

AMPLIFYING
VOICES

REVIEW OF THE AMPLIFYING VOICES PROGRAM 2022-25, NORTHERN TERRITORY

SUMMARY FINDINGS
DECEMBER 2025

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*We're not just telling our
stories – we're helping
shape solutions.”*





Alyssa West Amplifying Voices artwork story

For Amplifying Voices.

The world around her was loud with silence — the kind that settles after years of being told to stay quiet. Behind her lived the memories she never asked for: broken trust, fear hidden behind closed doors, words that bruised deeper than hands ever could. The handprints in the background of the painting carry those moments where there was pain layered upon pain, chaos swallowing identity, the feeling of no escape.

But above her hovered something powerful.

A glowing pink meeting circle representing the group of women at amplifying voices to them it's an escape from the toxic cycle, from the control, an escape from everything going on in their head. an escape from being at home with the abuser.

Each curve surrounding the center represents a survivor: one voice trembling, another rising stronger, another finally speaking after years of silence. Alone, each voice felt small. Together, they became impossible to ignore.

The pink glow cuts through the darkness like truth through shame.

She stands with her back to us because she could be anyone.

A mother.

A daughter.

A friend.

A sister.

A survivor.

And yet she is not facing the darkness anymore — she is facing the light created by community, advocacy, and healing.

The splattered stars across the top are not destruction; they are echoes. Every story shared through Amplifying Voices becomes a spark in the sky, proving survivors are not invisible. Their stories expand outward, reaching others still trapped in silence.

This painting tells the moment when fear stops being the loudest voice in the room. It tells the story of reclaiming power.

Of survivors being heard.

Of pain transformed into purpose.

And of a community that says:

"We believe you.

We see you.

And your voice matters."

Alyssa West, 2026

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 acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children are most impacted, and we acknowledge their strength, wisdom and resilience.

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."

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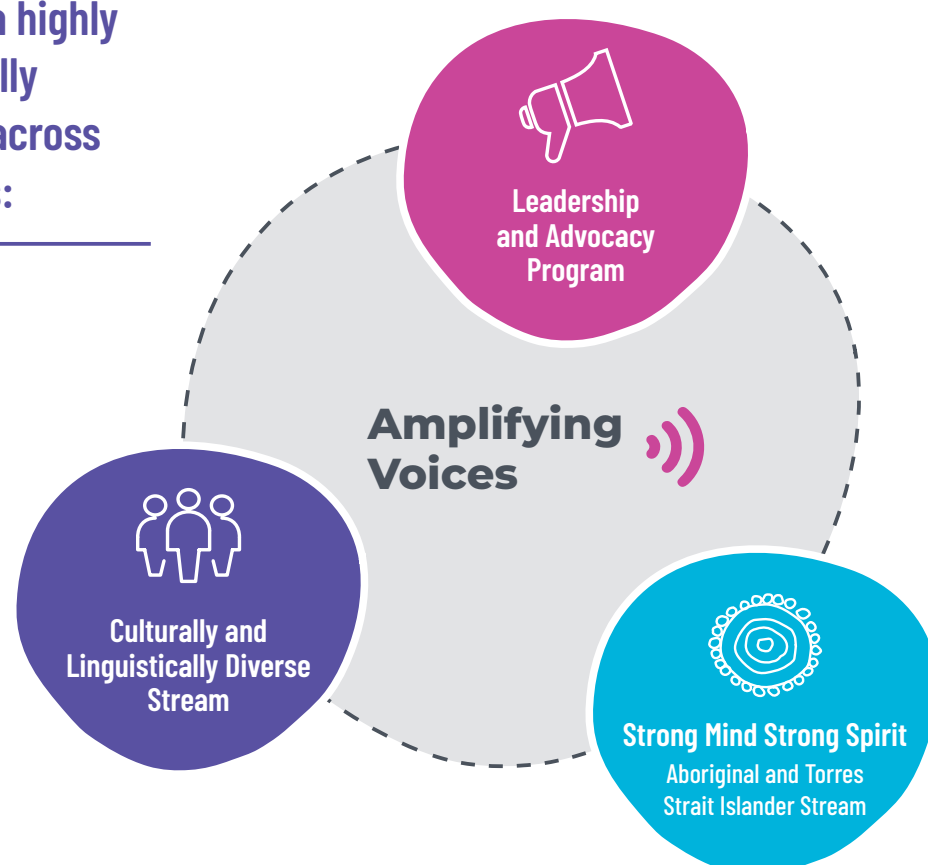
[It was] Empowerment through reclaiming power by breaking internalised shame whilst we had collective healing and solidarity for leadership development.” Participant

About Amplifying Voices

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.

Amplifying Voices aimed to provide advocacy and leadership training for women and gender diverse people with lived experience of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) 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:



Overview of Amplifying Voices



"

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

Review

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.

Overall, the Review found that Amplifying Voices is a highly valued and innovative lived experience 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.



Strong Mind Strong Spirit Project

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 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

“

[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**

Key perspectives and insights

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.

Key insights



Strengths-Based

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



Sector Influence

Program achievements included the approach to design and development, stakeholder engagement and support, and sector learning and development



Co-design

Program influence was enhanced by co-designed activities and advocacy, that prioritised participant agency, choice and control



Real Policy Impact

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.

Outcomes and impacts



Knowledge and understanding

Increased participant knowledge and understanding of the structural and systemic drivers of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence.



Stakeholder awareness

Increased stakeholder knowledge, understanding and awareness



Confidence and skills

Increased participant confidence and skills in lived experience, advocacy and leadership



Tools and resources

A suite of co-designed tools and resources for continuing use



Personal wellbeing

Positive impacts for participants regarding personal safety, connection, agency and wellbeing



Personal and professional growth

Identified significant personal and professional change for participants and stakeholders



Service design

Informed service design and planning

“

Engaging in Amplifying Voices program, 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**

Learnings for other Lived Experience Initiatives

Lived Experience Leadership is an emerging concept developed to give recognition to lived experience leaders. Key learnings to inform other lived experience initiatives more broadly include:



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

- Amplifying Voices is not a fixed model; it requires research, co-design and ongoing adaptation to participant needs and contexts.
- It is most effective when balancing participant choice, agency, and learning, with integrity, transparency, shared focus, structure, and flexible supports.



Relationships are key

- Amplifying Voices demonstrated a highly relational way of working with stakeholders, participants, and Aboriginal partners and Aboriginal facilitators
- High quality relationality grows through connection, empathy, reflection, reciprocity and shared understanding.
- The program built relationships early with stakeholders. It 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.



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.
- Participants developed increased confidence, knowledge and agency to exercise lived experience leadership and advocacy. This also transformed stakeholder knowledge, understanding and systems thinking.



As real people with real experiences in the Northern Territory our expertise is invaluable.” Participant

Key Practice Insights

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

Connection before everything else

- Build trust with participants before and during the process through safe, supportive interactions.
- Prioritise connection and psychological safety before focusing on content or outcomes.

Don't rush

- Allow sufficient time for participation, reflection, discussion and preparation so participants can contribute meaningfully.
- Schedule sessions at an appropriate pace, including adequate breaks and opportunities for processing.

Small groups are more productive and may feel safer

- Smaller groups can create a safer environment for participants who are less confident speaking up.
- They enable more detailed feedback and help ensure individual voices are heard.

Clarity is important

- Clearly communicate expectations, roles, processes and participation requirements throughout the consultation.
- Define the scope, purpose and key questions of the consultation before it begins.

Facilitation is safer when the facilitator is trusted by participants

- Participants are more likely to engage openly and honestly when facilitators are known and trusted.
- Facilitation led by someone with lived experience is valued by participants
- Facilitators with lived experience can build trust, model self-regulation and normalise participants' responses.
- Their leadership strengthens engagement by bringing shared understanding and credibility to the process.

Healing needs to be acknowledged and actively supported

- Embed healing-focused practices that promote wellbeing, reflection and connection throughout the process.
- Ensure everyone involved understands and commits to a shared approach to care and participant support.

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

- Focus inquiry on specific, actionable topics and explain how participant feedback will inform decisions.
- Close the feedback loop by sharing outcomes and only seek input on issues where change is possible.

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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

Building Impact Over Time

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 experience leadership is recognised and valued, primary prevention initiatives and networks are strengthened, and participant advocacy informs and influences decision-makers for positive change.

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.

**Amplifying
Voices**

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