

**LIVED EXPERIENCE**

# **PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK**

**2026**

**FVREE** FREE FROM  
FAMILY  
VIOLENCE





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

**We acknowledge that we live, work and deliver services, primarily on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin nation.**

We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples and acknowledge their ongoing connection to country, land, language, Lore, stories, sea, sky and waterways. We pay our respects to all First Nations Peoples, Ancestors as well as Elders past and present. We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities continue to be disproportionately affected by family violence, particularly women and children. We also understand that we must view First Nations Peoples' experience of family violence in the context of the continuing impacts of colonisation.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## ADULT AND CHILD VICTIM SURVIVORS AND ADVOCATES

**We welcome and affirm the diversity of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, sex characteristics, and relationship statuses.**

We recognise that the impacts of family violence extend to families, pets and animals.

We respect the lived experiences and Lived Experience Expertise of victim survivors and Advocates, including children and young people, and value the unique insights, knowledge and perspectives they bring to our work. We look forward to listening to the lived experiences of victim survivors and partnering in authentic ways as we work together toward a community free from family violence, where everyone is safe.

## SECTOR PEAKS AND PARTNERS

**We are grateful for the legacy and significant contributions of Lived Experience Advocates and people with lived experience working through advocacy peaks and partner organisations who paved the way for empowerment, as well as social, legal, systems and practice change.**

Our work has been informed by the Victim Survivor Advisory Committee (VSAC), Melbourne University Family Violence Experts by Experience Framework, Safe + Equal Code of Practice, Eastern Regional Family Violence Partnership and the high calibre client partnership Frameworks and strategies of sector leaders like Mind, YSAS, Berry Street and Uniting Vic.Tas.

Together with victim survivors we are learning to embrace and integrate the wisdom of lived experience in all we do. Our work has been inspired by trailblazers like Morgan Cataldo, Rosie Batty, and Christine Robinson. We extend our deep gratitude for the generous contributions of co-collaborators, including Anna Wark, Rebecca Carro, consulting Victim Survivor Advocates, as well as and our employees who helped shape our purpose and principles.

# OVERVIEW

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# OUR WHY

**Our organisation has its roots firmly in the early activism and efforts of women who worked collectively to provide refuge and support to women, children and their pets escaping family and domestic violence. From inception, the organisation was shaped by the voices and actions of the people it provided support to.**

The value of lived experience voices in creating safer families was highlighted by recommendation 201 of the 2015 Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Our Lived Experience Partnership Framework builds on our legacy by providing a pathway for intentional partnering with people, including children and young adults, with lived experience of family violence.

## **WE BELIEVE:**

- It is a person's human right to participate in decisions that will affect them.
- Victim survivors are experts in their own lives and context.
- Victim survivors' lived experiences have value and bring fresh perspectives to the decisions we make and the problems we want to solve.
- We will get better outcomes and create change faster if we involve people with lived experience of family violence in our decision making.



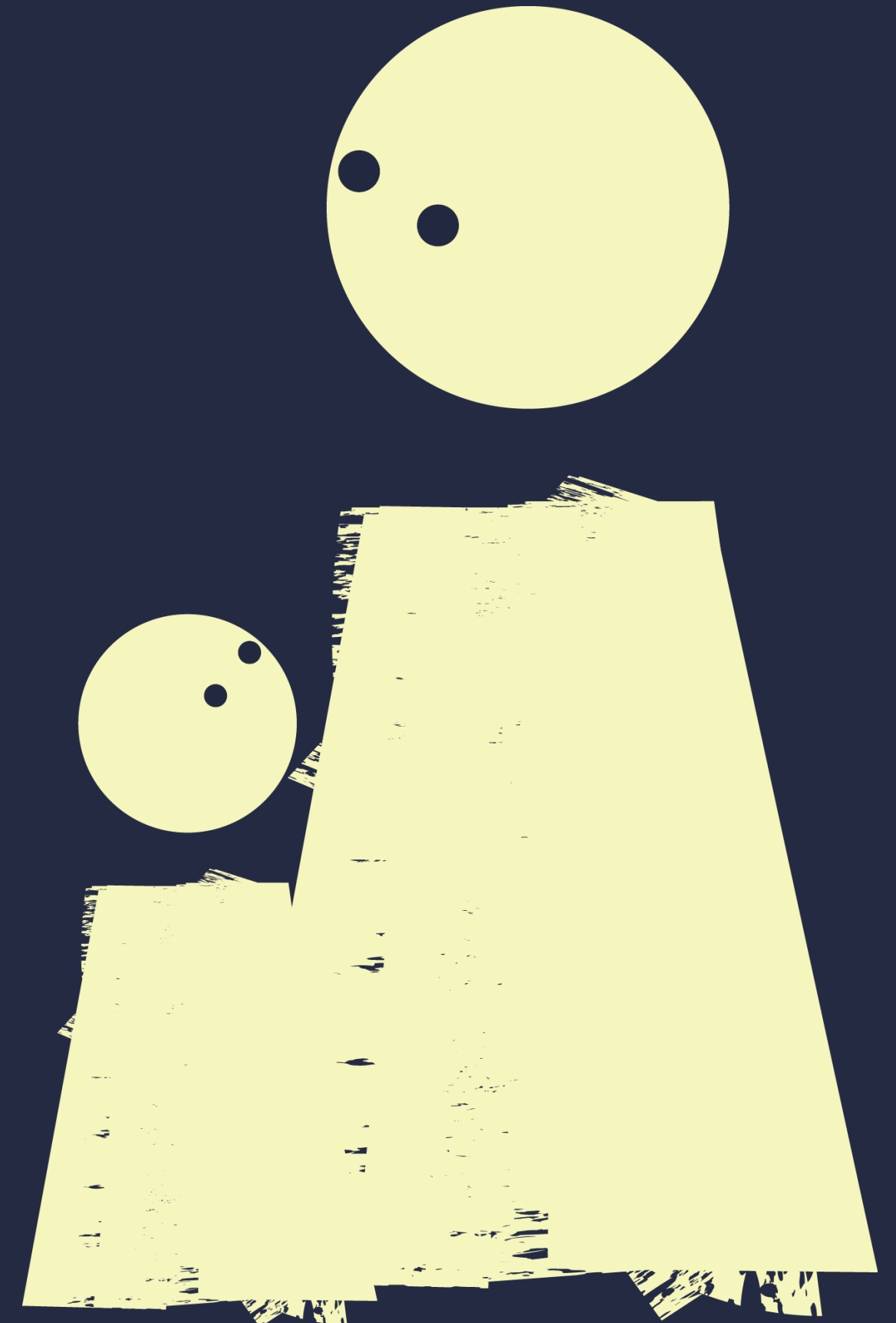
# OUR WHY

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*I've experienced first-hand the pervasive impact of family violence. The services which are designed to keep you safe, aren't always accessible or trauma-informed.*

*At FVREE, we aim to elevate victim survivors and advocates as equal partners in our workforce. FVREE's framework and accompanying practice guide provide a way of partnering to embed family violence survivor expertise in our culture, services, programs, people development, and operations. From risk assessments, safety planning, recovery, and advocacy, we are striving to make family violence survivor partnership the norm.*

— Chloe Symes, Board Director





# OUR INTENT

**Our Lived Experience Partnership Framework (Partnership Framework) creates ethical and safe partnerships with people who have lived experience of family violence. It describes our approach to partnering and what we achieve by listening to lived experience perspectives.**

This Framework re-envisioning our relationship with victim survivors and program participants from 'service-giver to service-receiver', to one of equal partner, creating a means for them to play an active role in breaking the cycle of violence. This re-envisioning has caused us as an organisation to undergo a shift in thinking and ways of working.

We:

**VALUE** lived experience knowledge and expertise equally with professional qualifications and experience.

**RESPECT** each victim survivor's story, identity and agency.

**BUILD TRUST** and genuine relationships with the people who access our services.

**LISTEN** with curiosity to understand victim survivor's insights and include their views in our decision-making processes.

**SHARE POWER** by creating safe opportunities for victim survivors to understand and utilise their Lived Experience Expertise.

**ACT** on the advice and views of victim survivors in decisions that affect them, including our practice, service design, advocacy for change, and how we work with other organisations to ensure safety.

# PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Partnership Framework provides a structure for purposeful and intentional partnerships. It draws Lived Experience Expertise into FVREE through reciprocal relationships with victim survivor clients, including children and young people, impacted by family violence, and external Victim Survivor Advocates.

## PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK THEORY OF CHANGE

Ineffective systems and services accessed by victim survivors is addressed through partnering across the spectrum of power sharing and participation, at the individual, service, community and system level, where lived experience plays an integral role in affecting meaningful change.

## PURPOSE

People with Lived Experience are an integral part of the design, continual improvement and delivery of safer, more effective and impactful services and systems, and play an active role in breaking the cycle of violence.

## PRINCIPLES

- Safety
- Power sharing
- Trust
- Transparency
- Courage

## OBJECTIVES

- Safe, ethical, empowering environment
- Partnering practice is evidence based, trauma informed, & promotes recovery
- People feel supported, informed and safe
- Learning through pilot projects & collaboration with other organisations
- Continuous improvement through feedback and measurement

## ORGANISATIONAL ENABLERS

It will take time to build trust and learn to work together in new ways.

- Governance structures and mechanisms that involve victim survivors and lived experience advocates.
- Deeper understanding and validation of Lived Experience Expertise in our clients and workforce.
- Practice guides, tools and training.
- A strong culture of inclusion and cultural safety.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

We will apply the International Association for Public Participation Engagement Spectrum to facilitate transparent conversations about sharing power in partnerships.

We will adopt a continuous improvement approach, where we test and learn best practice alongside victim survivors and lived experience advocates, which will ensure our practice remains relevant and dynamic.

Our practice will be supported by an evidence-based practice guide and employees and Lived Experience partners.

# DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Making lived experience wisdom part of our organisational DNA is foundational to our organisational Theory of Change, Values and Guiding Principles, and aligns with the wider changes driven by Victim Survivor Advocates within our sector.

## SECTOR CONTEXT

**Victorian Family Violence Royal Commission**

**Victorian Family Violence Outcomes Framework**

**Safe + Equal Experts by Experience Framework**

**Safe + Equal Code of Practice**

*Emphasises the inclusion of lived experience as an essential element in the provision of services and the work of the family violence sector more broadly.*

**Consumer participation frameworks and best practice models**

## OUR CONTEXT

**Theory of Change**

*The long term impact we are striving to achieve at individual, community and system level.*

**Values and Guiding Principles**

*Safety, Equity and Courage.  
Intersectional Feminism.  
Person Driven.*

*Evidence informed and Continuous Learning.  
Respect and Collaboration.*

**Strategic Plan**

*Priority 1 - Enhanced and expanded outcomes for victim survivors and the community.  
Priority 3 - An inclusive organisation that applies an intersectional framework.*

# INFLUENCE AND EVIDENCE

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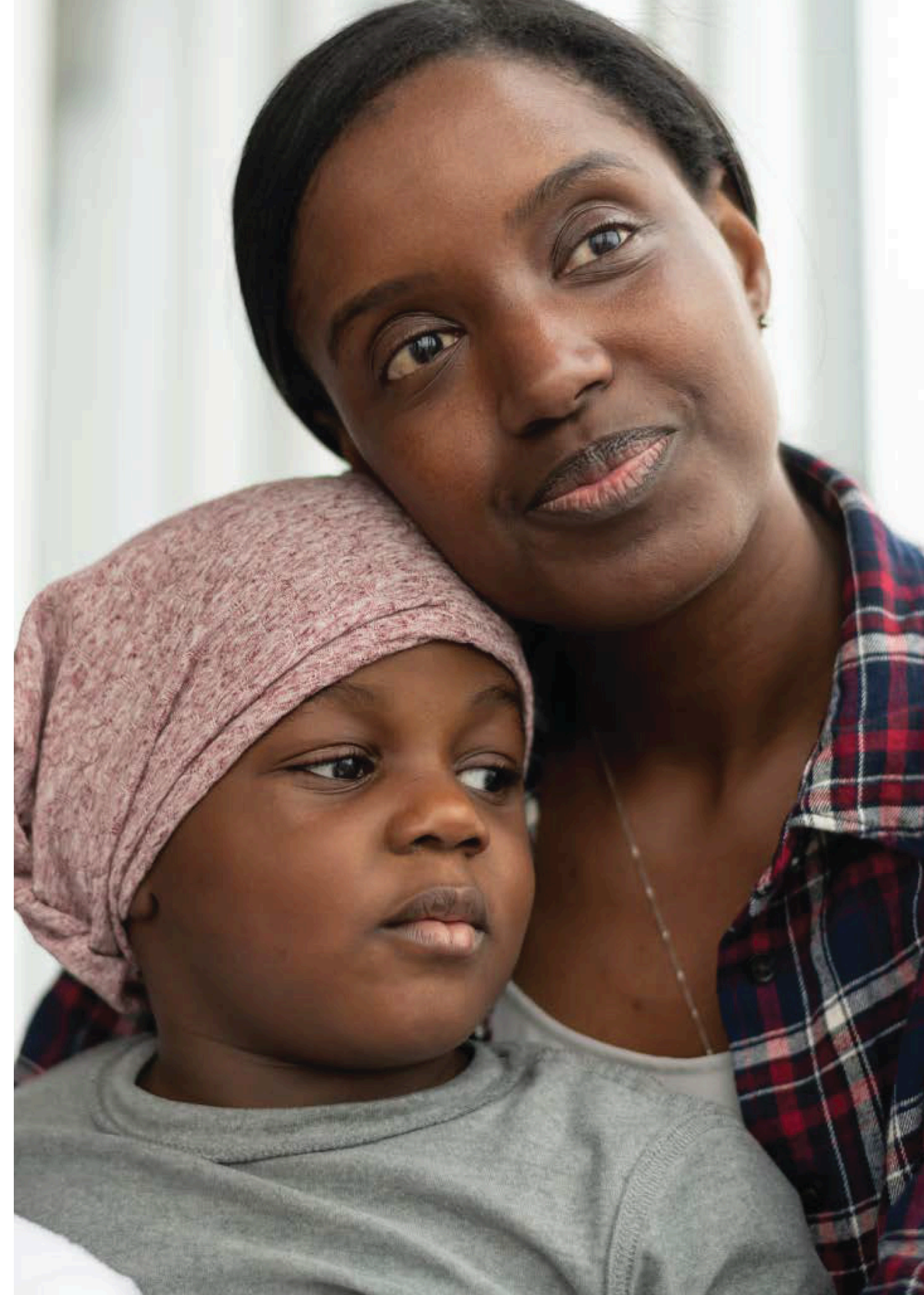
*“It takes both experts and survivors to make choices. I think that every involvement that victim survivors have is important. You can’t make decisions based on what you think is going on. Lived experience is invaluable to inform and help make decisions around planning how to respond to family violence. Survivors’ voices are powerful and need to be heard.”*

— Victim Survivor Advocate, Eastern RFVP Believed and Respected report.

**Various Human rights charters recognise that justice is founded on the recognition that we all share unequivocal rights to dignity and equal participation in civic life.**

The past ten years has seen a groundswell of interest and policy making around Client Voice and Participation. As a result there is now a rich repository of academic research and thought leadership that is driving best practice models of client and consumer engagement across different community services sectors in Australia.

Immersion in an extensive evidence base, along with multidisciplinary collaboration, learning and resource sharing between Lived Experience practitioners across sectors, form the foundation of our Framework. In implementation we will continue to build and contribute our understanding of ethical, meaningful and effective partnering practices with people who engage with family violence services and systems.



# INFLUENCE AND EVIDENCE

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*It is essential that victims of violence have input to the services that they seek. Only the victims can truly understand what they require to be safe, to survive and thrive. The embedded voices of lived experience should be at the heart of the creation and provision of services.*

— Jennifer, FVREE Client Advocate

