeholders noted a shift in sector knowledge and awareness, resulting in more informed engagement and opportunities offered to Program participants over time, as people became more aware of the value and insights participants could bring in different spaces.

"Educated the broader community ... people were asking for people with Lived Experience, and [they thought of] Amplifying Voices. In stakeholder meetings, Amplifying Voices was known, mentioned, talked about – could Amplifying Voices do that?" (YWCA)

"Advancing Lived Experience leadership, especially in the Northern Territory, and locally, in YWCA particularly. Sharing our learnings - what is required to do this well, meaningfully, safely, how to integrate this into practice." (YWCA)

Influence

Program participants identified and co-designed advocacy activities according to their preferences and requirements. Participant group agency and self-determination was critical. This enabled participants to engage in a wider range of activities, in different contexts and settings. It also ensured participant advocacy was not undertaken on an extractive basis, without participant choice, agency and control.

"[It was] an avenue for participants, [where] they were appreciated. [It was] not something taken from them." (Stakeholder)

Amplifying Voices participants exercised influence across a range of different settings, including service planning and design, assessment of Safe Houses, the development of social work education resources, regional and national

conference presentations, media engagement, research and advocacy, and a Ministerial briefing.

"It's powerful – but its how people act on that expertise ...connected with housing and other supports – [its] important to value, tell stories, work on a project, be supported." (Stakeholder)

"Engaging in AV, it made me listen and develop a new understanding. It provided us with direction ... and how it could be designed and delivered. How important it is to have lived experience. Instead of guessing and assuming what will work. We can learn from the people who have the experience." (Stakeholder)

In particular, participants met with Hon. Robyn Cahill OAM MLA, Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence. The meeting was described by both participants and stakeholders as a key achievement. During the Ministerial briefing, participants advocated for two key asks:

1. The need to ensure that lived experience voices are integrated into policy and program design in the DFSV and homelessness spaces
2. The need for a DFSV Hub co-designed with people with lived experience.

The NT Government recently announced new funding to establish a Lived Experience Advisory Group. The NT Government has also released a new Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Strategy 2025 – 2028, including a commitment to explore a DFSV Service Hub to be co-designed with sector and lived experience representatives.

"Meeting with the Minister, in our capacity as lived experience advocates, was a huge accomplishment. We have all worked incredibly hard for these moments and this was shown through the collective power, determination, and wisdom of the women who sat at that table." (Participant)

"It was wonderful meeting Minister Cahill, she's extremely personable and easy to talk to." (Participant)

"It was important for us to meet with the Minister to show her that we are real, local women who are passionate in advocating for change against Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and Homelessness in the Northern Territory." (Participant)

"As real people with real experiences in the Northern Territory our expertise is invaluable." (Participant)

6. Outcomes

Headlines:

- Increased participant knowledge and understanding of the structural and systemic drivers of DFSV
- Increased participant confidence and skills in lived expertise, advocacy and leadership
- Positive impacts for participants regarding personal safety, connection, agency and wellbeing
- Increased stakeholder knowledge, understanding and awareness
- Informed service design and planning
- Established a suite of co-designed tools and resources for continuing use
- Resulted in significant personal and professional change
- Highlighted key challenges.

"The community they built, the changes they achieved, for primary prevention." (YWCA)

6.1 Participant outcomes

Amplifying Voices was a positive experience for many participants, enhanced by trust-building processes, mutual learning and personal growth. Participants reported increased knowledge and understanding of the structural and systemic drivers of domestic and family violence, increased confidence and skills in lived expertise, advocacy and leadership. They also reported positive impacts regarding personal safety, connection, agency, and wellbeing.

A survey of Leadership and Advocacy participants (n = 7) found that all agreed or strongly agreed:

I am more aware of how to safely disclose my own lived experience
I feel supported to participate in advocacy opportunities
I feel better connected with the support I need
I have new connections with people who have lived experiences of their own
I feel connected to the domestic, family and sexual violence and homelessness sectors in the NT
I am better able to look after my emotional wellbeing
I feel more hopeful for the future
I have positive relationships in my life
I make positive choices for myself
I have better access to advocacy opportunities that are important to me
I feel encouraged to use my lived experiences to influence change
I have shared my lived experiences to inform decision makers
I feel valued for sharing my lived experiences.

A survey of participants in the culturally and linguistic diverse cohort (n = 5) found that all agreed or strongly agreed:

I felt comfortable to share my thoughts and ideas
I felt connected with other people who had lived experiences of their own
I felt listened to when I shared my thoughts and ideas
I could choose how I shared my experiences and/or ideas
My ideas were considered in group decisions
I understood what the group was working towards.

Similarly, a survey of participants in the First Nations cohort (n = 3 responses) found all agreed or strongly agreed:

I feel more confident in myself and my decisions
I feel more supported by others on the same journey
I feel stronger to move forward with the life I want to create for myself
I am able to recognise my inner strength and potential
I am able to make choices that align with my dreams and values
I am able to continue learning for my life and community
I am able to face challenges with courage.

This is one of the best platform[s] for everyone who can share the experiences and empower each other.

Thank you very much to Gemma and Zoe for being so supportive, motivating and encouraging us to keep growing.

What did you learn as a result of Amplifying Voices?

Participants reported they learned about their strengths, experiences, abilities and the impact they could have, advocating for change.

"That my voice is important I bring wisdom strength and hope that healing and growth is possible."

"How to be trauma informed. How to tell my story and how I'm in control of how much I choose to tell or not to tell. How to advocate for change. How to engage with media. How codesigning works. How consultations work. How to engage with higher parties like the Minister Robyn Cahill. How to advocate for change."

"That we can make a change and our voices matter."

"I am still learning. However, the most pertinent lesson has been how to step away from my living experience and engage in acts of self care. And how to step back into when advocating. Caring for ourselves, in and of itself, is a form of resistance. We need to do this to succeed."

Participants in the Strong Mind Strong Spirit Program said they learned:

- *Don't feel shame to ask questions*
- *How we can help other kids*
- *How [we] can help to change people make better choices*
- *[How to] be a good influencer.*

6.2 Stakeholder outcomes

Stakeholders identified key outcomes at individual, service-level, workforce and community levels, including increased knowledge and understanding of gender-based violence. For some, this included reflections about individual assumptions, systemic drivers and personal experiences.

"It's made me realise, it is so prevalent, it could have been one of my friends in this who has had this lived experience, and not everyone is going to be vocal about it, there's other people out there that are silent about it, and so that was eye opening." (Stakeholder)

"I was making assumptions about who violence affects. It was really humbling and it was really for me too to just clock. It was that was definitely for me, the most significant change and I think in that seeing the potentiality of a project like these to just, to shatter the assumptions of people thinking they would know the kinds of women who would experience this violence. " (Stakeholder)

"[Amplifying Voices] gives voice to the diversity of women who have experienced DFV. By highlighting this, it helps cut through ideas DFV only happens to some women, or that victim survivors are somehow to blame, this program helps demonstrate that violence against women is a structural issue of gender inequality in society. In all levels of society, across all cultural and social groups. This is the foundation of good primary prevention, but it is an abstract concept for most people. Amplifying Voices brings it to life." (Stakeholder)

For others, there were key learnings as a result of observing how the Program role-modelled and supported lived experience advocates in exercising their power and agency.

"So it was a really great insight for me. To just understand the space, understand where the members were coming from and also treating everyone, making sure everyone was treated with respect, dignity, the code of care that they have and that was all new. I'd never worked in that space at all." (Stakeholder)

"The response to trauma, self regulation techniques and strategies that were being used in the groups were offering me ideas on how we could add this into all work in DFSV as the content is distressing for workers, victim survivors." (Stakeholder)

"I learnt the processes for working with lived experience groups and what is important and of value to people, such as giving notice in advance, and

considering what times work for different people (especially parents). Also practical things to support trauma-informed practices, such as knowing the group, and sense testing your content/language/practices with group members.” (Stakeholder)

“[I was] humbled by the experience of meeting these women in an equality rather than I'm a service provider who really respects you as a human. There's a different equality baked into Amplifying Voices. Like I am someone that is consulting with you. As in, you're actually the subject matter expert. I think its very, very powerful - this is so important in DV like we absolutely need it... Amplifying Voices does demonstrate how you can embed that kind of lived experience leadership.” (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders also identified increased understanding of the value lived expertise brings to educating others, informing key discussions, and shaping service design and opportunities for change.

“I think it just allowed us to capture those that didn't engage with the service as well. sometimes that's what we need, because we only capture those at, do engage with the service. So what went wrong with those that didn't or couldn't access the service?” (Stakeholder)

“How important it is to have lived experience. Instead of guessing and assuming what will work. We can learn from the people who have the experience.” (Stakeholder)

“ ... that ongoing learning and building ... around how we can embed lived experience, voice and case studies and real Agency of people's stories.” (Stakeholder)

In particular, stakeholders identified service redesign and improvements as a result of participant advocacy and expertise.

“Outcomes for the [service] were a report to the executives on a redesigned model ... Themes that came out of those interviews that was around the investments [for the] workforce themselves and around their background on trauma informed care. Also access to the service and the occasion of the service as well which was something the clinicians within the org were also saying so was able to give weight to that point. Another point that they raised was access to information 24 hours a day and although [it] is available 24/7...[it identified] the potential to increase their internet site and [make it easier to find]].” (Stakeholder)

“AV supported us to create a meaningful and successful tool to use with women and children. Their insight and feedback supported us to create a tool which was safe, easy, relatable and effective. Sharing knowledge and

information to others. Advocating for the rights of other women and families ... This then supported and strengthened our case management practice. How important it is to have lived experience.” (Stakeholder)

6.3 A suite of co-designed activities and resources

Amplifying Voices participants co-designed a range of activities and resources that can be used more broadly. They include digital resources, curriculum materials, artwork and T-shirts. The Project Team also developed participant support tools, including codes of conduct and self-care resources. This suite of tested tools and resources (see section 3.5) are useful to share knowledge and build sector capability more broadly.

6.4 Most significant change

Participants and stakeholders were invited to share the most significant change for them, as a result of Amplifying Voices.

Participants shared powerful reflections regarding increased awareness and understanding, recognising the power of their voice, and acting for change.

Respect and identity

*“I feel empowered and feel that it has given me a sense of identity.”
(Participant)*

*“Feeling confident that my voice will be heard and respected.”
(Participant)*

“As a lived experience survivor, it's important victims are actually seen and heard. A lot of the time we have to repeat our stories and nothing happens and we are retraumatised. With AVP, we haven't needed to tell our story of trauma to be recognised as a crucial, yet rich individuals shaping solutions within our experience of DV and Homelessness. Though I haven't received the justice I should have, AVP at least makes me feel that I am valuable and not on my own through the darkness”. (Participant)

“My living experience will always be a part of my identity. However, it has become a superpower that I draw upon to influence change.” (Participant)

Power and bravery

*“Before joining this program ... I never said no before, but this program made me more brave to say no. This has really impacted me a lot ... Now I know how to help other women as well and to speak up to some of the authorities ... Since that as well I speak a lot, I am never silent.”
(Participant)*

"Creating a resource for sharing with other people is really powerful, it is really cool to be in the position that I've been here, I survived and you can do that too. We are a big group sharing a really strong story. Also the stigma, breaking that stigma is really important as well." (Participant)

Healing, confidence and learning

"Hearing about other experiences gave me healing. I felt like I had the most terrible one but now I think I have to leave myself and think about what others are going through. This gave me the healing and confidence to talk about my story and explain and to motivate other people who are not aware of what's going on ... I can use my lived experience in a meaningful way ... I have used my lived experience to educate other women. Somebody I just referred, the last time who had boys didn't get support in a shelter, so with the knowledge I had I referred [them] and they got help." (Participant)

"Raise my voice for the women who experience domestic violence, develop my confidence of voice recordings and public speaking" (Participant).

"It has been very useful to be part of this project from the beginning to the end, as I learnt every step of the process and how this kind of projects are built. From a professional point of view, I have learnt new project skills by watching and participating in the codesign". (Participant)

"Getting to work and support others that had similar lived experiences." (Participant)

"Awareness and power to advocate." (Participant)

For stakeholders, most significant changes related to increased understanding, informing their practice, the value of lived expertise in shaping services, and the transformative power of feminist approaches for change.

Understanding and learning

"It provided meaningful and important insight to how I practice." (Stakeholder)

"Engaging in AV, it made me listen and develop a new understanding. It provided us with direction to our case goal cards and how it could be designed and delivered ...How important it is to have lived experience.

"Instead of guessing and assuming what will work. We can learn from the people who have the experience." (Stakeholder)

"Learnings confirmed that feminist practice is still alive, the next generation of activist is strong, careful governance important, the decision to extend prevention grants from one year to three year minimum was the right policy decision." (Stakeholder)

Power and hope

"I really believe that, while people need support in terms of crisis intervention and recovery, activism and policy change is the key and that is best done by a combination of people. Lived experience voice must, must, must be in the mix. You never see funding in this area, very rarely... it's really inspired a sense of hope and that's been the biggest change for me... seeing it happen... seeing it happen so well [has] inspired me do more work in this area." (Stakeholder)

"I saw the power of the program unfold before my eyes... when some of the women went on their advocacy mission and lobbied as powerful women very clearly and strongly... it brought me so much joy!" (Stakeholder)

"The experience was revolutionary for me: we did activism during the session and that affirmed for me what we can do when we come together, that's the most powerful part of it was that we were peers in a way in that session". (Stakeholder)

6.5 Challenges

A number of challenges were identified by participants and stakeholders. They included:

- Readiness and ability to participate – the team recognised that not all Victim-survivors had had the time and space away from their experience that is necessary for safe advocacy practice. The team therefore adapted the initial engagement process, to include a process of self-readiness assessment before engaging with the program. The team also recognised that asking young victim survivors to advocate for change, when they had had little time to process their experience, was not a trauma informed practice.
- The program initially identified a focus on engaging participants aged up to 30 years old. The age restriction was subsequently lifted.
- Participants may have different levels of knowledge and awareness and be in different places in their healing and recovery. The process needs to recognise different needs, support safety, and respond flexibly – whilst supporting group learning, growth and peer-led directions

- The emotional toll experienced by victim survivors and the program team, when engaged in processes that model flexibility, responsiveness, peer-led support, power-sharing, with additional specialist support as needed
- Participants have competing priorities and demands associated with education, employment, caring and family responsibilities. For some, this limited their capacity to sustain engagement over a long period of time. Despite this, it was noted that 10 of the 11 graduates of the Advocacy and Leadership Program continued to engage in advocacy, forming a network to advance identified advocacy priorities, including the establishment of a women's DFSV hub in Darwin.
- Resources/funding, to be able to respond to emerging program and participant support needs. Case management support to participants was identified as an emerging need, as was readiness support and preparation for stakeholders, who were going through their own processes of learning and change. This additional support may have been better supported with an additional role, beyond the Facilitator role.
- The timeliness of funding decisions – The decision to continue funding for Amplifying Voices for an additional 12 months, was delivered very close to the end of the original funding period. The late decision created significant program pressures and uncertainties, which resulted in loss of staff.
- Advocacy to influence change does not guarantee action by decision-makers – there was a recognition that change may be driven by multiple drivers and competing interests, and these may emerge over time. Positive discussions and effective advocacy do not guarantee the desired outcome. This can lead to distrust and cynicism when the need for change is apparent and agreed.
- Sector readiness, learning and capability building – while the Program worked effectively to engage and build with sector stakeholders, sector readiness and capability was a challenge. The NT DFSV sector is challenged by the continuing DFSV crisis, limited funding, skills shortages and workforce challenges. Amplifying Voices invited the sector to think differently, and significant time was required to build lived experience readiness and understanding.

7. Reflections and Future Directions

Headlines:

- Lived experience program design requires time, research and support – one size does not fit all
- Relationships are key
- Explicit focus on feminist and trauma informed practice supports participant agency, power and transformation
- This way of working highlights key support requirements for participants and team members
- Impact builds over time – Amplifying Voices has demonstrated positive impact for individuals, the service sector and community more broadly.

7.1 Practice learnings

Amplifying Voices highlights practice insights that can inform the future design of the YWCA Lived Experience and Advocacy Program (LEAP) and lived experience programs more broadly.

Design requires time, research and support – one size does not fit all

Amplifying Voices is not an off-the-shelf model. It requires investment in research and learning, to inform tailored program planning and design. It is further shaped by co-design, participant interests, shared learning and support requirements. It is most effective when balancing participant choice, agency, and learning, with integrity, transparency, shared focus, structure, and flexible supports.

“Things take time and that is a key learning because women that have experienced incredible trauma, need that time to come into a space where they are happy to be engaging externally. A combination of providing that really safe space for people, which you’ve done brilliantly and at the same time going, you know what’s happening with you is important and critical... let’s look at that at a systems level. That takes time. The way we do things has to change... as organisations, as community, as a community sector, to allow that time and that space and a different way of doing things. [lived experience] voice needs assistance to be in the mix because of everything that people experience.” (Stakeholder)

Relationships are key

Amplifying Voices demonstrated a highly relational way of working, through initial engagement with stakeholders and participants, during co-design, and across leadership activities and advocacy support.

High quality relationality grows through connection, empathy, reflection, reciprocity and shared understanding. It is enhanced by flexibility, openness, trust, demonstrated behaviours, transparency and accountability.

Amplifying Voices demonstrated a key focus on building relationships early with key stakeholders, to support program recruitment, stakeholder participation, and program and advocacy supports. The Program created shared spaces for participants to engage, learn and work together, with a co-designed code of conduct, safety and support. Most particularly, the Program needed to understand and respond to individual support needs, which emerged for both participants and stakeholders throughout the process.

“In-person support for the group, as well as in-person support for the individual ... [for] presenters to the program, it could also impact them significantly, [so we needed to] check-in and validate [with them] also. Relationships are so key” (YWCA)

Relationships emerged as particularly critical in relation to the third stream with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors. As a non-Aboriginal organisation, the project team sought to partner with Aboriginal-led organisations, and in particular, to engage an Aboriginal facilitator. This required a highly relational approach, time and care. The role of Tanyah Nasir in facilitating the Strong Mind Strong Spirit Program was particularly valued.

Agency, power and transformation

Amplifying Voices emphasised participant strengths, agency and power. This was supported by an explicit focus on feminist and trauma informed ways of working, modelled and integrated into Program practice.

*“[I could] raise my voice for the women who experience domestic violence, develop my confidence of voice, [in] recordings and public speaking.”
(Participant)*

“[There is a] difference between the sector and lived experience groups, Lived experience groups have a different way of doing things that breaks down power imbalances. Part of the power of the session we did together was that we were peers. I was not there as a service provider that could be sensitive to their feedback. I was just another activist, and although there was power imbalance between us as individuals, there was no power imbalance between our shared experiences. There is real power in that. That is something to retain in the program moving forward.” (Stakeholder)

Participants and stakeholders described transformation at individual, group and program levels.

"I feel as though I have witnessed a powerful transformation amongst the group" (Stakeholder)

"The internal journey with peer support is critical, and with external expertise from others so people can realise, accept, this is not about me, its not personal, [its] not my fault, but I have rights, [there are] structural and systemic gaps, racism and patriarchy – that's the expertise they have developed. [They are] not retelling a trauma story." (YWCA)

"When they entered the program, they had lived experience, but they didn't have their lived expertise yet. They do now – they understand deeply the theories, concepts and frameworks, and [how to] see their lived experience in that, understanding how to put that together." (YWCA).

"It seemed like they'd had quite a lot of training from what they were feeding back to us on what their role was, so that was quite interesting and I think it's great to give them the voice to fight back too. We could see them." (Stakeholder)

What does this way of working highlight as important for staff support?

YWCA Australia have developed Lived Experience Workforce Guidelines, outlining key support and organisational requirements. Perspectives shared during the review build on this, highlighting the following specific reflections:

- It is essential that staff are just as supported as participants to do this work in a way that is safe for them. It is likely that practitioners will be drawn to this work because of their own lived experience, whether they disclose this or not. As such, they should be consciously supported to work within their self-defined scope of practice (KA McKercher, 2020), whether that includes using their lived experience to guide and support participants or not.
- External Supervision, or supervision by someone who understands the complexities of Lived Experience work should be provided to people explicitly using their lived experience as part of the role. This should be built into budgets
- Training should be provided to managers who are supporting staff with LE including Trauma informed Leadership training
- Organisational support must be in place. This means policies that allow for flexibility including leave provisions for mental health challenges and the ability to work from home when being in the office is not appropriate for self-regulation or other reasons.
- Steps must be taken to remove unnecessary exposure to trauma material for workers with Lived Experience including - limiting exposure to other workers conversations with clients and unnecessary attendance of case reflection meetings etc.

- Strong and clear boundaries around workers' responsibility to assist participants in a "case management" capacity are helpful
- A culture of not sharing unnecessary trauma material in the office (including at lunch break etc) should be encouraged.
- If staff identify that they would like to use their LE in their work, they can complete a scope of practice (KA McKercher), where they choose where the limitations sit in terms of what they want to share in their work and what they do not want to share. This can be a live and changing document. Eg: <https://www.beyondstickynotes.com/blog/why-designers-need-a-scope-of-practice>
- The Lived Experience of staff should be respected as a valued knowledge base. If the staff member with LE wants to use their Lived Expertise in their work, this can be drawn on with care. This should always be acknowledged, if the staff member is ok with that.

More specifically...

Amplifying Voices highlights key practices to support participant engagement and process:

Connection before everything else

- Build trust with participants before the first session
- Build activities that create trust between participants
- Prioritise *connection before content* - actively create groups and interactions that are safe and respect vulnerability and risk taking.

Don't rush

- Timing is critical - sessions should not feel rushed
- Time needs to be built into activities to allow for processing, reflecting and group-wide contributions
- There needs to be adequate time for breaks during sessions
- Participants need time to prepare for any kind of contribution so that they feel clear about what they want to share and how they want to share it.
- Participants value having time to reflect on their journey and how their experiences could help others.

Small groups are more productive and may feel safer

- Small groups can help people who feel less - confident to speak up
- Small groups in consultation can mean that people can have their voices heard more clearly and can provide detailed feedback.

Clarity is important

- Participants need clarity about what is expected of them at all times and in all contexts

- In consultations led by the YWCA- organisations need to be clear about their expected roles and processes
- Clearly defining the scope of the consultation and the specific questions or context being addressed is crucial before starting.

Facilitation is safer when the facilitator is trusted by participants

- Participants are more likely to share openly when the facilitator is trusted and known by participants.

Facilitation led by someone with lived experience is valued by participants

- Participants can see self-regulation methods modelled
- Participants can have their trauma responses normalised by someone with lived experience
- Participants can trust someone who has shared their lived experience
- The group is stronger when someone who identifies with their lived experience stands with them to lead.

Healing needs to be acknowledged and actively supported

- Programs that are healing-focussed, actively look for opportunities for healing in their processes.
- Ensure presenters have read and acknowledged the code of care before they join the process.

Some examples from the 12-week leadership program are: reflection at the end of each session, creating connection between participants doing warm-up activities without the presenter present, actively teaching self-regulation methods as part of the program.

In consultation, ask specific questions where participants' input can be actioned

- Outline a scope of inquiry - make sure it is narrow to get detailed information
- Tell participants how their information will be used in decision making
- Feedback to participants, once changes have been made based on their input
- Ensure the scope of questioning is no broader than what can be implemented (never ask questions about things that will not make a difference).

7.2 Building impact over time

Amplifying Voices was informed by an initial program logic that identified key short, medium and longer term outcomes over time. The program logic was subsequently refined to more closely align with the iterative participant-led nature of the Program, whilst remaining focussed on longer term impact for the Northern Territory community. The following table assesses the extent to which Amplifying Voices addresses these outcomes.

Table 4: Assessment against program logic outcomes

Outcomes	Assessment
Engaging • New relationships to support primary prevention • Activities are co-designed and participant-led • Increased participant knowledge, confidence and skills	• It is clear that Amplifying Voices established a range of new relationships and collaborations to support primary prevention initiatives led by lived experience. One stakeholder commented that existing collaborations focussed on crisis response, while Amplifying Voices invited services and sector stakeholders to collaborate differently and learn together in a different space. Stakeholders valued the relationships established through the Program and expressed interest in continuing similar collaborations in future. • A network of new relationships was also established among participants, offering peer-led support during and following advocacy activities. Participants also developed new relationships with stakeholder organisations through lived experience advocacy. For some participants, this led to new education and employment opportunities. • Program activities were clearly co-designed and participant-led, resulting in three very different approaches based on participant preferences and design. The co-design process highlighted participant choice and diverse expertise, which would not have been evident in a single co-design process across all. • The program increased knowledge, confidence and skills. Participant surveys reported increased knowledge, confidence and skills as a result of participation, and this is further highlighted across participant interviews. Stakeholders also reported their knowledge and understanding increased as a result of engaging with and learning from participants.
Connecting • Program partners collaborate to support participant pathways • Participants imagine and lead innovative primary prevention approaches • Participants inform primary prevention education and service responses.	• This review has identified a range of collaborations with program partners. Some collaborations supported participant-led initiatives. Other collaborations were new opportunities offered by partners recognising the value and benefit of lived experience collaboration. This included conference presentations and participation in lived experience panels • Collaborations were described as <i>“Content experts with context experts – bringing them closer together to build shared understanding and recognising strengths.”</i> • Participants imagined and created a range of innovative primary prevention resources, including T-shirts with primary prevention messages, student learning digital resources and online digital assets. • Participants informed a range of primary prevention and service planning and design initiatives. They also created student education resources that were subsequently shared across other Charles Darwin University departments. Participants informed the development and design of new child-friendly tools and resources for the Y’s Domestic and Family Violence Centre. They undertook walk-through assessments of YWCA Safe Houses regarding security, rules and homeliness for improved survivor experience. They also advised the Sexual Assault Resource Centre, shaping improvements to survivor-led service design.

Leading • Participants lived expertise and leadership are recognised and valued • Participant advocacy informs and influences key decision makers • Co-designed resources are refined for broader use across communities • Knowledge and attitudes that support primary prevention and gender equality are promoted • Primary prevention networks are strengthened with identified directions for future collaboration and sustainability.	• Lived expertise and leadership is recognised and valued in different ways, beginning with personal and individual valuing, through to stakeholder recognition more broadly. • Amplifying Voices created space and support for participants to increase their knowledge, confidence, and skills. The combination of external and technical support, alongside peer support, enabled participants to build on lived experience, to develop lived expertise leadership. • The lived expertise and leadership of Amplifying Voices participants was particularly recognised and valued by stakeholders. Stakeholders gained new knowledge and insights from participant expertise. They also recognised participant leadership in how they engaged with media, services and sector forums, as well as senior decision-makers. For stakeholders, participants moved beyond 'telling their story', to purposeful and strategic advocacy that demonstrated preparation, agency, power and expertise. • Direct advocacy by Amplifying Voices participants to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence was influential in the recent NTG announcement to explore the feasibility of a DFSV Service Hub, to be co-designed with sector and lived experience representatives.
Funded to contribute towards ... <i>NT Safe, Respected and Free from Violence (SRFV) 2022 - 2025 outcomes, including:</i> • Territorians are engaged in conversations on healthy relationships, gender inequality and what constitutes violence • DFSV and women's housing/homelessness initiatives for Aboriginal people are designed and led by Aboriginal people and organisations <i>AND YWCA long term outcome:</i> • Young women and gender diverse people with lived experience of DFSV, housing insecurity and homelessness lead policy and systems change.	• Amplifying Voices contributed towards key conversations regarding gender-based violence, healthy relationships and gender inequality, with individuals, services, key decision-makers and stakeholders. Conversations were supported by co-designed, tailored strategies, according to the interests and preferences of participants. • Program impact will continue to build for the benefit of all Territorians, through the established network of Amplifying Voices advocates, the new NTG Lived Experience Advisory Group, and the announcement to explore the feasibility of a DFSV Service Hub to be codesigned with sector and lived experience representatives.

7.3 Conclusion

Amplifying Voices is a highly valued and innovative lived experience and advocacy program. It reflects key principles from published research and evidence, while demonstrating a model of practice that contributes further to knowledge and practice.

Amplifying Voices is shaped and informed by Territory lived experience perspectives and sector requirements. As such, the Program offers significant knowledge and expertise that highlights Territory leadership and impact, for application more broadly across other jurisdictions and contexts.

Future directions

Amplifying Voices is informing the design and development of the YWCA Lived Experience and Advocacy Program, which includes the delivery of the inaugural NT Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) on Homelessness. This should include a particular focus on the practice and requirements of co-design, including a trauma informed focus on psychological safety.

There is an opportunity to consider expanding the Amplifying Voices model to include additional individualised supports if needed, and a potential mentoring component for future participants.

Amplifying Voices participants have established a peer network to continue their advocacy for primary prevention and systems change, particularly in relation to a DSFV Hub for women and families in Darwin. Amplifying Voices is supporting and assisting the advocacy group, until funding ends in June 2026. It will be important to consider how the network may be supported in future, once the program funding ends.

There is an opportunity to share Program insights and resources with others working more broadly in the context of DFSV. It was suggested this may include men's behaviour change initiatives, to share knowledge and support behaviour change. Any connection with men's behaviour change initiatives would require very careful consideration and further work in consultation with Victim-Survivors.

As a non-Aboriginal organisation, YWCA Australia needs to build relationships with Aboriginal-led organisations, with cultural safety, trust and reciprocity. This requires the organisation to take responsibility for listening, learning and decolonising our ways of working.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Detailed Program Outline

Appendix B: Strong Mind Strong Spirit Program Report

Appendix C: Amplifying Voices Our Voices, Our Influence: summary of key achievements for 2024-2025

Appendix A: Detailed Program Outline

The following provides a detailed outline of the Amplifying Voices Program activities.

Project Structure

Each group based their work on a **three-phase model**. Due to the iterative nature of the work, the model evolved each time the program was repeated. Group 1 stuck closely to the below model, however the second and third group made changes based on what had already been created (avoiding replication), and the specific needs and aims of each group.

Group 1: An Open Group

Co-Design Phase

The first co-design phase was an eleven-session series where the **Lived Experience Design Group** co-designed the Leadership and Advocacy Program, based on their own experiences and priorities, alongside insights from sector professionals and advocates.

Description	Sessions	Outputs
The co-design process for the Leadership and Advocacy Program took 10 months. Sessions were held fortnightly (excluding school holidays). They were two hours long and took place between March and December 2024. Two concurrent processes took place. The first involved interviewing professionals and experienced advocates, six in total. Professionals and experienced advocates were asked some of the same questions that guided the co-design process for the Lived Experience group as well as additional questions relating to their support of the program. Information from the professional and advocate interviews as well as research and data, were fed into the co-design process with participants who have living and lived experience. Eight participants with lived experience started the co-design process, including five who continued for a number of months, and three who completed the program. The group included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from CALD backgrounds who spoke languages other than English and Australian born non- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women.	The co-design sessions covered the following topics: 1. Introduction 2. Code of Care 3. Co-created Acknowledgment of Country 4. Lived Experience and advocacy 5. Primary Prevention- Gender and prevention of violence 6. Design principles and creating a program blueprint 7. Identifying skill sets for advocacy 8. Creating a session outline for the program 9. Reviewing the program, finding gaps, choosing facilitators	Co-design of Amplifying Voices Leadership and Advocacy Program Co-design of Amplifying Voices A4 Flyer Leadership and Advocacy Program Blueprint Design Principles (Values)

	10. Promotion of Leadership Program 11. Celebration	
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Leadership and Advocacy Program

A series of twelve workshops were led by advocates and professionals identified through the co-design process. The program focussed on advocacy skills including systems-based advocacy, political advocacy, storytelling, and media engagement.

Description	Sessions	Outputs
The Leadership and Advocacy Program was a 12 week program, designed by and for women and gender diverse people with lived/living experience of homelessness and domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV), and was an output of the first codesign group in the Amplifying Voices program. The 'Leadership and Advocacy Program' delivered weekly 3-hour education sessions across 12 weeks between February and May 2024. The education sessions covered a range of topics to build participants' knowledge and skills for leadership and advocacy to influence social and systems change in housing/homelessness and domestic, family, and sexual violence. Three of these education sessions were delivered by survivor advocates including Nina Funnel, Sarah Williams, and Rocket Bretherton. Other education sessions were delivered by subject matter experts from NTCOSS, Rainbow Territory, Top End Women's Legal Services, NT Shelter, and local specialists in community development and media. The program was facilitated by the Amplifying Voices Facilitator, YWCA who has lived experience of domestic, family and sexual violence and training to embed the principles of trauma-informed practice into the delivery of the program. A total of 18 people expressed interest and 14 were successfully recruited at the end of the screening and self-assessment process. Three people withdrew their participation, for different reasons, at weeks 2, 4 and 6. The remaining 11 participants completed the 12-week program	1. Welcome and Introduction to the project 2. Understanding trauma and DFSV 3. Understanding the link between DFSV and homelessness 4. How to use your voice for impact 5. Becoming a lived experience advocate 6. Speaking to media 7. Self-care in advocacy 8. Legal issues in advocacy 9. Advocacy in the Northern Territory 10. Creating an advocacy plan 11. Speaking to decision-makers 12. Celebration and next steps	11 participants graduated from the program (completed eight or more sessions). Graduates had high levels of engagement, with attendance averaging 10 out of 12 sessions.

The group included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from CALD backgrounds who spoke languages other than English and Australian born non- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women.		
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Advocacy Phase

Leadership Program graduates were supported to participate in advocacy activities and influence change opportunities, working towards victim-survivor-led reforms in the housing, homelessness, and DFSV sectors. They met ten times during the project to develop and work towards their collective advocacy goals.

Description	Sessions	Outputs
Ten of the 11 graduates from the Amplifying Voices Leadership and Advocacy Program committed to meet monthly to work towards a group advocacy goal established in session 10 of the Leadership and Advocacy Program. The goal was 'to establish a group of people with lived experience of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and Homelessness, to have a voice in decision making in the NT'. This group became the 'Amplifying Voices Advocacy Group'. The Advocacy Group worked together over five meetings to agree on their advocacy priority areas. Two key advocacy goals the group actively worked towards: 1. To seek funding for ongoing engagement with the Amplifying Voices Advocacy Group to ensure the views of people with lived experience of DFSV and homelessness are included in decisions about policy and program development. 2. Establish a DFSV Hub in the Northern Territory that is codesigned with the Amplifying Voices Advocacy Group. Five key advocacy areas identified for future advocacy efforts or opportunities presented to them. 1. Training for the sector to engage with people with lived experience 2. More housing to be allocated to women and children escaping violence 3. Legal reforms to strengthen perpetrator accountability and protect victims 4. Improving programs designed to support parents who experience family violence 5. Funding to employ DFSV liaison officers	1. Building a foundation for group advocacy 2. . Defining who we are and what we can do 3. Building Our Plan 4. Deciding what we want to achieve as a group 5. Choosing our areas for advocacy 6. Planning for meeting with the Minister 7. Practice run for meeting with the Minister 8. Meeting with Minister Cahill 9. Goal: to build a vision for the future of the Amplifying Voices Advocacy Group Session 10. Celebration dinner	"Amplifying Voices, Our Voice, Our Influence" Infographic Amplifying Voices Group Identity Infographic Meeting with the Hon Minister Robin Cahill, 15 April 2025

The final five meetings focused on preparing for their meeting with Minister Cahill and preparing for their future as a group.		
The Group continues to meet now.		

Group 2 (The Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Group)

Co-Design Phase- Step 1: Creating Developing an idea

A seven-session series where the Lived Experience Design Group co-designed the concept for a primary prevention intervention - a proposed training resource for students who will work with CALD victim-survivors, ensuring the unique needs and perspectives of this group are recognised and prioritised.

Description	Sessions	Outputs
The first six sessions of this co-design process were focused on creating a shared understanding of the project, safety within the project, concepts of advocacy and lived experience, trauma and Domestic and Family Violence and Gender Norms and Stereotypes. In the final session, primary prevention strategies were analysed and as step 1 in the Co-Design process, an idea was selected by group members that reflected what would be the most effective primary prevention strategy from their perspective. The group consisted of six members. All members were migrants from Non-English-Speaking backgrounds with a variety of migration histories. Sessions went for 2 hours and were monthly	1. Introduction to Project and Each-other 2. Building a "Code of Care" 3. Advocacy and Lived Experience 4. Advocacy and Lived Experience and Letter Writing 5. Trauma and intro to DFSV- Alex Richmond 6. Gender Norms and Stereotypes 7. Co-Design, Primary Prevention and step 1 in the design process	Co-designed primary prevention idea, "Better education for future case managers on the unique challenges faced by CALD women experiencing violence".

Leadership and Design Program

A nine-session series where the Leadership and Design Group collaboratively co-designed every aspect of the resource, from the guiding design principles to the images and content included within it. We invited two new members into this group. One member from the Initial design phase moved interstate.

Description	Sessions	Outputs
Seven participants from culturally and linguistically diverse communities developed a resource for case management students at Charles Darwin University. This project was born from the sessions above, where the aim of “better education for future case managers on the unique challenges faced by CALD women experiencing violence” was developed. Their vision was to equip students with the knowledge and skills to provide more inclusive, culturally responsive support, ultimately improving outcomes for CALD women and communities. The project was a collaboration with CDU, particularly Samantha Cooper, a Lecturer in Community Services who worked with the resource development team at CDU to turn our participants ideas into reality. As part of the co-design process, participants took full ownership of developing the resource, using their voices and lived experiences to shape its content. They crafted key messages, selected a production style, wrote their own stories, and carefully selected images that reflected their intentions. As a result, the final product was a true representation of their perspectives and vision. The project was developed through nine weekly 1 hour co-design sessions that occurred on-line and over lunch-time to allow for the participation of those who were working. In the final session the group watched the films together in person and created a questionnaire for the students who will watch the film to check their learning.	1. Creating Design Principles 2. Choosing Design Principles 3. Creating and Choosing Key Messages 4. Selecting a Medium 5. Choosing a Resource Type 6. Choosing Our Stories 7. Audio Recording – Worker Perspectives 8. Audio Recording – Lived Experience Story 9. Film Viewing, Consent, Evaluation & Creating the CDU Student Questionnaire	Six films were created by participants. Participant Experiences: Three films capturing the personal stories of participants, highlighting their insights on how workers can improve engagement with CALD communities. Worker Perspectives: Three films created by workers with lived experience, sharing their observations as CALD professionals and identifying key gaps that mainstream workers may overlook.

Advocacy Meetings

The group met twice after the videos were created to discuss the future use of this resource, exploring both its original intended purpose and opportunities for broader application.

Group 3 (The First Nations Group)

Co-design Phase

A more informal co-design phase was led by Tanya Nasir Consulting, involving conversations with community leaders across the NT to gather their insights and ideas on how the program should be shaped.

Description	Sessions	Outputs
This co-design process was led by Tanyah Nasir Consulting Service and supported by the YWCA. The process included multiple discussions between Tanyah and four key community stakeholders, where they talked about Domestic and Family Violence and its root drivers within, the community, discussed the program and its approach and worked out the program structure. Discussions about the project and its direction were held with the following key stakeholders: 1. Female Cultural advisor, Groote Eylandt, Anindilykawa Language & English 2. Aboriginal cultural advisor, Galiwinku, Yolgnu and English 3. Female Aboriginal Community Police Officer, Darwin, English language 4. Female, Aboriginal Community Police Officer, Darwin, English Language	Sessions were held informally, in person and over the phone, and spanned a period of approximately eight months.	Strong Mind Strong Spirit, Breaking the Cycle Program

Leadership Program (Strong Mind Strong Spirit)

Participants in this program took part in a three-part Leadership program specifically for a younger cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Description	Sessions	Outputs
Strong Mind, Strong Spirit is a leadership and empowerment program created by Tanyah Nasir in consultation with four community leaders from Darwin and remote NT. This initiative provided a safe and inspiring space for young Aboriginal women to reflect, grow, and take control of their future. Workshops took place over three days. Participants were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young women aged between 16 and 23. There were 13 referrals into the program, with five participants starting on the first day and four completing the program (attending two or more sessions)	Workshop 1: • My Hopes for ATSI people • Being Young • Living in Darwin • Strengths • Things that make me happy • Worries • Strategies for coping Workshop 2: • Things people say about ATSI people • To calm myself when I am upset or angry I... • I want a life that can/ where I can.... • The first workshop made me feel... Workshop 3: • Today I Am Feeling... • This Group Is... • I'm Proud of Myself For... • 3 Things I Like About Myself • When I Say Negative Things to Myself, I Will.... • Posters: How to bring about change and Violence and Fighting.	Strong Mind Strong Spirit, Breaking the Cycle Program

Reflection Workshop

Stakeholders and referring agencies came together to reflect on the learnings from the Leadership Program, discussing the issues and solutions raised by participants and exploring how they could work collaboratively to support the participants' goals.

Description	Sessions	Outputs
In line with Amplifying Voices' commitment to adaptive, reflective, and community-led programming, a reflection session was held following the completion of Strong Mind Strong Spirit. Referring services and stakeholders supporting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were invited to reflect on program outcomes and identify future opportunities. Facilitated by Tanyah Nasir, the workshop was held on Friday 28 March, 9:30–11:00 AM at Durack Community Arts Centre. Eight service providers attended the session and reflected on learnings from the program.	The aims of the session were to: • Share key learnings from young participants' • Reflect on these within the broader domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV) sector • Identify opportunities to strengthen support and work together to create systemic change	Some of the key priorities set within these conversations were: • We need more safe spaces and brave spaces for ATSI young people to have conversations about issues they worry about but feel like they can't talk about. • Networking as service providers to support working with families • Knowledge is power: the education system can teach children and young people knowledge to live a life free from violence (education about rights, responsibilities, wellbeing, relationships, communication and life skills) • More education for everyone • Restorative practice with the whole community • Non-judgmental spaces and services and experiences • Racism is a key issue that needs to be addressed as part of violence prevention amongst ATSI young people.

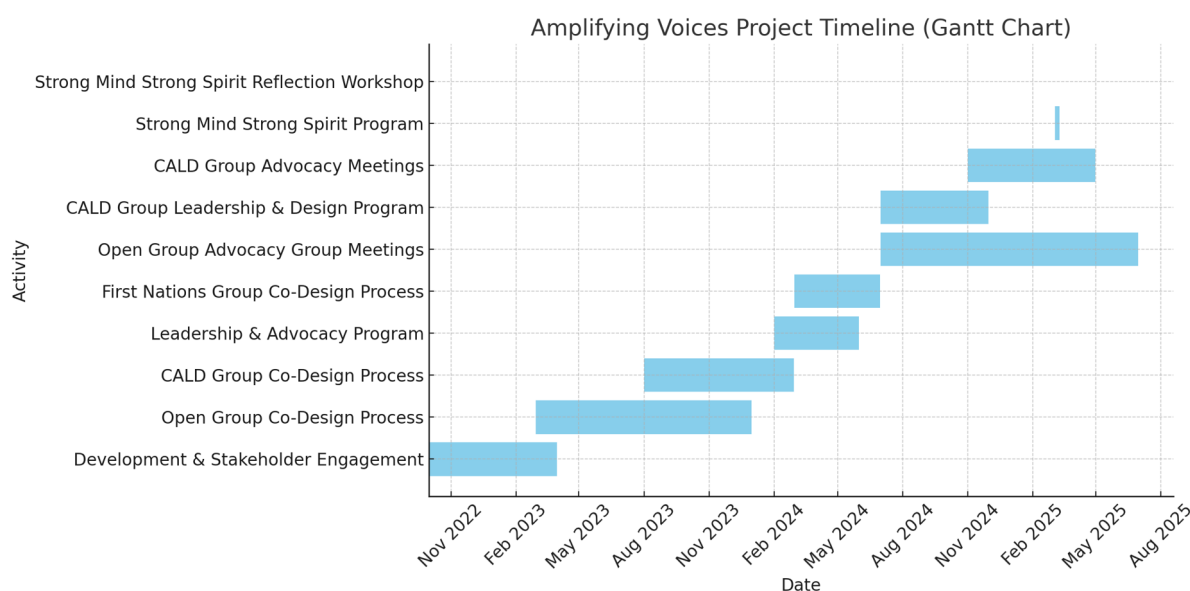
Supports for Participants

Participant wellbeing is a priority throughout Amplifying Voices. All participants had access to referrals for counselling, legal services, DFSV case management, and culturally appropriate support. The program facilitator worked alongside participants to identify their needs and connect them to appropriate services where required.

Project Timeline

Amplifying Voices is intentionally responsive and flexible, recognising the importance of working at a pace that respects participants' needs, experiences, and wellbeing. The project is iterative, with learnings documented and integrated into each new phase or group. The program phases were as follows:

Activity	Start Date	End Date
Development & Stakeholder Engagement	October 2022	March 2023
Open Group Co-Design Process	March 2023	December 2023
CALD Group Co-Design Process	August 2023	February 2024
Leadership & Advocacy Program	February 2024	May 2024
First Nations Group Co-Design Process	March 2024	June 2024
Open Group Advocacy Group Meetings	July 2024	June 2025
CALD Group Leadership & Design Program	July 2024	November 2024
CALD Group Advocacy Meetings	November 2024	April 2025
Strong Mind Strong Spirit Program	4 March 2025	11 March 2025
Strong Mind Strong Spirit Reflection Workshop	28 March 2025	28 March 2025



Appendix B: Strong Mind Strong Spirit Program Report

STRONG MIND STRONG SPIRIT

BREAKING THE CYCLE

REPORT

Collaboration between YWCA and Tanyah Nasir Consulting Services



Strong Mind Strong Spirit

Breaking the Cycle

Explore your inner strength and dream of a future full of possibilities



THIS PROGRAM IS FOR YOUNG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN

Join us for a special 3-day journey where young women aged between 16 and 25 come together to share, learn and grow.

Each day is about you! Your hopes, your dreams and the small steps that lead to big changes.

In a safe, supported space, we'll gently explore ways to build confidence and discover tools that will help you create a positive path for yourself and those you love.

TOPICS WE WILL EXPLORE TOGETHER

- Finding your strength
- Building relationships that lift you up
- Dreaming big and setting goals
- Creating a personal plan for your future



DATES : Tue 4 March, Wed 5 March, Tue 11 March (2025)

TIME : 10:30 AM to 2:00 PM

LOCATION : Palmerston Culture and Family Centre

HOW TO GET INVOLVED?

Scan the QR code or visit our website
ywca.org.au/amplifying-voices



Contact : AmplifyingVoices@ywca.org.au



Background

The Strong Mind Strong Spirit (SMSS) project was initiated by YWCA to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) young women with a culturally safe and supportive space to explore identity, resilience, leadership, and the realities they face. Recognizing the unique challenges and pressures Aboriginal young women experience — including intergenerational trauma, racism, systemic failures, and community disconnection — this project offered a safe place where their voices could lead the way.

The approach was intentionally organic and flexible, allowing the outcomes to unfold naturally, led by what the young women said, felt, and needed in the moment.

At the heart of the project the aim was to listen deeply, - - not to fix, not to impose but to try to understand their thoughts and their reality from their perspective.

To the young women who shared their voice, their story, and their time — thank you. Your contributions have shaped something powerful and meaningful. This report will continue to be a reminder that when we listen with respect, lead with heart, and walk together, real change is strengthened.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the SMSS project was to

- Empower ATSI young women to express themselves freely and without judgment.
- Create a brave, culturally grounded environment for truth-telling, connection, and healing.
- Strengthen young women's self-belief, confidence, and awareness of themselves
- Build a peer support network

Project Objectives

The objectives were to:

- Provide workshops that promote connection, identity, confidence, and resilience.
- Explore issues of violence, respect, belonging, and empowerment.
- Identify gaps in current systems and services through the lens of young people's lived experiences.

- Create space for young women to lead conversations about their futures and the change they want to see.
- Develop insights and practical recommendations for supporting ATSI young women better.

Speaking Truth, In Their Way

The workshops created a vital space—a safe, confidential, and culturally grounded environment—where young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women could share openly, reflect honestly, and connect meaningfully. What emerged was a powerful tapestry of truth, hope, and resilience.

These young women came into the space feeling a mix of emotions and very cautious. As trust grew, so too did their courage to speak from the heart. They offered raw and real insight into the pressures of being young: not being taken seriously, lacking support, and being expected to show respect without always receiving it. Yet, they also saw the beauty of youth—its potential, its open doors, and the belief that a better future is still possible.

Their hopes for their people were deeply moving: to be seen without shame, to dream boldly, and to speak up without fear. They wanted a community that uplifts rather than judges, that listens rather than silences and is positive and peaceful.

Living in Darwin brought mixed emotions—some felt deeply connected to family and country, while others expressed disconnection and discomfort. Still, they were grounded in their strengths and what brought them joy: creativity, laughter, art, and caring for others. At the same time, they carried heavy worries—about their family, relationships, friends, their mental health, and their future.

Despite the challenges they identified, these young women held onto wisdom beyond their years:

"Don't let one bad day make you think you have a bad life."

"It's okay not to be okay."

They shared strategies that help them stay strong—affirmations, breathing techniques, reaching out—and reflected on how social anxiety and violence affect their communities in deep, systemic ways. There was a shared frustration that problems aren't talked about openly, and that stereotypes still define them in the eyes of others: lazy, ungrateful, incapable. But they rejected those labels and replaced them with their truth.

They dreamed aloud of better lives—ones they could shape themselves, filled with family, love, safety, and purpose. A life with choices. A life where healing and happiness are possible. A life with a nice house, two kids, and understanding at home. A life that is theirs to create—"big and bright."

Throughout the workshop it became clear – that these young women are not the problem—they are the solution and need to always be part of this.

A Report Guided by Their Voice

This report has been intentionally written to privilege the voices, stories, and lived experiences of the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who participated in the workshop. From the beginning, our priority was to create a safe, confidential space where they felt respected, heard, and free to express themselves in their own way. As a result, the majority of this report is composed of their own words, shared in their own language, without translation or interpretation. We chose to write it this way to ensure the young women had a sense of ownership over what was recorded and shared. It also highlights their maturity, clarity, and deep desire to be part of the solution, not just seen as part of the problem. For us, as service providers and community workers, this way of writing is an invitation—to listen deeply, reflect honestly, and gain meaningful insight into their realities, hopes, and the barriers they face. Their words are powerful, and this report honours that power.

Across each workshop, we heard stories that were not only personal but profoundly instructive. These young women spoke with courage and clarity. They shared pain, pride, survival, humour, hope, and truth. More than identifying what isn't working, they illuminated what could be - and what must be - if we are to genuinely support them.

Their words were simple, yet powerful

- *“If you want change, do it yourself.”*
- *“Try before you decline.”*
- *“Just give it a go.”*

This report is not simply a record of activities and outcomes. It is a conversation starter. A gentle invitation to rethink how we engage with young people — not just in programs, but in policy, in services, in systems, and in everyday practice.

Key Messages from Young People

What they want adults, systems, and communities to understand and change

1. See us for who we are – not who you assume we are

- “They aren’t good kids.”
- “They’re lazy.”
- “They all do the same thing.”
- “Talking back is ungrateful.”
 - Young women are painfully aware of the stereotypes and assumptions that surround them. They want to be seen, heard, and valued, not judged or boxed in.

2. We want support – not shame

- “Too shame, they don’t use the services.”
- “If you’re too shame, you’re not gonna get anywhere – you need to step out of the box.”
 - Shame is a barrier. Culturally safe, shame-free, trust-building environments are essential.

3. Fighting is often the only response we’ve been taught

- “If you don’t fight, people call you soft.”
- “Our parents let us do whatever.”
- “We don’t have anyone to show us how to do it different.”
 - Violence is learned behaviour – but it’s not who they want to be. They want tools, role models, and support to choose other paths.

4. Life is hard – but we still have hope

- “When you are surrounded by it – you become it.”
- “There is a way out... you’re not stuck forever.”
- “Storms don’t last forever – the sun always shines after.”
 - These young women are fighting to believe in a better future. Programs that help them imagine that future — and walk towards it are critical.

5. We want to be ourselves – not who others expect us to be

- "Be yourself."
- "Take off the mask – stop hiding behind it."
- "You can be free to be me."
 - Strength lies in cultural identity. Programs must ensure cultural pride and personal truth telling are embedded in the learning.

WORKSHOP SUMMARIES

Workshop 1 Strong Mind Strong Spirit – Day 1

How Young Women Were Feeling:

- "Confident"
- "Good and a little scared"
- "Fine"

Hopes for ATSI People

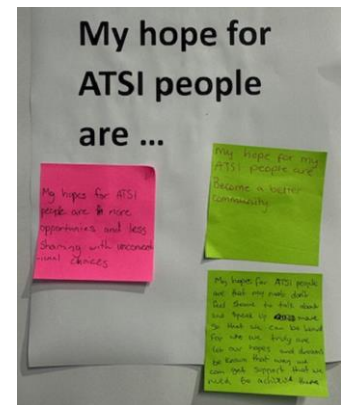
- "More opportunities and less shaming with unconventional choices."
- "Become a better community."
- "That my mob don't feel shame to talk about and speak up more so we can be heard for who we truly are. Let our hopes and dreams be known so we can get the support we need to achieve them."

Being Young:

- **Hard:** "Nobody takes my concerns seriously." "We may not have a lot of support." "People demand respect because you're younger."
- **Good:** "Endless opportunities." "You still have your whole life ahead of you." "I still have a chance to make a great future for myself."

Living in Darwin:

- "Family, friends and home."
- "The diversity of different cultures, fishing, and the national/wildlife parks."
- "I don't like living in Darwin."



Strengths:

- "Being myself, make-up, making people laugh."
- "Looking after kids, loving my family."
- "Project Zomboid, drawing, essays."

Things That Make Me Happy:

- "Family, friends, nephew."
- "My partner, art, interests."
- "Art, streaming, going out with friends."

Worries:

- "Embarrassing myself, speaking to new people, letting my disability affect my life."
- "Financial stability, finding a job, mental health."
- "Not being good enough, being alone."

Key Messages from the Group:

- "Don't let one bad day make you think you have a bad life."
- "It's okay not to be okay."
- "The paths we choose are important."
- "Live and learn – keep moving forward."

Word Associations:

- **Aboriginal people and confidence:** "It goes away as you get older." "Social anxiety is a shared issue."
- **Aboriginal people and violence:** "Fighting feels like survival." "No trust in authorities because people think they won't be believed."

Strategies Shared:

- Affirmations
- Box breathing
- Positive and negative self-talk awareness
- Reaching out for support

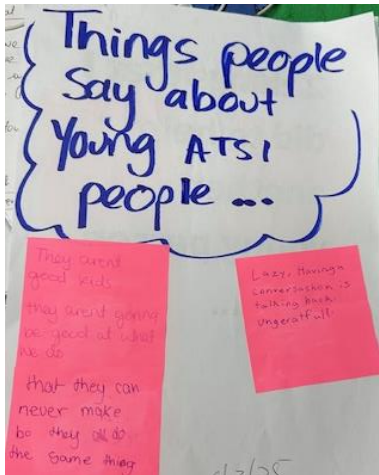
Key Discussions:

- Worries about alcohol and antisocial behavior affecting community perceptions.
- Frustration that problems are not talked about openly.

Observations:

- Participants felt proud, safe, and motivated to speak openly.
- Recognized they are not alone in their experiences.

Workshop 2: Strong Mind Strong Spirit – Day 2



Things people say about Young ATSI people...

- *They aren't good kids*
- *They aren't gonna be good at what we do*
- *That they can never make it*
- *So they all do the same thing*
- *Lazy*
- *Having a conversation is talking back*
- *Ungrateful!!*

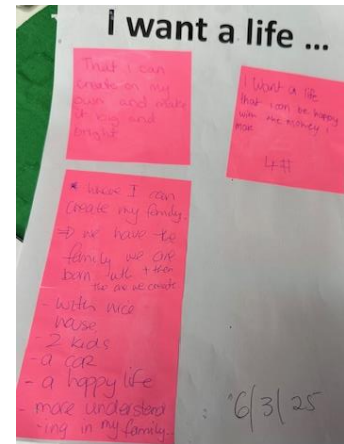
To calm myself when I am upset or angry I...

- *Take a walk or listen to music*
- *Breathe*
- *Do something you like*

- *Breathe and listen to music*
- *6#*

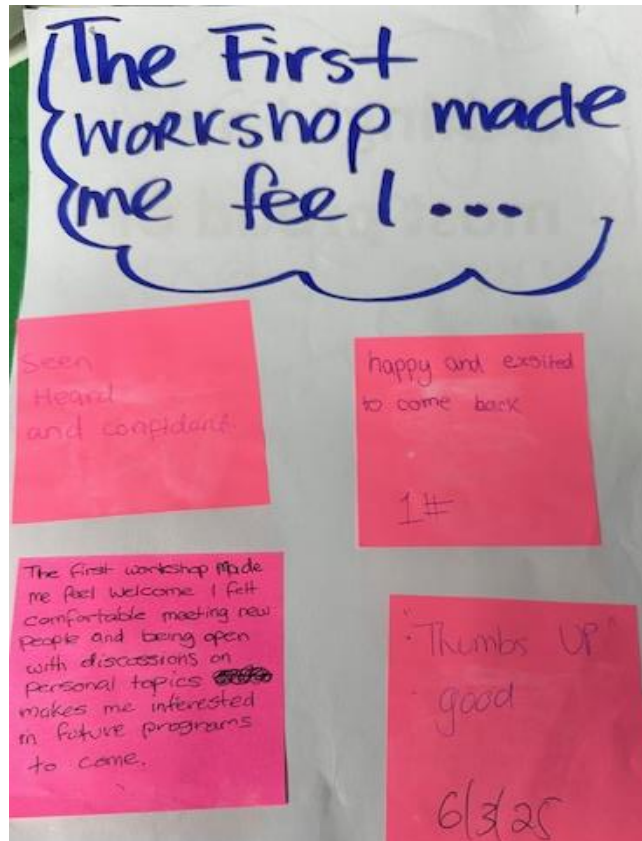
I want a life...

- *That I can create on my own and make it big and bright*
- *I want a life that I can be happy with – the money more*
- *Where I can create my family.*
 - *We have the family we are born with + then the one we create.*
 - *With nice house*
 - *2 kids*
 - *A car*
 - *A happy life*
 - *More understanding in my family*



The first workshop made me feel...

- *Seen*
- *Heard*
- *And confident.*
- *Happy and excited to come back*
- *1#*
- *The first workshop made me feel welcome. I felt comfortable meeting new people and being open with discussions on personal topics. It makes me interested in future programs to come.*
- *"Thumbs UP"*
- *Good*



The young women shared courageous, unfiltered reflections about their lives, communities, and the emotional weight they carry daily. Violence, particularly violence in public among young people emerged as a dominant theme, *often seen as normal or expected, with many saying it's hard not to fight when you're scared, because if you don't fight they will just continue and keep picking on you.* Police and other authorities compounded feelings of being unheard and unsupported as they shared they did not respond or dismissed the incident.

Conversations revealed the struggle with emotional regulation and the importance of learning grounding techniques like breathing to stay calm. They spoke openly about the cost of silence in families—how unspoken pain can spill out onto others—and the harmful impact of envy and feeling "not good enough."

Their shared insights included a belief and a sense that their community has "fallen," that some parents no longer guide or support their children, and that detention can feel safer than home. Without support, they expressed feeling stuck and shaped by their

environment. Yet in the midst of these realities, the young women displayed leadership, maturity, and a desire to be part of the solution.

A group-led 'Guess Who' team-building game boosted connection, strengthened confidence, and showcased their ability to step up and lead. Their feedback was clear—they value sessions that are close together, thrive in the 10:30am–2pm window, and need youth programming designed for mature 16+ participants who choose to be there. Above all, their messages were strong and wise: "Be confident, brave, and never give up." "Think before you speak."

Key messages

Morning Discussions:

- Violence among young people was a strong theme.
- Fighting seen as an expected, normalized response.
- Police and authorities perceived as ineffective or uncaring.

Emotional Regulation:

- Acknowledging the challenge of choosing *not* to fight when scared.
- Emphasis on learning emotional strategies like breathing and grounding.

Talking About Feelings:

- "If you keep it in, you take it out on other people."
- "No one in families talks about problems."
- Raised the impact of **envy** — feeling not good enough compared to others.

Key Messages from Participants:

- "Think about what you say before you say it, or don't say anything at all."
- "Be confident, brave, and never give up."

Powerful Reflections on Community:

- "Our community has fallen. People have given up trying to be good."
- "Some parents let their kids do whatever without support to go to school."
- "Young people who go to juvenile detention feel better treated there than at home."

When Support is Missing:

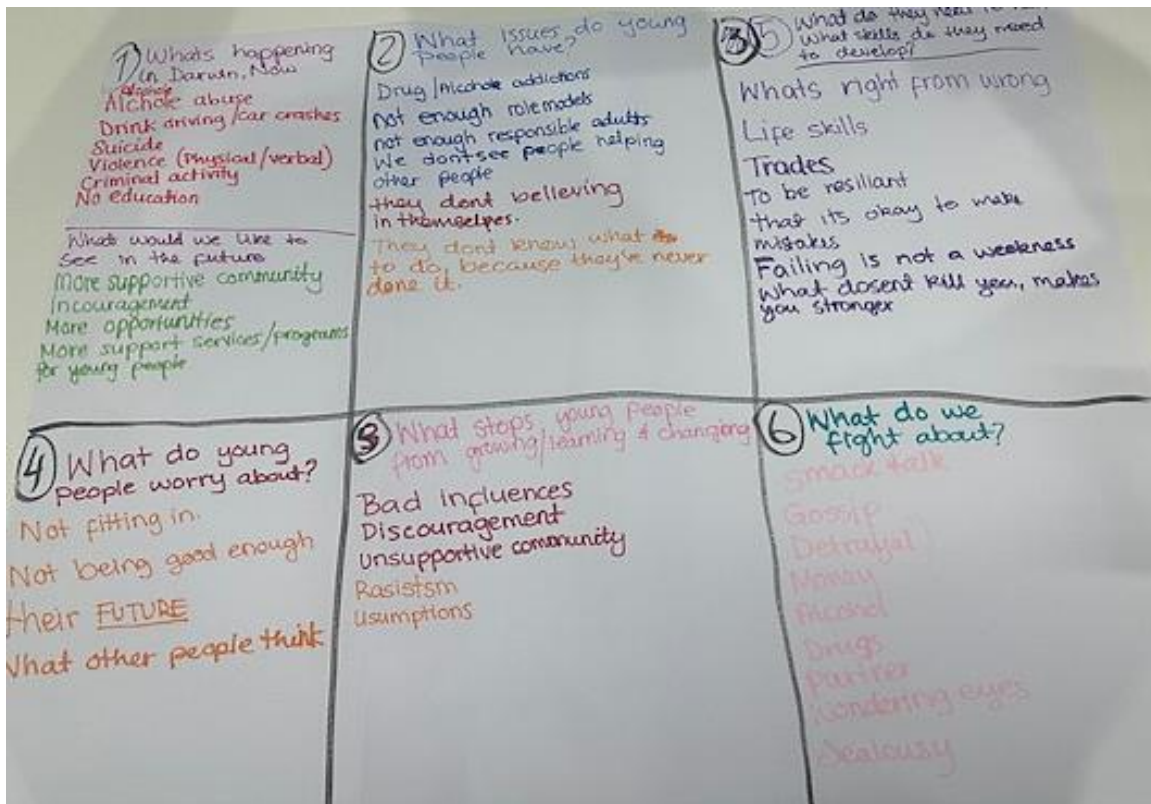
- "Feels like you can't do anything and dreams can't come true."
- "When you're surrounded by it, you become it."

Activities:

- 'Guess Who' team building game led by young women.
- Strengthened group cohesion, boosted leadership and speaking confidence.

Feedback from Young Women:

- Prefer sessions close together (not too spaced out).
- Love the 10:30am–2pm timeframe.
- Need activities for 16+ age group with maturity/readiness to engage voluntarily.



Poster and Groupwork discussion

What's happening in Darwin, Now

- Alcohol abuse
- Drink driving / car crashes
- Suicide

- Violence (physical / verbal)
- Criminal activity
- No education

What would we like to see in the future

- More supportive community
 - Encouragement
 - More opportunities
 - More support services / programs for young people
-

2. What issues do young people have?

- Drug / alcohol addiction
 - Not enough role models
 - Not enough responsible adults
 - People don't see people helping other people
 - They don't believe in themselves.
 - They don't know what to do because they've never done it.
-

3. What do they need to learn? What skills do they need to develop?

- What's right from wrong
 - Life Skills
 - Trades
 - To be resilient
 - That it's okay to make mistakes
 - Failing is not a weakness
 - What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger
-

4. What do young people worry about?

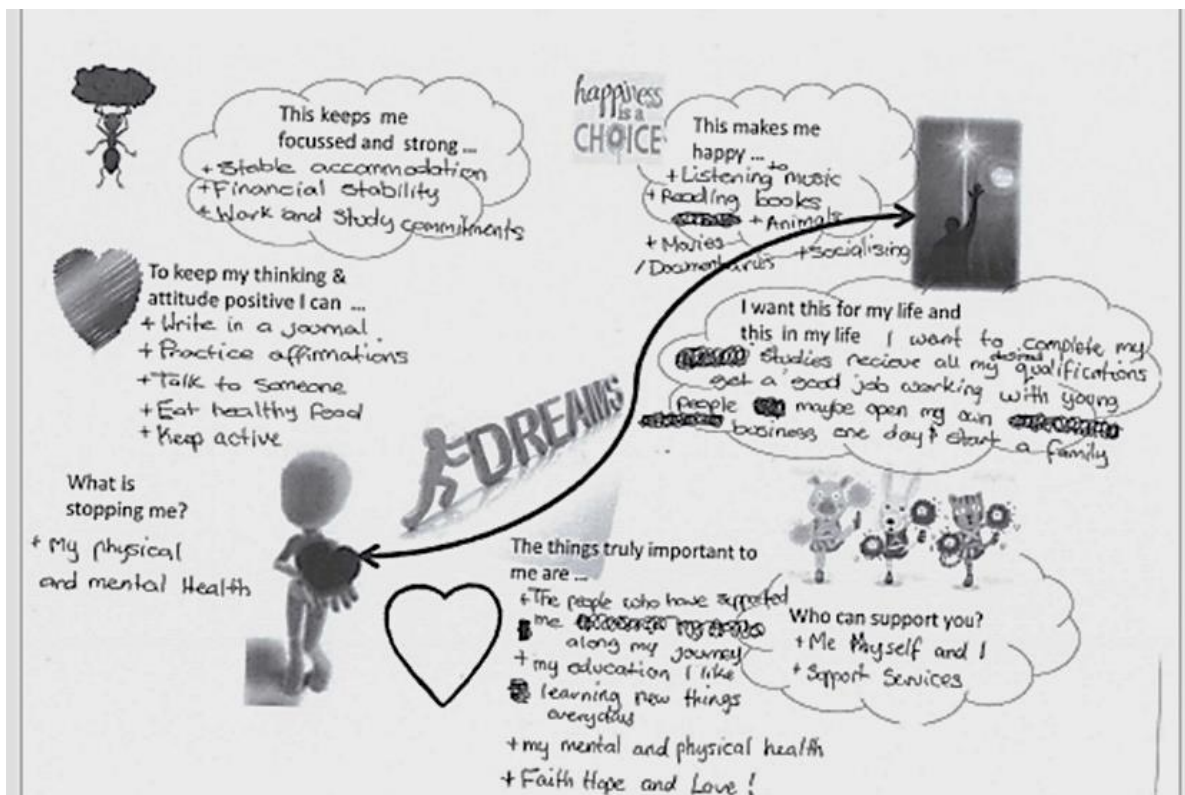
- Not fitting in
 - Not being good enough
 - Their FUTURE
 - What other people think
-

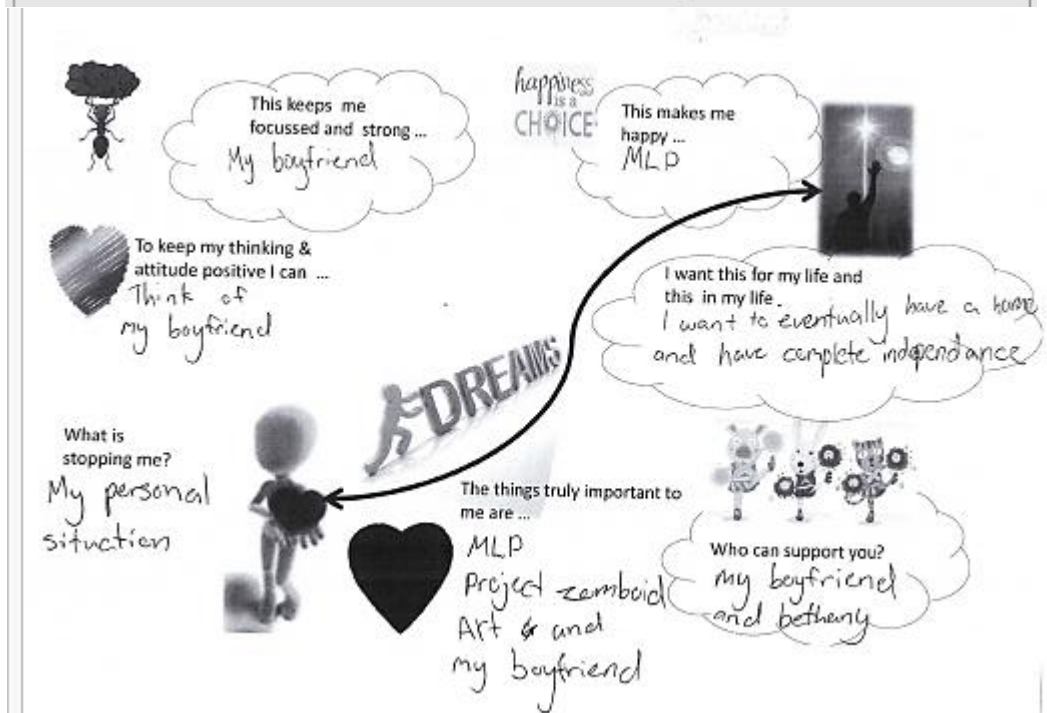
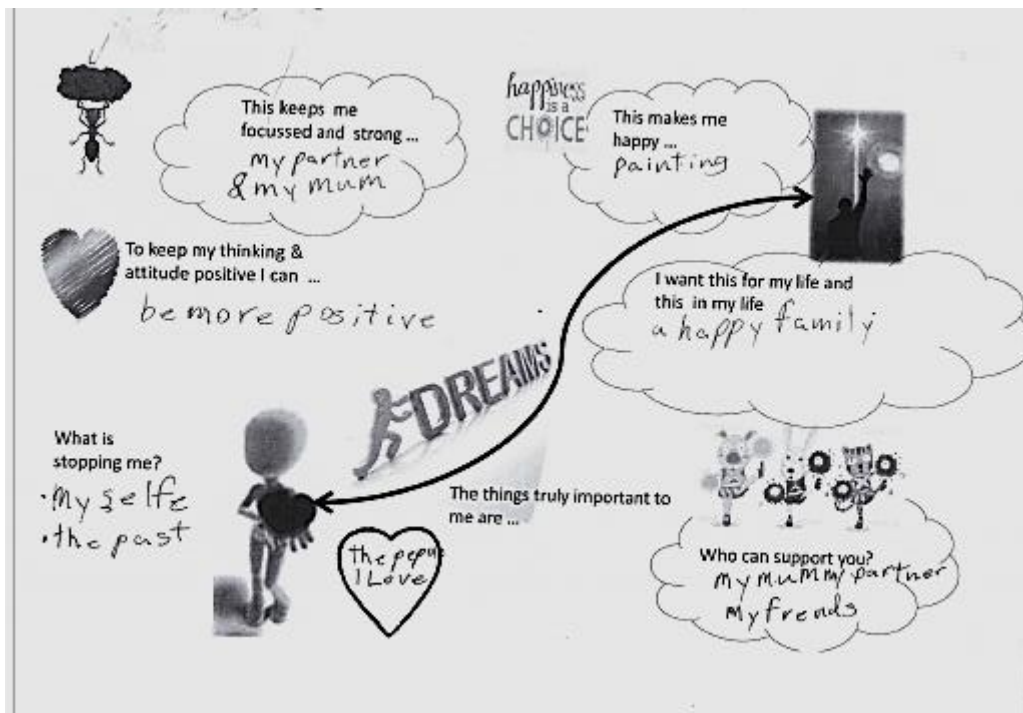
5. What stops young people from growing / learning / changing?

- Bad influences
- Discouragement
- Unsupportive community
- Racism
- Assumptions

6. What do we fight about?

- Smack talk
- Gossip
- Betrayal
- Money
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Partner
- Wondering eyes
- Jealousy





Workshop 3: Strong Mind Strong Spirit – Day 3

Workshop 3 created a space for deep reflection, emotional check-ins, and self-recognition. Trust had been built over the previous sessions — the young women were more open, expressive, and comfortable in leading parts of the session themselves. The focus was on affirming identity, acknowledging achievements, and exploring practical and emotional strategies for navigating their world.

This session captured unfiltered insights from the participants about the realities of their lives, their emotional landscapes, and how they see pathways for growth and healing. Creative activities such as poster-making allowed for expression beyond words — with visuals that represented identity, culture, dreams, and strength.

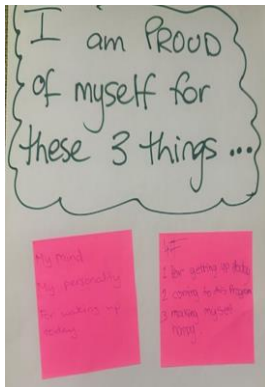
Today I Am Feeling:

- "Great!"
- "Good and calm today."

This Group Is:

- "Stress-free, chilled, happy."
- "Comforting, fun, stress-free."

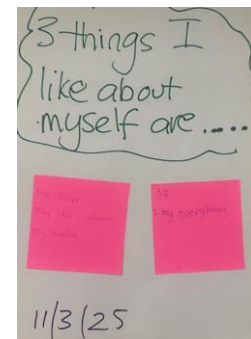
I'm Proud of Myself For:



- "Getting up today."
- "My own achievements."
- "Making myself happy."
- "My mind."
- "My personality."
- "Waking up today."

3 Things I Like About Myself:

- "My everything."
- "My hair, my skin colour, my body."



When I Say Negative Things to Myself, I Will:

- "Stop and think about the positive things."
- "Turn the negative into positive and remind myself of what I have achieved."

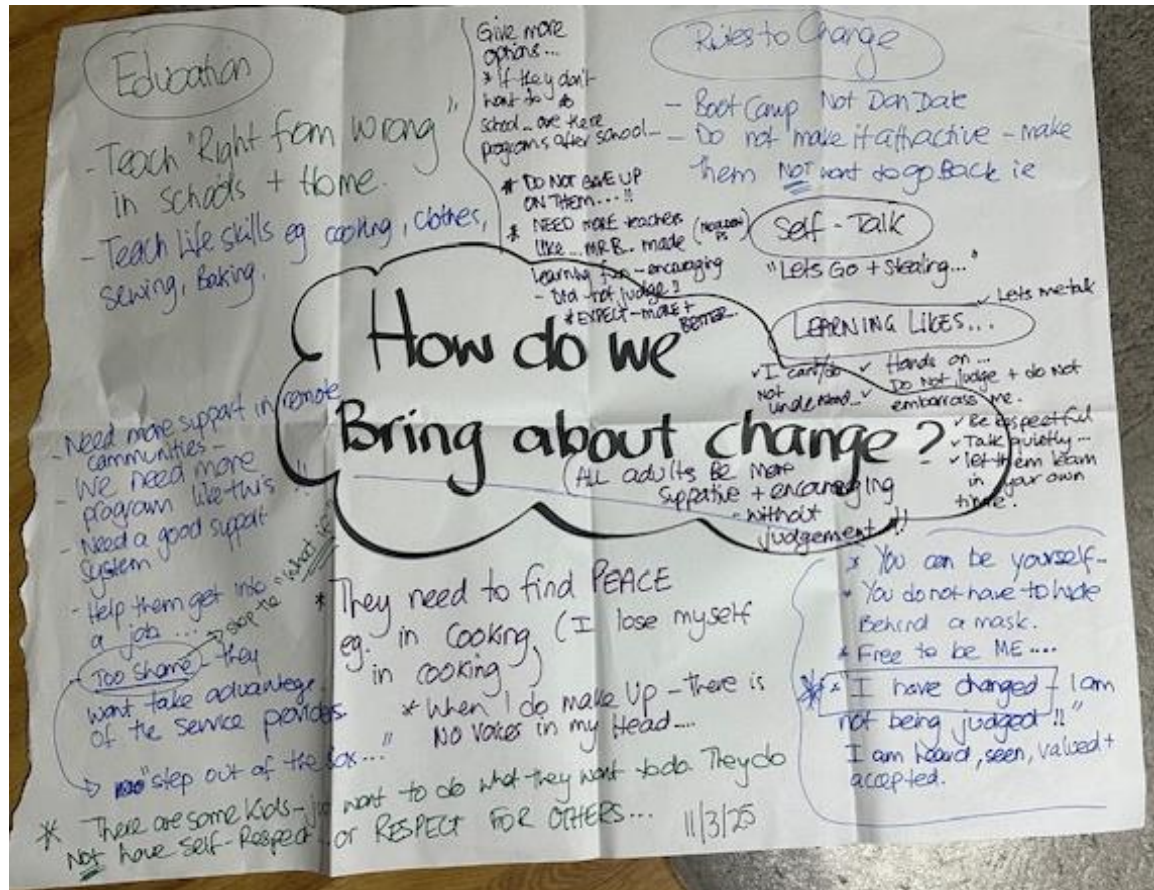
Posters:

Participants used poster-making to share who they are, what they value, and how they see themselves. The posters included words like:

- "Proud to be me."
- "Strong, funny, real."
- "My culture is powerful."
- "Love my skin."
- "Learning how to talk better to myself."

- "Still here – still trying."

The following posters were created by the young women and reflect their direct thoughts, hopes, and analysis of their lived experience



Poster 1: How do we bring about change?

Education

- Teach "Right from Wrong" in schools + home.
- Teach life skills e.g. cooking, clothes, sewing, baking.

More Support (Remote)

- Need more support in communities.
- We need more program like this – need a good support system.
- Help them get into the job.
- *Too Shame* – they won't take advantage of the service providers.
- *Step out of the box*

There are some kids – just want to do what they want to do. They do not have self-respect... or respect for others...

Give more options...

- *If they don't want to go school... are there other options/programs*
- *Do not give upon them ... we need more teachers like Mr B. He did not judge and expected more of us and better*
- *Parents make excuses... "She is uncontrollable" (15 yrs)*
- *Need to teach more – cooking, life, etc.*

They need to find Peace

e.g. in Cooking (*I lose myself in cooking*)

- *When I do make up – there is NO voices in my head.*

Rules to Change

- Boot Camp NOT Don Dale
- Do not make it attractive – make them not want to go back in.

Self-Talk

- *"Let's go & steal..."*

Learning Likes...

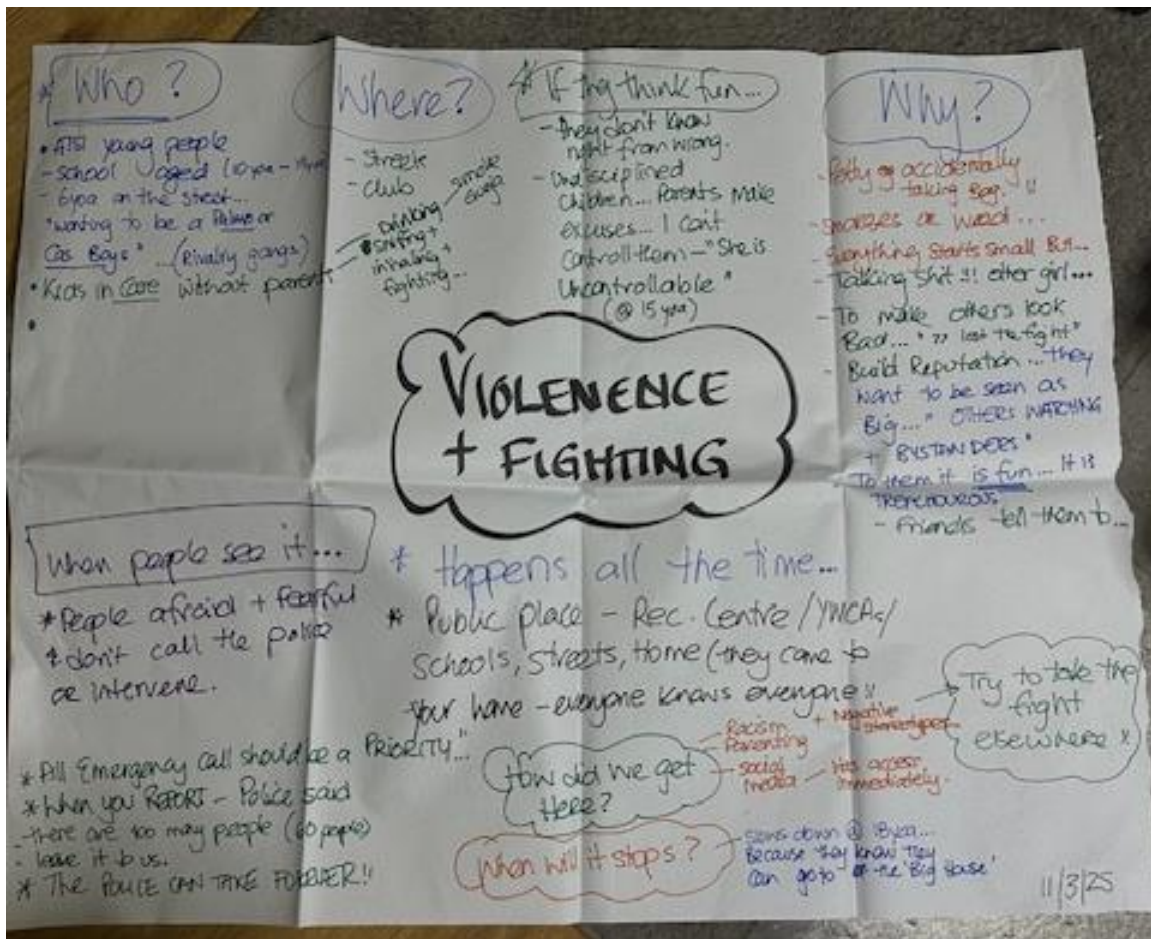
- I like Hands on activities
- If I do not want to do it or do not understand - do not embarrass me.
- Be respectful to me
- Talk quietly to me
- Let them learn in their own time
- Do not embarrass me or judge me.

At this workshop

- *I am peaceful – not feeling judged.*
- You can be yourself – You do not have to hide behind a mask.
- Free to be Me...
- I have changed
- I am not being judged
- I am loved, seen, valued, accepted.

Central Message expressed throughout the workshop

All adults to be more supportive & encouraging without judgement



Poster 2: Violence + Fighting

Who?

- ATSI young people
- School-aged (boys + girls)
- 6yo on the street – wanting to be a fighter
- Cas Boys (rivalry gangs)
- Kids in care – without parents

Where?

- Street
- Club

If they think fun...

- They are smoking, drinking and inhaling and fighting as well as smoking gunja.
- They don't know right from wrong.
- Undisciplined children... parents make excuses...
("She is uncontrollable" @ 15yrs)

Why?

- Petty or accidentally “talking shit”
- Smokes or weed...
- Everything starts small but...gets worse.
- To make others look bad... “lost the fight”
- To build a reputation – they want to be seen as big... → others are watching
- To them it is fun... it is TREACHEROUS...
- Their friends “tell them to...”

When people see it...

- *People afraid + fearful*
- *Don’t call the police or intervene*

Happens all the time...

- Public place – Rec Centre / YMCA / schools, streets, home
(they come to your home – everyone knows everyone)

Extra Comments:

- *All Emergency calls should be a priority...*
- *When you report – Police said “There are too many people (60 people)”*
- *Leave it be...*
- *The police can take FOREVER!*

Key Learnings for Future Programs

This project invites us to reflect on how we walk alongside ATSI young women and to rethink the ways our systems, services, and mindsets can better support their journey.

Build from Trust, Not Templates

- Programs must allow time to build relationships. The 3-day structure of SMSS allowed for increasing openness, honesty, and self-leadership.
- Young people opened up because they felt safe, respected, and not rushed.

Let Young People Lead

- Activities where participants took the lead (e.g., games, game ‘Guess Who I am?’ poster-making) deepened engagement and connection.
- Future programs should co-design content with youth, not just for them.

Cultural Safety Is Non-Negotiable

- Shame, racism, and assumptions push young people away.
- Every facilitator must be trauma-aware and actively anti-racist in language, policy, and action.

Prioritise Identity, Not Just Behaviour

- Programs should centre identity, culture, and confidence building before addressing “problem behaviour.”
- Leadership, resilience, and emotional regulation grow when young people feel proud of who they are.

Systems Need to Listen and Evolve

- Young women shared that at times, the police, schools, and support services can feel untrustworthy or not as helpful as they need them to be.
- What they’re asking for is consistency, empathy, and real support — not judgement or red tape.



**STRONG MIND STRONG
SPIRIT - BREAKING THE CYCLE
EVALUATION**

THANK YOU

Date: 11/3/25

2 words to describe this program...	Today I learnt ...
fun and calm	mind set violence and fighting our support people
The biggest thing I learnt about myself was ...	What could have been done better?
Self respect and mind set.	Talk a little more.
I am really proud of myself for ...	I will always remember ...
Stepping out of my comfort	to stop putting myself down
I really got a lot out of ...	Did the facilitator create an open and safe space for learning?
Showing up!	☒ Yes ☒ No ☒ Unsure
Is it important to have Aboriginal trainers? Tell us why?	Is this type of training important for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women? Tell us why?
they know what your talking about.	build there confidence.
If we ran this program again, what would you want more of?	Would you recommend this program to other Aboriginal women?
activities	☒ Yes ☒ No ☒ Unsure
What support do you need to keep growing in your leadership?	What type of support do you need after this program?
this program and my family	Encouragement, and good people
Please Circle The learning was ...	Please Circle The trainer was ...
Dislike OK Very Good ☒ Excellent	Dislike OK Very Good ☒ Excellent
On the first day I felt ...	On the third day I feel ...
Shame Job!	even more happy
Any other comments	
never felt better.	



STRONG MIND STRONG
SPIRIT - BREAKING THE CYCLE
EVALUATION *

THANK YOU

Date: 11/3/25

2 words to describe this program...	Today I learnt ...
Exciting & Calming	My skin is not a weapon! you cant change those who dont want to change
The biggest thing I learnt about myself was ...	What could have been done better?
I have a bright future ♥	have more people
I am really proud of myself for ...	I will always remember ...
Showing up everyday!	to stop hiding behind the mask BE MYSELF
I really got a lot out of ...	Did the facilitator create an open and safe space for learning?
talking about me, expressing is good! NO SHAME JOB!	☒ Yes ☒ No ☒ Unsure
Is it important to have Aboriginal trainers? Tell us why?	Is this type of training important for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women? Tell us why?
Because it shows us that we can do something with our lives	It's important because it gives us an opportunity to be greater!
If we ran this program again, what would you want more of?	Would you recommend this program to other Aboriginal women?
activities	☒ Yes ☒ No ☒ Unsure
What support do you need to keep growing in your leadership?	What type of support do you need after this program?
My self support.	Encouragement & believing myself
Please Circle The learning was ...	Please Circle The trainer was ...
☒ Unsure ☒ OK ☒ Very Good ☒ Excellent	☒ Unsure ☒ OK ☒ Very Good ☒ Excellent
On the First Day I felt ..	On the third day I feel -
Nervous...	NO SHAME Comfortable!
Any other comments	
I love you, myself and others.	

The young women were very encouraging of each other, and they would exchange words of encouragement to each other. Some of these words were:

- *When you are surrounded by it – you can become it !*
- *If you want change – do it yourself*
- *When the opportunity comes take it !!*
- *Storms don't last forever – the sun always shines after ...*
- *There is a way out ... you're not stuck forever!*
- *If you're too shame you're not gonna get anywhere – you need to step out of the box!!*
- *Take off the mask stop hiding behind it QQ*
- *Be yourself!! Step out of your comfort zone*
- *You can't change people who don't want to change...*
- *Try before you decline*
- *Just give it a go ...*

Conclusion

The *Strong Mind Strong Spirit* project revealed what becomes possible when we create an environment where young women feel seen, heard and valued and when we truly listen, we learn more from them and their world.

Across each workshop, we heard stories that were not only personal but profoundly instructive. These young women spoke with courage and clarity. They shared pain, pride, survival, humour, hope, and truth. More than identifying what isn't working, they illuminated what could be - and what must be - if we are to genuinely support them. Their words were simple, yet powerful

- *"If you want change, do it yourself."*
- *"Try before you decline."*
- *"Just give it a go."*

This report is not simply a record of activities and outcomes. It is a conversation starter. A gentle invitation to rethink how we engage with young people — not just in programs, but in policy, in services, in systems, and in everyday practice.

To those who work in this space - educators, service providers, policymakers, and community leaders — we encourage you to use this report as a springboard for change. Let it provoke new thinking, guide new conversations, and shape new models of youth engagement that are led by respect, authenticity, cultural safety and co-creation.

As one stakeholder representative shared (paraphrased from my memory of the conversation) ...

“We need to acknowledge each other and ourselves, and the work we do. This is a difficult space to work in, and we need to remember — we are doing the best with what we have, we need to remember to be kind to each other and ourselves”

Her words are an important reminder for us all; to honour the effort, the heart, and the intention that goes into this work. To be kind - to ourselves and others and to stay open to doing things differently.

Let this be our moment to listen more deeply, act more intentionally, and walk beside young people — not ahead of them. Because when we do, the possibilities are not only visible – they become real, tangible and positive long lasting change becomes more attainable.

To the young women who shared their voice, their story, and their time — thank you. Your contributions have shaped something powerful and meaningful. This report will continue to be a reminder that when we listen with respect, lead with heart, and walk together, real change is strengthened.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank YWCA for their positive and responsive collaboration throughout this project. Your openness to working in a culturally appropriate way, and your genuine respect for our ways of doing, created a strong foundation for trust and shared purpose. We appreciate your commitment to walking alongside us and valuing the strengths, voices, and leadership of our community.

Appendix C: Amplifying Voices Our Voices, Our Influence: summary of key achievements for 2024-2025

AMPLIFYING VOICES

Our Voices, Our Influence



Summary of key achievements for 2024-25

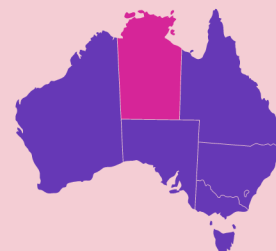
The Amplifying Voices Advocacy Group have used their voices to influence national and local responses to address Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DHSV) and homelessness in the Northern Territory.

1



Northern Territory Representation in National Research and Advocacy Initiatives

Amplifying Voices advocates have drawn on their lived expertise to inform and support national research and advocacy initiatives, highlighting critical concerns regarding DHSV and homelessness in the Northern Territory.



1. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS: NATIONAL RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Four advocates were interviewed for the DHSV National Partnership Evaluation contributing towards future policy and service development.

Two advocates have been selected for the YWCA Australia's Youth Advocates Group who are leading the YWCA 2025 Federal Election Campaign, 'Safe Homes, Safe Futures'.

One advocate interviewed for a national research project exploring what a 'safe home' looks like for young Australian women. Reported in 'We've Been Robbed: Young Women & Gender Diverse People's Housing Experiences & Solutions'.



Advancing Lived Experience Leadership in the Northern Territory

Amplifying Voices advocates have shared their lived expertise to advanced lived experience leadership as a key component for responding for DHSV in the Northern Territory.

2



2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS: LIVED EXPERIENCE LEADERSHIP

Since July 2024, advocates have continued to meet monthly to progress their strategic plan that aims to ensure the voices of those with lived experience are central to policy and program design relating to DHSV and homelessness in the Northern Territory.

Amplifying Voices presented at the 2024 Sharing and Strengthening our Practice Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Conference in Alice Springs.

One advocate was a panelist for the Lived Experience Panel Discussion about Valuing the Victim Survivor Voice



"We're not just telling our stories - we're helping shape the solutions."



Leading Solutions and Driving Change with Lived Expertise

Amplifying Voices advocates have led independent advocacy initiatives and contributed their lived expertise to inform program development and drive service improvements in response to DFSV.

3. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS: INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY



Advocates presented their individual advocacy goals at Parliament House as part of the graduation ceremony for the Amplifying Voices 2024 Leadership and Advocacy program.

Four advocates participated in the production of social media videos to promote the program and mobilise the voices of victim-survivors by advocating for solutions informed by their lived experiences of DFSV and homelessness.

Three advocates collaborated in the codesign and recording of an audio-visual resource for Charles Darwin University sharing their lived expertise to portray specific challenges experienced by culturally and linguistically diverse women seeking support for domestic and family violence.

3. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS: LOCAL SERVICES & PROGRAMS

Six advocates participated in consultations to inform the development of the new Children's and Young Persons Program at the YWCA Domestic and Family Violence Centre.



Three advocates participated in consultations after a 'walkthrough' of YWCA Domestic, Family Violence Centre Safehouses to provide feedback and recommendations to enhance safety, comfort, and community support for families.

Three advocates participated in consultations for the Sexual Assault Resources Centre, contributing their lived expertise to shape improvements to the service model in ways that better meet the needs of victim-survivors

