Voices of Hope
The family violence system isn’t working and needs to change...

The Royal Commission into Family Violence has highlighted that the current system isn’t working. Addressing the complexity associated with preventing and responding to family violence will require a long-term approach, one that reflects the experiences of victim survivors so they remain at the heart of the government’s 10 Year Plan for Reform.

Before embarking on the implementation phase of these reforms, it was important to hear directly from victim survivors.

Through co-design sessions with a diverse group of victim survivors, we listened to their current experience of the system. We then asked them about the experience they hope a reformed system will deliver and co-created a better experience—one which is designed from their perspective and for their context.

The Royal Commission provided a blueprint of what an improved system should look like, and through this work, victim survivors expressed what that experience should feel like.

Right now the system feels like a tangled mess—like navigating a labyrinth blindfolded...

The burden for victim survivors to find their way through something so messy while dealing with something so traumatic can discourage people experiencing family violence from reaching out for support. While victim survivors did talk about great interactions with individuals in the service system, this was not a consistent experience across all the services they needed.

For victims survivors, trying to stay safe is not easy when reaching out for help. It can feel like the system and its processes take priority over the person, with the courts and the police at the centre. Services are fragmented. They have to tell their story over and over again. They have to say and do the right thing at the right time to play the role of the ‘perfect victim’ to have the best chance of receiving the help they need. There are rules they are meant to know that nobody told them about. They’re trying to fit into and navigate this tangled labyrinth. They feel like the one in the spotlight, while the perpetrator is in the periphery.

Imagine a system that offers hope for the future...

Despite this, victim survivors are resilient and strong. They imagine a future system that builds and enables hope. A system that works at a human level and considers the whole person, where victim survivors and their experiences are at the centre, where services across the entire system work to provide holistic support and make things easier for them wherever possible.

To make this a reality, a new approach is needed.

The Royal Commission told us that this transformation will require new ways of thinking and collaborating. We need to work together in a more human-centred way and we’ve already started that journey. This is not a quick-fix approach, but an ongoing process. It will require collaboration between government and service providers across the entire service system, bringing multi-disciplinary teams together to co-create solutions which can evolve over time. It will involve co-design, taking a stance of ‘designing with’ victim survivors, which elevates them from being the subject, to being partners in reform.

We need to put victim survivors at the heart of reform.

The recommendations of the Royal Commission are a blueprint for Victoria, but many decisions still need to be made before the change is realised. To put victim survivors at the heart of reform will require a shift in the way government and the entire service system make decisions. The tools we’ve created—Experience Principles, a Change Framework, and Vision Stories—will help.

The shift will take time but it’s already underway.

"You’ve got to start thinking in a different way because the old ways don’t work."

—Victim survivor

Reforming the family violence system in a human-centred way has begun.
The family violence system isn't working and needs to change
Standing on the shoulders of giants

Right now, the system feels like a tangled mess—like navigating a labyrinth blindfolded
Lived experiences of the family violence system

Imagine a system that offers hope for the future
The victim survivor experience in the future

To make this future a reality, a new approach is needed
It's not just about what we do, but how we do it
Considerations for how we will do it

We need to put victim survivors at the heart of reform
Tools for change
Experience Principles
Change Framework
Vision Stories

Reforming the family violence system in a human-centred way has begun
It's only the beginning

The stuff at the back
Service Opportunities
Why 'Project Spirit'?
Who we spoke to
Our approach to working with victim survivors
Our human-centred methodology
The family violence system isn’t working and needs to change.
The family violence system isn’t working and needs to change

Family violence is widespread in our communities. Chances are we all know someone affected by physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, economic, or spiritual abuse by a family member, and the system that exists to support those people is not working.

The Victorian Government recognises that to create meaningful reform, the lived experience of victim survivors must be understood to design responses and services that work in the context of their lives.

The Royal Commission told us this transformation will require new ways of thinking and collaborating. Project Spirit*, a collaboration between Huddle and the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, is a demonstration of this new way of working. A human-centred approach was used to co-design the vision for an improved experience with the family violence system.

Insights into victim survivors’ experiences were used to create tools to guide the implementation of the recommendations. These tools have been designed so that every person working on the reforms and designing a future system has empathy and understanding for people with lived experiences.

This work reflects a more positive experience for people living with the effects of family violence, where the system takes on the burden of ensuring their safety and protection, and perpetrators are truly held accountable.

*Refer to page 57 to learn the meaning behind the name ‘Project Spirit’

Standing on the shoulders of giants

The team at Huddle recognise family violence is an immensely complex social problem. We acknowledge the significant work done to date in the sector and in academic research to address it. Throughout this project, we have researched widely and leaned heavily on consultations with the specialist family violence sector experts. It’s important to acknowledge that the victim survivors we spoke to had very positive experiences with specialist family violence organisations that invited them to participate in this work. For many, they chose to participate because of the significant difference those organisations had made to their life.

Because the team at Huddle are not experts in family violence, we partnered with sector organisations, expert advisers in the field, and the newly-formed Victim Survivors Advisory Council (VSAC) to guide us in every phase of this work.*

Co-pilot partners

We partnered with the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service, Drummond Street Services, Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, and Seniors Rights Victoria. Through their generosity, wisdom, and compassion, we were able to create safe, respectful, trusting environments to work with people.

Expert advisers

Two expert advisers employed by specialist family violence services —Danielle Lintern at Safe Steps and Charlie van der Gaag at Launch Housing—brought a contextual understanding of family violence to the process, offering advice on forms of inquiry to take with victim survivors, verbal and non-verbal language.

VSAC members

Three victim survivors from VSAC—Nicole Lee, Liana Papoutsis, and Kristy McKellar—played an active role each week as part of the Project Spirit team at Huddle (we prefer to think of them as honorary Huddlers). Each of the women shared their stories of family violence, prototyped, tested, and took part in our co-design sessions, participated in data analysis and provided feedback on our written and visual design work.

Huddle would like to say thank you to these collaborators. Without them, this work would not have been possible.

Why ‘victim survivors’? Throughout this report we refer to people who’ve experienced family violence as ‘victim survivors’. We were guided on the use of this term by Nicole, Liana, and Kristy of VSAC, who themselves identify as victim survivors.

*For details on our approach and methodology, refer to page 59–61.
Right now, the system feels like a tangled mess—like navigating a labyrinth blindfolded.
Currently the family violence system can make it very hard for victim survivors to get what they need. It’s important to understand what it feels like currently so that people make changes and do things differently. Victim survivors reflected on a range of experiences across the entire system. They interpreted the system as any service they needed support from in relation to family violence which encompassed the police, courts, child protection, legal services, housing, counsellors, health services, education system, Centrelink, and specialist family violence services.

Victim survivors said there were many instances of the system failing to support and protect people. For some, in amongst the deeply traumatic experiences, were also moments of profound human connection, where one person in the system was able to change someone’s life for the better. Unfortunately for many, this was not consistent across the entire service system.

Victim survivors said the experience of navigating the system was like trying to find your way around a labyrinth blindfolded. The threat of the unknown and unseen was a theme that came through strongly. For many people, they felt their journey through the labyrinth was still going, and might never end. People talked about the pressure to play the ‘perfect victim’ at a time of crisis, bouncing between disjointed services and illogical processes, and services not understanding the complexities in life that victim survivors have to negotiate daily.

For victim survivors, it was important to understand what family violence means for them. Stop for a moment and imagine just one of these experiences. Some victim survivors we spoke to experienced many. Some had multiple perpetrators.

"I was stalked"
"I was punched, but never in the face so it could be hidden"
"He raped me!"
"I was verbally abused"
"When I finally left he tried to kill himself"
"I got death threats when I said I’d leave"
"I was thrown out on the street"
"He yelled at me in a carpark full of strangers"

"He intimidated me in court"
"I couldn’t access any of my own money"
"My pets were mistreated"
"He threatened to get my visa cancelled"
"My money was stolen"
"He tried to strangle me"
"My kids were threatened"
"I was knocked to the ground and broke my ribs"
"I needed to call 000 and he took away my mobile phone"
"I wasn’t allowed to see my friends and family"
Lived experiences of the family violence system

As victim survivors shared their experience* powerful themes emerged about what family violence feels like and how shortfalls in the system impact them. These are people you know. A photographer, a singer, a ceramicist; people who love music, travel, or their cats. A former nurse, a social worker, a human rights advocate, a dancer, a champion swimmer, a lawyer, an international athlete, a rapper, a former model, and an award-winning family violence activist. People who love craft, working out, or tracing their family history. People who want to buy their own home and people taking things one day at a time. People who described themselves as adventurous, talkative, hardworking, patient, and artistic; people who are readers and people who cherish small moments. These themes are drawn from their collective experience and the stories they shared.

*I refer to pages 40–41 to learn more about our human-centred methodology and how these insights were created from victim survivor stories.

I’ve built up strategies to keep me and the kids safe.

I’ve been managing this situation for a while, and I’ve learned how to protect myself and the kids at home where things are familiar.

I’ve been acting protectively in the hopes of making things better.

I’m afraid for our safety if I try to leave.

I’ve been managing this situation for a while, and I’ve learned how to protect myself and the kids at home where things are familiar.

Fear of the alternative (loneliness, homelessness, poverty, relationship failure, starting over, dealing with the system) prevents me from reaching out for help.

I don’t want to leave. I just want the violence to stop.

It hasn’t always been bad. I can remember the good times so I don’t want to throw away this relationship. There are so many ties that hold us together that you can’t simply separate us.

The perpetrator is my own child. How can I formally charge my own flesh and blood?

The perpetrator is my carer. Who will look after me if I leave?

We have the kids to think of.

I worry what would happen to the perpetrator if I reach out.

Fear of the alternative (loneliness, homelessness, poverty, relationship failure, starting over, dealing with the system) prevents me from reaching out for help.
The abuse erodes my self-worth, which makes me feel powerless.

The perpetrator worked to wear down my self-esteem and confidence. Now I feel lonely, isolated, scared, and second guess myself. How did this happen to me? I’m a smart person. I’m humiliated and embarrassed.

Sometimes it feels like I’m managing this completely on my own.

When I don’t feel part of a team, I feel a lack of guidance, support, and control. I have to put all the parts of the system together myself, and figure it out as I go.

I might appear capable but I still need help.

The spotlight is on me, and the perpetrator is in the periphery.

It feels as though the system is making life easier for the perpetrator and parts of the system, but not for me. It’s as though the perpetrator is pulling the strings and all the scrutiny is on me.

I need to prove the abuse before people will believe me.

Family, friends, and people I’ve gone to for help don’t believe me. It’s as though I’m guilty until proven innocent. The burden of proof is on me.

I’m forced to play a role, but I just want to be myself.

During the most stressful time of my life, when I’m feeling weakest, I’m expected to be strong and appear flawless. I have to learn how to play the role of the ‘perfect victim’. I’ve had to fight to get out of this situation and now I have to fight the system.

My dysfunctional private life is exposed and I’m being scrutinised by everybody.

I’m forced to leave the home, displace the children, and constantly look over my shoulder, while the perpetrator is the problem.

I need to feel that the perpetrator has been held accountable and they’re not out there doing this to someone else.

I don’t want to burden others with my issues and I’m too ashamed to confide in anyone.

I don’t feel like myself, don’t know myself and don’t trust myself anymore.

I’m really scared. Desperate for help. And you’re not taking my situation seriously.

I’m afraid to show any vulnerabilities or defects. It can be used against me if I’m seen as weak or incapable.

I learn the lines I need to feed the system to get what I need, rather than tell my story in my own words.

I worry about how people will perceive me—because of my background, my lifestyle, or my parenting choices.

I haven’t done anything wrong, and yet here I am among criminals in a courtroom.

I’m afraid I’ll be blamed for what happened to me.

I already feel humiliated. Now I’m anxious about being judged.

Emotional abuse can be just as bad as physical abuse but people don’t take it as seriously because it can’t be seen. I don’t have any visible scars.

I learn how to manage the system as I’m muddling my way through it. What I know after I navigate it is what I needed at the start.

I have to advocate for myself the whole way.

I have to coordinate different forms of support and they’re all in different places.

I have to play a role, but I just want to be myself.

During the most stressful time of my life, when I’m feeling weakest, I’m expected to be strong and appear flawless. I have to learn how to play the role of the ‘perfect victim’. I’ve had to fight to get out of this situation and now I have to fight the system.

I’m forced to share very intimate details about my abuse in public forums. I especially don’t want to be exposed to my perpetrator.

I already feel humiliated. Now I’m anxious about being judged.

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I’m afraid I’ll be blamed for what happened to me.
Others who’ve been through this help me feel less alone.

I can learn from others who’ve been through family violence because they can relate to my situation. When I hear their stories it helps build solidarity between us and helps me understand that though my situation is unique, it’s one of many.

Helping others going through this makes me feel valued.

I feel I can trust people who are like me because they get me.

I feel more comfortable talking to people I share a cultural connection with, who are from my community. They understand my situation and what’s important to me.

Community awareness is not enough. It takes courage to do something about it.

No one should tolerate this. I believe this is a cultural issue and we should focus on education, prevention, and building community. At the end of the day, no matter how much awareness there is of family violence and the options that are out there, it’s still really hard for anyone to ask for help.

Mainstream services don’t cater for people of non-normative gender identities and sexualities like me.

It’s hard to know who I can trust and what services will look out for me.

I know you care, but I need action.

It feels as though some people in the system don’t understand how family violence has impacted me or know what to do to help. I need to feel that progress is being made.

The perpetrator is charming and charismatic—no one believes they’re capable of this.

I want to hear words of reassurance but I need to hear good practical advice.

It’s frightening because I can’t predict or comprehend what the next steps are.

This isn’t trivial—this is my family’s safety and my life. Every decision I make has unknown consequences, and I’m blindfolded to the next step in the process. There’s no transparency in what’s going on.

The focus is on the things that can be seen, but it’s the things you can’t see that sabotage me—the non-physical scars, the effects on my mental health, the judgement from others, and the fear that the perpetrator is out there somewhere roaming free.

Victim survivors can help me navigate the system and advocate for me.

When I share my story I feel like I have a voice.

When services are culturally safe, I feel understood and respected.

I gather myself together only to feel knocked down again.

Services are not connected so I have to repeat my story over and over.

I regularly question whether I’ve made the right decision to leave, especially when the system gives me hurdles to jump through.

I need help with some very basic needs—like feeding the pets, or help with showering and going to the toilet.

I have to constantly move around to manage my safety but this is unsettling and comes at a cost.

Some people in my family side with the perpetrator.

My children are my priority—where is their support and how can I make sure the impact on their lives is minimised?

This could bring me and the kids closer together or it could tear us apart.

I hadn’t done this before. Surely you know what’s happening next?

The impact of this reverberates across every aspect of my life.

It impacts my mental health, my children’s lives, my work, and my relationships with others. The disruption to my life is immense.

My children are my priority—where is their support and how can I make sure the impact on their lives is minimised?

It’s slow when I need fast, and it’s fast when I need slow.

I can tell there is human fatigue in the system because I’m often treated like a number in a queue.

There are very helpful and caring people in the system but it feels so random—it’s like a high stakes lottery.

I didn’t realise it was family violence until it became critical.

I have to constantly move around to manage my safety but this is unsettling and comes at a cost.

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The focus is on the things that can be seen, but it’s the things you can’t see that sabotage me—the non-physical scars, the effects on my mental health, the judgement from others, and the fear that the perpetrator is out there somewhere roaming free.
I'm sick of feeling controlled by other people.

If protection and safety aren't delivered on my terms, it feels like power and control and that's already been my world.

I wonder if I'll ever escape this fear.

I'm not certain there's something better for me at the end of all this. Some optimism would help me navigate this with more confidence.

Family violence feels like a life sentence.

The process of healing could take the rest of my life. I might never feel safe, ever. I need ongoing support and so does my family.

Parts of the system silence me. I feel like I don't have a voice.

I've tried to stay positive about a better future for my family for so long, always hoping something would change.

Parts of the system have stripped my hope away.

I dream of being free to go wherever I want, when I want. I dream of taking time for me.

By putting a time restraint or limited number on my available support, it feels like I'm expected to be all better by then.

I have to work to reclaim my identity and it won't be the same one I had before this happened.

The support I get is cursory and often doesn't stretch beyond my next court date.

Parts of the system are able to continue to manipulate me by exploiting the system, especially the legal system.

I'm tired of feeling controlled by other people.

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It's my body and my life.

I feel like I don't have a voice.

The perpetrator is able to continue to manipulate me by exploiting the system, especially the legal system.

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The support I get is cursory and often doesn't stretch beyond my next court date.

Parts of the system are able to continue to manipulate me by exploiting the system, especially the legal system.

It's my body and my life.
Imagine a system that offers hope for the future.
Imagine a system that offers hope for the future

Victim survivors say the current system feels like a labyrinth—impossible to navigate, easy to get lost in, and with so many barriers and dead-ends that some found it too difficult to find help at all. What victim survivors hope for in the future is the walls of that labyrinth come down, and people are able to see a pathway to safety.

Victim survivors expressed the need to be considered as a whole person, not just defined by one thing. People are human with complex relationships, histories and identities. The system must take in the fullness of people’s reality and draw out the best in them. This is about how the system needs to be for people, not how people need to be for the system.

In a positive experience, victim survivors are accepted and understood for who they are, listened to, treated with dignity, and advocated for across the entire system. The people and mechanisms driving the system carry the burden of co-ordinating and ensuring their long-term safety and wellbeing. Every person in the system is empowered and enabled to play a part in making this happen, and communities play a part in keeping people safe.

This future has been imagined through Vision Stories describing the experience victim survivors designed for themselves. They are fictional representations based on what they hope to think and feel, say and do, see and hear.

Ben’s teacher Ming responded to early warning signs

I had noticed that recently a student in my class, Ben, had been distracted and disengaged. I was worried as this wasn’t his usual behaviour, so I checked in with him to see how he was. He told me that his parents had been fighting at home, and he got quite upset talking about it. I gave his mum Nadia a call, and she explained that tension had been escalating with her partner Sophie and she hadn’t known what to do or where to turn for help. I felt confident about suggesting some local support services, which Nadia was grateful for. She told me how relieved she felt to talk to someone about this, how it took some of the pressure off her, and how supported she felt knowing that there were other people looking out for Ben and had his best interests at heart.

"I want to share my story to help others so they don’t have to go through what I did."
The victim survivor experience in the future

Victim survivors describe a future experience and the changes they want to see, why that would be important, and how it would make them feel. Their vision is captured in these insights* that express what is important to them and how a future experience could build and enable hope.

Empower me by informing and educating me.

When I understand what’s going on I don’t second guess myself and my decisions—I’m confident that I’m doing the best thing for me and my family.

I’m respected for who I am without judgement.

I’m safe to be myself, regardless of my culture, gender, age, sexuality or other forms of identity. I feel confident asking for help where I need it and that I won’t be perceived as weak, damaged, or incapable. I’m treated as an equal.

I’m understood as a whole person.

You recognise that there’s a lot going on in my life and I might need support in more ways than just the service you specialise in. You’re able to see the big picture.

I have hope for the future.

All my plans have come undone, but you help me believe things will improve in time. Without positivity, I wouldn’t have the strength to move forward.

I choose the path and you are the guide.

You show me my options and help me forge my own path. I don’t have to initiate everything in a system I don’t understand, completely on my own.

I can trust you.

You’re an expert, you listen, and I can confide in you. I feel confident you can help me.

You’re open and honest with me.

You’re clear about what’s going to happen and I don’t have to wait around for a response, for the next step, or for information from you.

I feel confident because everyone is working together on my behalf.

I know I’m at the centre of all decision-making and I’m advocated for. You shield me from the complexity of the system.

Looking after Noelle meant looking after her son Max

When I suffered family violence, my son Max saw everything, or heard everything while hiding in his room. I knew I needed to get some help, but was embarrassed to expose my dysfunctional home life to a stranger. When I did reach out to a specialist family violence support service, my support worker made me feel unashamed, and it was easy to speak openly with her. She told me about other women who’d been in the same situation and how they’d gotten through it. My support worker did more than look out for me, and understood that Max was my world, and that looking after me meant looking after him. She listened to Max’s story and asked him if he’d like to be part of the process when we worked through all the options available to us. Throughout the whole process Max had a voice. It came as a great relief to me that Max’s wellbeing and education were central to the support we were receiving. The support worker made sure Max was as involved as he wanted to be, but they also recognised that he was young and needed time out to escape to just be a kid once in a while.

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*Refer to pages 60–61 to learn more about our human-centred methodology and how these insights were created from victim survivors stories.

Imagine a system that offers hope for the future | 27

FINAL 27/03/2017
Imagine a system that offers hope for the future.

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Part of looking after me is looking after my kids.
You recognise that I’m not the only victim; that my kids were just as affected by the violence. They need their voices heard and their needs addressed too.

The perpetrator is held to account.
I don’t have to disrupt everything in my life; it is the perpetrator’s life that is most disrupted. The spotlight is on them and they’re held accountable.

I feel validated. You hear me and believe me.
I’m a good judge of threats to my safety. You listen actively, you tell me that this isn’t my fault, and you take me seriously.

I belong and am supported by a community.
I learn from and am supported by peers, community and kinship networks who’ve had similar experiences. This helps me transform my life after feeling isolated.

Make things easier for me and the kids.
This was always going to be a tough experience, but you’re able to lighten some of my load and help carry me through this.

I can access help when I need it, for as long as I need it.
I am safe and supported in the long term, the help I get is not just the duration of my ‘case’ or my block of 12 support sessions. Help is accessible, culturally safe, and non-discriminatory.

You’re prepared with the right knowledge and wisdom to help me.
You’re trained in how to respond to family violence and you understand the particular needs of me and my community. You’re willing to acknowledge what you don’t know and ask for advice.

I have somewhere to go for time out from this chaos.
I feel better equipped to take on this battle because I’ve had time to hit pause and catch my breath. I have the time and space I need to rebuild and heal.

Susan was looking out for her community.
I was feeling concerned for my neighbour Pat. At one of our recent community meetings in our retirement village we learned about elder abuse so I understood what it might look like. I recognised some of the signs in Pat’s relationship with her son. He’s always been very aware, possibly overly involved in Pat’s finances, and now that she lives alone and her health is deteriorating I’m worried he might take advantage of the situation. I decided to talk to Pat about it over a cup of tea, and she agreed that her situation had potential to turn into elder abuse. We talked about what she could do, and she could see it would be far better to deal with things quickly before it turned into something more serious, but she still felt anxious about taking action. I offered to support her with whatever she needed, which gave her enough confidence to reach out to a seniors’ support programme, and together we learned about her rights and created a plan of action.

“It’s good to know that I’m not alone.”
Family violence feels like a life sentence

I need to prove the abuse before people will believe me

It's frightening because I can't predict or comprehend what the next steps are

I wonder if I'll ever escape this fear

The abuse erodes my self-worth, which makes me feel powerless

I'm sick of feeling controlled by other people

I feel I can trust people who are like me because they get me

The spotlight is on me, and the perpetrator is in the periphery

I know you care, but I need action

My dysfunctional private life is exposed and I'm being scrutinised by everybody

The impact of this reverberates across every aspect of my life

I don't want to leave. I just want the violence to stop

Community awareness is not enough. It takes courage to do something about it

I'm managing this completely on my own

I'm forced to play a role, but I just want to be myself

Others who've been through this help me feel less alone

I've built up strategies to keep me and the kids safe.

It feels like a tangled mess—it's like making your way through a labyrinth blindfolded.
We imagine a system that offers hope for the future.
To make this future a reality, a new approach is needed.
It’s not just about what we do but how we do it.

The 227 recommendations handed down by the Royal Commissions into Family Violence have provided a clear direction for change.

The Royal Commission said to deliver meaningful reform, government will need to work in new ways. We must keep the needs of victim survivors at the centre of our thinking. We need to harness the expertise of victim survivors and service providers. Design for diversity and work in collaboration.

It starts with mindset

For complex and at times overwhelming problems like family violence, we need new ways of thinking so together we can create strategies for building a better future. The mindset of believing in possibility sets up a powerful stance for solving challenging problems. It is based on a mindset of can do, rather than one of why we can’t. It’s shifting our focus from what stops us, to deliberately being optimistic and believing we can. This is the same optimism we see in victim survivors who, despite their experience, still believe they can help change the system for the better.

Design with, not for

Rather than taking a stance of ‘designing for’ victim survivors, we embrace ‘designing with’ victim survivors, which elevates them from being the subject of reforms to partners in reform. By designing with a diverse range of victim survivors we are also able to design for diversity from the outset, rather than modify the system at a later point.

Collaborating means bringing multi-disciplinary people together across the service system to develop ideas for the many ways we can implement the Royal Commission recommendations. Co-designing with victim survivors means a deeper engagement than merely consulting with them.

A non-linear approach

Co-design doesn’t prescribe a step-by-step approach because people, contexts, and organisations are always variable, and often surprising. Instead, it follows a non-linear process of understanding the ambiguity of problems in the ‘fuzzy front end’, generating ideas, prototyping concepts, and iterating. By testing and learning we can work towards a system which is truly responsive to the diverse people it intends to serve.

Collaborating and co-designing with people

The right capability in the right place

Ultimately we look for solutions that prioritise all the diverse needs of victim survivors rather than limit them within the constraints of the system. In order to meet the needs of victim survivors the service system needs to have the right capability to provide services and evidence-based practice. Service providers need the support of government funding and policy to be adequately resourced.

Considerations for how we will do it

Co-designing with victim survivors

Creating a prominent role for victim survivors in the co-design process will ensure they continue to sit at the centre of the reform agenda. This was the approach taken in this work.

Key considerations

- Ensure victim survivors continue to play a central role through co-design. For some, this is an important part of their recovery process where they see value in sharing their perspectives and experiences so change can be realised.
- Embed co-design throughout the reform process so that victim survivors can contribute to the initial idea phase to detailed design, prototyping, testing, and reflection.
- Ensure the co-design process is conducted empathically and respectfully. Offer a choice of engagement methods that enables people to share their lived experiences and thoughts in their own ways.
- Place the safety and wellbeing of victim survivors at the heart of your approach and ensure they are adequately supported. Consider the impacts of re-traumatisation when co-designing with victim survivors.
- Ensure a diverse range of voices are represented when co-designing with victim survivors. This helps to design inclusive solutions that remove discrimination and barriers faced by diverse communities.
- Be transparent with victims survivors about how their stories will be used and share the final outcomes of their contribution.
- Consider how victim survivors can become part of a reformed service system beyond a consultative role. How might they play an active role in support of other victims survivors so their experiences move beyond co-design.

Co-designing with family violence services

The deep knowledge and expertise that exists within the specialist family violence service sector is critical to the reform process, particularly as wider groups of people become involved in the reform agenda.

The government should continue to maintain deep partnerships with specialist family violence services for co-design, to ensure that the experience and perspective of service providers is included in the design of the reforms.

Service providers also help co-design by connecting victim survivors with opportunities to participate.

Key considerations

- Co-pilot with specialist family violence organisations when conducting co-design work. The deep and specialist knowledge of the sector allows victim survivors participation to be supported in familiar environments. Allow specialised family violence organisations to guide your approach so that victim survivors are engaged in a safe and supportive way.
- Make it easy for the service sector to participate in co-design by understanding and planning for the impact of participation on the organisation and its people. Reduce any financial burden on the organisation and day-to-day services so victim survivors are not impacted.
- Allow enough time for the organisation to understand the intent of the co-design work and to adequately prepare for it, such as assessing suitability of victim survivors to participate, contributing to the design of engagement, and arranging support workers to participate.
- To ensure sustainable change is achieved, consider how government might develop capability within the service sector so the people who work within it can take a leading role when redesigning services in a human-centred way.

VSAC members Nicole, Liana and Kristy played a key role in the co-design process, guiding the approach, and testing and prototyping at each step before and after we spoke with participants.
We need to put victim survivors at the heart of reform.
The tools are designed for co-design and collaboration between government, victim survivors, and people working in the family violence system so that a balance of perspectives is addressed. They are designed to be used, to springboard ideas, and refine concepts, test, prototype, and assess the outcomes of change.

These tools are not a substitute for co-designing with victim survivors rather, they complement and support the new way of thinking and collaborating as part of that co-design approach.

These tools were developed to help government and people working in the service system implement the reforms in a human-centred way.

**Experience Principles**—The virtues of the future family violence system that align us on how we need to be for the victim survivors the system is in service of.

Use this tool when creating ideas, testing concepts, and assessing outcomes.

**Change Framework**—A practical guide to assess how a change might impact people and services across the system. It helps to centre decision making around the perspective of victim survivors.

A tool to use when people initially come together and start working on recommendations. As ideas are prototyped, use the canvas to reassess the impacts and scope of this change.

**Vision Stories**—The way we imagine people will feel experiencing the service system when the reforms have taken place. These help people visualise change.

Use Vision Stories to describe how your concept might feel from a victim survivor’s perspective. They’re helpful for storytelling and focusing on the experience of change.

Experience Principles

Experience Principles were created by listening to what victim survivors hope for a positive experience and extracting the core human needs the system has to meet. They embody how victim survivors want to feel in any experience with the system in the future.

The Royal Commission’s recommendations will reform the system. The Experience Principles align us with what we need to be for the people that the system is in service of. They remind us to consider the totality and intersectionality of people and the impact family violence has across different aspects of life—particularly children, relationships, communities, work, health, culture, and identity.

They are the guiding lights to refer to when designing solutions, making decisions at all levels, and testing solutions and outcomes. They apply to all decisions and all parts of the system.

In a situation where there are several options from which to choose, connect with these Experience Principles. This will keep victim survivors’ needs and desires at the centre.

Each Experience Principle has a sample set of prompting questions to consider when applying them. These are not the only questions to ask, and people are encouraged to create their own.

Share the burden

Empower people

Show empathy

Ensure safety

Lead with diversity

Show the way

Relieve the victim survivor of unnecessary burden by proactively understanding, anticipating and managing the complexities of the system. Help the victim survivor engage with the system so they aren’t taking it on alone.

How might we ensure that the responsibility to complete steps and transition to different services sits with people within the service system and not the victim survivor so that the experts, not the novice, keep progress going?

How might we share information between services so that victim survivors do not have to repeat their story and can control what information is shared?

How might we take the lead and support victim survivors to gather evidence for both physical and non-physical forms of family violence so that all victim survivors feel validated and supported in this task?

Empower victim survivors to play an active role in their service experience so they reclaim the power, sense of control, and confidence they may have lost through the experience of family violence.

How might we focus on the individual’s needs and circumstances so that we demonstrate the victim survivor is the priority?

How might we give the victim survivor agency throughout their experience so that we avoid perpetuating power and control?

How might we help the victim survivor to understand the system so that they feel confident to make informed choices?

Listen generously, without judgement, to a victim survivor’s experience no matter what your role in the service system. Through action demonstrate you genuinely believe them, care about their situation, and understand what matters to them.

How might every person working in the system demonstrate to the victim survivor we believe them so that we can build trust throughout their service experience?

How might we build empathy into critical services like police and courts so that people feel comfortable engaging with these services?

How might we provide empathy across the entire service system so that victim survivors have a sense of hope and can build confidence through every interaction?

Make victim survivors’ safety and protection a priority before and during a crisis and over the long term. Provide reassurance, timely and individualised responses, and evidence of actioned security measures.

How might we hold the perpetrator truly accountable throughout each interaction with the service system so that the victim survivor feels validated and empowered?

How might we build longer-term safety and support structures into the service system so that victim survivors feel safe well after their formal family violence case has closed?

How might we recognise ongoing forms of abuse enacted by perpetrators so that victim survivors are supported to be safe regardless of whether they remain in the relationship or leave?

Demonstrate respect and understanding for differences in people by creating services that are culturally safe, where personal and community values are reflected, and where people are safe to be themselves, without judgement.

How might we respect the values of diverse communities and intersectionality so that we always start by creating an inclusive system where everyone is welcome and understood?

How might we make communities to lead awareness training so that the needs of people are understood throughout the system?

How might we build capability with victim survivors so that they can provide peer support to people currently experiencing family violence?

Guide the victim survivor through the system so they aren’t navigating it alone. Create clarity so that victim survivors can see what can happen next for them, and transparency in the process so that they remain the key decision maker in their own journey.

How might we explain to victim survivors steps they could experience along the way so that they can understand and make plans for their future?

How might we help victim survivors anticipate the impacts of family violence and other support services they might need so that they feel prepared?

How might we transparently and frequently communicate the options and rights of victim survivors so that they are not overwhelmed and can make informed choices?

Experience Principles are the virtues of a future family violence system that not only keeps victim survivors safe, but supports them, brings out their best, enhances their health and wellbeing, and instils hope.
Change Framework

This framework helps government and people working in the service system to take a holistic approach to designing each reform. It will not give you the answers but prompts you to think through the change through a series of steps. It is not an exercise to do alone. Collaborate with others across government and the service system and most importantly, with victim survivors.

Using the Change Framework can help you identify positives but also potential issues with your proposed change. It’s better to pick these things up before you start implementation so you can shift and adapt the ideas so they deliver the right outcomes. If you discover the proposed change won’t deliver the benefits you were expecting, try something different and go through the process again. Designing effective change is an iterative process of learning about what works and what can be improved.

### HOW MIGHT THE CHANGE IMPACT VICTIM SURVIVORS?

| Describe the proposed change. |
| - Which recommendations from the Royal Commission are we designing for? |
| What is the problem from the victim survivor perspective? |
| - What is the victim survivor wanting to achieve? |
| - How do they want to feel through this experience? |
| - Consider what children are wanting to achieve. |
| - How might this look through the lens of different diverse communities? |

### WHO ELSE DO WE NEED TO INVOLVE?

Co-design
- How will we co-design with a diverse range of victim survivors and ensure they play a central role in designing solutions?
- How will we collaborate with people who work in the service system?
- Who else should be involved?

### WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED TO CONSIDER?

**Downstream and upstream**
- What downstream and upstream services are affected? Consider the constraints, dependencies and impacts to:
  - Specialist family violence services
  - Universal services
  - Other specific services, i.e. disability
  - Culturally-specific services
  - Community services

**Worker journey**
- How might the change impact people working in the service system?
- What are people working in the service system trying to achieve at this point?
- How do workers want to feel through this interaction?
- What activities, tasks or steps are required to support the victim survivor through these interactions?
- What will people who work in the service system need to make this change?

**Perpetrators**
- How might the change impact perpetrators?
- How are we ensuring this change does not have unintended consequences where perpetrator control or manipulation of the system is enabled?

**Experience Principles**
- How might the change embody our Experience Principles?
  - Share the burden
  - Empower people
  - Show empathy
  - Ensure safety
  - Lead with diversity
  - Show the way

**Prototype, test, pilot, review**
- How will we bring our ideas to life early on so we can understand and explore them quickly and cost-effectively and see how they might work for diverse victim survivors, workers and the system?
- What prototypes will we use to interact, discuss and critique our ideas? i.e. storyboards, wireframes, service enactments, pilots etc.
- How will we evaluate our ideas?

**Assumption busting**
- What assumptions can we challenge in designing a more human-centred experience?
- How will we avoid perpetuating inequality, power imbalances or discrimination?

We believe and/or assume that... If this weren’t true then...

The concept for the Change Canvas is inspired by the Business Model Canvas, created by Alex Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur.
Creating Vision Stories helps people visualise change from the perspective of the person they are designing for. They also help teams share their ideas in new ways, focusing on the experience they wish to create, not just the function and mechanics of a change.

This can be a combination of elements which work well today and things which are missing.

The examples in this toolkit (and on page 23, 25, 27) describe a better experience of the family violence service system for people. These stories have been crafted after listening to what victim survivors said about their values, beliefs, and goals and identities. They reflect what they wish to feel, think, see, and do in a more ideal experience of the system.

Aspects of these experiences may exist today. A Vision Story enables teams to place all ideal elements together to describe a more holistic experience.

Use Vision Stories when developing concepts to help bring ideas to life and communicate them from the victim survivors perspective. Refine Vision Stories when piloting services to reflect how the experience should feel.

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**Jamie found solace in community**

I grew up in an abusive home and had always believed it was my fault. I thought it was so incredibly stressful, and talking to a stranger about what had happened to me wasn’t easy. I was a comfort that I could approach a service run by people from my culture. It’s so important to know that people get me and where I’ve come from.

I heard stories like mine from others just like me, and I even made some close friends. I learned more about family violence, and I was able to forge my own path in a way that was suitable for my circumstances.

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**Richard’s comprehensive support put him at ease**

As an older person living in a small community, I was reluctant to seek help about my daughter’s behaviour towards me. I called a support service and my support worker took my story seriously. He reassured me that things would be okay, and laid out a plan of action. He met me for a face-to-face chat. When we talked, it felt like we were equals. He took time to listen to me, told me none of this was my fault, and was open and honest with me about what could happen. I knew this might sound like a small thing, but it made a lot of difference.

He was really proactive about making things happen, from organising medical treatments, to filling out forms, to arranging taxi rides. I didn’t have to initiate everything in a process I didn’t fully understand. Along the way, my support worker kept me updated on progress so I never felt like I was left in limbo.

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**Bindi felt culturally safe**

The situation at home had gotten to the point where I had to get outside help. It was so stressful, and talking to a stranger about what had happened to me wasn’t easy. It was a comfort that I could approach a service run by people from my culture. It’s so important to know that people get me and where I’ve come from because there are differences in what I value that have shaped me and how I want to feel. I felt accepted, understood, and was treated with respect and dignity.

I was able to forge my own path in a way that was suitable for my circumstances.

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**Ally’s support was holistic and co-ordinated**

My family violence situation was complex: I had complicated legal matters, my children needed protection, my family was being rehoused, and I required disability services. Managing this really traumatic time in my life was made less stressful because I felt in control—the organisations supporting me took me seriously, informed me, educated me, and empowered me to make decisions that were right for the family. There was a lot going on behind the scenes, but I knew my team had it covered and would advocate for me.

I felt secure, and was able to focus on working and getting my children to school. The appointments I had were straightforward— I didn’t have to explain myself, everyone knew what they were talking about, and people explained things that weren’t clear to me. I didn’t have to disrupt everything in my life, it was my perpetrator’s life that was most affected.

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**Hana had someone to help carry the load**

My partner was violent for three years before I separated from him. My two-year-old daughter and I have lived on our own for the last 18 months now. My support worker has co-ordinated my counselling, legal help, childcare, as well as some practical day-to-day needs. Sometimes everything felt so overwhelming, and it was so helpful to have my support worker carry the load for me, and she was so kind and warm to me throughout all of it. It took a long time, but I’m starting to get my confidence and independence back, and I’m finding I rely on my support worker less and less. We still have a catch up every four months or so to check in. I feel like I can call on her whenever I need to, but I’m pleased that our catch ups are starting to feel more like social occasions than family violence support. I still have bad days, but she’s there to support me for as long as I need her. It helps me feel like I’m not doing this alone. I’m so grateful to her for that.

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**We need to put victim survivors at the heart of reform | 50**

FINAL 27/03/2017
Reforming the family violence system in a human-centred way has begun.
Co-design work with people with lived experiences focuses our vision towards a system that not only keeps victim survivors safe, but supports them, strengthens their welfare, and offers hope. It's an expression of the government's commitment to work in new ways to bring about meaningful, positive change for the people of Victoria.

**It’s only the beginning**

To ensure government and the service system supports all people and all contexts, a number of other areas should be explored to inform the reform process:

- The lived experiences of children
- The lived experiences of male victims
- Prevention and ending intergenerational trauma
- The social and system barriers faced by people with diverse needs
- Social and cultural attitudes towards gender, families, and relationships
- Perspectives of people who work in the family violence system
- Perpetrator behaviour and lived experiences

We recommend working to gain a deep understanding of these and other aspects of the complex issue of family violence in Victoria throughout the reform process.

Co-design is a way of thinking as much as it is a way of doing: it requires teamwork, mutual respect, and generous listening. It requires a belief that change is possible, a belief victim survivors have demonstrated by breaking the silence.

We wish to thank:
All of the victim survivors that participated for their courage in sharing their stories.
Liana, Kristy, & Nicole from VSAC; Estelle at PsychMaps; Tracy & Kirsten at Shantiworks; Danni at SafeSteps & Charlie at Launch Housing; Karen at Drummond Street Services; Wanda, Kelly, & Paula at Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service; Rose, Maya, & Adisa at Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence; and Jenny at Seniors Rights Victoria.

"I've lived with family violence for too long. But now I'm living again, and I want others to live."
The stuff at the back.
Service Opportunities

When prompted to design a better experience with the family violence system, some victim survivors expressed a need for services that don’t currently exist (that they’re aware of), or to dramatically alter existing services. These are opportunities to consider as part of the reform process.

The Round Table

We heard from victim survivors that the court experience is an ineffective and harmful environment in which to try to solve complex family issues. The Round Table opportunity is a form of conflict resolution that helps to build understanding between multiple parties in a private and non-combative way. It is about creating a safe space to invite everyone involved to communicate openly, have a voice and be heard, and an opportunity to share their perspective and needs on an even playing field. Experts to assess child safety, mental health, cultural considerations, and other needs would also be present. It takes into account the complexities of each unique situation, and is a space for the group to consider options, their consequences, the wellbeing of all parties, and tailor fit solutions. This restorative form of justice may not be appropriate for every case.

The One-Stop Shop

A problem many victim survivors talked about is the disconnect between services in the system and the many different places they were required to go. This sparked the idea of a one-stop shop—a place for victim survivors to go to be part of community, to receive the help they needed, and to heal. This place would meet all the needs, practical and emotional, of victim survivors and their families, with all the diversity that might encompass. Appointments for managing family violence cases would take place in one location, and the many different places they were required to go. This sparked the idea of a one-stop shop—a place for victim survivors to go to be part of community, to receive the help they needed, and to heal. This place would meet all the needs, practical and emotional, of victim survivors and their families, with all the diversity that might encompass. Appointments for managing family violence cases would take place in one location, and the many different places they were required to go. The independent advocate represents an opportunity to approach everything that we do with a human-centred mindset.

The Sanctuary

Victim survivors described emergency shelters and refuges as undesirable places to be for many reasons, and that staying in the home is often the more appealing option. What they suggest needs to change is the way we think about accommodation for victim survivors and their dependents. Instead of refuges and shelters, victim survivors want a sanctuary. We asked them to tell us what that might look like. They told us the sanctuary would be similar to a retreat—a desirable place to go for some time out to regroup, to look after yourself to stabilise. It would allow for families to have their own space and independence, but still feel part of a supportive community. It wouldn’t simply be crisis support, but would consider families’ long-term recovery needs.

The Community Group

The community group concept, though not novel, arose on multiple occasions. People expressed a desire to be supported by others with similar life experiences. Victim survivors saw these groups as a place where they could let their guard down, laugh and sing and have fun. Beyond that, they recognised the mutual learning that occurs when connections are made between people, and the reward in being able to help others. Community groups offer a safe space for talking about relationship dynamics, sharing advice, and drawing from the wisdom of others in a way that is culturally attuned to the community. Community groups, be they for women, men, people of non-normative genders or sexualities, offer peer support that builds confidence and empowers people.

The Independent Advocate

Victim survivors expressed a need to be guided through the system, to be advocated for, and for their burden to be shared. The concept of an independent advocate represents an opportunity to place someone—a person or peer that is in service of the victim survivor, not the government—to do some of the fighting for the victim survivor, to ensure they don’t get lost in the system, to take on some of the explaining required to get people where they need to go. The independent advocate is someone who understands the victim survivors’ needs, which might be completely different to someone else’s. They see the victim survivor as a whole person who may have complex considerations, and need support in multiple areas. They walk alongside victim survivors, not ahead of them or behind them.

Why ‘Project Spirit’?

The word ‘spirit’ has several interpretations that resonate with us and this project. First, it recognises the spirit of people who endure family violence. The word spirit also remembers those who’ve passed as a result of family violence, their spirit enduring with their loved ones. Third, ‘spirit’ also connects to Aboriginal culture—a oneness and interconnection with all that lives and breathes and with all that does not.

“[Spirit] is a feeling of oneness, of belonging... (a connectedness with) deep innermost feelings.”

—Mudrooroo, Aboriginal writer

This word also resonated with our VSAC guides who told us the experience of family violence can strip away your spirit, and while it does return, it is forever changed.

These meanings remind us to stay true to the stories victim survivors have shared with us, to represent their voices authentically, and to approach everything that we do with a human-centred mindset.
Who we spoke to

We had conversations with people with intellectual and physical disabilities; people of non-normative gender identities and sexualities; people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds; young adults and older people; people from urban and rural areas.

Those that could take part were safe and strong enough to do so. We talked about people's experiences with the system, both good and bad, and reasons why, for some, they never entered the system. Our sessions were qualitative in nature, deeply exploring their values, attitudes, and motivations.

There are many, many voices to be heard. We acknowledge there are missing perspectives that are much needed to continue the reform process.

Why people participated

While experiencing family violence, many people feel they are silenced. The people who took part saw the co-design sessions for Project Spirit as an opportunity to have their voice heard and use their experiences to help contribute to positive change. This was particularly strong for people who felt mainstream services didn’t meet their needs and require greater awareness of diversity and intersectionality.

They saw this work as a chance to make something positive from something so negative, using their experience to inspire action and improve the situation for many others. Ultimately, people spoke of shaping a better future for themselves and their children.

On a more individual level, participants saw the therapeutic benefit of sharing their story, connecting with others, and finding community with other victim survivors. Others felt grateful for the support and help they received from services when they were experiencing family violence, and welcomed the opportunity to give something back.

Our approach to working with victim survivors

In the early stages of the project we developed our approach which we co-created with DPC and experts working in the specialist family violence sector. Our work was conducted from a place of empathy and respect as we sought to create a supportive and enabling experience for the victim survivors who worked with us. Our approach to this work included:

Finding participants

• Only working with victim survivors of family violence who were over 18 and had been free from violence for 12 months or more, the older people for 6 months or more.
• We only worked with people who freely gave their informed consent. Information was provided to prospective participants in an accessible format so they were aware of what they were consenting to.
• Our community partners identified and invited people to take part where they had an existing relationship with them and were able to assess their suitability to participate.

Taking a safe approach

• We took an individualised approach tailored to meet the specific accessibility and support needs of each person.
• People were given the choice to involve their own support network during the session.
• Experienced family violence support workers were on site during the workshops and available for support following individual interviews. Their service was also made available to all people for up to six months after their participation in this work.
• Where people required an interpreter, carers, or other support worker, this was provided at no cost.

Providing Choice

• We offered a choice of engagement methods which allowed people to share their lived experiences and thoughts in their own ways. Choices included one-off workshops co-hosted and co-piloted by community family violence partners as well as individual face-to-face conversations at a place of the victim survivors choosing.
• People were able to choose which questions and activities they were comfortable to respond to and given the option to withdraw participation at any time.
• We asked people how they like to be communicated with so that if there was a change in our approach at any stage, we were able to inform them and negotiate their ongoing involvement.

Being open and transparent

• We provided people who participated with a preparation kit to inform them about the process so they felt comfortable with our co-design approach before it commenced. We co-designed this with our expert advisers, our VSAC guides, and community partners.
• All people who participated will receive a copy of the final report so they can see the impact of their contribution.

Our approach to personal information and privacy

• Strict confidentiality and full anonymity was applied to all information people chose to share.
• All personal information was de-identified and no personal stories have been published as part of this work. No names, locations or other identifying factors are included in our outputs.
• Workshops and individual interviews were audio recorded so we could capture notes after the interview. Upon completion of the project these files were destroyed.
Our human-centred methodology

We took a human-centred design approach to gain a rich understanding of the lives and experiences of people who have experienced family violence in Victoria. Human-centred design involves intentional phases of ‘divergent’ and ‘convergent’ thinking, as demonstrated by the triple-diamond below.

In this work, we not only sought to deeply explore victim survivors’ realities and values, but to partner with them to generate ideas about a better experience with the service system so that changes that take place will be effective in their context. The resulting insights are based on 13 weeks of intensive immersion, conversations with victim survivors, analysis, synthesis and production. More detail on each phase can be found in the following pages.

Immersion

To begin, we gathered existing information and research to build a picture of family violence in Victoria, the service system, and the issues and opportunities relating to people experiencing family violence. We conducted a literature review. We ran informal interviews with subject matter experts in the sector and created an eco-system map. We completed Aboriginal cultural awareness training and LGBTI awareness training. Finally, we built hypotheses to be tested throughout the analysis and synthesis phase.

Preparation and planning

Given the sensitive nature of this work traditional methods for finding participants through recruitment agencies would not have been appropriate. Instead, we partnered with community support services to identify and invite individuals to take part in the work. We worked to build relationships and trust with these organisations, and embraced them as co-pilots for our research, valuing their experience and expertise.

We co-designed, prototyped and tested the activities with our VSAC guides and expert advisors and made changes to improve our design.

Workshops and interviews

We engaged 24 victim survivors representing broad diversity and intersectionality to share their thoughts and feelings about their experience of family violence and the system. We spoke with many participants in individual interviews, as well as facilitating group workshops, which were either incorporated into existing programs such the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service’s Dilly Bag workshop or created as stand alone workshops. Our co-pilots advice and recommendations guided our approach. Each session consisted of a number activities designed to be future-focused and generative, and focus on participants’ emotions and needs and the support they received whilst experiencing family violence. We also conducted some observation work at two Magistrates’ Courts and the Children’s Court.

Analysis and Synthesis

After talking with victim survivors our project room was wallpapered with their de-identified raw stories and perspectives. We used several rounds of synthesis with HDDs, CPC, and members of VSAC to find themes and patterns in the data, which then underwent deep analysis to uncover the insight that sat behind it. We conducted this process for each of the activities we ran, which we crafted into current and future state insights, plus Experience Principles.

Prototyping

In order to best communicate the insights, we explored several concepts with DPC and members of VSAC. We needed to find a design that would convey the layers of complexity of family violence, that also resonated strongly with victim survivors and was authentic to their perspectives. After some critique and development we determined a confronting, raw and human photographic design was the strongest solution.

Production

This final phase of the project consisted of several rounds of writing, review, proofing, design, and proofing again. We continued to work with our VSAC guides to ensure the final deliverables represented their stories authentically. We also worked with people in the service system to understand their perspective on the content and design and sought input from our co-pilot partners.