

Consultation report to inform development of Tasmania's Child Sexual Abuse Reform Strategy

April 2024

Prepared by



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Being abused the way I was is a death sentence. I will die with this.

I am still here and still alive but what happened to me does not ever go away.

I am capable, competent, intelligent, kind but I was robbed of an innocence and childhood that everyone deserves.

- adult victim survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

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About Laurel House

Laurel House is a not-for-profit, community-based sexual assault support service based in North and North-West Tasmania. Laurel House provides a range of trauma-informed, evidence based, therapeutic services to victim-survivors of sexual assault, their families and supporters. We also develop and deliver a broad range of programs to adults, young people and children including the provision of therapeutic face-to-face counselling at our centres located at Launceston, Devonport and Burnie and through outreach locations across the North and North-West Tasmania, and 24/7 telephone support and assistance with accessing police and forensic medical processes.

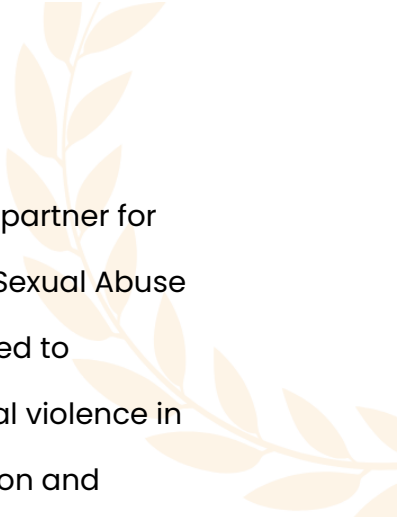
Laurel House partners with the Tasmanian Government in the delivery of the Arch Centres (multidisciplinary centres for victim-survivors of sexual harm) with the Northern Arch Centre opened in 2023 and the North-West Arch Centre currently under development.

Laurel House delivers the PAST (Prevention, Assessment, Support and Treatment) Program for children and young people (aged 17 years and under) who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours in North and North-West Tasmania.

Our team also provides community education and other capacity building programs focused on the prevention of sexual harm and on supporting parents, carers and service providers to better respond to disclosures of sexual violence.

Laurel House plays a key role in policy and advocacy work to improve the lives and safety of victim-survivors and the Tasmanian community. This includes our Laurel House Expert Advisory Panel for Youth (LEAPY) which is a program that provides victim-survivors aged 12 to 18 years with an opportunity to advocate and drive change.





Laurel House welcomes the opportunity to act as a key consultation partner for the Tasmanian Government as part of its development of the Child Sexual Abuse Reform Strategy (“the strategy”). As an organisation that is committed to amplifying the diverse voices of victim-survivors of all forms of sexual violence in Tasmania, Laurel House has developed this submission in consultation and collaboration with a range of stakeholders, including Tasmanian victim-survivors of child sexual abuse, parents and caregivers of children who have been subject to child sexual abuse, other supporters of victim-survivors, and professionals who work in the sexual and family violence sectors.

While the timeline for the development of this report has highly compressed, we have sought to represent a range of views on the development of the Child Sexual Abuse Reform Strategy. It is our intent to consult further with victim-survivors and other key stakeholders on the draft of the strategy following its release in July 2024.

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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians and first peoples of the lands on which we live, work and play. We would like to acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonisation and dispossession of the lands on First Nations People and pay our utmost respects to the Elders past and present. We particularly acknowledge the resistance and resilience of those First Nations people who have experienced sexual violence. Your stories and your strength of culture inspires us to fight for equality and a positive future without sexual harm.

We would also like to acknowledge the power and importance of lived expertise and express our sincere gratitude to the victim-survivors and their parents, caregivers and supporters who gave their time, emotional energy, thoughts, insights, wisdom and feedback during this consultation.

Additionally, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the victim-survivors who invested their courage, time and emotional energy into giving evidence for the Commission of Inquiry into Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, and their ongoing advocacy in addressing child sexual abuse in Tasmania and nationally.



Executive Summary

Addressing child sexual abuse is a complex and urgent task that requires comprehensive strategies grounded in the experiences and expertise of victim-survivors and practitioners. This executive summary encapsulates key findings and recommendations drawn from consultations conducted by Laurel House. Through these consultations, diverse perspectives yet common themes have emerged, highlighting the need for systemic change, prevention efforts, and victim-centered responses.

Consultation and engagement activities

Laurel House conducted consultations with two key groups: individuals with lived experience of child sexual abuse and those with practice experience largely from the family and sexual violence sector. We engaged with these diverse stakeholders through various methods like consultation sessions, surveys, and "Kitchen Table" Conversations. Our consultations with victim-survivors were conducted with best practice guidelines, including co-facilitation by experienced individuals and capturing significant insights. However, the limited timeframe restricted the depth and breadth of feedback. We identified that consultation methods that are aligned with best practices (including longer periods of engagement) will enhance ethical and authentic engagement, where more extensive and targeted engagement, particularly with some diverse communities including men and boys, and marginalised communities.

Consultation Summary

We heard concerns and solutions, and most of all we received clear messages of passionate commitment to see Tasmania do better for our children and young people and for victim-survivors.





1. Recognise all forms of child sexual abuse and its intersections with family and sexual violence

The strategy must recognise and address all forms of child sexual abuse, including abuse within familial, community and institutional settings. Definitions of child sexual abuse and the focus of the strategy must be broad to include various contexts, such as abuse between step-siblings, online abuse, grooming tactics, and harmful sexual behaviours among children and young people.

2. Ongoing and effective consultation and engagement with victim-survivors is essential

Effective and ongoing consultation and engagement with victim-survivors are crucial for developing policies and strategies that truly address the needs of survivors of child sexual abuse. Victim-survivors emphasise the importance of direct consultation to ensure decision-makers have a deep understanding of their experiences and perspectives. To ensure inclusion and access, multiple modes of consultation should be offered, including group sessions, individual consultations, online surveys, and written submissions.

3. Recognition of practice wisdom and expertise within the specialist sector beyond government

Recognising and incorporating the practice wisdom and expertise within the specialist sector is vital for effective policy development and implementation in preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. Practitioners in sexual violence services possess invaluable insights gained from direct interactions with victim-survivors, offering nuanced understanding and trauma-informed approaches.

4. A genuine commitment to prevention

The need for investment in prevention of child sexual abuse emerged as a central theme in our consultations. Key recommendations include implementing evidence-based whole-of-community education that is inclusive and tailored to diverse audiences, involving both victim-survivors and specialists in program



design and delivery. Systemic changes, such as comprehensive training, robust screening and checks, and child-safe policies, are also crucial for embedding a culture of prevention within institutions and the community.

5. Build a society and culture that fosters the identification of child sexual abuse

Our consultations highlighted the need for multifaceted actions to address the barriers hindering the recognition and disclosure of abuse, including a lack of community awareness and the negative impacts of societal norms. Efforts to shift cultural attitudes should involve media engagement and empower individuals to seek help and support.

6. Ensure responses to child sexual abuse are trauma-informed and victim-centered


In ensuring responses to child sexual abuse are trauma-informed and victim-centered, it's vital to address the inadequacies in existing systems and services. Strengthening understanding among family and friends of victim-survivors of the impacts of abuse and the needs of victim-survivors is also crucial, requiring specialised training and support services.

Improving responses within the justice and child safety systems is paramount. Suggestions included appointing case managers and trauma-informed lawyers for victim-survivors, enhancing police responses through proper training in trauma-informed approaches, and addressing systemic barriers within the justice system.

7. Meeting the Needs of Victim-Survivors from Diverse Communities

Through our consultations, it was abundantly clear that the needs of victim-survivors from diverse communities are often overlooked and their needs are inadequately addressed. While those who participate in our consultations did include participants from diverse communities, we recognize that we need to





engage more broadly that this consultation period allowed and look forward to engaging more fully in future.

8. Hold Perpetrators and those that protect or enable them accountable

The consultations underscored the urgent need to hold perpetrators and those who protect or enable them accountable for their actions. This includes ensuring that offenders, including those in positions of authority, are not shielded from justice.

Key Themes

In exploring key themes crucial for the advancement of Tasmania's response to child sexual abuse, our report delves into our vision for the state, aspirations for systemic improvements, expectations regarding reform development, implementation, review, and monitoring.

1. Our Vision for Tasmania

Throughout our consultations, diverse yet interconnected visions for change in Tasmania's approach to addressing child sexual abuse emerged. First and foremost, there is a fundamental desire for a future where children not only survive but thrive, with their voices valued and empowered. Additionally, there is a call to centre the experiences of victim-survivors, believing and supporting them, and drawing on their expertise and lived experiences. Another key vision advocates for holistic, coordinated responses that transcend organisational boundaries, aiming to bridge gaps and foster collaboration across sectors. Lastly, there is unequivocal support for the shared responsibility of every individual, organization, and governmental body in preventing, identifying, and responding to child sexual abuse. These visions offer a multifaceted framework for transforming Tasmania's approach, paving the way toward a safer and more just future.



2. Our Hopes for the System

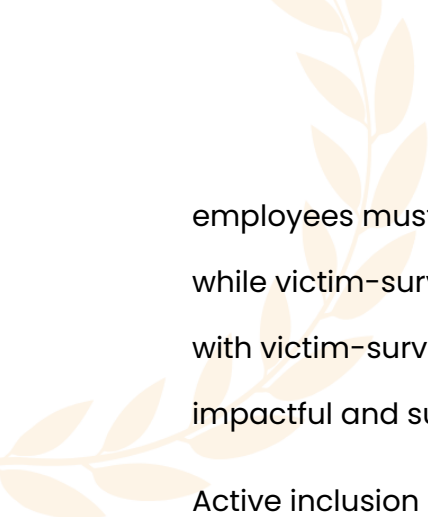
Our aspirations for Tasmania's system drawing from our consultations span seven key and interconnected areas. Firstly, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive and integrated system that not only addresses the existing gaps in the Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan but also encompasses all forms of child sexual abuse. Secondly, the system must be firmly rooted in the experiences and needs of victim-survivors, operating in a manner that upholds their rights and agency. It is imperative to consult with victim-survivors meaningfully and diversely at every stage, ensuring their voices guide the system's design and implementation. Additionally, the insights and perspectives of professionals working within the sector are invaluable, complementing victim-survivor input to inform effective solutions. Moreover, addressing power dynamics and privilege is essential to create an environment where victim-survivors feel empowered to seek justice without fear. To achieve systemic change, both bottom-up and top-down approaches are necessary, alongside crucial law reforms that prioritise victim-survivor rights. Finally, accountability is paramount, requiring robust monitoring, evaluation, and transparent communication mechanisms to ensure progress and responsiveness to victim-survivors, families, and communities..

3. Our Expectations for Reform Development, Implementation, Review, and Monitoring

Drawing from our consultations, we outline the expectations of victim-survivors, supporters and the sector about how the Child Sexual Abuse Reform Strategy and other reforms should be developed, implemented, reviewed and monitored.

Reforming Tasmania's approach to addressing child sexual abuse must prioritise the lived expertise of victim-survivors, recognising their invaluable contributions to effective change. Best practice frameworks, co-developed with victim-survivors, provide crucial foundations for ethical and safe engagement, emphasising trauma-informed, person-centered approaches. Government





employees must receive comprehensive training in trauma-informed practices, while victim-survivors should be remunerated for their expertise. Collaboration with victim-survivors is not only ethically imperative but also essential for impactful and sustainable reforms.

Active inclusion of children and young people's voices is fundamental, ensuring comprehensive strategies that safeguard their rights and experiences. Sensitivity to diverse identities and communities, including marginalized groups, is crucial. Consultation materials should be accessible in various formats, and advertising should be diverse and inclusive. Establishing formal advisory councils is valuable but should be complemented by a multi-pronged approach engaging a wide range of voices and experiences.

Adequate funding is essential for effective implementation, including support for counselling services, workforce development, community education, and law reform efforts. Longer funding cycles are needed to address workforce shortages and promote retention. Robust governance, monitoring, review, and evaluation arrangements guided by victim and survivor-centered approaches are crucial. Continuous feedback mechanisms, transparency, and accountability are vital for building trust and credibility with victim-survivors and stakeholders.

Feedback Summary and Conclusion

The voices of victim-survivors and specialist practitioners collectively call for transformative action to prevent, identify, and respond to child sexual abuse. Their narratives underscore the urgency for change, emphasizing the imperative to believe and embed lived expertise at every stage. Laurel House is committed to driving transformational change and eagerly anticipates collaborating with the government and stakeholders to address child sexual abuse in Tasmania. We look forward to further opportunities to amplify the voices of victim-survivors in our work with the Tasmanian Government.



Consultation and Engagement Activities

Laurel House undertook consultation and engagement focused on two primary groups of people with knowledge, experience and expertise about child sexual abuse – those with lived experience and those with practice expertise, located in the north and north-west of Tasmania.

People with lived experience of child sexual abuse

Laurel House sought the views of a range of people who have lived experience and expertise of child sexual abuse including:

- adult victim-survivors of child sexual abuse
- child/youth victim-survivors of child sexual abuse who were members of Laurel House Lived Experience Advisory Panel for Youth (LEAPY);
- parents/caregivers of children who have experienced child sexual abuse;
- other supporters (non-parent/caregivers) of people who have experienced child sexual abuse e.g. partners, siblings, etc.

A total of 27 people with lived experience shared their views as part of this phase of Laurel House's consultation and engagement activities. This included one member of LEAPY, however, views shared by LEAPY members during previous engagements have also informed the report. The people who participated in this phase of engagement were all women except for one non-binary and one transman who completed the survey. Despite this, there was considerable diversity within the group with significant representation of people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTQIA+, rural and remote, and low socioeconomic background. Specifics about the consultation method and the demographics of participants are available in Appendix B.



People with practice expertise about child sexual abuse

Whilst seeking to put lived-experience and voices of victim-survivors at the forefront, the consultation and engagements also sought to draw upon the valuable perspectives, insights and practice wisdom from those working in both the specialist family and sexual violence sector, including Laurel House staff and board, and the community sector more broadly. A total of 44 people with practice expertise shared their views as part of this phase of Laurel House's consultation and engagement activities. The views and feedback of a range of community stakeholders (147 people across 16 sessions) who attended "Kitchen Table" Conversations sessions held throughout January to April 2024 have also informed the report although direct quotes were not able to be collected in these conversations. As above, specifics about the consultation method and the demographics of participants are available in Appendix B.

Modes of consultation

Several different options to participate were offered, including:

- consultation sessions (group and individual);
- consultation survey;
- providing input using video or audio feedback (for people with lived experience only);
- opportunities to provide input via Laurel House counsellors (for existing clients of Laurel House);
- "Kitchen Table" Conversations (for sector, individuals and community organisations).

Consultation sessions and surveys were promoted via social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter), the Laurel House website and through the



circulation of information to stakeholders and partners of Laurel House working in the North and North-West of Tasmania.

Limitations of consultation

Whilst the engagement activities have captured significant insights a range of input, the restricted timeframe in which Laurel House was given to undertake this consultation has created significant limitations to the breadth and depth of feedback we were able to obtain.

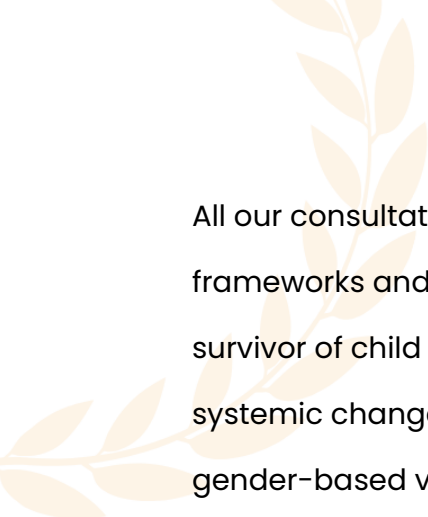
It was evident in the consultation and engagement process that significantly more time was and is needed to more meaningfully and deeply engage and consult. Unfortunately, with the time available, we were only able to conduct a limited number of consultations, and we received less survey participants than we had hoped for. Sufficient time would ensure a more diverse range of experiences are captured, including targeted engagement with men and boys, more marginalised communities, and to allow for a more nuanced capture of information and experiences. We anticipate that we will have greater capacity to facilitate broader and more targeted engagement following the release of the draft strategy in July 2024.

“Rapid turnaround time negatively impacts fulsome consultation processes. Once the draft strategy is developed, an appropriate timeframe for full consultation across community should be allocated before the final version is signed off.”

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation survey participant)

Furthermore, as outlined herein, the ways in which victim-survivor engagement and consultations are conducted should align with best practice frameworks and guidelines for ethical, safe and authentic engagement with lived experience, including responding to needs of diverse individuals and communities.





All our consultations with victim-survivors were held with best practice frameworks and guidelines at the centre, including co-facilitation by a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse with extensive experience with victim-survivor systemic change work, and a specialist law and policy practitioner experienced in gender-based violence and child sexual abuse/sexual exploitation.



Consultation Summary

Our consultations amongst different groups, gathered a multitude of diverse perspectives across a wide range of issues and areas. We heard concerns and solutions, and most of all we received clear messages of passionate commitment to see Tasmania do better for our children and young people and for victim-survivors.

This report seeks to place the voices of those we have consulted with at the forefront. Throughout the report we utilise the quotes of people we consulted with – these are colour coded to assist the reader with quotes from victim-survivors in teal, supporters (including parents-carers) of victim-survivors in gold, and service providers in purple.

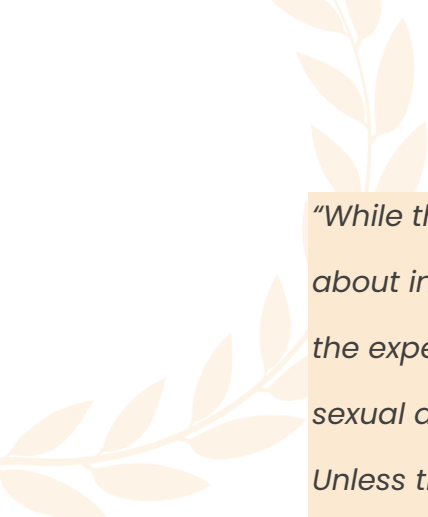
1. Recognise all forms of child sexual abuse and its intersections with family and sexual violence

Research on the setting where child sexual abuse occurs, demonstrates that perpetration usually occurs in a familial setting, with a family member being the most common perpetrator for victims aged 0–9 years (57%)¹. Whilst the Commission of Inquiry² focused on child sexual abuse in institutions, victim-survivors highlighted the need for the strategy to address child sexual abuse across all settings.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2024c, *Family, domestic and sexual violence – Children and Young People*, Australian Government, viewed 17 April 2024, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/children-and-young-people>>.

² Tasmanian Government 2023, *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse In Institutional Settings: Who was looking after me? Prioritising the safety of Tasmanian children*, Tasmanian Government, viewed 10 April 2024, <https://www.commissionofinquiry.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0011/724439/COI_Full-Report.pdf>.





“While the Commission of Inquiry means that the Government has heard about institutional child sexual abuse, they still need to hear more about the experiences of the majority of survivors and supporters where child sexual abuse has occurred in familial relationships, outside institutions. Unless the Government listens to all survivors and supporters the strategy will be incomplete and insufficiently focused on whole of community culture change and community based supports, and the actions of the strategy will not meet our needs.”

– supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

While institutional abuse rightly garners significant attention, abuse within familial or community settings can be equally damaging. Children who experience abuse in these contexts may face unique challenges in disclosure and accessing support, further underscoring the importance of prevention and intervention efforts.

“Having come from a previous employer where most of my experience was working with people in institutionalised sexual abuse, the one thing I heard a lot since starting here, which is incredibly sad, is the amount of people who feel extra shamed because they’ve been abused in their family systems and they have no voice..... So I really think that’s the kind of a blind spot in the collective psyche around how we think about what goes on in families and what goes on for children.”

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation session participant)

Additionally, some groups who experience abuse in organisations are less likely to garner attention and empathy from the public despite their vulnerability to sexual



abuse. As evidenced from the Commission of Inquiry³ evidence and final report, preventing and responding to child sexual abuse within out of home care and youth detention setting, including abuse that results from harmful sexual behaviours towards other children and young people needs particular attention. Often the voices from victim-survivors who are living in or have lived in these settings are missing from consultation processes when they hold important insights into failures for keeping children safe and the solutions to preventing or responding to child sexual abuse in closed settings such as these.

“They need to start being more inclusive and start tapping into those survivors because I do think that they’ve got more of an insight of where those failings are, particularly within those 2 settings.”

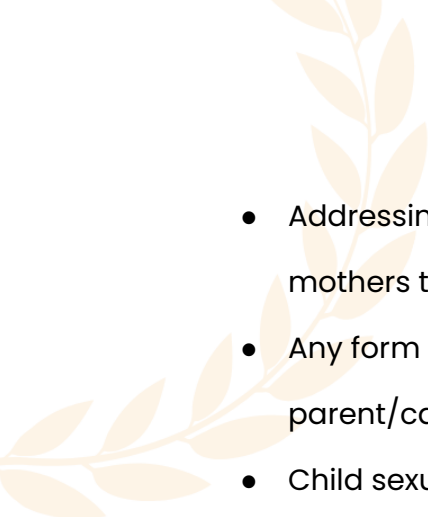
– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

Those we consulted, particularly victim-survivors, believe that the definitions of child sexual abuse, institutional child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviours needs careful review to ensure that the strategy and actions are inclusive of all forms of child sexual abuse, specifically:

- Child sexual abuse between step siblings or blended families.
- Child sexual abuse that occurs within a cult, not just a faith-based/religious organisation.
- Child sexual abuse that doesn’t include physical contact, such as online or verbal.
- Sextortion and child exploitation.

³ Tasmanian Government 2023, *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government’s Responses to Child Sexual Abuse In Institutional Settings: Who was looking after me? Prioritising the safety of Tasmanian children*, Tasmanian Government, viewed 10 April 2024, <https://www.commissionofinquiry.tas.gov.au/___data/assets/file/0011/724439/COI_Full-Report.pdf>.



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- Addressing the spectrum of grooming, including grooming of single mothers to access children for perpetration.
 - Any form of unwanted sexual touch by a person who is not the child's parent/caregiver.
 - Child sexual abuse used as a tactic in domestic and family violence, particularly in the case of coercive control to manipulate their partner or exert power and control.
 - Harmful sexual behaviours occurring between children and young people.

"I think this is a huge gap that we've got here around sibling sexual assault and... when we're talking about things happening and institutions, or we can talk about that, but when we're not comfortable talking about, you know, young people hurting other young people."

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation session participant)

Child sexual abuse (CSA) needs to be considered both as a unique form of abuse, and in the context of its intersection(s) with family and sexual violence (FSV). The Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance Steering Committee states "put plainly, any strategy that fails to adequately incorporate the relationship between CSA and FSV will be ineffective in preventing and addressing CSA in Tasmania."⁴ This includes recognising drivers such as gender inequality, gender privilege and exploitative masculinity, as well as the links between child sexual abuse and later experiences of further violence. There is also a need to examine how legal systems, including the Family Law Courts, traumatise and re-traumatise or play a part in condoning or

⁴ Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance Steering Committee, 2024, Three essential elements of an effective Tasmanian Child Sexual Abuse Reform Strategy and Action Plan.



facilitating abuse, including when child sexual abuse is used as a tactic in family violence by perpetrators.

“Because each system is so flawed and each individuals experience so unique it is only those that have lived it through their individual journeys that can identify the flaws and identify how it can be done better.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

“I think we need to focus on just how widespread it is and how it is not restricted by any demographic. Social norms, family structure and poor legal systems very much play a huge part in facilitating the abuse.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

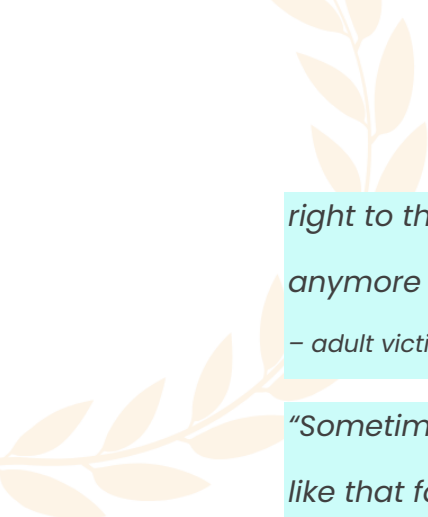
It is imperative that at all stages of development and implementation of the strategy and in the implementation of other initiatives that consultation with victim-survivors, parent/caregivers, their supporters and specialist service providers to ensure all forms of child sexual abuse are considered.

2. Ongoing and effective consultation and engagement with victim-survivors is essential

In response to being asked why it is important for victim-survivors to be consulted, we heard that victim-survivors believe that government and others involved in policy and decision making do not have the sufficient information about the experiences and perspectives of victim-survivors:

“These guys are sitting up there in their ivory goddamn towers thinking everything's all hunky-dory because the people below them and below them(sic) it's like a very much a siloed lot of information that's getting fed up the chain. If they're going to commit to things like hearing our voices and us having a say into those systems and reforms, then it needs to go





right to the top of the heads of agencies and for it not to be filtered anymore they need to hear that from our mouths directly.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

“Sometimes we can see reports written and it misses that human element, like that face of lived experience that is often hidden away. So, you know, coming there as a human speaking about your experience, I think that signals to government that we’re here and we’re a human. We’re not just a statistic that’s written into your report.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

“You can’t speak for/protect people if you have no understanding of their experiences in great depth and detail.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

“They (government) need to be aware of the realities on the ground and read the words which describes what we were put through at the hands of our perpetrator/s.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

“Because they (victim-survivors) are the experts in the field, no amount of pen pushing can ever give someone real lived experience. It’s exhausting when policies and agendas don’t align with reality. It just proves we still are not being heard.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

Further, victim-survivors reported finding healing by participating in processes that bring them a platform to talk about their experience in a way that has the potential to make systemic change for others.

“Listen to us... our input is healing for some people.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)



"I didn't start addressing my abuse properly until I got a platform and I got that platform through speaking to the Commission of Inquiry."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

2.1 Multiple modes of consultation should be offered

It was clear through our consultations and surveys that there is not one way to undertake consultation that meets the needs of all victim-survivors. As such, it is essential that multiple modes of consultation should be offered in order support the engagement of all victim-survivors who wish to share their views.


"Give people the options because I think as victim-survivors something that we've had happen is we've had our power or choices taken away...so when government consults with us on our experiences, we want to be able to have that agency and that choice back."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

From our survey about modes of consultation with victim-survivors, we found that with most people selecting multiple options there was no clear preference, demonstrated that a range of approaches are needed:

- 60% chose public group forums (in person) held directly with government;
- 60% chose individual consultations directly with government;
- 50% chose group sessions held by specialist sexual assault support organisations;
- 70% chose individual sessions held by specialist sexual assault support organisations;
- 70% chose an online survey;
- 60% chose the option to make a written submission.





During our consultations, victim-survivors indicated that when government is seeking the views of victim-survivors they need to offer multiple ways of engaging with lived expertise to give agency and choice to victim-survivors over their participation and anonymity, including:

- Group consultations
 - preferably facilitated by specialist sexual assault services and with a victim-survivor co-facilitator (victim-survivors we consulted with told us that knowing there was someone who had lived experience signalled solidarity and understanding).
 - if held directly by government they should be co-facilitated with specialist sexual assault services and/or a facilitator who is a victim-survivor or experienced in consultation with victim-survivors.
 - Government invited into spaces that feel safe to victim-survivors for consultation (i.e. not government allocated spaces or buildings that may feel intimidating or re-traumatising).

"If you haven't lived through it don't think they would understand."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

"You know if we hold the space something similar like we have right now and we're calling them into our space so we can ask them all the difficult questions, then maybe there's a power shift in that...how we dig into accountability."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

"I think having government there as well as would be of most benefit particularly to the victim-survivors because they've got the support they need, but they've also got those ears from government"



listening.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

- Individual consultations offered for victim-survivors who are unable to attend or don't wish to attend a group consultation due to safety, privacy, health, disability, accessibility or otherwise. These consultations should be offered in-person, online or by phone.

“I don't really support panel discussions as it appears to me like we one up each other. I'm sorry to say that but it's my feeling.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (survey participant)

“Individual appointments with each victim would be the preferred option. Definitely not a public forum.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

- Feedback captured in the therapeutic environment, enabling victim-survivors to provide feedback via their therapeutic practitioner (with consent) with counselling support provided to do so.

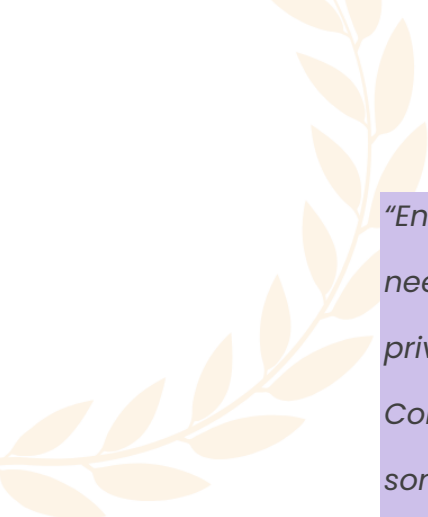
“Certainly giving evidence before enquiries [sic] can be incredibly traumatic for many people because they have to re-live experiences. Maybe passing on stories through an intermediary (e.g. one's therapist - with permission of course) may be a less stressful way of doing things.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

“Create opportunities to listen to victim-survivors in lots of different ways so that a broad range of people can participate like surveys, via support services.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)





“Engagements and consultations should occur according to the needs /directions of the victim-survivor. Usually one on one, in a private, comfortable space. With a support person if requested. Consultation done at the pace directed by the victim-survivor, sometimes needed over several sessions, to enable trust, confidence and security to be developed.”

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation survey participant)

- Group and individual consultations held online and in person to give choice and improve accessibility.

“I think maybe it's better that they can see and like feel the feelings of the people who are actually there like in front of them like I think sometimes it's good for people who haven't been in it to be a little confronted by us and our experiences because otherwise it's just like here is your number on a page like that doesn't mean a lot.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

“If you can get them face to face with a victim they can be moved to be actually attached to the actual issue emotionally in a way that they can't in any other way. Getting them to spare the time to have a sit down one on one is another thing, but I think that's what we should be pushing for more.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse & parent/caregiver of a victim-survivor (consultation session participant)

- Surveys online and in paper form, with the option to remain anonymous.
- Individual submissions with the option to use written format, video recording or audio recording.

“It's just giving options as an advocate...giving options means that it increases the access...means that it increases the accessibility for



people to advocate as well as, you know, receive this wide range of information that it increases the accessibility for people to advocate.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

2.2 Ways of consulting must be co-designed with victim-survivors

For consultation methods and practices to be trauma-informed and adaptive it is recommended that victim-survivors' expertise is utilised. Ensuring that victim-survivors are engaged in the design of consultations and to support the interpretation and evaluation of the consultation/engagement will be important for ongoing improvement and to minimise the negative impact (e.g. fatigue, frustration) that can occur when consultation is poorly designed or ill-conceived.


“I think sometimes government or whoever's doing consultations, they develop a model of like this is how we're going to do this and then they just keep that same model everywhere and it never changes. So I think, yeah, I think that's really important there to.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

2.3 Consultation needs to be authentic and feel impactful to victim-survivors

Victim-survivors expressed the need for government consultation to be authentic and meaningful to give them the sense of being heard and taken seriously. Further, victim-survivors need for consultations to occur before frameworks, policies, laws, programs or strategies are written or developed to ensure lived expertise informs the content. Seeking feedback only after a draft is written or a program is designed creates a power imbalance and can dissuade victim-survivors from providing their views.





“Ensure that there are clear objectives for the work and that the lived experience is being used to create something rather than it being tokenistic.”

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation survey participant)

“For starters, nobody trusts the government at this point in time. Why are they going to trust the government to talk about one of the most horrific things that's happened to them? I was part of a government advisory panel, but they knew what they wanted to hear from us. If we spoke our voices, they didn't care what we had to say. They knew the stuff that they needed to tick off and that was the end of it. That's the issue with government, they don't care what we've got to say.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse & specialist sexual violence practitioner (practice wisdom consultation session participant)

Consultation periods should not be rushed or done within a short timeframe, with victim-survivors given ample time for providing feedback, i.e. more than a few weeks. This enables them to coordinate support if required, due to the risk of re-traumatisation in the consultation process.

“And when they do look for that expertise it's not a you've got 3 weeks to give us an opinion on a document we've already drafted for you just so that they can tick a box to say that they've consulted... tick, we've done it.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse & parent-caregiver of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

“Usual consultation methods with tight turnarounds for submissions don't work for survivors or supporters, but neither does big surveys like the lived experience survey conducted as part of the family and sexual violence action plan where there has been no feedback to the survey participants or the community about the results or how the information has been used to



improve things for survivors and their supporters.”

– supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

A long-term commitment to consulting with victim-survivors, beyond the initial creation of the strategy would ensure continuing engagement with lived expertise.

“When the government is engaging with victim-survivors it needs to stop being tokenistic.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

2.4 Victim-survivors would like feedback on how their advocacy is bringing tangible change

Victim-survivors expressed frustration at investing time, mental and emotional labour into consulting with or giving feedback to government without any feedback or transparency on how their contribution has brought change in an effective way.

“Keeping people regularly informed of progress or identified issues will help people to feel heard and a part of the process.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

One victim-survivor spoke of her opportunity to consult one-on-one with a key Government Minister and her perception and expectation of change that would bring, but experienced disappointment and emotional distress at the lack of action from her advocacy. It is evident that more work needs to be done on building trust between government and victim-survivors and ensuring there is transparency about how feedback can be transformed into action.

“I wanted to educate him and I gave him lots of information on how I believed would help adult survivors and he had tears in his eyes. It was really impactful. But nothing was followed on. Nothing happened and that was



really, really disappointing and heart wrenching because it took a lot of guts for me to go and do that."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

Victim-survivors would like government to establish mechanisms for circling back to them with updates, so they know their contributions have been valuable and successful in systems change. These conversations should be instigated by government in a proactive way, instead of the responsibility laid with victim-survivors to wonder how they feedback has impacted change.

"It's quite common we see victim-survivors sharing, you know, being heard by the government, but then they don't hear anything back. We're not we're not hearing back from the government."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

"I've been involved in a couple of steering committees for different projects. And the last one was a little bit more innovative than the ones I've ever been involved in. It used design thinking. And it was exactly that. They have members with lived experience of the issue and not just one or two but a nice core group of about half a dozen. And once you reach a certain milestone in the timeline of the program, it comes back to that core group again. And it's refined further. And then it's sent off for a little bit more tweaking and then it comes back again."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

2.5 Victim-survivors would like to stay informed on the progress

Victim-survivors would like to see that they and members of the public to be informed of the progress of the actions of the Commission of Inquiry recommendations and the actions that form part of the Child Sexual Abuse Reform Strategy. These updates should be provided in public forums hosted by government and publicly available reports in accessible formats. Victim-survivors



shared frustrations about the lack of action or communication about the action from the COI recommendations to date.

“There is absolutely no point in enquiries [sic] and handing down recommendations if they aren't acted on, and acted on promptly. It ends up being traumatic for those giving evidence and a total waste of paper.”
– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

“Information needs to be presented in a variety of ways eg. Verbally, digitally, orally and in 'plain speak', (not professional terminology) with translation options.”
– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

“...that longer term commitment of you are important, your voice is important and we'll keep listening.”
– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

2.6 Victim-survivors would like to be involved in evaluation

Victim-survivors would also like to be involved in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of the 191 recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry Final Report⁵ and the actions of the strategy.

Some victim-survivors consulted were aware of and supported the Commission of Inquiry's recommendation regarding the establishment of an implementation monitor, similar to the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor⁶ formed in

⁵ Tasmanian Government 2023, *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse In Institutional Settings: Who was looking after me? Prioritising the safety of Tasmanian children*, Tasmanian Government, viewed 10 April 2024, <https://www.commissionofinquiry.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0011/724439/COI_Full-Report.pdf>.

⁶ Victorian Government 2023, *The Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor*, viewed 17 April 2024, <<https://www.fvrin.vic.gov.au/>>.



Victoria, that will hold government and its agencies to account for implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.

“With an independent regulator or review board/evaluator with the full report made public for the community to understand if it is working and the government is really listening and transparent as this has lacked in its entirety, including the COI.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

3. Recognition of practice wisdom and the expertise within the specialist sector beyond government

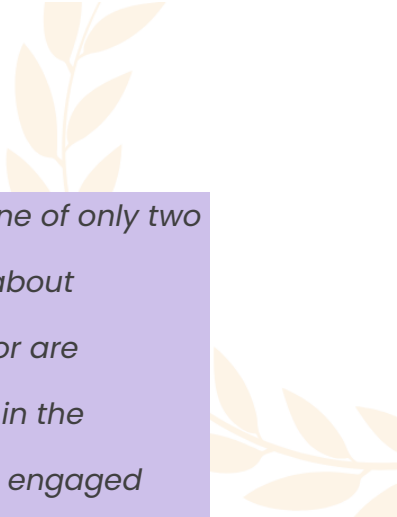
The practice wisdom accumulated by sexual violence services and their practitioners holds immense value in shaping policy, informing practice, and evaluating strategies and programs related to sexual violence prevention and response. These practitioners possess firsthand experience and insights gained from working directly with victim-survivors, witnessing the complexities of their experiences, and understanding the systemic barriers they face. Their nuanced understanding of survivor needs, trauma-informed approaches, and effective interventions can greatly enrich policy development and implementation.

Similarly, our colleagues in the family violence sector and other organisations in the community sector play a critical role in preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse, and it is essential that their expertise is also valued.

3.1 Specialist services are ready to share our practice wisdom to improve policy and practice

We heard frustrations from practitioners and leaders in the specialist sexual and family violence service sector about the lack of genuine and quality engagement by government.





“One of the things that I think is problematic is that that we, as one of only two specialist sexual violence services in Tasmania, often only hear about initiatives including initiatives directly affecting victim-survivors or are effective or are directly in response to something that came out in the Commission of Inquiry after they’ve happened rather than being engaged and consulted during the development phases.

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation session participant)

Governments can leverage sexual violence and other specialist services as critical friends and advisors to strengthen policy and practice. Specialist services are keen to see proactive engagement and genuine involvement in governance and decision making.

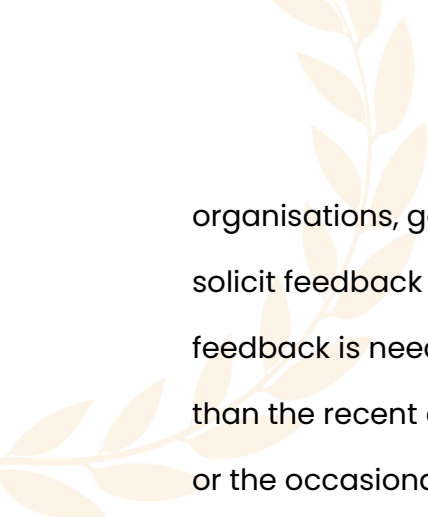
“It would be great if the Tasmanian Strategy had an advisory group, similar to the advisory group that oversees the National Child Sexual Abuse Strategy. Something that includes people with lived experience, academics, service providers and other non-government organisations that represent priority populations. This kind of group can provide critical insights that inform and contribute to the implementation and evaluation of the Strategy and Action Plan, and can play a key role in socialising the Strategy and its work within key communities.”

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation session participant)

3.2 Use us to connect with victim-survivors and their supporters

Governments can leverage sexual violence and other specialist services as crucial intermediaries to establish meaningful connections with victim-survivors and gather essential feedback for policy making, service design and provision. Specialist services often serve as trusted and accessible points of contact for victim-survivors seeking support and assistance. By collaborating with these





organisations, governments can create structured consultation mechanisms to solicit feedback directly from victim-survivors, especially where more targeted feedback is needed or where different or more diverse voices are needed. Other than the recent engagement by DPAC to inform the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy or the occasional requests to share flyers or information about consultation opportunities, utilisation of this mechanism for reaching victim-survivors, parents and carers and other supporters has been largely non-existent.

“We are an organisation that's being funded by the government to be thinking about this [child sexual abuse] all the time. If we're not being brought on the journey, then almost certainly victims-survivors are not being brought along their journey.”

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation session participant)

3.3 Leverage dual expertise of victim-survivors

There are victim-survivors who work in the specialist domestic, family and sexual violence sector or general community sector who are victim-survivors of child sexual abuse, who may or may not choose to disclose their lived experience.⁷ Lived expertise or working in the sector cannot be compartmentalised, due to the interrelated nature of lived experience. The strategy should consider how workforce with lived experience of child sexual abuse can be supported to address removing stigma and shame for victim-survivors in the sector who choose to disclose they are a victim-survivor. Sector workers who have lived experience have a unique lens

⁷ Safe & Equal 2022, *Sources of Lived Experience in the Family Violence Sector Issues Paper*, viewed 23 April 2024, < https://safeandequal.org.au/wp-content/uploads/PAP_Sources-of-Lived-Experience-Issues-Paper_FINAL-1.pdf >



when supporting victim-survivors and the strategy should consider recommending the development of guidelines for supporting workforce with lived experience in a sustainable way.

"It should also be remembered that many people working in the family and sexual violence sector also have personal lived-experience that has influenced their career choices and motivates them to make a difference, whether or not they are at liberty to disclose."

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation survey participant)

4. A genuine commitment to prevention

Our consultations revealed that those with lived experience and those working with victim-survivors recognise the importance of prevention and the need for more strategic investment in strategies that are focused on building an awareness of child sexual abuse and child safety in the whole community, including but not only within government institutions.

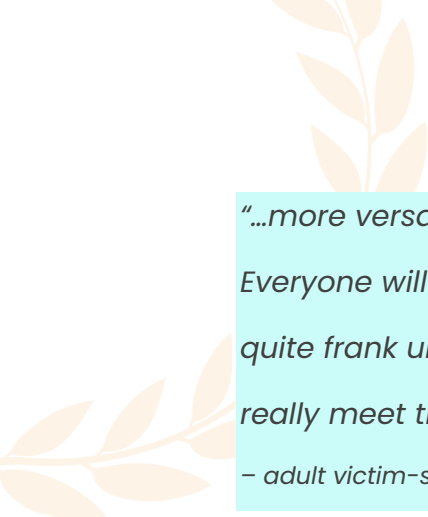
"Prevent for the next generation, and the next, and the next after that!"

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

4.1 Strategic approach to evidence-based whole-of-community education

Our consultations reinforced the notion that education is needed across the community and that because the community is diverse and has different levels of engagement with children and young people, and victim-survivors it is essential that there is careful consideration about how education and awareness programs are targeted to meet the inherent diversity in the community.





"...more versatile means of engaging people. Everyone learns differently. Everyone will cotton on in a different manner. Things just might not click to be quite frank until a certain need is met.. everyone has different requirements to really meet this level of knowledge and understanding."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

Education must be evidenced-based, inclusive and designed and delivered with both those who have lived experience and with specialist services. It should focus on the drivers of sexual violence, as well as intersectional perspectives of other forms of marginalisation, again drawing on lived experience.

"Education as a whole needs to be effective... accessible..... But what I personally think would really, really help and we talked about this previously is engagement with victim-survivors taking people into the community. It's very shocking. It's very jarring. Yes. However, it's very shocking and jarring as a child to be sexually assaulted."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

Overall, it was recognised there is a significant need for education and information to be widely promoted, accessible and for conversations to be occurring everywhere in all parts of the community. The role of sporting and social clubs, pubs, charities and other organisations were also raised in the context of promoting education, awareness raising and as a context for embedding education in community programs that reach all members of the community.

"More programs for child sexual abuse prevention embedded across the community run in conjunction with specialist sexual violence services (eg in antenatal classes, playgroups, schools, sporting clubs etc etc)... "

– supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)



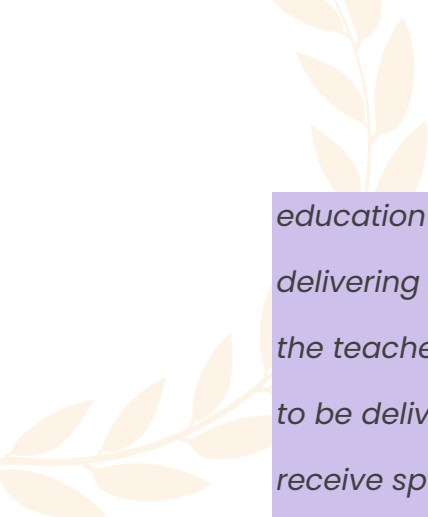
While our consultation identified significant needs and opportunities, including a range of topics that should be included in education programs (see Appendix C), there is a clear need for deep and meaningful consultation to guide investment and research in prevention education.

4.2 Improve education for children and young people to prevent child sexual abuse

We heard consistently that the current approach to educating children and young people about child sexual abuse, respectful relationships, consent and other related topics is insufficient and ad hoc. While it is critical to remember that children and young people shouldn't be held responsible for keeping themselves safe, the provision of age-appropriate information and skills building is critical to empower children and young people, and to ensure that they are able to seek support when something is not right.

“Success will mean that every child will have access to quality, age-appropriate consent and respectful relationships education delivered by specialist services into every school - with appropriate funding allocated to schools or specialist service-providers to enable this. This education must be supported by fully resourced student support teams in the knowledge that: many instances of child sexual abuse are perpetrated by student-peers; for some students home is not a safe place, and home does not model respectful relationships; students may experience barriers to accessing counselling support outside of the school environment. It takes reinforcement of messaging, and modelling from school staff to cultivate cultural change. Teachers themselves have their own experiences of sexual violence and their own beliefs/attitudes/prejudices around sexual violence - teaching consent and sex is not the specialisation of teachers and for many it is extremely uncomfortable leading to inequities in the quality of





education delivered and/or piecemeal delivery. Teachers have told us that delivering content on sexual relationships feels like crossing a boundary in the teacher/student relationship and therefore it is preferable for education to be delivered by external specialist services. Teachers themselves must receive specialist education on sexual violence if they are to recognise it and model appropriate attitudes and behaviours.

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation session participant)

Improvements are needed to the current education about consent currently delivered in schools, including depth of content, regularity of delivery and its ability for learning to be translated into a real-life situation. A LEAPY member advised they have only received education once in the past year and there is a lack of conversations that occur outside of the structured education sessions in an ongoing or cumulative way.

“We’ve gone through consent. We just watched a video explaining consent, but drinking tea. That’s about all we’ve done really in consent, we haven’t really gone through like what it really means”

– LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

It was noted in the consultations that there needs to be a greater focus on proactive response within schools, instead of a reactive response, which often takes the form of schools delivering extra education when an incident is reported. It was noted that these sessions could appear punitive to students, and there is a risk content will not be taken seriously without efforts to embed this learning in day-to-day situations.

“When something problematic happened, you know, like kids are sending nude pictures or something, then suddenly there’s a whole bunch of education. That, you know, well, there’s at assembly, there’s a big kind of



lecture from somebody or something like that”

- LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

“We have had a police officer just come in and talk about sending nudes and child pornography on phones and stuff just saying all the fines and criminal stuff that can happen....we just looked at each other like and looked at people who have done it before. Just saying, well, I guess you're going to jail or stuff like that. It was just kind of a bit of a joke. To everyone.”

- LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

Many of those we consulted including our LEAPY group believe the education about child sexual abuse and related topics should be delivered by trauma-informed community educators with specialised skills in delivering appropriate content, such as those provided by specialist sexual assault services, who would also be resourced and experienced to respond to disclosures from students.

Education to prevent child sexual abuse needs to be designed and implemented in a manner that is coordinated, cumulative, and ongoing. Minimum standards should be set, and its delivery should be mandated in all education settings for all ages, commencing from infancy.

“I reckon there definitely can be more education... I don't feel like it's enough.”

- LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

4.3 Improve education for parents and other caregivers

During our consultations, we commonly heard about the need to build the capacity of parents and other caregivers. Education also needs to extend to parents and caregivers. There needs to be support and resources provided to facilitate conversations between parents/caregivers and their children. Giving examples of *how* to start and to have those conversations was identified as



helpful during consultations. Laurel House is in the process of developing a set of conversation cards for this purpose.

“Education for the children, the parents and other caregivers. Education has two benefits – it empowers the child in a natural way as it opens the lines of communication with parents, guardians and teachers. It also acts as a good deterrent to ‘would be’ perpetrators as they’d be aware that they could get caught.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

4.4 More awareness campaigns and leadership

Resourcing proper awareness campaigns utilising advertisements on television, radio, social media, toilet doors, community centres, restaurants, healthcare settings, and other sources was something suggested and supported by many consultees.

“This is something that could really normalise conversations on TV and on the internet. The more we see anything about child sexual abuse, about prevention, about consent, about respects, about rights.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

“...More investment by the Government in community awareness campaigns like the federal One Talk at a Time and the campaign from Laurel House and SASS 1 in 4 becomes none in 4).”

– supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

The awareness and normalisation of child sexual abuse as a topic is something that also should fall upon the government and leaders:

“It is important that the government and leaders normalise talking about child sexual abuse so that parents and other adults who have influence in the lives of children are alert to the fact that child sexual abuse is common



and that all adults need to listen to and support children.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

“Talk about it, make it visual, make the topic not taboo, make it easier for those experiencing it to get help and be believed.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

“Leaders actually committing to talking openly about child sexual abuse.”

– supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

4.5 Systemic change to embed a culture of prevention within all institutions

Consultations identified some other areas that would work towards creating systemic change that embeds a culture of prevention. These included:

- Training and Supervision
 - Meaningful, interactive and comprehensive training for anyone working with children (including training requirements in Working with Vulnerable People Cards;
 - Ensuring adults understand and uphold their responsibilities in keeping children safe;
 - Embedding the expertise of people with lived experience;
- Screening and Checks
 - Background checks on people working with children should be more comprehensive;
 - Working With Vulnerable People Cards should cover history Australia wide and internationally;
 - High risk organisations/institutions need to obtain international police checks, not just national ones for persons who have worked overseas;
 - More comprehensive checks for foster carers;



- Child and youth safe policies and practices
 - Creating systems where no child is alone with just one adult:

"I also strongly believe that if there were always 2 people looking after children under e.g. 15 years old in all outside of home facilities i.e. hospitals, schools, sporting groups, institutional facilities etc, the incident opportunities would be greatly reduced and children would be safer."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

- Setting a culture of regular conversations with children about what it means to feel safe and what is and is not okay;
- Preventing access to children by perpetrators
 - Ensuring the public sex offender registry is easy to find;
 - Do not relocate perpetrators to country areas.

Many of the above suggestions would be addressed if organisations comprehensively embedded the Child and Youth Safe Organisation Principles.⁸ It is therefore essential that victim-survivors, children and young people and other community members are supported to better understand these new legal requirements, and where to go if they are concerned about any organisation, including government entities. There are vast amounts of work to be done to bring about systemic changes and embed a culture of prevention in all institutions. Doing this will also have positive flow-on effects within communities.

⁸ The Royal Commission Response Unit (TAS) 2023, Child and youth Safe Standards. Justice Tasmania, <<https://www.justice.tas.gov.au/carcru/child-and-youth-safe-organisations-framework/child-and-youth-safe-standards>> accessed 29 April 2024.



5. Build a society and culture that fosters the identification of child sexual abuse.

During our consultations while there was unanimous agreement that everybody has a role to play in stopping child sexual abuse, many barriers to identifying and/or disclosing child sexual abuse were noted by our informants. A lack of community awareness including an absence of understanding about the prevalence, indicators and impact of child sexual abuse, as well as societal and cultural conditions that prevent people from acting were areas that were areas that need to be the focus of action.

5.1 Increase awareness of the indicators of child sexual abuse, other forms of child maltreatment and/or adverse experiences

A key area of discussion that arose repeatedly in consultation sessions and surveys was the importance improving the awareness of the indicators of child sexual abuse and the signs of grooming, especially amongst parents and carers and those working with children and young people.

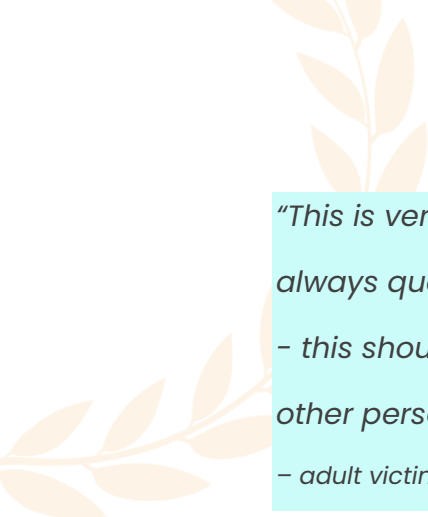
It was noted that in order for people to seriously look for child sexual abuse or other forms of maltreatment or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)⁹, people need to understand that these situations are not rare, and typically occur repeatedly and in combination¹⁰.

The unique differences on the experiences and realities faced by each child must also be recognised when supporting increased awareness of these indicators:

⁹ Emerging Minds, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Summary of evidence and impacts, viewed 24 April 2024

¹⁰ Australian Child Maltreatment Study 2023. Brief report - <https://www.acms.au/resources/the-prevalence-and-impact-of-child-maltreatment-in-australia-findings-from-the-australian-child-maltreatment-study-2023-brief-report/>





"This is very complex as everyone presents very differently but we must always question why a child is uncomfortable or hesitant around someone - this should only happen in a safe environment and never in front of the other person."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

Concerns were also raised around balancing the need for the information to be available to those working with children, but its potential to be misused by perpetrators:

"Perhaps an online register of what to look for if you suspect something. I wouldn't suggest publicly advertising this as perpetrators might also find it useful. Perhaps access details could be given to parents, guardians, school teachers and other people who are in charge of children."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

There was also a general consensus that everyone in the community should be educated, including parents and caregivers. Victim-survivors identified that there are particular roles where knowledge and skills to identify child sexual abuse is particularly importance including school staff, and healthcare workers.

"And I think also that parents and teachers and yeah, nurses, everybody needs to be educated to see the signs of potential signs of child sexual abuse."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

"Parents and carers and other people in the community need to know the behavioural signs of child sexual abuse. There were plenty of signs that I didn't want to be left with my perpetrator and no one seemed to think there might be reasons for this behaviour. These people also need to know how to respond to a disclosure (or partial disclosure)."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)



Training needs to be delivered regularly by specialist services and victim-survivors. It should be interactive and delivered in accessible formats with active participation that supports a deeper understanding:

“Now I watched that video... anyone that’s going into schools as a volunteer has to watch these videos, all the staff had to watch a separate video but here’s the thing - There was no checks or balances done at the end of it, so, people could actually fudge watching this video and still get their certificate at the end of watching what you didn’t even need to watch... you could just get the certificate say that you’ve done it. So again, I keep coming back to if you’re going to do things like this - Like strategies to prevent child sexual abuse in Tasmania again, it needs to not be tokenistic.”

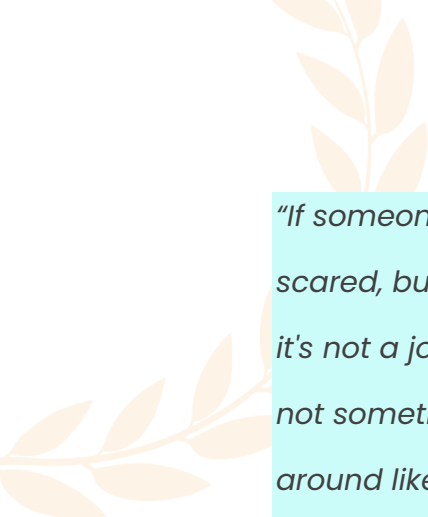
- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

5.2 Change community norms, culture and understanding so people are better equipped to identify child sexual abuse

In addition to the role that culture, community norms and understanding play in prevention, these are also important in the context of identifying child sexual abuse. It was a common theme during the consultations that everyone needs to be equipped to listen to and believe victim-survivors of child sexual abuse. A cultural shift and deeper understanding can bring about this shift.

In the consultation period, victim-survivors outlined the importance of more people holding belief and understanding that child sexual abuse is more likely to happen in homes than in institutions. Additionally, many victim-survivors said that efforts need to be made to change community attitudes and reduce stigma and judgments. It is important that all community members, not just victim-survivors and their supporters understand what bystander action they can take to call out unhelpful and potentially harmful comments about child sexual abuse.





"If someone was talking about slut-shaming, I would probably be a bit scared, but people who like joke about rape and sexual assault I always say it's not a joke like you shouldn't just be joking around about it because it's not something that you should joke about. It could just be more education around like it's not okay to joke."

- LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

The importance of the role of the media and its influence on community norms, culture and understanding is relevant to all three domains. Any strategy aimed at community change needs to consider and include media.

"The media can hurt or heal sometimes depending on how they comment on the issue, and how they report on that, and how they position you as a victim."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

Some other victim-survivors also spoke about the importance of changing these norms in the context of encouraging and supporting people to come forward and seek supports:

"To lift people up to be able to come forward... and I guess learn the most important thing is that no, no [sic] matter how hard it is..... I feel if I dealt with this many years ago, I might not be like I am today and would save people from living my lifestyle."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

"Well, back in my day, I think that if we had the support that some of us, not all of us, but some of us have now, I would have had the courage to come forward."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)



6. Ensure responses to child sexual abuse that are trauma-informed and victim-centred

In our consultations stakeholders consistently highlighted numerous instances of inadequacies within existing responses, both those received by informal supports like family, friends and community members, as well as formal services and systems. Their testimonies underscored a pressing need for comprehensive improvements to address the shortcomings and ensure that victim-survivors receive the compassionate and effective responses they deserve.

6.1 Improve initial responses by those receiving disclosure

The initial reaction a victim-survivor receives in response to disclosure has colossal impacts. It can be a vehicle to healing, while unfortunately for many the initial responses they received created further trauma and/or barriers to healing.

“Above everything else, the most important initial reaction and response to a victim should be to offer compassion and to convince them that they are now safe. Once a victim tells someone or someone realises the situation, the victim will have a range of emotions happening – initial relief, sheer terror at what the perpetrator might do next, guilt, shame and then probably shock. Everyone who is made aware of an incident needs to recognise that the victim is not at fault and has to be extremely careful with what they say.

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

With the prevalence of child sexual abuse being 1 in 3 for women, and 1 in 5 for men, and higher again for gender diverse people, and being largely stable over generations, it is critical that all members of the community are prepared and equipped to respond safely and appropriately to a disclosure from a child, young person or adult about their experience of child sexual abuse:

“Equipping everyone to be able to support someone when they need to.”



- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

"I would probably speak to my family or friends first.

- LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

In particular, people need information on how respond to disclosures of child sexual abuse in ways that are supportive, including what to say, and also what not to say including avoiding questions or comments that result in victim-blaming or slut-shaming. Similarly, families and friends must be aware of and have accessible resources to support them, with victim-survivors, in navigating support systems and needs.

"I guess that speaks to that not victim blaming. You know, what you're wearing?.....What we are doing out late at night? Did you have too much to drink?"

- LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

Consultation also highlighted that even those with specialist training (such as mental health providers or psychiatric services) may require further education to effectively respond in an appropriate and trauma informed way to child sexual abuse disclosures.

"Psychiatric service providers in particular need training in how to sensitively assist a patient who discloses that they have experienced child sexual abuse, and to have good links to specialist counsellors and social workers who may be able to assist the patient, whether they are an inpatient or not."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

The education system and schools were commonly identified by consultees, as imperative actors in responding to disclosures of child sexual abuse. It was evident that not all teachers and school staff are able to provide appropriate support when a student discloses child sexual abuse, and that it is essential that



they undergo professional development to enable them to respond appropriately to and support children and young people when they disclose sexual abuse/sexual violence, and to make warm referrals that will offer appropriate support, and not be perceived as disciplinary action.

"I've heard stories from other young people...that have said that you know as soon as this conversation starts to happen they sent to the school nurse. I know some people have been sent to the nurse. To get told off for like some things but I am not too sure. I know that they get sent there about like sex concerns and about, like use of drugs and stuff."

– LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) during consultation also identified the importance of having a deep understanding of trauma and the ongoing impact of colonisation is needed to improve initial responses to a disclosure. Further, an approach that reduces judgment, disbelief and actively avoids inappropriate responses by those receiving disclosures is essential.

Suggestions that arose during consultation around how to improve these initial responses. These included ensuring specialist services, in partnership with victim-survivors delivered victim-centric and trauma-informed education and capacity building training about responding to disclosures (or concerns about abuse) amongst organisations and individuals. Additionally, as part of that education it was identified organisations would benefit from clarity around comprehensive referral options and pathways which would require up to date mapping of support systems.

6.2 Strengthen understanding of supporters on the impacts of abuse and needs of victim-survivors

Although similar to the response component of improving initial responses, this area was spoken about in the context of supporting parents and caregivers,



supporters with a direct personal relationship with a victim-survivor in better understanding the impacts and needs of victim-survivors of child sexual abuse.

"... family need education to understand that sexual abuse just doesn't go away because you want it to."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

This may include increased specialist sexual violence services and other related services to support parents, carers, partners, siblings and other supporters so that they can address their own trauma responses, understand how trauma affects the victim-survivor, how therapeutic counselling and other supports work, and how the supporter can best assist the victim-survivor in their healing.

6.3 Work with persons with lived experience in responses

With recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry highlighting the importance of embedding lived experience, it is unsurprising that discussions around the need to work with persons with lived experience in responses. Working with victim-survivors in response is two-fold:

- 1) Ensuring that victim-survivors are employed in positions that are active in the design and delivery of (*within*) responses;
- 2) Recognising that providing trauma-informed responses requires providers to work *with* the individual victim-survivor

A range of opportunities where victim-survivors could work within a system or service as part of the response were shared by respondents, including working within child safety, delivering training and other capacity building initiatives, being a liaison and/or supports to access response services and other processes, and running victim-survivor support groups. The possibilities are vast, and for the most part underutilised.



Furthermore, the failure of responses to be trauma-informed or person-centric was apparent throughout consultations and as evidenced in the Commission of Inquiry. You cannot have trauma-informed practices without working *with* the person that has had the experience. Victim-survivors must have autonomy and agency throughout the response to their 'case'. While there are some situations that may be beyond the control of the victim-survivor (e.g. mandatory reporting, a decision to prosecute, etc), it is critical that power and control is provided throughout the process and options are determined with the victim-survivor. A failure to do so can have pervasive and long-lasting impacts on a victim-survivor:

"I just think more power and control needs to be given to the kids/people in these situations. My choice to speak in court was taken from me from my parents and I will never not be angry that I couldn't speak for myself."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

Capacity building of responders must occur at all points of the response to ensure they understand and are able to implement principles of working with victim-survivors, and especially to uphold a person's choice and voice. Another victim-survivor during a consultation session spoke to the fact that they were not given sufficient information throughout processes and were asked re-traumatising questions. They highlighted the need for safety and security, and advocated for specialised sexual assault support person to be there to increase safety and ensure options and choices are provided.

6.4 Improve the justice and child safety systems

In our consultations, victim-survivors and other respondents have shared profound insights into their experiences within the justice and child safety systems. Their stories highlight many shortcomings of these systems, emphasising the urgent need for improvement.



A focus on victim-survivors, while holding perpetrators accountable

Victim-survivors identified concerns throughout consultations about the need for a greater focus on ensuring the legal and child safety systems are victim-survivor centric and trauma informed, *and*, that they hold perpetrators accountable. We heard often that many victim-survivors, supporters and professionals felt that the justice and child safety systems didn't focus sufficiently on the victim-survivor, and in many instances failed to hold the perpetrator to account.

"...It's the perpetrators fault for finding a loophole in an imperfect system to do harm."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

"Perpetrator accountability is essential for breaking the cycle of child sexual abuse. By holding offenders responsible, we send a clear message: abuse will not be tolerated. But accountability doesn't end there. Effective treatment programs are vital, addressing not just the behaviour but also the underlying trauma and maltreatment that may have shaped the perpetrator's actions. There's a pressing need for more perpetrator interventions in Tasmania to effectively combat child sexual abuse and other forms of violence against women and children."

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation session participant)

A part of this might include considering ensuring that every victim-survivor is appointed with a non-legal case manager to assist the person with non-legal holistic supports, as well as specialist lawyer with training in trauma-informed legal practice, who can work with them to explain legal jargon and legal processes, and to advocate for their rights and needs throughout the process.



SiS¹¹ has effectively piloted such a model, for Aboriginal and Torres–Strait Islander victim–survivors of family and sexual violence. There are however systemic barriers in the structure of the justice system in adequately upholding victim–survivor rights.

Police responses need improvement

We heard throughout the consultation that victim–survivors and other stakeholders believe that police responses could be improved, specifically regarding their response to disclosures, ways of capturing evidence, ensuring criminal charges ensue, and signalling safety for children and young people (and other victim–survivors of child sexual abuse) to report to police. In particular, consultees shared experiences and solutions around police responses including in investigation stages, prosecution stages as well as responses within the child safety system. Discussions also took place about the impact of legislative and procedural limitations often preventing police from ‘doing their job’.

“...Police lack resources and avoid pursuing cases without escalating concerns to the DPP. Police also will not pursue cases based on “no touching”... even though a parent was told there was touching.”

– adult victim–survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

Specific feedback was provided in relation to the approach that should be taken when police are talking with, receiving statements from or interviewing children and young people and other victim–survivors of child sexual abuse.

“Explore like going more into depths of what you’re looking at. Like if a child comes and says like this happened to me you don’t just brush it off. You

¹¹ <https://sistas.org.au/>



don't just say, oh yeah, we'll do this, but not really do it."

– LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

"When a child under four can't identify the names of genitalia that shouldn't be where investigations stop with police."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

"We know that kids well, we know that all people actually, but kids it even more, likely to tell a little bit of a story that may not tell the full story straight up and so if a police officers kind of made you feel like your story is not... You're important enough or whatever it may have only been the start of what else they might have been to tell... and so if they haven't created a welcoming and safe environment at the start of that story even for some kids they might not ever get to tell the full story."

– LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

"I'll put this in kind of really crude terms, but they're a bit full of themselves and I think that they're really important so they would only wanna deal with something if it was really you know, serious. I'm sorry but, yeah, not all police would feel welcoming that I could ask questions and feel like I would be supported to, you know, to explore what I was worried about."

– LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

There were suggestions that police should be in plain clothes when dealing with victim-survivors. Feedback was also received that this can be a concern for some people, including some people from Aboriginal communities, whereby being able to identify 'who is who' is important to them and the potential of not being able to identify someone's role based on a badge/uniform could be a barrier and create further mistrust.

There were multiple discussions occurred during consultations around some police being perpetrators and the impunity that comes with that position of



power. Many victim-survivors spoke about the need to ensure appropriate responses in that situation. It is hoped that the Weiss Independent Review will provide further insights and recommendations that will improve systems and accountability in relation to police perpetrated child sexual abuse. Further, respondents hoped that will the independent monitor as recommended in the Commission of Inquiry and Draft Bill Establishing the Reform Implementation Monitor, will play an important role in governing this aspect.

A key solution to improve police responses was the identified need, throughout consultations, for *all* police to be properly trained to respond to child sexual abuse in a trauma-informed way. One victim-survivor spoke about their positive experience with a senior officer from the sex crimes unit and stated:

“Why do we have to wait to get someone that is so well informed and well-trained? As the 1% in the entire force of like our engagement and our experiences. Why do we have so few people that are competent and capable in that regard? That is. It’s abominable and it’s abysmal.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

In addition to concerns being raised by consultees about police responses often being racist, discussions took place within ACCO consultations around the fact that police need more education in the academy to really learn cultural awareness, and what constitutes sexual and family violence to ensure that victims receive appropriate responses and supports when making disclosures.

In addition to this training, the involvement of specialised services working alongside police to enhance victim-survivor supports, facilitate communication and build trust was raised during consultations.



Ongoing concerns about the statutory child protection services

Consultations brought up concerns about lack of action when reports are made to Child Safety Services and long wait lists with Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL)¹² resulting in further harm to children. It is not uncommon for experiences to be reported to those with practice wisdom, or by victim-survivors or their caregivers, whereby a notification for abuse is made to Child Safety Services and police, and the notifier, including when it is a parent, receives advice that it is a 'police issue' from Child Safety Services or 'it is a Child Safety Services issue' from police. Consequently, resulting in the child continuing to be exposed to harm.

Some consultees spoke of the frustrations about access to skilled and qualified staff when they seek the support of statutory services or where children are in care.

I'm working a lot lately with sibling sexual harm and I'm frustrated particularly with Child Safety's responses to that. It's been really tricky to navigate because unlike some states have a really clear response, we do not [in Tasmania]. There's, there's not a lot of specific Tasmanian system level guidance. I'm finding that they ask us for our input and what we think, and then child safety just completely disregard it because it's not what they wanted to hear".

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation survey participant)

We heard support for workers also receive comprehensive training in trauma informed practice, domestic, sexual and family violence, as well as continuing cultural safety training, including intergenerational trauma, ongoing impacts of

¹² <https://strongfamiliesafekids.tas.gov.au/>



colonisation and its relationship to the child safety system. A failure to apply a family violence lens or understand cultural safety often results in a breakdown in communication and understanding between a protective parent and Child Safety Services and has devastating consequences to families and communities with little efforts being made to support the protective parent towards reunification.¹³

Reports were made in consultations that there is a clear need for Aboriginal communities to be greater resourced to provide family support through programs such as Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS)¹⁴. Additionally, resourcing and appointing community connected Aboriginal persons as community engagement officers within Child Safety Services was suggested during a community consultation session with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation. This might assist in breaking down barriers, facilitate cooperation between Child Safety Services and Aboriginal families and communities, and lead to improved outcomes for children. Further, meeting obligations under Outcome 12 - Closing the Gap.¹⁵

Law reform

During consultations, it was evident that many victim-survivors have negative experiences of the legal system, and many have suggestions about the law and how the system could be more effective in upholding victim-survivor rights, and in improving victim-survivor experiences within systems responding to child sexual abuse, including the child safety and criminal justice systems.

¹³ Practice wisdom received from staff in specialist organisations.

¹⁴ <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/servicedirectory/186-children-families/integrated-family-support-service-ifss-north-west2>

¹⁵ Closing the Gap, 2020, *National Agreement on Closing the gap July 2020*, Closing the Gap, viewed 15 April 2024, < https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-09/ctg-national-agreement_apr-21-comm-infra-targets-updated-24-august-2022_0.pdf>.



"The justice system needs to prioritise the victim over the perpetrator."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

There are a number of areas where respondents raised concerns, all of which would require considerably more consultation and engagement with a broader group of stakeholders to explore in full. These include:

- There is no mechanism for external review of Department of Public Prosecution (DPP) decisions not to prosecute;
- Delays related to the criminal and civil proceedings, and family court matters and the impacts on victim-survivors and the safety of children.

"Yeah, there's not much really you can do about the laws, but I don't know, it's just really hard on the children if their case just gets pushed to the back and just ignored and just not looked at or if they're just sitting there in silence and they know."

– LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

This evokes questions of whether legislation or processes could be put in place to reduce lengths of criminal justice proceedings, and how children can be better supported in these situations.

- Exploring gaps in the Family Violence Legislation where sexual abuse of children and/or use of child sexual abuse material is being used as a component of coercive control and family violence against a parent;
- Concerns about the understanding and application of the law relating to age of consent.

"I was 15, he was 18, he gets nothing because of the age of consent in Tasmania. He, he gets nothing."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)



- The definitions of various type of child sexual abuse and how these are reflected in legislation. For instance, it was raised during consultations that the legislation on grooming does not adequately respond to all situations, and that there are shortcomings in the application of criminal law to some contexts of ‘no touch’ sexual abuse.
- Children and young people’s rights are not properly embedded in systems, including in the criminal justice and family law systems. A number of examples where children and young people were stripped of a voice or choice were shared including giving a statement in a criminal trial, counselling services being prohibited on parenting orders, and children being made to spend time with perpetrators of abuse.
- Extending principles of natural justice and/or procedural fairness in criminal proceedings to ensure that proceedings are victim-survivor centric.
- The need for specialised courts and prosecutors that are trauma-informed and embed victim-survivor advocates and centre victim-survivor rights.

“I would love to see Tassie pilot some kind of sexual violence court that utilised an inquisitorial (rather than adversarial) approach to getting the truth/justice for a victim. It would be a massive shift but maybe just what is needed for survivors.”

– supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

- The value of non-legal holistic supports/case manager being provided to victim-survivors alongside a specialist lawyer like that offered by SiS¹⁶ or

¹⁶ SiS is Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service’ (TALS) specialised family and sexual violence and prevention legal service: <https://sistas.org.au>



WLST¹⁷ for victim-survivors of family violence, and the need for legal representation to be provided to all victim-survivors of child sexual abuse (and other sex crimes).

- Review of compensation/damages for victim-survivors of child sexual abuse. Considerations could be given to whether a specialist court could adopt the model used in some European Countries to hear both a civil and criminal case together. This would reduce re-traumatisation by not requiring separate trials and reduce delays in damages being awarded.
- Some victim-survivors during the consultation period shared that they believe there should be public access to names of offenders and reforms around the laws relating to the publication of offender names.

“Fair justice system, harsher sentencing, removal of gag orders, no prison protection and public access to all know offenders. We need to protect the children not the perpetrators, this is something we do extremely poorly currently.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

- Inadequate sentencing and accountability for perpetrators was a common theme.

“Sexual offence punishments are non-existent. The laws need to be strengthened and increased.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

“A justice overhaul, from gag suppression orders being removed, harsher sentences, offenders having 3 strikes and never to be released penalty, a public registry of offenders and a legal system that supports

¹⁷ WLST is Women’s Legal Service Tasmania: <https://womenslegaltas.org.au>



the victim so it stops continually re-traumatising the victim, cohesive control needs to be address [sic].”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

- Responding within the criminal justice system to coercive control being used by a perpetrator to control a child in the context of child sexual abuse.

6.5 Increase safe, available, and accessible holistic supports for victim-survivors

The omnipresence of the need to provide safe and accessible holistic supports for victim-survivors was highlighted throughout the consultations.

“We definitely need more resources in this space, but while we still see low conviction rates, systemic risks, social stigma, unfair protection of the perpetrator how does someone feel safe enough to use the services?? I guess the real answer is how do you assure safety when every service up to date has failed to deliver and we still victimise the victim and protect the perpetrators.”

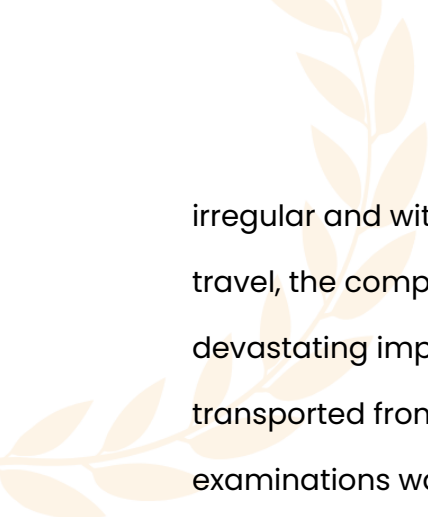
– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

“I think they should be providing as an injury that we suffer I think there should be a provision if needed for psychological medical and financial support..... Not unlike you would if you had cancer or you had you know suffered some sort of injury.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

The current resourcing to the service system is insufficient and the supports available are often disjointed, provided in silos, fail to take a holistic approach to the needs faced by victim-survivors, culturally unsafe, and/or lacking trauma-informed practices. Additional barriers are faced by those in rural and remote areas including limited support services coupled with challenges around transport to access services (e.g. poor access public transport such as buses are





irregular and with limited routes, financial costs associated with taxis, time lost to travel, the complexity and cost of travel from the Islands and West Coast). The devastating impact on children who have been sexually abused being transported from the north-west coast to Launceston for forensic medical examinations was discussed in multiple consultations, this again highlights the need to adequately respond to and fund the needs of rural and remote communities.

"More of everything!! The NW is CHRONICALLY UNDER STAFFED AND UNDER RESOURCED for most things, particularly Allied Health with child safety 9nly [sic] staffed on the NW at 28 %!!!! The Tasmanian Government needs to offer incentives packages to attract staff to the area, or more importantly, to keep the staff they have. It is at crisis point. The public would be appalled if they knew the extent of under staffing across the board in the NW to keep children safe. DONT get sick on the NW and don't get abused as a child or adult."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

Long wait times with specialist services meant that otherwise safe and accessible services are not accessible when people are seeking therapeutic supports. Concerns were raised about some services that have time limitations on how many sessions may be accessed. Additionally, the failure of the public mental health system for victim-survivors to receive ongoing mental health and psychological supports without being out of pocket was raised in consultations.

"Psychologists should be accessible and free - this will help the victim to process and work through a healthier approach then [sic] potentially substance abuse."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)



More specialist counselling services

There was an overwhelming call for more specialised and skilled counselling services:

"Of course there should be more counselling services, and people need to be skilled in the area..."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

"... Counselling is offered on reporting to police nowadays, and following, free through Laurel House. This is so necessary and beneficial and needs to continue."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

"Counsellors providing support in home by outreach for those who have challenges leaving home due to anxiety, or children who may feel more safe and comfortable in home. Being at home may offer more privacy."

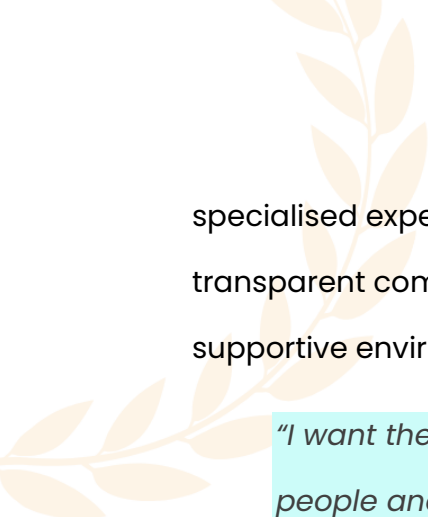
– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

"Definitely more counselling services. When reported to Child Services, report is immediately reported to police. Forums to inform communities regularly. Taking the word of small children who are deemed as not credible witnesses. Small children do not lie about abuse. Parents and caregivers need their own group in each town with the support of a qualified person to talk, meet and share the load."

– Parent/caregiver of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

Ensuring counselling services are child and young people friendly is crucial for effectively supporting victim-survivors of child sexual abuse. Insights gathered from consultations, including feedback from LEAPY highlight several key recommendations. These include the necessity for counsellors to possess





specialised experience in both working with children and sexual violence, transparent communication about the counselling process, and creating a supportive environment tailored to the needs of young victim-survivors.

"I want them to be qualified and experienced to work with both young people and sexual violence. Some counsellors have worked with adults mostly and not so much with young people and it shows."

- LEAPY youth advisory council member (consultation session participant)

Additionally, language used by counsellors should be validating and non-judgmental, and counselling approaches should include trauma-informed therapies. Importantly, young survivors advocate for a counselling style that respects their agency and decision-making abilities, emphasising the importance of a strengths-based, person-centric, exploratory and supportive approach.

Separate counselling support for parents/caregivers is also recommended, with the consent of the young person prioritised. These insights underscore the need for responsive and accessible counselling services that prioritise the unique needs and experiences of child and young survivors of sexual abuse.

Reducing silos and improving coordination and collaboration

Responses that address the system working in silos are needed. Some efforts to improve coordination include the Arch Multidisciplinary Centres were noted, but there is need for more consultation with victim-survivors, their supporters, specialist service providers and other community organisations to identify ways to improve coordination and collaboration for victim-survivors. During the consultations a range of preliminary ideas were explored:

- Free holistic support centres that offer whatever supports (including counselling, mental health supports, case management, victim-survivor



advocacy and assistance within the Court process, etc) a victim-survivor may seek without limitations on how long a person has to such services.

- Brokerage type system where service providers were able to receive vouchers for payments. This would mean that victim-survivors would be able to choose supports who were the 'right fit' for them, potentially in a location near them if they live outside of main centres and have flexibility in that approach.

Further consultation will be necessary to determine which approaches have merit, and what other approaches could be considered.

Expand models of care to meet diverse needs

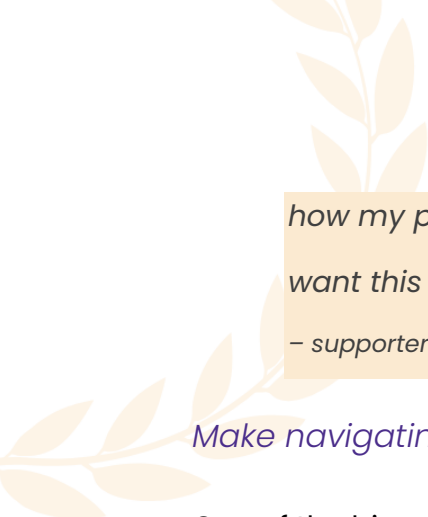
Increased funding for existing specialist services to expand models of care that meet the needs of victim-survivors and their supporters regardless of their age, how long it has been since their abuse or first disclosure, and to support specific cohorts with unique needs.

"Specialised counselling services need to be dedicated to sexual abuse victims and should be multi level and age appropriate. From pre primary age through to post menopausal as the fallout from trauma never leaves you. It affects every decision you make throughout life and sometimes professional help makes the difference between continuing and giving up. These people have been through enough."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

"Services like Laurel House need more funding - more funding for counselling but also funding to consult and engage with victim-survivors and supporters to develop new models of support. For example I don't feel like I need counselling but I do think that some kind of course about how I could better support my partner, how we could improve our sex life given





how my partners abuse affects this would be amazing. I don't think I would want this in a group but I imagine some people would."

– supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

Make navigating the system easier

One of the biggest takeaways from consultations was that victim-survivors continue to experience stress and distress when navigating the service system. They report having to wait, and to fight for the supports that they need.

"We've gone through enough shit in our lives we shouldn't have to still be continuing to fight like a dog."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

7. Meet the needs of victim-survivors from diverse communities.

Through our consultations, it was abundantly clear that the needs of victim-survivors from diverse communities are often overlooked or inadequately addressed. While those who participate in our consultations did include participants from diverse communities, we recognise that we need to engage more broadly than this consultation period allowed and look forward to engaging more fully in future.

7.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors

From our "Kitchen Table" conversations with community members and staff from the Six Rivers Aboriginal Corporation and Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, and individuals who participated in group/survey consultations, we provide the following considerations.



Barriers to reporting child sexual abuse

- The ongoing impacts of colonisation are a huge barrier for many Aboriginal people reporting child sexual abuse, including the fact that systemic responses are often culturally unsafe.
- Many Aboriginal people fear bringing shame to their family and fracturing kinship ties due to speaking out about child sexual abuse.
- Coercive control in family violence can perpetuate child sexual abuse as well as being a barrier to reporting.
- Child sexual abuse can be normalised generationally by the perpetrator to excuse or condone the abuse.

Police responses

- In small communities, police often know both the victim-survivor and the perpetrator which can lead to police not believing the victim-survivor. This dynamic is also evident in responses by school, family members and the justice system in their pre-judgement based on past known history of the victim-survivor or perpetrator.
- Police need specific training, both at the academy level professional development for existing officers, about cultural awareness and domestic, family and sexual violence, specifically what constitutes it.
- Increase investigative powers including access to search warrants to seize electronic devices when there are allegations of grooming/image-based abuse.

Community responses

- Victim-survivors fear disclosing in a rural/small community due to fear of gossip or breaches of confidentiality.
- More education and awareness about who to contact when experiencing child sexual abuse, including specialist services.
- A need to have more conversations about healthy masculinity.





Cultural sensitivity & inclusivity

- Anyone working to support victim-survivors of child sexual abuse need a deep understanding of intergenerational trauma and the impacts of colonisation.
- More education needed about the experiences of child sexual abuse of people with disability and how to facilitate conversations to talk about the abuse and support accordingly.
- Programs, responses and initiatives should be designed with lived expertise to ensure they are culturally inclusive and connected – this includes consultation with individual Aboriginal Communities to enable local solutions unique to communities and contexts.

Service provision

- Address specialist workforce shortages to reduce wait times for counselling.
- A review of Child Safety Services to enable better responses.
- Social work placements should be remunerated and Aboriginal students with strong cultural connections be supported to undertake their qualifications via a paid internship.
- Outreach to rural and remote areas.
- Review of requirement in schools to obtain consent from both parents for student to access counselling and support, when a parent/stepparent may be the perpetrator.
- Provide more support for young people who use harmful sexual behaviours.
- Make culturally and community connected Aboriginal community engagement officers a part of Child Safety, police and parent support programs.

Education

- More education about online grooming.



- Tighter controls on online pornography and more education for children and young people about porn not being the reality.

Justice system responses

- Voices of children who are victim-survivors of child sexual abuse are being ignored in the family law courts.

7.2 LGBTIQA+ victim-survivors

LGBTIQA+ children and young people face higher risk of experiencing child sexual abuse due to biases and discrimination in the community and transgender youth and children face alarming high rates of stigma, violence and discrimination (transphobia)¹⁸. There are higher prevalence rates of child sexual abuse in LGBTIQA+ young people, with the recent paper by the Australian Child Maltreatment Study finding that more than half those with diverse sexualities (52.6%) experienced child sexual abuse, compared with 26.8% of people who identified as heterosexual or straight, and similarly those of diverse genders experienced child sexual abuse at much higher rates (51.9%) than women (37.3%) and men (18.8%)¹⁹.

LGBTIQA+ victim-survivors of sexual violence experience more challenges to accessing support and reporting to police than non-LGBTIQA+ victim-survivors. In recent research, 86% reported they did not report to police, 64% believed police are not supportive, 89% indicated there are difficulties in accessing support for

¹⁸ Capaldi, M, Schatz, J, Kavenagh, M, 2024, 'Child sexual abuse/exploitation and LGBTQI+ children: Context, links, vulnerabilities, gaps, challenges and priorities', *Journal of Child Protection and Practice*, vol 1, April 2024, 100001, pp. 1-7.

¹⁹ Higgins, D. J., et al. 2024, 'Prevalence of Diverse Genders and Sexualities in Australia and Associations With Five Forms of Child Maltreatment and Multi-type Maltreatment' *Child Maltreatment*, doi.org/10.1177/10775595231226331



sexual violence and 58% believed sexual assault support services do not understand the needs and experiences of LGBTQ+ people.²⁰

LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors who attended our consultations (4 participants) or completed the survey (5 participants) made the following recommendations:

- A need for more community education to address the misbelief that experiencing child sexual abuse can lead to someone becoming LGBTIQ+.
- Ensuring there are adequate LGBTIQ+ supports for victim-survivors.
- Ensuring government and non-government support services are appropriately trained in LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice.

“My partner who is a survivor is trans – I don’t see stories like theirs very often in the mainstream discussions about child sexual abuse even though I know it is very common experience for trans and other LGBTQIA+ people.”

– supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

8. Hold perpetrators and those that protect or enable them accountable

Another predominant theme arising in consultations was that there is a need to ensure that proper measures are put in place to hold *all* perpetrators accountable, including child sexual abuse offenders who are also police or that hold other positions of authority/power. Victim-survivors need to be believed

²⁰ Layard, E, Parker, J, Cook, T, Murray, J, Asquith, N, Fileborn, B, Mason, R, Barnes, A, Dwyer, A, Mortimer, S 2022, 'LGBTQ+ peoples experiences and perceptions of sexual violence', ACON research summary report, viewed 23 April 2024, <https://www.acon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/22178_Sexual-Violence-Report_v_6.pdf>.



when they make disclosures against police or others in position of power and all acts of sexual and family violence need to be managed appropriately.

Similar to what was heard through the Commission of Inquiry, our consultations highlighted the need to holding individuals and institutions (including the institutions of the family and of communities) accountable for protecting perpetrators of child sexual abuse, whether through action or inaction. Our consultations revealed a clear demand for robust measures to address impunity and prevent the shielding of offenders, particularly in positions of authority. There is a collective call for transparency and accountability, with victim-survivors emphasising that accountability requires tangible actions, not just rhetoric. Many reiterated that failure to act in the face of abuse or calls for accountability or action perpetuates harm and erodes trust in governmental systems. One victim-survivor said they will know the system is working when:

“there is complete transparency no nepotistic behaviour from politicians with direct appointments.”

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

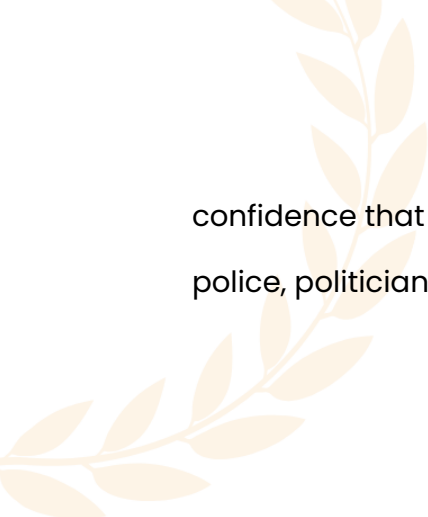
Further, concerns were raised that members of the government are protected through various mechanisms and their identity, despite being known offenders, is protected:

“Accountability requires actions not words, start from the top without protecting their names, showing that no one is exempt from prosecution!!!.”

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

The consequence of impunity is great, including the impact on the individual, their families and communities, limiting access to justice and resulting in a lack of trust in the government and systems. Reforms to the system, therefore, must provide





confidence that where a disclosure is made against people in power (including police, politicians, leaders) there will be accountability and an end to impunity.



Key Themes

In exploring key themes crucial for the advancement of Tasmania's response to child sexual abuse, our report delves into our vision for the state, aspirations for systemic improvements, expectations regarding reform development, implementation, review, and monitoring. Drawing from consultations with individuals with lived and practice experience and expertise, we aim to articulate a framework that prioritises victim-survivors' needs and fosters a culture of accountability and support within our communities.

1. Our vision for Tasmania

Throughout our consultations, victim-survivors, parents-carers, supporters and providers have articulated diverse yet interconnected visions for the change they want to see in Tasmania and in our approach to addressing child sexual abuse. These visions, each offering a unique perspective on the path forward, underscore the complexity and urgency of the task at hand.

The voice of child and young people is valued

Children themselves are demanding change, expressing a fundamental desire for a future where they not only survive but thrive. Their voices, often marginalised in legal and community settings, call for recognition and empowerment.

"Children should start to thrive."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

This vision emphasises the need to prioritise the rights and well-being of children, ensuring their voices are heard and their experiences validated.

Victim-survivors are believed, supported and have agency

At the heart of the views of many we consulted was the need to centre the experiences of victim-survivors and ensuring that they are believed and



appropriately supported. We commonly heard about the need for victim-survivor centric, trauma-informed approaches where their dignity and agency.

“Victim/Survivors feel heard.”

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation survey participant)

This vision advocates for systems that not only respond to the needs of victim-survivors but also honour their expertise and lived experiences.

People, services and systems work together to ensure children and young people are safe and victim-survivors are supported²¹

Another key vision revolves around the need for holistic, coordinated responses that transcend organisational boundaries. Stakeholders in our consultations highlighted the detrimental effects of siloed approaches, which create barriers to safety and exacerbate trauma for victim-survivors. By bringing together diverse stakeholders and resources, this vision aims to bridge gaps and foster collaboration across sectors.

“It’s again bringing all the pieces together. It’s not just concentrating efforts in one area...you’ve got to stop organisations working in silos.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

This vision advocates for systems that work in tandem to provide comprehensive support and care to all children and young people and those affected by child sexual abuse.

Child safety is everyone’s responsibility²²

Finally, our consultation found unequivocal support for the role everyone has in stopping child sexual abuse. This vision emphasises the shared responsibility of

²¹ COI Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.c., 19.1.1.e, 19.1.1.f, 19.1.1.h.

²² COI Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.e., 19.1.1.f.



every individual, organisation, and governmental body in preventing, identifying, and responding to child sexual abuse.

“Every child needs to be protected, to have the right to feel safe and the foundations to be safe if they are to move forward and thrive in our society. It is the absolute and sole responsibility of every one of us adults to ensure that this happens, and therefore we have to make change.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

This vision calls for inclusive and collaborative approaches that engage all sectors of society, ensuring progress and accountability at every level.

In summary, these diverse visions for change offer a multifaceted framework for transforming Tasmania's approach to addressing child sexual abuse. By amplifying children's voices, centring victim-survivors, fostering collaborations, and engaging every sector of society, we can collectively pave the way toward a safer and more just Tasmania.

2. Our hopes for the system

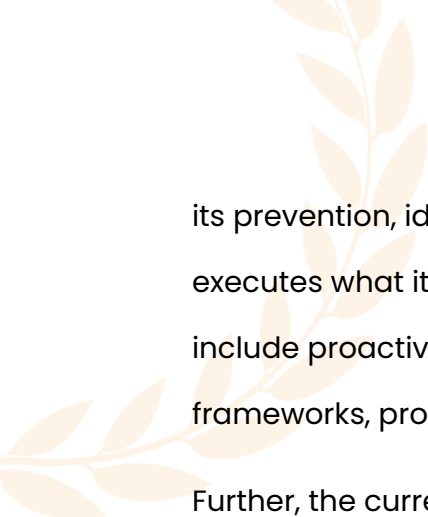
In articulating our aspirations for the system, we aim to envision a transformative framework that not only addresses the urgent needs of victim-survivors but also fosters the culture needed to prevent, identify and respond to child sexual abuse.

2.1 A comprehensive and integrated system that recognises the contexts and drivers of child sexual abuse²³

The need for the system to address a) the gaps and shortfalls of the existing Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan, and b) *all* forms of child sexual abuse in

²³ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.b., 19.1.1.c, 19.1.1.d, 19.1.1.e, 19.1.1.f.





its prevention, identification and response is integral in ensuring the system executes what it has set out to achieve. The system also needs to be equipped to include proactive measures and advocacy that influence national policies, frameworks, processes and laws.

Further, the current practices where work is undertaken in silos cannot continue – a key role of initiatives and reforms must be in creating a coordinated and holistic system.

Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027²⁴ is the Tasmanian Government's coordinated, whole-of-government action plan to respond to family and sexual violence. Whilst the Plan acknowledges that children and young people are victim-survivors in their own right, it does not provide a substantive or sufficient focus on child sexual abuse, by appearing predominantly focused on domestic and family violence, or sexual violence that occurs within intimate partner relationships between adults.

The strategy should complement the Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan by more comprehensively identifying and developing actions for preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse that are missing from the Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan and more authentically engage with victim-survivors across its development, implementation and beyond.

As part of the complementarity between the Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan, and the strategy, consideration must be given to the intersection between child sexual abuse and family and sexual violence. This is further discussed under

²⁴ Tasmanian Government (2022), Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027: Survivors at the Centre, viewed 23 April 2024, <<https://www.safefromviolence.tas.gov.au/our-plan/safe-homes,-families,-communities-governance>>.



the heading “Recognise all forms of child sexual abuse and its intersections with family and sexual violence”.

2.1 A victim-survivor centric system²⁵

A sacrosanct component is the fact that the system must as a whole be founded with victim-survivors. **It is essential that the system is designed with and works with victim-survivors at all levels and at all stages.**

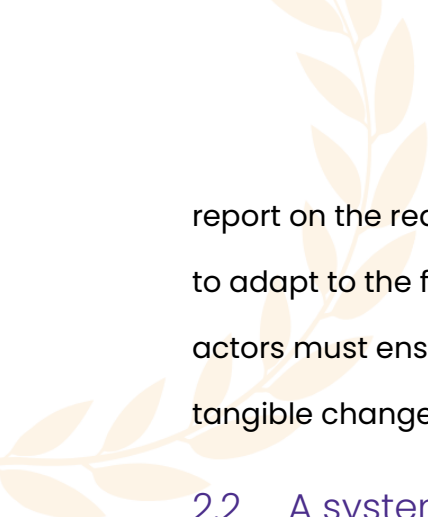
The system must operate in a manner that believes, and demonstrates that belief of victim-survivors, and that explicitly and proactively upholds and embeds victim-survivor rights.

As presented within the section on the importance of consultation, and throughout this report, victim-survivors must be consulted with at every single stage. Such consultations must be meaningful, have adequate time, be dispersed and diverse in the victim-survivors that are consulted with, but also different communities and organisations. Consultations should also encapsulate practice wisdom from the sector. When planning for and undertaking consultations with Aboriginal communities, it is crucially important to consult with individual communities to ensure programs are culturally inclusive and connected as well as responding to the needs of that unique community. Local communities will bring local solutions as the context and issues differ from community to community.

In doing working with victim-survivors to create a victim-centric system, the government and actors within the system will need to uphold and apply best practice frameworks, and to scrupulously apply the learnings found within this

²⁵ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.c., 19.1.1.h.





report on the requirements of consulting with victim-survivors, as well as continue to adapt to the feedback from victim-survivors throughout the process. Similarly, actors must ensure that victim-survivors regularly receive feedback on the tangible change(s) their work is making.

2.2 A system that recognises the value in practice wisdom²⁶

Whilst the system and those working within it must ensure the voices of victim-survivors are at the forefront, the valuable perspectives and insights of those working within the sector must be heard and drawn upon. The contribution of sector workers in identifying ongoing themes, trends, barriers and challenges from their engagement with multiple victim-survivors provides valuable insights to complement the calls from victim-survivors.

2.3 A system that truly understands power and privilege and seeks to level the playing field²⁷

Our consultations revealed the need to talk more openly about power and to level the playing field. Addressing power dynamics is essential because child sexual abuse often occurs within contexts where perpetrators wield disproportionate power over their victims, exploiting vulnerabilities and perpetuating cycles of harm. By acknowledging and challenging existing power structures, governments can create environments where victim-survivors feel empowered to come forward and seek justice without fear of retribution or marginalization.

This requires governments to confront entrenched norms and practices, challenging what has traditionally been accepted and advocating for systemic changes that prioritise the safety and well-being of children above all else. Real

²⁶ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.c., 19.1.1.h.

²⁷ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.c., 19.1.1.g., 19.1.1.h., 19.1.1.j.



systemic change can only be achieved when governments are willing to question their own practices and policies, actively listen to marginalised voices, and take bold action to dismantle systems of oppression and inequality.

"It reminds me of that Einstein quote: 'If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got.' It's time for our government to break away from the status quo. Doing things differently isn't just a suggestion; it's a necessity if we want to see real change and protect our children effectively."

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation session participant)

2.4 A solution-focused system²⁸

A major component in the system in which Tasmania is seeking to achieve is the demand for it to be *solution* focused. It needs to be practical. It cannot be simply theoretical or tokenistic. We know from best practice, and we heard throughout consultation that these solutions need to be tailored to the specific needs of marginalised communities. Solutions should be based on consultation and co-design with such communities.

2.5 A system that achieves change at all levels²⁹

For preventing, identifying and responding to be effective, interventions need to be multi-pronged and target changes from the bottom up and the top down.

It is crucial to incorporate both bottom-up and top-down approaches when creating systems change to ensure that initiatives are informed by grassroots perspectives and community needs while also being supported by institutional

²⁸ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.e,

²⁹ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.e, 19.1.1.f.



structures and policies. Victim-survivors during consultation recognised that the government has a key role in this, nonetheless, addressing child sexual abuse from the bottom up is also important.

"... A lot of these issues need to be addressed both ways."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

"For those who are actually in the policy making area... do they know what the power threat meaning framework is about, you know a lot of this stuff can be addressed both bottom up and top down..."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

2.6 A system that achieves law reforms³⁰

Further, in order to achieve the intended outcomes of initiatives, reforms and recommendations, it is imperative that law reform is included as an integral component in the strategy, response and action plan. During consultations, it was evident that amending laws to uphold victim-survivor rights and improve victim-survivor experiences within systems responding to child sexual abuse, including the child safety and criminal justice systems is inherent to accomplishing what the Tasmanian Government is setting out to achieve.

Identifying specific laws and processes within legal systems for reform will be an activity that will require funding. Part of this funding will be needed for deep consultation, in particular, with victim-survivors, parents/caregivers, specialist domestic, family and sexual violence service providers, priority cohorts, and the justice and legal sector. Insights to be received from legal practices and centres providing legal services to victim-survivors and/or their families in Tasmania such

³⁰ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.e., 19.1.1.g.



as [SiS](https://sistas.org.au/),³¹ [Knowmore](https://knowmore.org.au/),³² and [Women's Legal Service Tasmania](https://womenslegaltas.org.au/)³³ will be extremely valuable in the reform process.

"The justice system needs to prioritise the victim over the perpetrator."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

2.7 An accountable system³⁴

A call for accountability was heard constantly during consultations. This included the need for the system to create, and evidence, change at all levels, including from top down and bottom up. For many to know that the system is working, this accountability included a system that is equipped to instil responsibility upon every adult to prevent, identify and respond to child sexual abuse and to be held accountable if they fail to do so.

For many consultees, accountability also involved holding the government and each actor responsible for their roles and responsibilities within the system through an appropriate governance model. Additionally, the system must have ongoing and robust monitoring, review and evaluation embedded.

"Regular updates from surveys, and interactions and feedback via forms and online data completed by victims and families, police, legal fraternity and mental health support staff."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

³¹ <https://sistas.org.au/>

³² <https://knowmore.org.au/>

³³ <https://womenslegaltas.org.au/>

³⁴ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.e., 19.1.1.j.



Transparency and a two-way diverse, flexible and accessible communication mechanism as part of monitoring, evaluation and learning, will further demonstrate accountability to victim-survivors, families and the community.

“There will be transparent communication of the changes that are being implemented with regular consultations and evaluation of effectiveness the results of which are widely accessible. The measure of success must take account that in the first instance there may in fact be an increase in reported cases and consider that this may actually be a measure of success not an indication of failure of reforms, though ultimately a decrease in cases is what the strategy is aiming for. There will be a decrease in reports of secondary harm from systems such as the police and school, through more trauma-informed awareness...”

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation survey participant)

3. Our expectations for reform development, implementation, review and monitoring

Drawing from our consultations, we outline the expectations of victim-survivors, supporters and the sector about how the Child Sexual Abuse Reform Strategy and other reforms should be developed, implemented, reviewed and monitored.

3.1 Embedding lived expertise is fundamental³⁵

In particular, we have drawn upon the solutions identified by victim-survivors recognising for principles and objectives to be effective, they need to be informed by and be reflective of the experiences and truths faced by victim-survivors.

³⁵ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.c., 19.1.1.g. 19.1.1.h.



“Victim/survivors need autonomy and wider society needs engagement. We are the true facilitators for change. Utilise us.”
– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

Best practice frameworks and guidelines form the foundation for working with victim-survivors³⁶

Lived experience is what unites victim-survivors in their call for change and refers to ‘the experience(s) of people on whom a social justice issue, or combination of issues, has had a direct impact’³⁷, whereas lived expertise is the ‘knowledge, insights, understanding and wisdom gathered through lived experience’³⁸ and allows people with lived experience to transmute their knowledge into intentional, specialised skills to actively inform systems change in collaboration, co-design or co-development with others, including other victim-survivors, service providers and government agencies.

Victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence are key in driving reform in Tasmania and across Australia and the work of victim-survivors being embedded in the development of reform has gained momentum in more recent years, notably with the work of key victim-survivor advocates in Australia, including Rosie Batty³⁹ in her call to establish a Victorian Family Violence Royal

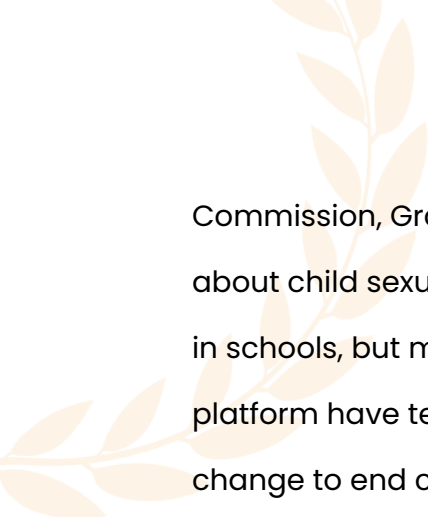
³⁶ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.c., 19.1.1.g. 19.1.1.h.

³⁷ Baljeet Sandhu 2017, *The Value of Lived Experience in Social Change. The Lived Experience Report*, viewed 22 April 2024, <thelivedexperience.org>.

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ Wheildon, L, True, J, Flynn, A & Wild, A 2021, *The Batty Effect: Victim-Survivors and Domestic and Family Violence Policy Change*, viewed 22 April 2024, <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10778012211024266#:~:text=Other%20themes%20to%20emerge%20from,described%20as%20%E2%80%9Ca%20watershed%20moment>>.





Commission, Grace Tame's⁴⁰ community awareness raising and campaigning about child sexual abuse and Chanel Contos'⁴¹ activism about consent education in schools, but many victim-survivor advocates with less of a public identity and platform have tenaciously and tirelessly been working across the full spectrum of change to end child sexual abuse in Australia.

Capturing lived expertise to inform improvement and changes to policy, practice and legislation is vital to ensure that prevention, intervention and response mechanisms are sensitive to the needs of victim-survivors and embed the nuance of experience of child sexual abuse. As outlined by the Independent Collective of Survivors (ICOS) in the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032⁴²:

"We hold knowledge and answers that others simply do not. We are diverse but galvanised by a common cause. We know what needs to change. No meaningful solutions can be made about us without us."

Frameworks and guidelines for best practice engagement with victim-survivors have emerged over the past few years, providing vital foundational pieces for ethical and safe engagement with victim-survivors. These frameworks and

⁴⁰ Young, E 2022, 'The defining moments of Grace Tame's time as Australian of the Year', SBS, viewed 22 April 2024, <<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/the-defining-moments-of-grace-tames-time-as-australian-of-the-year/tof6q82ns>>.

⁴¹ NSW Government 2023, *Chanel Contos:2023 NSW Young Woman of the Year recipient*, viewed 22 April 2024, <<https://www.nsw.gov.au/women-nsw/awards-and-events/past-nsw-women-of-year-awards/2023-awards/chanel-contos>>.

⁴² Department of Social Services 2022, *The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*, Australian Government, viewed 22 April 2024, <<https://www.dss.gov.au/the-national-plan-to-end-violence-against-women-and-children/the-national-plan-to-end-violence-against-women-and-children-2022-2032>>



guidelines have been predominantly co-developed with victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence.

The Experts by Experience Framework⁴³, co-designed with lived expertise, has been key in outlining a best practice framework for working with victim-survivors in social change by setting the standard for safe and ethical engagement with victim-survivors. An Australian Framework for the ethical co-production of research with victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence⁴⁴ provides best practice principles and a set of resources to support academic researchers and victim-survivors wanting to engage in co-produced research and acknowledges what is needed to ensure the work is done in a sustainable way, including how to maintain conditions for trusting relationships. Safe & Equal's Planning Best Practice Engagement with Survivor Advocates⁴⁵ provides a checklist for organisation and institutions working with victim-survivors in advocacy. UN Women's Safe Consultations with Survivors of Violence against Women and Girls⁴⁶ provides detailed guidelines for conducting group consultations or individual interviews with victim-survivors to inform systemic change.

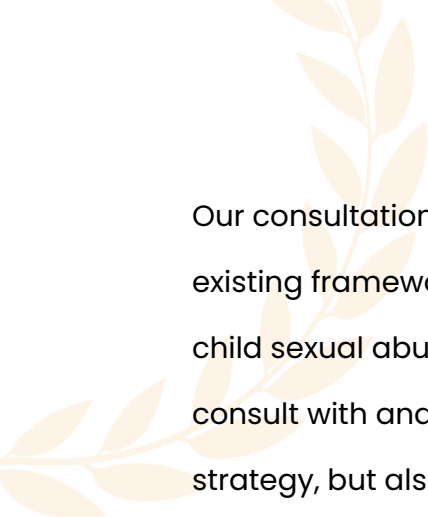
⁴³ Lamb, K, Hegarty, K, Amanda, Cina, Fiona, and the University of Melbourne WEAVERs lived experience group, Parke, R 2020, *The Family Violence Experts by Experience Framework: Domestic Violence Victoria*, viewed 22 April 2024 < <https://safeandequal.org.au/working-in-family-violence/service-responses/experts-by-experience-framework/>>.

⁴⁴ Lamb, L, Dembele, L, Nina, Fiona, Hegarty, K, *An Australian Framework for the ethical co-production of research and evaluation with victim survivors of domestic, family, and sexual violence*, Centre of Research Excellence Safer Families, viewed 22 April 2024 < <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/596d8907b3db2b5b22158a4e/t/64f66257ae069407cbd0aa0c/1693868635099/WEAVERS+Australian+Framework+ethical+coproduction+LAUNCH.pdf>>.

⁴⁵ Safe & Equal nd, *Planning Best Practice Engagement with Survivor Advocates*, viewed 22 April 2024, < <https://safeandequal.org.au/resources/planning-best-practice-engagements-checklist/>>.

⁴⁶ UN Women 2022, *Safe Consultations with Survivors of Violence against Women and Girls*, viewed 22 April 2024, < <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/12/safe-consultations-with-survivors-of-violence-against-women-and-girls#:~:text=UN%20Women%2C%20together%20with%20Global,Nations'%20entities%20can%20take%20to>>.





Our consultations with victim-survivors reinforced the recommendations of existing frameworks and guidelines, reinforcing the call that victim-survivors of child sexual abuse are the experts by experience on the ways government should consult with and embed the voices of lived experience in the drafting of the strategy, but also in the longer term to address child sexual abuse in Tasmania.

All consultations need to be held in a trauma-informed⁴⁷, person-centred⁴⁸ and strengths-based⁴⁹ way with assessment of risk to the victim-survivor holding their safety at the centre, providing confidentiality protocols (including how information and personal details will be used) and support wrapped around before, during and after consultations. An informed consent process (with documents provided in accessible formats, including easy read/plain English) is vital so victim-survivors know what is expected of them, they are aware of their rights during the consultation, they know how to access support, and transparency is given about how their input will impact change.

“Survivors need information about why their perspectives are valued and why they should share their opinions. For some victim-survivors like me, I would never volunteer my perspectives unless someone explained to me why my ideas might help the government help other children and other

⁴⁷ Blue Knot (nd), *Applying Trauma-Informed Principles to Conversations About Trauma*, viewed 22 April 2024, < <https://blueknot.org.au/resources/blue-knot-fact-sheets/talking-about-trauma/applying-trauma-informed-principles-to-conversations-about-trauma/>>.

⁴⁸ Edwards, N & Lambie, G 2009, 'A person-centered counseling approach as a primary therapeutic support for women with a history of childhood sexual abuse', *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, Vol. 48, np 1, pp. 23-35, < <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/j.2161-1939.2009.tb00065.x>>.

⁴⁹ Kelly, B & Gates, T 2010, *Using the Strengths Perspective in the Social Work Interview With Young Adults Who Have Experienced Childhood Sexual Abuse*, viewed 22 April 2024, < <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15332981003744438>>.



survivors.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

It is necessary that government employees who engage with victim-survivors in consultation are trained in trauma-informed ways of engaging. This training should be comprehensive (not completion of a basic online module) preferably delivered by sexual assault specialist services or another organisation specialising in trauma informed practice with victim-survivors. One victim-survivor highlighted the importance of having identified roles for victim-survivors working in government policy:

“Lived experience from a diverse perspective should make up at least half of the positions held that are making these decisions. I simply feel it is extremely insensitive to think a privileged educated perspective can ever really understand the complexity of abuse that they have never experienced as it is a very unique individual experience that effects everyone differently.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

Victim-survivors should be remunerated for their time and labour in providing lived expertise in consultation, and this remuneration should reflect appropriate hourly rates for time spent preparing and engaging. Any out-of-pocket expenses such as travel or accommodation expenses should be reimbursed.

All genders should be given the opportunity to participate, particularly trans and gender diverse people.

“Everyone is entitled to have their voice heard, not just girls but boys as well.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)



3.2 Genuinely include the voices of children and young people⁵⁰

Children and young people's voices are often missed or silenced in policy and law reform for a number of reasons, including fear about consulting with minors due to re-traumatisation, infantilisation, and assumptions that working with children is too difficult or complex.

Children and young people should have the right to influence matters which affect them, including how child sexual abuse should be addressed in the community. In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,

*'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.'*⁵¹

Given that children and young people are the target group of the strategy it is imperative that direct consultation with them is made a priority to ensure a comprehensive process for preventing further trauma and abuse for this vulnerable group. Child sexual abuse violates the human rights of a child, and it is crucial to amplify their voices to safeguard their rights, but to also ensure that

⁵⁰ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.c., 19.1.1.g. 19.1.1.h.

⁵¹ UNICEF Australia (nd), *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, viewed 22 April 2024, <<https://www.unicef.org.au/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>>.



responses to child sexual abuse are child-centred and informed by lived experience.

3.3 Accommodate for the needs of people from marginalised communities⁵²

If the strategy is going to be successful in addressing child sexual abuse for all communities, it must be sensitive to the additional needs of marginalised communities, including children and young people with diverse identities and communities, including First Nations children, children with disability, children with mental illness, LGBTIQ+ children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, children who have been criminalised, children from rural and remote areas, children from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, and more.

Unfortunately, due to time limitations for the consultation for this submission we were not able to facilitate targeted forums or individual consultations for specific marginalised communities. It is our hope to do so during the consultation period once the draft strategy is released.

Tasmania has high rates of low literacy with 50% of the state's population having inadequate reading skills for everyday life.⁵³ Modes of consultation that rely heavily on literacy may exclude victim-survivors, particularly those who also live in low socio-economic areas.

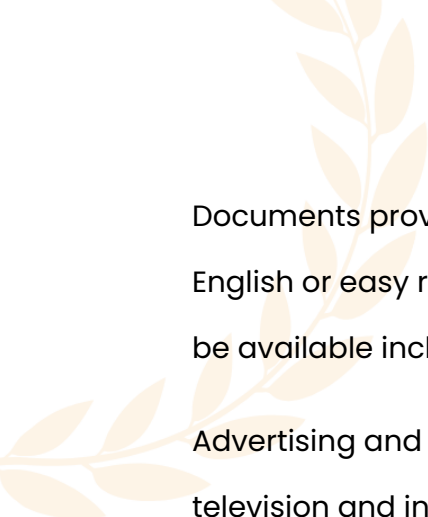
"Survivors and victims that are completely not even tapped into because a lack of Literacy skills is a huge issue down here."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

⁵² Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a, 19.1.1.c., 19.1.1.h.

⁵³ AEU 2023, *Alarming new report on poor literacy levels highlights urgent need for investment in Tasmanian schools*, viewed 17 April 2024, <<https://aeutas.org.au/alarming-new-report-on-poor-literacy-levels-highlights-urgent-need-for-investment-in-tasmanian-schools/>>.





Documents provided for consultation purposes should be made available in plain English or easy read format and in multiple languages. Video format should also be available including audio, Auslan and closed captioning.

Advertising and promotion of consultations should be conducted online, on television and in print media (newspapers) in addition to distributing to relevant stakeholders in the Tasmanian community sector.

Victim-survivors from diverse backgrounds need to be consulted with an approach that is sensitive to their individual needs, i.e. First Nations people, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disability, people living in rural and remote areas, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, children and young people, older people, migrant and refugee people, sex- workers, criminalised people. Building relationships with organisations that represent and support diverse communities are key to building trust between government and victim-survivors and ensuring adequate support is provided to victim-survivors to engage.

“Victim-survivors are from a very diverse area and lots of different settings...and so in response to that, there has to be an approach that's equally diverse. I think we need like a multi-pronged approach to make sure that we're collecting as much information and feedback from people and a range of people.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

It was emphasised that whilst there is value in establishing formal Councils to government (such as victim-survivor advisory councils), they shouldn't be the only mode for consulting with lived expertise and they shouldn't be assumed as representative of all victim-survivor experiences. There was some concern expressed about the same victim-survivors being consulted in a repetitive way instead of ensuring a broader range of voices and experiences are included.



Limiting victim-survivor engagement to a select few who are already known to government has limitations and does not capture nuanced experiences nor the voices that are not usually given a platform due to multiple factors. This is similarly seen in the failure to advertise open consultations up to a wider variety of organisations more generally.

it was repeatedly highlighted that one victim-survivor's experience does not represent all victim-survivors' experiences.

"It's essential to understand that no single survivor's experience represents the diverse spectrum of experiences. Consulting with survivors from various backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences is paramount in crafting effective responses. Each story adds valuable insight, shedding light on unique challenges and needs. Only by embracing this diversity can we truly create inclusive and responsive support systems for all survivors."

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation session participant)

3.4 Funding should be adequate to meet the aims of the strategy⁵⁴

Given the current fiscal environment, many of those we consulted raised concerns about there being sufficient funding to effectively implement the strategy and any real action on child sexual abuse beyond what has been committed to as part of the Commission of Inquiry implementation. Without adequate financial backing, there is fears that the strategy may fall short of its objectives, hindering progress in safeguarding children and supporting victim-survivors.

⁵⁴ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.i.



*Funding should be ongoing and build sustainable initiatives and services*⁵⁵

Whilst it will be up to the government to allocate, identify and outline the funding sources for the initiatives and reforms contained within the strategy, consultation discussions raised concerns about funding allocation and length of funding cycles, and how this will affect the implementation of priority actions.

“Don't write a strategy unless you are prepared to put the funding and strategies in place to make the strategy work and not just words on paper.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

*Improve funding cycles to assist with worker retention and wellbeing*⁵⁶

Many service providers and individuals working within specialist services, and associated programs face short-term funding cycles. Sometimes 2 years, sometimes up to five, and sometimes less for new initiatives or initiatives linked to particular strategies and action plans. There is a clear need for long-term investment in this strategy and that includes allocating budgets for much longer periods of time to ensure sustainability and success. Short funding cycles, one-off funding result short-term or instable contracts for employees which creates job uncertainty, and makes it more difficult for organisations to invest in the training and development needed to workers to develop the specialist skills needed to work with victim-survivors of child sexual abuse.

Research has identified that job uncertainty is “a determinant of decreasing job satisfaction and commitment and a damaging tool for the psychological health of employees”.⁵⁷ The overall health of those who live with job uncertainty is greatly

⁵⁵ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.i.

⁵⁶ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.i.

⁵⁷ Chen H, Li J, Li J and Bao J 2022, 'Role of employee loneliness, job uncertainty and psychological distress in employee-based brand equity: Mediating role of employee exhaustion.' *Public Health*, 10:941106, 10.3389/fpubh.2022.941106, no pagination.



impacted and it has been found to increase depression and make people more vulnerable to disease and exacerbate existing chronic ailments including heart disease and diabetes.⁵⁸ Given the complexity of the work already facing those who work with victim-survivors of child sexual abuse such as persistent risk of vicarious trauma, heavy workloads, and compassion fatigue, stemming from their continuous exposure to distressing narratives and the emotional toll of supporting victim-survivors, it is critical that funding of the strategy and its programs and initiatives mitigate against adverse impacts on worker and organisational wellbeing.

Long-term and greater funding for counselling services, together with a sector workforce strategy⁵⁹

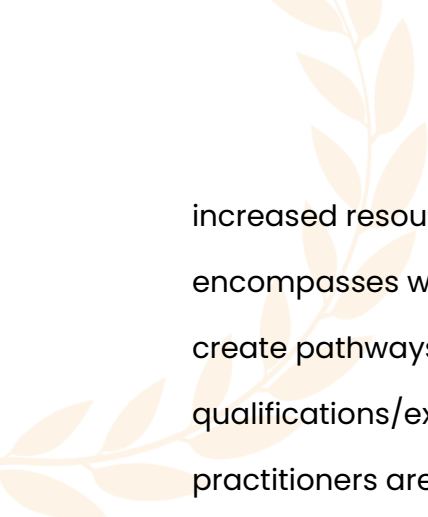
Consultations consistently identified the need to ensure that there is sufficient resourcing to better support victim-survivors, those close to them and their communities. A common theme identified during the consultation period was the long wait lists for victim-survivors, including children, seeking counselling. Others also noted the long wait times for other types of case-management support and mental health supports. Consultation in the sector attributed the long wait lists to insufficient funding, insufficient resourcing to support ongoing retention and wellbeing of the workforce, and workforce shortages that are affecting recruitment and retention.

Another important discussion in the sector during consultation was that whilst funding is crucial to reduce wait times, the aim to focus only on employing more counsellors and sector-workers now, is short sighted. It is imperative that such

⁵⁸ Robinson, B, 2022, *What Brain Science Reveals About Uncertainty And 6 Strategies To Cope At Work*. Forbes, viewed 19 April 2024, <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryanrobinson/2022/08/24/what-brain-science-reveals-about-uncertainty-and-6-strategies-to-cope-at-work/?sh=2cfce21744b0>>.

⁵⁹ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.i.





increased resourcing is coupled with an effective workforce strategy that encompasses workforce development and expansion. The aims should be to: create pathways to support people to obtain appropriate qualifications/experience to enter the sector, promote interest and ensure new practitioners are supported in entering the space and to ensure appropriate strategies work to foster organisations' abilities to retain staff. Victoria established a Centre for Workforce Excellence which leads initiatives to support workers and organisations in the family violence sector.⁶⁰ Promising practices from this centre could be considered in addressing a sector workforce strategy.

Practice wisdom identified that in training for social work and other relevant fields, there is not adequate coverage of sexual and family violence, whereas those and associated topics should be better embedded in the education to obtain such qualifications. Additionally, the long placement requirements for social work can act as a barrier for people beginning or staying in educational programs to become qualified. The government should invest in ways to better support persons from more diverse communities to access and complete educational programs in the sector including social workers, counsellors, psychologists. This may involve subsidising education and placements for such courses.⁶¹ One of the consultations with members from an Aboriginal community brought about the need to resource and support person-centred and engaging persons from communities that are trusted by community. Scope to provide opportunities for these people to obtain relevant qualifications whilst working with their

⁶⁰ More information about this centre can be found at the following website: [Centre for Workforce Excellence | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au/centre-for-workforce-excellence)

⁶¹ Raised during Kitchen Table Conversations consultation session facilitated by Laurel House with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).



communities was also raised.⁶² Another Aboriginal community consultation also highlighted the importance of incentivising university work placements and supporting Aboriginal students with strong cultural connections to undertake the qualifications via a paid internship.⁶³

*Resourcing Law Reform*⁶⁴

As outlined earlier in this report, there are a multitude of laws that should be considered for reform to enable improved responses to child sexual abuse, many of which were raised in various consultation sessions and in survey responses from a range of different persons/organisations. As a result, the strategy must allocate suitable funding to ensure adequate consultation and resourcing to bring about such reforms.

⁶² Raised during Kitchen Table Conversations consultation session facilitated by Laurel House with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).

⁶³ Raised during Kitchen Table Conversations consultation session facilitated by Laurel House with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).

⁶⁴ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.i., 19.1.1.j.



Funding for community education and primary prevention programs⁶⁵

Currently there is a range of organisations trying to deliver community education and primary prevention programs across the state, but this is ad hoc and poorly coordinated, and is not keeping up with the need in the community and demand from organisations and schools. Appropriate funding needs to be allocated to support the development and roll-out of a coordinated program of consistent and wide-reaching community education and primary prevention programs by a range of specialist community based services. This should include capacity building other organisations and actors, broader community education and specific education for parents/caregivers, and importantly for children and young people.

Specialist education across whole of community must also be appropriately funded if we are to break the intergenerational cycle of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate sexual violence.”

– sexual violence specialist practitioner (consultation survey participant)

3.5 Governance, monitoring, review, and evaluation arrangements must be robust and embed learning⁶⁶

Effective monitoring and evaluation is “a potent mechanism through which agencies can reach their target populations and understand the activities that can make a real and lasting difference for them, with no one left behind.”⁶⁷ There are many components that are necessary to ensure that the strategy and subsequent activities and action plans are effectively carried out.

⁶⁵ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.e., 19.1.1.i.

⁶⁶ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.e., 19.1.1.j.

⁶⁷ International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020, *IOM Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines*. IOM Geneva, viewed on 1 April 2024, <<https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-monitoring-and-evaluation-guidelines>>.



The need for monitoring and evaluation guiding principles⁶⁸

It is essential that the strategy contains key principles that guide and underpin a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, action plan, and associated activities. It is crucial that these principles are co-designed with victim-survivors, the sector and academics. Such principles should then be used by the government and relevant departments to ensure monitoring, evaluation, review and learning is aligned within those principles.

A starting point may be to utilise and/or draw upon those formulated as part of the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse's* National Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Framework⁶⁹:

- 1) Ensure monitoring and evaluation approaches are victim and survivor-centred and focus on the needs of children and young people;
- 2) Involve local partners and stakeholders;
- 3) Ensure a focus on learning, accountability, and transparency; and
- 4) Plan for evaluation from the beginning, allocate adequate budget and reasonable timeframes.

These four (4) principles within that framework are intended to “serve as an ethical framework and should be used by both activity owners and independent evaluators”.⁷⁰ The Tasmanian government may also consider additional

⁶⁸ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.e., 19.1.1.j.

⁶⁹ Noting that this used a comprehensive codesign process involving victim-survivors, supports, service providers, peak bodies and academics.

⁷⁰ These have not yet been published but are expected to be published shortly.



principles⁷¹ of: impartiality to mitigate bias; and utility to ensure that it is serving the needs and maximising the benefits and credibility.⁷²

It is integral that the framework established is not tokenistic but that it demonstrates a commitment for meaningful change and improvements.

Ensuring victim-survivors and others engaged receive relevant information about how their input has been applied and used to shape and improve aspects of the government's response will support in reducing feelings of tokenism. This can further be encapsulated when the government utilises findings for learnings and continues to adapt and evolve its responses accordingly (see "Embedding learning").

Monitor perceptions, satisfaction and gathering feedback around the effectiveness of implementation⁷³

We heard that victim-survivors, their supporters and service providers want government to be committed to seeking and listening to their feedback with openness and curiosity on an ongoing basis.

"We need the government to work effectively with the whole community they need to be open to the knowledge and experience that sits outside government and to be truly open to hearing feedback. This will be a big change for the state service and our politicians but it needs to happen"
– supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

⁷¹ Additional resources to support defining evaluation criteria may include those from OECD which can be accessed here:

<https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm> and here: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/applying-a-human-rights-and-gender-equality-lens-to-the-oecd-evaluation-criteria_9aaf2f98-en

⁷² International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020, *IOM Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines*. IOM Geneva, viewed on 1 April 2024, <<https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-monitoring-and-evaluation-guidelines>>.

⁷³ Col Recommendation 19.1.1.a., 19.1.1.e., 19.1.1.j.



"It should be an ongoing conversation that continues."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

Feedback from consultations concluded that it is crucial for the government to work with victim-survivors and stakeholders to create and facilitate methods that seek perceptions and feedback via open, honest and transparent communication. It was noted by some participants that having two-way feedback is important and shows respect.

"there needs to be an active path for conversations."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

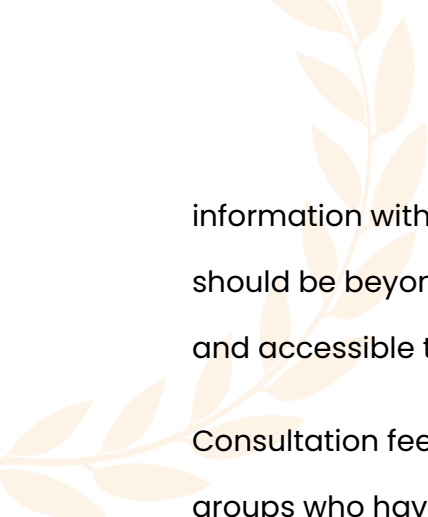
In designing and developing these feedback and communication channels, consideration needs to be given to communication expectations held by victim-survivors, the sector, communities and stakeholders. Accessibility⁷⁴ must be ensured by providing multiple avenues for all people to share feedback with and receive information from the government.

A multipronged approach that offers various options for people, such as: opportunities to give feedback anonymously and confidentially, online surveys, and face-to-face interviews and interactions. People should have multiple accessible options to engage including written, oral, in plain English as well as other languages.⁷⁵ Regular meetings need to take place between stakeholders, victim-survivors, and families, but it should not be assumed that it is safe for victim-survivors to consult in the same session as families due to competing perspectives and lenses of experience. Opportunities need to include sharing

⁷⁴ Accessibility considerations include: literacy levels, language barriers, technological limitations, the potential to receive sensitive information, and preferences on communication mechanisms of victim-survivors, parents/caregivers, specialist services, other people, stakeholders and communities.

⁷⁵ Input received from Laurel House DFV sector practice wisdom consultation survey.





information with and receiving feedback from children and young people. This should be beyond the formal advisory committee but more dispersed and diverse and accessible to all children and young people, and child victim-survivors.

Consultation feedback and results should also be actively sought from other groups who have a personal relationship with victim-survivors such as parents/caregivers of victim-survivors and other supporters, and those that work in roles where their core business is working with victim-survivors (i.e. specialist providers) or roles with a higher likelihood of direct contact with victim-survivors are directly with a mental health services, drug and alcohol services, police and legal fraternity, amongst others.

During our consultations, we heard about the lack of feedback mechanisms especially at critical times in a victim-survivors journey (e.g. after a forensic medical examination, following providing a police report, when prosecution does not proceed) where often the victim-survivor is receiving support from multiple agencies. Such mechanisms if built into the monitoring and evaluation processes and importantly day-to-day operational practices that could provide useful information of the safety, appropriateness, and effectiveness of programs and other actions from the strategy and the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations, and allow continual improvements and adjustments to be made, including to the feedback and evaluation processes.

Promoting both feedback opportunities and findings

It is critical that victim-survivors and other stakeholders know about opportunities to share their feedback, and have access to published progress reports, findings and other status updates. Accessible and diverse communication strategies will be needed to promote and raise awareness of results/reports, opportunities, and the various ways in which people can participate in monitoring. During our



consultations there were suggestions for promotion in a wide variety of places were shared including medical practices, child health clinics, schools, advertisements on television/radio and other places where people engage regularly. This transparency and public promotion were considered to be essential in building awareness and accountability.

"I think the entire subject needs to be delivered transparently, as in announce the improvements publicly, on radio and television, on repeat. Announcing any positive improvement sends a message of relief to those affected, but more importantly reminds active perpetrators that this behaviour is being stamped out and they will get caught. Also, educate the good respectful men in our society to openly discuss and call out this behaviour with their sons, nephews, peers."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)


"what is being done to address the problem, what has already been done with high level transparency and information about how to provide feedback, report ongoing concerns and a method for continuous improvement."

- specialist sexual violence practitioner (consultation survey participant)

With reporting being a climacteric aspect of monitoring and evaluation, consideration must be given to how and when reports and updates will be shared. Some suggestions during consultations included that reports should be released twice per year, annually, and at other specific and relevant intervals. The timing of these reports should be agreed upon through consultations with stakeholders and victim-survivors, and methods for victim-survivors and other parties to share their views publicly about the progress that has been made.

"Annual reports should be available about the progress of the strategy and implementation of the recommendations. Victim-survivors, their





supporters and specialist services etc should have an opportunity to be comment on the report (perhaps in the form of a survey that is independently written up) where this response/report is published alongside the governments [sic] report.”

– supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

Embedding learning

Whilst recommendation 19.1.1. j. does not explicitly refer to “learning” as part of a monitoring, review and evaluation process, we urge the Tasmanian Government to adopt a view that learning is an integral part of that process. Learning ensures success in implementing the strategy; as well as being able to adapt to evolving contexts and needs to prevent, identify and respond to child sexual abuse. Further, monitoring and evaluation, where done properly, and where the government actively utilises the findings for learning and applies those learnings to continue to evolve its response can contribute to a shift in culture, accountability and capacity within the government, and increase public perceptions and trust.

“This is a giant and complex task in itself. It will require comparative statistics, feedback and input from many direct and indirect sources. I would suggest that a database be set up now, with as much information that has already been collated from victim survivors etc. be input now, in readiness, but I would be designing more surveys like this one, to be done in the meantime.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

Through the ongoing and continuous monitoring of perceptions, satisfaction and gathering of feedback from diverse and dispersed victim-survivors, practice wisdom of specialist services and community needs, the government will be able



to utilise those learnings to ensure they influence and shape ongoing interventions and activities.

Incorporating learning as part of the process is reflective of international practices, including those of United Nations (UN) agencies and is reflective in the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse*. Therefore, the Tasmanian government should be striving to embed such an approach in its strategy.

Results Based Management (RBM) and accountability for results

There is currently significant mistrust of the government and its ability to demonstrate accountability and to appropriately embed lived experience into prevention and responses to child sexual abuse.

"To me accountability is clearly and transparently talking about strengths, weaknesses, progress (or lack of progress), failures, where timelines have been met and where they haven't. I don't have confidence now that anything the Tas Government tells me or the community is accurate - I think it is all spin. I want to know the truth and I want to hear apologies when things have not been achieved."

- supporter of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

"Corruption and misinformation needs [sic] to be tackled ensuring adequate audits are done."

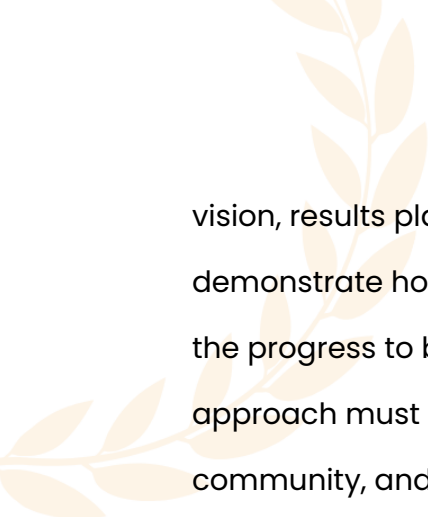
- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

"The government has been really good at not listening forever so maybe a magic wand for this one."

- adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)

Part of monitoring, review and evaluation will require the government to co-design and establish (with victim-survivors, the sector, and other stakeholders): a





vision, results plan, clear objectives, outcomes, and indicators. This will demonstrate how each component will lead to the promised changes and verify the progress to be (and being) made. This results-based management (RBM)⁷⁶ approach must also include a plan in ensuring victim-survivors, the sector, community, and all stakeholders are informed of progress made, achievement of results and how resources have been used.

“Publically [sic], I don't believe the community will rebuild trust in the government without high levels of involvement and transparency. There needs to be ongoing ability to input ideas and concerns for consideration at each scheduled update.”

– specialist sexual violence practitioner (survey participant)

Given the reality that the strategy and action plan will encompass a wide range of actors implementing various aspects there is a need for consistency, reliability, quality and accountability across all involved. This could be achieved using a standardised tool, reflecting RBM. Consequently, the standardisation of objectives, outcomes, key performance indicators of higher-level results will be necessary to explore higher-level results, and the achievement and impacts of activities. Many people consulted with during the consultation phase of the writing of this report, including victim-survivors expressed disappointment over past efforts in Tasmania, but also other states and nationally, in the way in which recommendations have been implemented.

“We are not another box to tick. We are more than a statistic.”

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

⁷⁶ United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), 2007, *The Role of Evaluation in Results-Based Management*, viewed on 1 April 2024, <<https://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/87>>.



It was not uncommon to receive feedback in consultations that were consistent with views that often it feels a 'box is being ticked' rather than something is meaningfully and effectively planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated.

By applying a RBM approach, using standardised tools and developing and utilising a co-designed set of specific indicators, the government has an opportunity to show its commitment to tangible outcomes and progress. Monitoring and evaluation can be utilised to demonstrate the credibility of activities track its progress. Coupled with transparency, consistency and dependability in data findings will also enhance the credibility and ensuring that tracking is transparent and promoted will work towards establishing accountability but also may assist in building trust and enabling visible results and successes to be understood and embraced. Where results indicate a need for adjustments to be made, this can also be an opportunity to engage and consult with victim-survivors, the sector, communities and other stakeholders to identify solutions and how things can be done better.

"Accountability requires actions not words, start from the top."

– adult victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation survey participant)





Feedback Summary and Conclusion

The voices of those affected by child sexual abuse echo a collective desire for a better tomorrow, one where children not only survive but thrive. One resounding call has emerged: a demand for change. This feedback, gathered from consultations with victim-survivors and specialist practitioners, underscores the urgency for transformative action to prevent, identify and respond to child sexual abuse in all settings.

Our consultations have identified the imperative to believe and to embed the expertise of lived expertise of victim-survivors. Their narratives must be heard, validated, and acted upon at every stage. It is incumbent upon us as a society to uphold and embed their rights, recognising that neglecting their voices perpetuates harm and hinders our progress as a community.

The call for holistic responses reverberates throughout the feedback. Siloed approaches create barriers and exacerbate trauma, emphasising the need for coordinated efforts across all sectors. Only through a unified, multifaceted approach can we effectively prevent, identify, and respond to child sexual abuse.

Building upon the aspirations articulated by stakeholders, our hopes for the system are integrated and inclusive. The system must address all forms of child sexual abuse and its intersections with other forms of family and sexual violence comprehensively, bridging gaps felt by victim-survivors and by existing strategies and frameworks. It should embody a victim-survivor-centric ethos, co-designed with those it serves and informed by diverse voices and perspectives.

Practical, solution-focused approaches are imperative, tailored to the unique needs of marginalised communities. Legal reforms play a pivotal role, ensuring that laws uphold victim-survivor rights and facilitate justice.



As we embark on this journey toward a safer, more just Tasmania, consultation remains paramount. Meaningful engagement with victim-survivors, communities, and sector experts is indispensable in shaping an effective and responsive system.

Our expectations underscore a collective commitment to meaningful reform. By embedding lived expertise, amplifying the voices of children and young people, and prioritising the needs of marginalised communities, we can build a Strategy that reflects the diverse realities of Tasmania. With adequate funding and unwavering dedication, we can forge a future where every child is safe, supported, and empowered to thrive.

The success of the strategy hinges upon effective implementation, which is reliant on robust governance, monitoring, review, and evaluation mechanisms.

Monitoring should encompass diverse perspectives, including those of victim-survivors, supporters, providers and communities. Feedback mechanisms must be ongoing, inclusive and accessible, offering multiple avenues for engagement. Regular and transparent communication channels are essential for building trust, fostering dialogue, maintaining momentum, and addressing challenges.

Accountability lies at the heart of our aspirations for change. Every individual, organisation, and government body bears responsibility. Transparent governance and robust monitoring are essential to ensure progress and hold stakeholders to account.

Laurel House is unwavering in its commitment to drive transformational change in Tasmania, and we are steadfastly committed to working in partnership with victim-survivors, the government and other stakeholders. We eagerly anticipate working collaboratively with the government as we embark on the necessary changes to prevent, identify and respond to child sexual abuse in Tasmania.





Photo: Azra Lee Photography

“

We can make these changes and make people aware.

We don't want anybody to go through what we went through and there's so much room for improvement, there's so much room in today's society with media, with social media ... and the government who has got the funds.

*Please make a change government.
You're hearing us now.
Please do something.*

- adult victim survivor of child sexual abuse (consultation session participant)

”

Appendix A – Consultation Guidelines

The following information was provided by the Department of Premier and Cabinet to Laurel House to inform the approach taken by Laurel House in our engagement and consultation.

Background

The Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government’s Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (“Commission of Inquiry”) was established on 15 March 2021. On 26 September 2023, the Commission’s Final Report⁷⁷ was released.

The Commission of Inquiry has looked at how children can be safe in Tasmania in schools, out of home care, hospital and health care settings, youth justice systems and youth detention and how institutions can work better together to protect and respond to child sexual abuse.

The Commission has made 191 recommendations for change and the Tasmanian Government has committed to implementing all 191 recommendations.

One of these recommendations (19.1) is to deliver the child sexual abuse reform strategy and action plan for preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse, including child sexual abuse in institutions and harmful sexual behaviour. This is due to be delivered by 1 July 2024.

⁷⁷ Tasmanian Government 2023, *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government’s Responses to Child Sexual Abuse In Institutional Settings: Who was looking after me? Prioritising the safety of Tasmanian children*, Tasmanian Government, viewed 10 April 2024, <https://www.commissionofinquiry.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0011/724439/COI_Full-Report.pdf>.





Consultation and Engagement Overview

Consultation and engagement should address Recommendation 19.1 in areas that groups or individuals have specific interest in. This might include, for example, the part of the recommendation relate to areas such as vision, policy and principles, what success looks like, being informed by victim survivor voice, specific needs of population groups and evaluation. You may wish to focus on one or all of the clauses below (or any other clauses in the recommendation):

- a. describe the system that Tasmania seeks to achieve, including the component parts of that system, how Tasmanians will know it is working, and the role of key initiatives, reforms and recommendations in achieving the intended outcomes
- c. be informed by the voices of children and young people and adult victim survivors of child sexual abuse (Recommendation 19.5)
- e. set out guiding principles and objectives to inform preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse
- a. set out considerations relevant to particular cohorts of children and young people, including Aboriginal children, children with disability, children with mental illness, children who identify as LGBTQIA+ and children from culturally and linguistically diverse communities*

*In addition to i. above, consideration may also focus on children from rural and regional areas.

Engagement Outcomes

The consultation outcomes will align with the overarching delivery of recommendation 19.1 to develop the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and Action Plan.

These will include:




- 
- a. Enhanced engagement between government and the community sector to inform the Child Sexual Abuse Reform Strategy and Action Plan and respond to the recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry.
 - b. Victim survivors, supporters, families and members of the public have a platform to engage with government on a shared vision for a child safe Tasmania, as well as how the system can better prevent, respond to and identify Child Sexual Abuse.
 - c. Individuals, groups and the community have ongoing opportunities to shape the child safe system.
 - d. The voices and views of people with lived experience, children and young people are embedded in the government's response to the Commission of Inquiry and there are ongoing opportunities to engage with the implementation of the Commission of Inquiry recommendations.
 - e. Individuals and groups have an opportunity to influence policy and decisions that affect them, including Tasmanian Aboriginal people, people with disability, people from culturally, linguistic and diverse backgrounds, people from LGBTIQ+ communities, and people from rural and regional areas.
 - f. Individuals, groups, the community sector and government have greater understanding of shared responsibilities on preventing, responding to and identifying child sexual abuse and their role in the system.

Engagement Objectives

- Provide victim-survivors, families, supporters and members of the public with opportunities to:



- 
- raise enquiries and/or express concerns to gather this feedback into the development of the Tasmanian Government's Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and Action Plan.
 - share views on what a child safe system should look like.
 - share experiences and views on what it means to be safe in institutions, in the community and at home.
 - inform the principles and objectives for preventing, responding and identifying child sexual abuse.
 - influence the Tasmanian Government on considerations relevant to particular cohorts of children and young people, including Aboriginal children, children with disability, children with mental illness, children who identify as LGBTQIA+, children from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and children from rural and regional areas.
 - provide feedback on what success looks like.
 - provide advice on how ongoing engagement with the Tasmanian Government can occur while implementing the Commission of Inquiry recommendations.
 - Raise awareness of the Tasmanian Government's response to the Commission of Inquiry and the need for a child sexual abuse reform Strategy and Action Plan.



Appendix B – Consultation Method

1. People with lived experience of child sexual abuse

1.1 Group and individual consultations

Adults with lived experience of child sexual abuse

Two online group consultations were held with adults (over 18) on 8th and 9th April 2024 by Zoom. A total of 13 participants attended these sessions and the duration was approximately 2.5 hours.

One person who identified as a victim-survivor and having a disability was interviewed in an individual consultation due to accessibility needs (unable to use Zoom). This consultation was completed on 10th April 2024 by telephone with one of the facilitators and appropriate supports given.

All participants identified as female/woman and it is important to note the voices of cisgender men are absent from our submission, not through intent but through the nature of registrations we received. With more time to consult we may have been able to capture more information from people of other genders.

Demographics:

Table 1 Type of lived experience

Victim-survivor of child sexual abuse	11
Parent/caregiver of victim-survivor of child sexual abuse	1
Both victim-survivor & parent/caregiver of a victim-survivor of child sexual abuse	2
Total	14



Table 2 Diversity

Person with disability	6
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	4
LGBTIQA+	4
Migrant or refugee	0
Culturally & linguistically diverse	1
Rural and remote area	4
Carer of someone with a disability	1
From a low socioeconomic background	3
None of the above	2

Table 3 Age

18-24	0
25-34	3
35-44	3
45-54	5
55-64	3
Over 65	0
Prefer not to say	0
Total	14

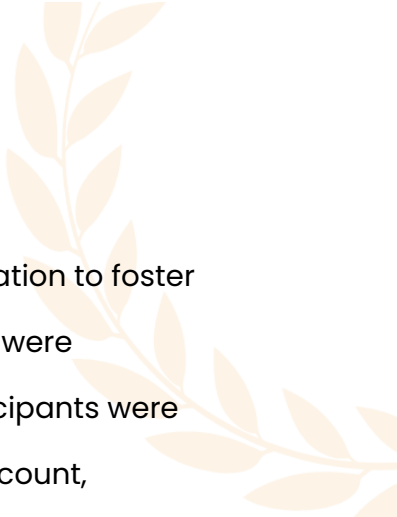
Table 4 Geographical location

North	8
North-West	6

Table 5 Laurel House service user status

Current client	2
Past client	6
Past & current client	1
Neither	5





Participants were provided with an information sheet prior to registration to foster an informed consent process. Prior to the consultation, participants were provided with questions in plain language to guide their input. Participants were paid \$100 for their time by gift card or direct deposit to their bank account, depending on their preference.

Each session was facilitated by two policy officers from Laurel House with extensive experience in community consultation, law and policy, especially with diverse communities. One of the facilitators has extensive experience in consulting with victim-survivors in a trauma-informed way, has a background in sexual assault counselling, and is also a victim-survivor of domestic, family & sexual violence. Participants were provided with support throughout the session and a debriefing component was included at the end of the formal question section. Participants were provided with details of avenues of support post-consultation and a check in was provided by the facilitators within 48 hours of the session.

A feedback survey on the consultation experience was provided to participants after the consultation to gather considerations for improving future consultations. The feedback survey responses were positive.

Children and young people

Laurel House established a youth advisory council known as the Laurel House Expert Advisory Panel for Youth (LEAPY)⁷⁸ in 2023, which consists of victim-survivors of child sexual abuse between the ages of 13 and 18 living in Tasmania. A Youth Engagement Lead coordinates the work of the Panel and members are

⁷⁸ Laurel House, Join LEAPY (Youth Advisory Council), viewed one 15 April 2024.
<<https://laurelhouse.org.au/get-involved/join-leapy-youth-advisory-council/>>
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provided with full support to engage. The primary aim of the Panel is to ensure the lived expertise of young people is embedded internally in the work at Laurel House and externally in advocacy to bring change to policy, legislation and practices regarding child sexual abuse.

A consultation session was offered to LEAPY on 8th April 2024 by Zoom. Due to the short notice for the consultation only one member attended the session but provided very detailed suggestions for the strategy. This member identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and lives with a disability (neurodivergent).

1.2 Surveys

Online surveys were offered to adults with lived experience and each participant selected the survey relevant to their experience.

Table 6 Number of surveys completed

Victim-survivor of child sexual abuse (VS)	10
Parent/caregiver (PC) or supporter (S) (e.g. partner, sibling) of victim-survivor of child sexual abuse	2
Total surveys completed	12

Table 7 Gender of survey participants with lived experience

	VS	PC or S
Female/woman	8	2
Male/man		
Non-binary	1	
Other	1 (trans man)	

Table 8 Diversity of survey participants with lived experience



	VS	PC or S
Person with disability		
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	1	
LGBTIQA+	4	1
Migrant or refugee		
Culturally & linguistically diverse		
Rural and remote area	3	2
Carer of someone with a disability	1	
From a low socioeconomic background		
None of the above		

Table 9 Age of survey participants

	VS	PC or S
18-24		
25-34	2	
35-44	1	
45-54	3	1
55-64	3	1
Over 65	1	
Prefer not to say		
Total	10	2

2. Practitioners with sector experience working with victim-survivors

Practice wisdom was gathered from the Tasmanian sector including specialist domestic, family and sexual violence practitioners and non-specialist/generalist sector practitioners.



2.1 Group Consultations

Sexual Violence Practitioners and Leaders

An online consultation was held with 30 specialist sexual violence service staff from Laurel House on 3rd April 2024 and with the 8 Laurel House board members on 11th April using Microsoft Teams. Practitioners and leaders were also invited to complete the practice wisdom survey.

Other community consultations

Laurel House captured feedback from two Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), namely Six Rivers Aboriginal Corporation and Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation in kitchen table style conversations held with their staff and community members. A total of 24 people attended these two consultations.

Laurel House has conducted a further 14 “Kitchen Table” conversations with community groups and organisations since the beginning of 2024. 143 participants (including staff, volunteers, community members and service users) have been involved in these. These sessions did not specifically ask for feedback about the strategy but sought general feedback about child sexual abuse (and other forms of sexual violence) and where relevant this feedback was incorporated into the report.

2.2 Survey

An online survey was made available to domestic, family and sexual violence specialist practitioners and non-specialist/generalist sector practitioners. Six responses were received, and all were sexual violence specialist practitioners. Unfortunately, there were no responses from non-specialist/generalist sector practitioners.



Appendix C – Topics for Education Programs

Our consultations, although limited, found that education to prevent child sexual abuse must include, but should not be restricted to, topics such as the below:

- Hearing from lived experience speakers at schools;
- Consent (this needs to be detailed and have 'real life' application, using scenarios to demonstrate what it really means, including consent in contexts of alcohol use);
- Body autonomy including using the anatomically correct terminology for body parts
- Different types of sexual abuse and assault;
- Removing shame around sex;
- Sex positivity;
- Reducing stigma, victim-blaming and slut-shaming;
- Pornography;
- Online safety, child exploitation, child sexual abuse material and image based abuse;
- Specific education for boys from a younger age, and education around healthy masculinity;
- Grooming;
- Stranger danger (the truths and myths);
- The prevalence of child sexual abuse and the fact it happens everywhere, including in homes and institutions;
- Awareness of the impacts of child sexual abuse;
- Awareness of the needs of victim-survivors of child sexual abuse;
- Avenues for seeking assistance;



- Sharing strategies around preserving and saving evidence;
- The laws around sexual abuse and assault, including the perpetration towards young people by other young people, stealthing, and the use of strangulation;
- Continue to evolve and be developed based on emerging trends, cultural contexts and experiences of victim-survivors.



Appendix D – Strategy Stakeholders

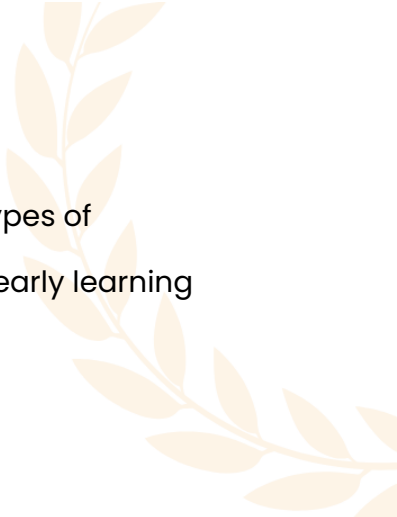
Although the following should in no way be treated as an exhaustive list, consultations discerned a range of actors that consultees deemed necessary to be involved. These include:

- Department of Children and Young People⁷⁹
- All specialist Family and Sexual Violence Support Service organisations;
- Commissioner for Children and Young People;
- Child Safety Services, organisations that work within the Child Safety system, and individuals providing foster and/or kinship care.
- Courts in varying jurisdictions (including Criminal, Child Safety and Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (FCFCOA⁸⁰);
- Tasmanian Police (including Police Prosecution);
- Safe at Home System and all actors within that system;
- Department of Justice (including the Department of Public Prosecutions, Victims of Crime Service; Tasmanian Prison Service, Community Corrections);
- Youth Justice;
- Department of Health and Health care providers;
- Witness Intermediary scheme;

⁷⁹ Although this department, DECYP, has been included in an overarching broad manner, some other actors falling under DECYP have been explicitly mentioned separately.

⁸⁰ Whilst it is recognised that jurisdictionally, the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia is governed by the Commonwealth, there may still be scope to ensure consistent messaging within the Tasmanian Strategy, aligned with the National Strategy and Commonwealth's approach to Child Sexual Abuse regarding that Court System. That system, in particular, was raised in consultations with victim-survivors, Aboriginal communities, those with practice wisdom we consulted with, as well as people from different cohorts completing consultation surveys.



- 
- Actors within the education system, the department and all types of schools including independent/private and catholic schools, early learning and childcare centres);
 - Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOS);
 - Migrant Communities and supporting organisations;
 - LGBTIQI+ community and supporting organisations;
 - NDIS Providers;
 - Service Tasmania;
 - Centrelink;
 - Local councils and government;
 - Neighbourhood centres;
 - Governance bodies/regulators/steering committee of the strategy/action plan as well as regulatory bodies of relevant organisations/persons within the sector;
 - Media;
 - Sporting and other activity organisations and/or charities engaging with children and young people;
 - Religious and spiritual institutions;
 - Community Legal Centres, law firms, and Tasmanian Law Society.

