



QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

to the Youth Sexual Violence
and Abuse Steering Committee's
First Report

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
2	The Committee's work	1
3	The Committee's recommendations	2
3.1	Improve service effectiveness	2
3.2	Raise awareness	2
3.3	Resourcing	2
3.4	Recommendations	3
4	Government response	4
	Recommendation 1: Apply principles for service delivery improvement	4
	Recommendation 2: Sustain focus on coordinating and integrating services in Aurukun and West Cairns	4
	Recommendation 3: The need for community support to address the issue	5
	Recommendation 4: Developing a shared understanding by defining YSVA consistently	5
	Recommendation 5: The need for services to understand what YSVA is and how to respond	5
	Recommendation 6: Fund effective responses for victims and perpetrators:	6
	Recommendation 7: Crime prevention is part of a holistic response to YSVA	6
6	Further work	7

1 Introduction

In 2010 the Queensland Government commissioned Griffith University to consider youth sexual violence and abuse with a focus on two communities, West Cairns and Aurukun.

Its report, *Preventing Youth Sexual Violence and Abuse in West Cairns and Aurukun: Establishing the Scope, Dimension and Dynamics of the Problem*, was received by Government in 2013. It contained disturbing findings regarding the prevalence of the issue in the two communities, where a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live. The report was embargoed to avoid stigmatising the two communities and also to allow strategies to be established to address youth sexual violence and abuse.

On 12 March 2016, the Queensland Government made the difficult decision to release the report, in a redacted format to avoid any identifying data.

At the same time, the Government announced the establishment of the Youth Sexual Violence and Abuse Steering Committee and the appointment of the Honourable Stanley Jones, AO QC, a former judge of the Supreme Court, as its Chair.

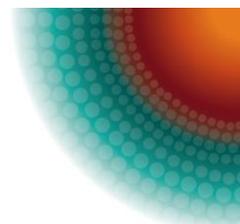
The Committee includes senior representatives from all levels of government and peak body and community members. It provided the First Report to the Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships on 31 August 2016.

2 The Committee's work

In the First Report, the Committee was asked to consider the effective and efficient implementation and coordination of activities in Aurukun and West Cairns to address youth sexual violence and abuse. The Committee undertook a literature review to research the issues and potential solutions and an Action Plan was produced to map services and activities addressing youth sexual violence and abuse in the two communities.

Through its research, the Committee recognised that this issue is not location-specific. It is a national and global problem and, to date, there are few proven solutions. The Committee noted, however, there is a growing body of work regarding promising approaches, including holistic responses. The Committee's recommendations to government include continuing current successful strategies and improving current initiatives through, for example, better coordination.

The Committee's Final Report, which will focus on the broader prevalence of youth sexual violence and abuse and make recommendations to the Queensland Government by the end of the year.



3 The Committee's recommendations

The Committee made recommendations across three themes: improving service effectiveness, raising awareness and resourcing.

Government support for all recommendations will ensure improved responses to youth sexual violence and abuse in each community, noting that further community engagement by the Steering Committee would inform approaches to addressing this issue.

Based on the literature review, outcomes of the survey and further discussions, and consistent with the analysis of effectiveness and strategies, the Committee made seven recommendations based around three themes: improving service effectiveness, raising awareness and resourcing.

The Committee's recommendations are described below.

3.1 Improve service effectiveness

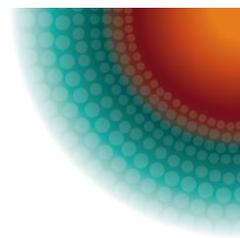
- principles for service delivery improvement should be applied
- a focus on coordinating and integrating services in Aurukun and West Cairns should be sustained.

3.2 Raise awareness

- community support to address the issue should be garnered
- a shared understanding should be developed by defining YSVA consistently
- services should be supported to understand what YSVA is and how to respond.

3.3 Resourcing

- effective responses for victims and perpetrators need to be funded including –
 - responses for victims need to be individual and location-specific, long term and aim for higher levels of retention
 - responses for perpetrators need to be youth-specific and comprehensive
 - the opportunities provided by new technologies to support service delivery also need to be explored
- crime prevention initiatives should be supported as part of a holistic response to YSVA.



3.4 Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Apply principles for service delivery improvement:

- Responses should be evidence-based and linked to the Griffith University framework;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be involved in the design and delivery of services, preferably local people (including capacity building and skills development opportunities)
- Services should be field based delivered via outreach minimising travel by participants, with appropriately qualified staff engaged in delivery;
- Services should take account of culture and historic issues relevant to the community;
- Staffing needs to be appropriately gender balanced, trained to understand cultural safety by local people and supported to understand local issues;
- Treatment plans should take account of cultural heritage, local language and protocols, cultural values, beliefs and practices;
- Treatment plans should be holistic and suited to the young person's development and environment and be non-stigmatising; and
- Crime prevention responses that focus on environmental design to ensure community and personal safety should be supported.

Recommendation 2

- Sustain focus on coordinating and integrating services in Aurukun and West Cairns.

Recommendation 3

- The need for community support to address the issue.

Recommendation 4

- Developing a shared understanding by defining YSVA consistently.

Recommendation 5

- The need for services to understand what YSVA is and how to respond.

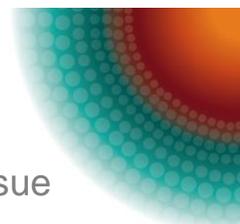
Recommendation 6

Fund effective responses for victims and perpetrators:

- Responses for victims need to be individual and location-specific, long-term and aim for higher levels of retention;
- Responses for perpetrators need to be youth-specific and comprehensive; and
- Technological responses to be explored.

Recommendation 7

- Crime prevention is part of a holistic response to YSVA.



Recommendation 3: The need for community support to address the issue

Lead: All agencies and services

Response: Supported

Improving community engagement at all levels can be achieved through:

- Individual service points
- Round tables
- Government Coordination Officers
- Including community members in Communities of Practice.

'Community advocates' could be considered. Key community members, eg employees of a health service or the local government, could be identified and supported to raise awareness of the services available and to support community members to access services.

Recommendation 4: Developing a shared understanding by defining YSVA consistently

Lead: All agencies and services

Response: Supported

Agencies and services are encouraged to use the Steering Committee definition to promote a shared understanding of YSVA; and to promote the definition by using it in reporting.

Recommendation 5: The need for services to understand what YSVA is and how to respond

Lead: All agencies (supported by advice from DATSIP)

Response: Supported

Various evaluations currently underway which will help agencies to incorporate output-based reporting to improve outcomes by:

- better understanding of service use and effectiveness; and
- making data comparisons simpler.

For the Final Report, the Terms of Reference require that the Committee will have investigated the prevalence and impact of youth sexual violence and abuse in other locations across Queensland; and taken advice from experts in the field of youth sexual violence and abuse, to consider and make recommendations about:

- the appropriateness of the Queensland Government's current legislative, policy and resourcing response to youth sexual violence and abuse; and
- how all levels of government, the non-government sector and the community can work better to prevent and respond to youth sexual violence and abuse and reduce re-victimisation.



Recommendation 6: Fund effective responses for victims and perpetrators:

- Responses for victims need to be individual and location-specific, long-term and aim for higher levels of retention;
- Responses for perpetrators need to be youth-specific and comprehensive; and
- Technological responses to be explored.

Lead: All agencies Queensland and Australian Governments

Response: Support

Discussions will continue between the Queensland and Australian governments regarding funding arrangements for the future of YSVA projects.

Recommendation 7: Crime prevention is part of a holistic response to YSVA

Lead: Queensland Government agencies:

- DATSIP
- DCCSDS
- DJAG
- QPS
- Community Justice Groups
- Local Governments

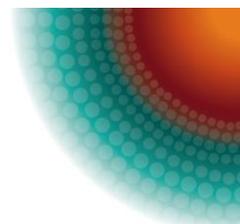
Response: Support

Agencies involved in strengthening community harmony and safety programs could ensure better coordination by improving communication between:

- Police Liaison Officers
- Women's groups
- Men's groups
- Family Responsibilities Commission (where appropriate)
- Local Governments.

Increase programs delivered out of PCYC and schools in both locations to encourage use of facilities for positive activities.

Agencies are encouraged to consider implementing an incentive model to encourage positive engagement by young people. One example is the AAA program of excursions and camps, which is used in some South East Queensland Schools and provides rewards for students who show improvement in: academic performance; attendance; and attitude to schooling.



6 Further work

Consultations will continue to occur with the Australian Government and across Queensland Government departments, along with local governments and, most importantly, community members, including young people.

While this first report focuses on developing strategies that are effective for the two communities of Aurukun and West Cairns, the Queensland Government notes the next part of the Committee's work is to develop an understanding of the broader prevalence of youth sexual violence and abuse and make recommendations about how it might be addressed.

The Queensland Government notes the importance placed by the Committee on using research and evaluation to inform holistic approaches to support healthy relationships and increase community functioning. The Committee's findings highlight the need to ensure the foundations for healthy lifestyles and relationships are laid very early in life and could be supported by providing services that improve parenting skills.

The Queensland Government recognises there are clear links between the Committee's recommendations and agendas being pursued through domestic and family violence reforms, the child protection reform agenda and sexual health strategies. The presence of the Directors-General, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and Queensland Health will ensure the necessary links are made to this work.