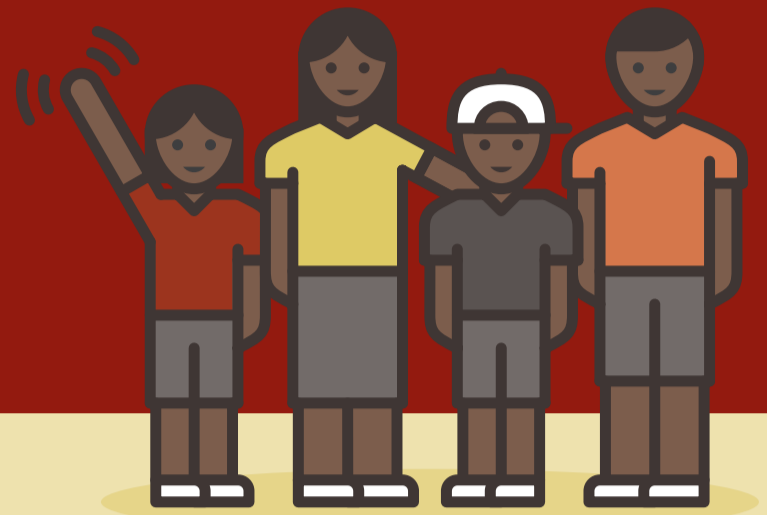


# The Grow Model of family violence primary prevention

Changing attitudes and beliefs to stop violence before it begins



OCTOBER 2019

## Why have we created this model?

**Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFS) is a serious and prevalent issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in the Northern Territory. The NT has the highest prevalence of DFS in Australia and the highest rate of associated homicides, 67% of homicides in the NT are related to DFS compared with the national average of 39%.**

Aboriginal women in the NT are 18 times more likely to experience this violence than non-Aboriginal women. There is a pressing need for creative, community-driven and holistic primary prevention.

The work of the Tangentyere Family Violence Prevention Program (TFVPP) is underpinned by the NT Government's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028. Additionally, the work is influenced by and hopes to build upon the work of Our Watch, a national organisation which promotes change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children nationwide.

### The 'Grow Model'

Informed by an understanding of the specific nature of DFS in the NT, and by an understanding of best practice principles in family violence primary prevention, the TFVPP has developed a 'Grow Model' for primary prevention programs. TFVPP has experience of this model working in the context of family violence prevention work but it is likely that this model could be applicable in other areas of primary prevention.



The Grow Model uses the metaphor of a tree to illustrate how the TFVPP approaches family violence primary prevention. This resource

will further explore the nature of the problem of family violence and outline the good practice principles that inform the model, before stepping through the process with reference to TFVPP's *Mums Can Dads Can* project as an example of how the model works in practice. The model combines evidence-based theory with practice wisdom and experience of what works, which is underpinned by key frameworks that create conditions for growth.

The tree metaphor allows primary prevention to be understood as taking place in context. Just like how trees find ways to thrive in the harsh conditions of the Central Australian desert, with the help of sun, water and soil nutrients, so too can primary prevention programs be successful in the context of all the social challenges they face. If the right conditions are created, the tree can grow up strong.

### The NT Government's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence reduction framework snapshot

- The Northern Territory has the highest prevalence of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFS) in Australia;
- Northern Territory police officers and emergency service representatives attend more than 61 incidents related to domestic and family violence on a typical day in the Northern Territory;
- At least one child is subjected to domestic and family violence every day of the year in the Northern Territory;
- The victimisation rates of domestic and family violence in the Northern Territory is about three times higher than any other jurisdiction;
- The victimisation rate for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory is 18 x higher than non-Indigenous people;
- The Northern Territory has the highest rate of domestic and family violence associated homicides in Australia;
- Women are significantly overrepresented as victims of DFSV;
- DFSV takes on many forms;
- No two experiences are the same.



**18x**  
more likely to experience family and domestic violence than non-Aboriginal people

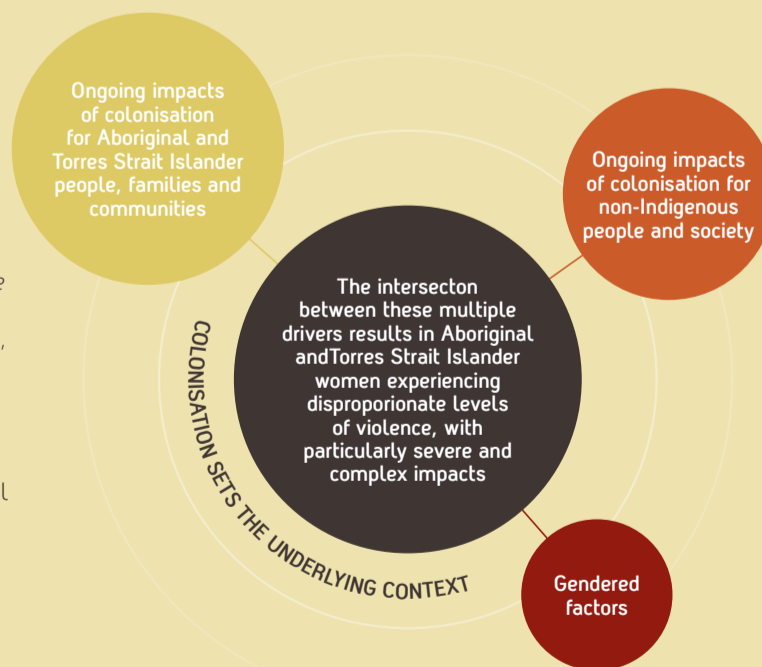
**40x**  
more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be hospitalised for family and domestic violence related assaults

### The drivers of violence

There is substantial evidence from research and consultation that gender inequality and rigid gender stereotypes are key drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, alongside the ongoing effects of colonisation. Our Watch's *Changing the Picture* research demonstrates that gendered factors intersect with other determinants such as trauma, poverty and multidimensional disadvantage.

To address the gendered drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, Our Watch recommends a number of evidence-based strategies including intersectional approaches, supporting Indigenous female leadership and challenging gender stereotypes and the impacts of colonisation on men's and women's roles, relationships and identities.

Figure: The intersecting drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Adapted from *Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children* (p13), by Our Watch (2018), Melbourne. Available at [www.ourwatch.org.au](http://www.ourwatch.org.au). Adapted with permission.



### Principles of Good Practice

Impactful prevention programs consider the way in which programs achieve change. The 'Grow Model' is guided by the following principles:



Community driven



Culturally safe



Holistic



Safety focused



Strengths based



Framework and theory informed



Accessible



Accountability for men who use violence



Multi-agency coordination



Educational

### Mums Can Dads Can

*Mums Can Dads Can* is a community-led primary prevention program that addresses the gender-based drivers of DFSV. The program campaigns to challenge the rigid gender stereotypes and tackle the gender-based drivers of DFSV. Community Champions, both male and female, design, develop and deliver strengths-based, accessible and meaningful public messages and resources that promote gender equity, respectful relationships and equal parenting.

The *Mums Can Dads Can* primary prevention program followed the logic of a 'grow model' organised around three stages of change:

- 1) Community consultation
- 2) Program development
- 3) Implementation and evaluation

These stages of the 'Grow Model' are explained in detail over the page, illustrated by the example of the *Mums Can Dads Can* project.



'A community-led primary prevention program that addresses the gender-based drivers of DFSV.'



## Stage One

# The 'Grow Model' of primary prevention



### Assess community readiness Test and prepare the soil

Community readiness is the soil into which the seed can be planted. The soil has been tested and time has been taken to prepare it for planting. The soil is now ready for the seed to be planted.

- The *Mums Can Dads Can* project built on prior relationships with Town Camp community members, who have a history of leadership within the town camps of Alice Springs.
- The project workers undertook consultations with a number of groups from within the community in order to develop the concepts and messaging behind *Mums Can Dads Can* and assess the community's overall readiness for the program.

### Talking straight Planting the seed

Talking straight is about planting the seed for change within the community. It is important that this seed is planted with transparency and integrity, and the community trust that we are fully committed to growing the tree up right.

- *Mums Can Dads Can* utilises fun, positive messaging, which allows for the soft entry of participants into a space where they feel supported to have conversations about gender roles as well as DFSV.
- Participants are encouraged to flip gender stereotypes and draw parallels between rigid gender roles and their experiences of violence.

'Community readiness is comparable to bush medicine growing in a sandy crop – with the right conditions, a community can grow and thrive.'

'Talking straight must include men who are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences of being a man and contribute to the process of change at a community level.'

## Stage Two

# Program development



### Community-driven change Establishing roots

Community Champions and Cultural safety ensure that the prevention program is embedded within community. They are the roots that provide the strong foundations through which the tree can begin to grow up strong.

Strong Community Champions and a commitment to Cultural Safety are essential for the future growth of the tree, without these roots the tree cannot thrive.

- The Community Champions within *Mums Can Dads Can* undertook training to ensure that they possessed a shared understanding of DFSV from a gendered perspective, including the importance of gender equity, and challenging rigid gender roles and stereotypes in parenting.
- The Community Champions stood up as individuals to have their photographs displayed on posters throughout the community, standing up strong against DFSV.
- New Community Champions have joined *Mums Can Dads Can* at all stages of the program's development.
- The ongoing involvement of the Community Champions at all stages helps ensure cultural safety.

'We were talking about family violence before we started talking about primary prevention.'

## Theories and frameworks underpinning practice

**Without strong theoretical frameworks, the 'Grow Model' doesn't have the same potential to grow and flourish.**

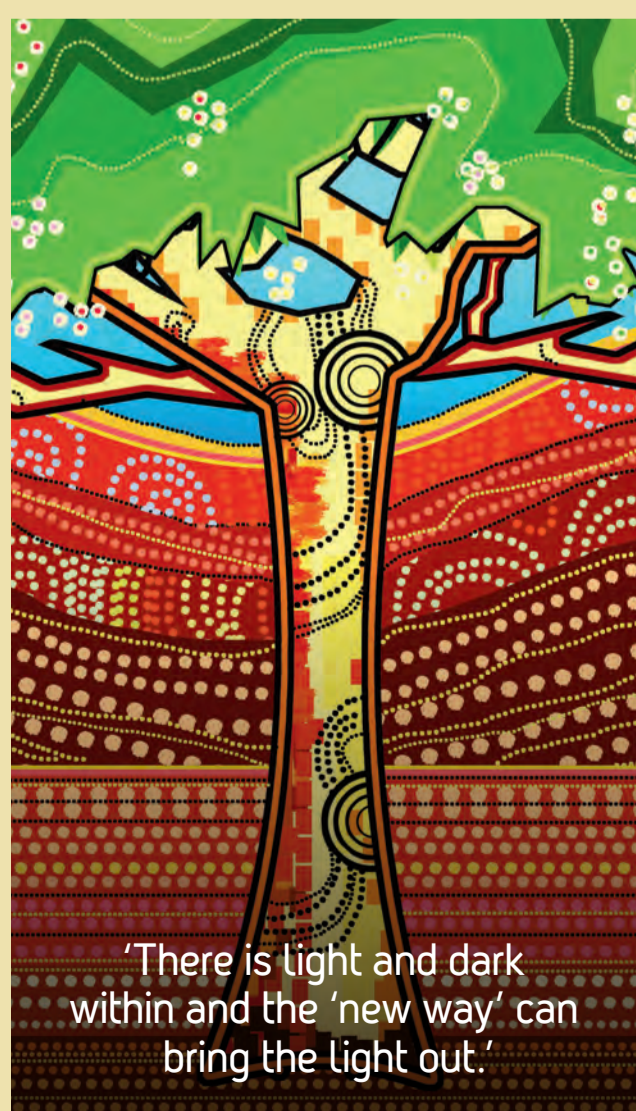
Theories and frameworks create the right conditions for the tree to grow and flourish; nourishing, nurturing, grounding, supporting and keeping the tree strong.

The theories and frameworks that underpin our practice are:

- Community development theories
- Cultural safety
- The United Nations rights of Indigenous peoples
- Intersectional feminism
- Two-way learning
- Trauma-informed practice
- Anti-oppressive practice
- Strengths based practice
- Stages of change
- Acknowledgment of colonisation and historical context
- Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women

## Stage Three

# Implementation and evaluation



### Resource Development and Implementation Blossoms

The resources are the culmination of the work. They are the buds and the blossoms, and they carry meaningful and impactful messages throughout communities. Just like a mature tree is covered in blossoms, the messages of the resources saturate communities.

- The *Mums Can Dads Can* program created t-shirts, posters, and short videos.
- The messages were also promoted through community educational workshops which facilitated debate and discussion about the connection between rigid gender roles and DFSV.
- The aim is to liberate people from a sense of what women and men are allowed to do, which many participants have called the 'new way' with one participant commenting that 'the new way feels free'.

### Program Assessment and Growth

Program Assessment and Growth is checking up on the tree and making sure it's healthy and thriving. It's looking at the bark, the branches, the leaves and the flowers, it's re-testing the soil regularly, it's making sure everything is on track and figuring out how the tree could thrive even more.

- *Mums Can Dads Can* is continually workshopped and assessed by workers and community members.
- Assessments of the resources' impacts are undertaken through a 'yarning' approach, tracking changes in attitudes towards gender roles.
- This qualitative assessment process influences the further development of messages and resources.
- As such, *Mums Can Dads Can* is inherently accountable to the community that it is working for.

### Pollination

Primary prevention is a cyclical process. The learnings from one project will inform future programs, spreading principles of good practice. Primary prevention workers and Community Champions take the nectar of the thriving program elsewhere within the organisation, the community and beyond. This resource is part of that pollination process.

