

The Youth Coalition believes that all forms of violence are unacceptable and should not be tolerated. The Youth Coalition believes that all young people have the right to safety and to be free from violence and the threat of violence. Research and statistics strongly suggest that contrary to media stereotypes, young people are much more likely to be the victims of crime rather than the perpetrators. In order to reduce the instance of violence, the Youth Coalition strongly supports the evidence base behind crime prevention. The Youth Coalition supports a broad definition of violence to be inclusive of verbal, emotional and physical abuse.

Young people are also likely to be victims of violence with 10-24 year olds accounting for over 40% of victims of assault reported to the police, of which males between 15-19 years constitute a very significant group of victims.¹ Young people are also unlikely to report many instances of assault with only 15% of young people who have been assaulted reporting this to the police.² Although the ACT has a much lower rate of sexual abuse than the national average, the Youth Coalition notes with concern that young people also constitute over 60% of reported sexual violence victims and that young women 10-14 years are the most likely to be sexually assaulted.³

Young people are also likely to be affected by violence from partners within their relationships with almost half of 19-20 year old young people reporting that they had experienced at least one act of violence from their partner.⁴ The Youth Coalition believes a culture of violence is not acceptable and that more work needs to be done on education around what constitutes domestic violence and preventative and early intervention measures put into place in order to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence. Such efforts must also involve increased training for those who work with young people as young people are likely to be the victims of domestic violence and require support from those they turn to in the first instance.

The Youth Coalition is also concerned at the continued high rates of bullying that young people experience in schools. While there are no recent statistics on bullying in schools, previous research indicates that up to one in six young people experience frequent bullying in schools.⁵ Bullying is therefore not only a serious issue, but one which is wide spread and requires continued attention by schools. The Youth Coalition also recognises that those who engaging in bullying behaviours are likely to experience depression and suicide, drop out of school early, abuse alcohol and other drugs and, if unchecked, continue their bullying behaviours in later life.⁶

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000), *Recorded Crime*, cat no. 4510.0

² ACT Government (2002), *Youth in the ACT: A Social and Demographic Profile* p128

³ Ibid

⁴ National Crime Prevention (2000) *Young People and Domestic Violence: National Research on Young People's Attitudes and Experiences of Domestic Violence* Attorney-General's Department, Barton, ACT p.xvi

⁵ Rigby, K & Slee. P.T. (1999). Bullying in Australian schools. In P.K. Smith et al. (eds.) *The nature of school bullying. A cross national perspective*. Routledge.

⁶ Farrington, D.P. 1993, "Understanding and preventing bullying", in M. Tonny & N. Morris (eds), *Crime and Justice*, vol. 17, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Bullying is not, however, confined solely to schools and the Youth Coalition also recognises the role that the youth sector has to play in the eradication of bullying and encourages community organisations to develop policies which ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people they work with.

The Youth Coalition also recognizes that it is critical to support comprehensive crime prevention strategies that include young people, particularly those at risk. Accumulating evidence demonstrates that crime prevention strategies do reduce and prevent crime. Crime prevention is as important as a fair and equitable civil justice system and in the long-term more cost-effective than reactive policies on crime.

The Youth Coalition is committed to:

- ◆ Advocating for schools to continue to focus on decreasing bullying and to adopt early intervention and prevention strategies.
- ◆ Advocating for increased community education on domestic violence.
- ◆ Advocating for increased training for those who work with young people in matters concerning harassment and abuse.
- ◆ Advocating for young people to continue to be involved the construction and delivery of crime prevention strategies.
- ◆ Supporting the youth sector to develop policies and strategies to prevent bullying from occurring to young people accessing their programs and services.