

The economic impact of violence against children and young people in NSW and Australia

Executive summary

Under both national and international law, children and young people are entitled to freedom from violence and maltreatment. Despite this, every day in NSW children and young people – as some of the most vulnerable members of our community – suffer physical, sexual and emotional violence in settings that should be places of safety and nurturing. In NSW in 2016-17, there were an estimated 154,302 cases of violence against children and young people¹ - that is an average of 18 children an hour, every hour. Even then, these estimates are likely to be conservative. There is uncertainty in the true prevalence and incidence as violence against children is often underreported or undetected. As a result of this context, only those impacts of violence that had robust evidence on causation were included and costed.

Violence against children is never justified and causes significant harm to the individuals it is perpetrated against. Further to this, however, is the damage violence causes which is not exclusively felt by the individual victim. This report reveals that the public health costs associated with addressing the immediate and ongoing physical health, mental wellbeing and social development of the child or young person will also be felt by their community.

This report reveals that violence against children and young people costs NSW \$11.2 billion annually.

On average, that's \$72,500 per incident of violence.

\$2.3 billion of this burden is borne by NSW health, education, child protection, housing and justice systems in annual direct service delivery costs².

A child or young person who experiences violence may require both immediate and ongoing intervention from health, social welfare and justice services. Then, due to the long-term adverse outcomes associated with violence including depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse, disengagement from education, housing insecurity and a variety of negative health outcomes, they are likely to rely on the ongoing support and protections from public services.

Accordingly, the scope of costs associated with violence against children and young people will need to be provided for in the budgets of the Ministry of Health, Department of Education, Department of Family and Community Services and Department of Justice. Further costs can also be associated with productivity losses, a loss of taxation opportunity (deadweight loss) and a shortened lifespan that can be directly associated with the impacts of violence against children and young people.

1. Deloitte Access Economics estimates based on substantiations and personal safety survey data, Finkelhor et al. (2013), Moore et al. (2015), AIHW (2018) and ABS (2017).

2. Chart 7.2 Deloitte Access Economics

The personal, social and economic burden of violence against children and young people has been recognised and addressed in the NSW in the Strategic Plan for Children and Young People (the Plan) in 2016 under a key theme of Safe. This inclusion recognised the need to work towards keeping children and young people free from abuse, neglect, violence and serious injury by creating a safe environment for children and young people to live and grow up in. The Plan documents the initiatives NSW agencies including Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), Department of Justice and Department of Education are delivering for the benefit of children and young people. The NSW Government has allocated substantial additional funding into the care and protection system, including but not limited to funding to FACS to support out of home care permanency, additional parenting youth and family support programs, Their Futures Matter child protection reform and funding to Start Safely to help people escaping domestic violence move into stable housing in the private rental market.

Overall, the NSW Government bears a larger proportion of annual financial costs (60%) compared to Federal Government (16%) or individuals/society (24%). However, when quality of life is accounted for, children and young people are the ones who end up bearing the greatest burden. This is why it is important to ensure that they have a safe community, a safe home and safe relationships to enable them to develop to their full potential.

The following Deloitte report, *The economic cost of violence against children and young people*, commissioned by the office of the Advocate for Children and Young People is one part of ACYP's Now and Forever campaign to end violence against children. For further information on the campaign, the Plan, or information relating to the Deloitte report, please visit www.acyp.nsw.gov.au or www.nowandforever.nsw.gov.au.

To download a full copy of the Report and for more information on the NSW *Now and Forever* End Violence Against Children campaign please visit www.nowandforever.nsw.gov.au

For more information on the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People please visit www.acyp.nsw.gov.au