

# Improving Justice and Support for Child and Adolescent Victims of Crime

Conference Report

10 November 2015



## Background

On 10 November 2015 the Victim Support Service in partnership with Anglicare hosted the *"Improving Justice and Support for Child and Adolescent Victims of Crime"* Conference. At this event a diverse group of representatives from across the non-government and government sectors with an interest in supporting young victims of crime met to hear experts in the field talk about the quality and extent of support for young victims of crime and to consider and discuss what should be done to address the issues. A full list of attendees is attached at Attachment B.

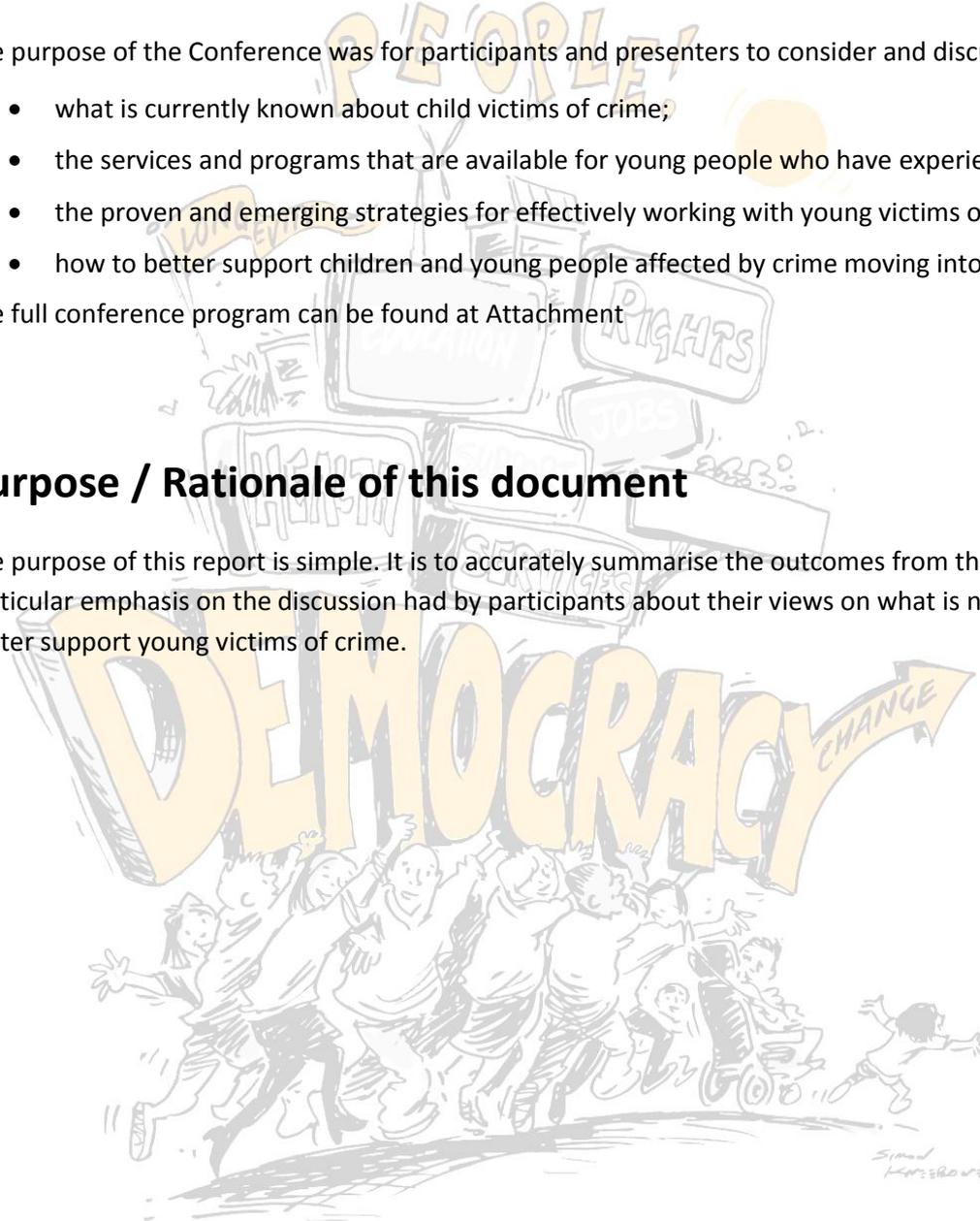
The purpose of the Conference was for participants and presenters to consider and discuss:

- what is currently known about child victims of crime;
- the services and programs that are available for young people who have experienced crime;
- the proven and emerging strategies for effectively working with young victims of crime; and
- how to better support children and young people affected by crime moving into the future.

The full conference program can be found at Attachment

## Purpose / Rationale of this document

The purpose of this report is simple. It is to accurately summarise the outcomes from the day with a particular emphasis on the discussion had by participants about their views on what is needed to better support young victims of crime.



## Preconference survey

Prior to the conference, attendees were surveyed about the services they provide to young victims of crime to assist in a 'mapping' of current service provision. Their views were also sought on what is needed to further support this group.

50% of attendees completed the survey and they represented the broad cross section of legal, government, non-government and community based support services.

A full summary of this survey is attached at Attachment C.

## Conference

The conference was broadly split into two general sections;

1. Listening to experts and victims who have experienced the system of supports for young victims of crime.
2. Discussion and reflection in groups.

Initially participants heard from Julian Roffe, Chief Executive of the Victim Support Service about the challenges faced by young victims of crime, some of the gaps in service delivery and the opportunities. In particular, Julian spoke about a framework used in the United Kingdom to assist in information sharing, assessment and support. The Child Concern Framework was developed for the Borough of Sutton.

Participants then heard from the key note speaker Professor Caroline Taylor. Caroline is recognised as a leading expert and consultant in the field of child and adult sexual violence and domestic violence and the criminal justice response to victim/survivors and social models of trauma and recovery.

Caroline spoke about;

- The short and long term effects of trauma on young children.
- How the criminal justice system manages young victims.
- A case study on the South African model of court intermediaries for children and adolescents and liaison advocates that support young victims through the legal and therapeutic process.
- How child victims can fall through the gaps of support provision and why this occurs.
- The importance of early intervention for preventing long term health outcomes.
- The importance of having a children's advocate to ensure criminal justice process and associated services are accountable and adhere to best practice.

Caroline was followed by an 'on the couch' session – where Lynette Nitschke and Brian Peat spoke about their experiences of supporting their children through the trauma of losing close relatives. The session explored the issues their children faced; the supports that were available, what worked well

and what did not. Lynette and Brian reflected on what they felt was needed to support child victims of crime in the short and long term.

Reflecting on what worked within the current system, Brian indicated that support was best received from school, family and friends and the support from Allianz (through vehicle insurance) assisted both emotionally and financially.

Lynette raised concerns about the compensation process. The family had to prove they had been affected by the murder. They had to undergo a psychological test to prove this, something which she said shouldn't be necessary because it adds considerably to the trauma. Lynette also reflected that counselling is needed at different stages. She highlighted that there is no duration of time where one recovers from such a crime so hence support should not be limited to a time frame.

### *Discussion and Reflection*

Following the sessions' outlined above attendees explored ideas for improving services to young victims of crime.

In particular, attendees were provided with the following statement;

*Anecdotal evidence suggests that lots of young victims are either falling through the gaps or aren't accessing the services available.*

They were then asked to discuss at their tables - why they thought this was the case and what their top idea for addressing the issue was?

A diverse range of ideas were explored by participants at their tables. All of these ideas were then put up on the wall, organised and 7 were chosen by participants for deeper discussion and deliberation.

This report explores those 7 ideas and the level of support shown by the participants for each.

Support was shown through a process of 'dotmocracy' – where participants chose which ideas they thought were best by voting for their top 3 using stickers.

## **The Ideas**

The brainstormed by participants in order of support were as follows:

1. Children's Victim Support Service – One Stop Shop for Families (46 Votes)
2. Spend \$200m from Victims of Crime Fund (36 Votes)
3. Advocates in Court (Sth Africa Model) (30 Votes)
4. Access mentor in school for kids (21 Votes)
5. Appoint SA Commissioner for Children (15 Votes)
6. Fly in Service for Indigenous Communities (15 Votes)
7. Quality – Improving Quality of Services (make them more child centric) (10 Votes)

The following section explores each of the ideas in detail. It outlines the scope, purpose and challenges in implementing these ideas. The text ideas are as the participants documented them.

## 1. 'One Stop Shop' for young victims of crime to get support.

The idea proposes that a "One Stop Shop" be established for young victims of crime to stop them falling through the gaps of current service provision. Such a shop would also reduce stress on families and would have immediate benefits for the victims involved. Features of the 'shop' would include;

- One website, one physical location and one 24 hr hot line, where young victims of crime can go to connect with support services.
- Triage – when youth came through the door they would be assigned a case worker/ consultant (for the family) and they will be assessed as to their needs.
- The child/ family will then be referred to the services available that can most help them (these may or may not be offered at the shop)
- A recreational / social area to make it a more relaxed and fun space where kids want to be
- Social supports
- Regular meetings of all agencies involved in the "One Stop Shop"

The shop would require a skilled workforce, culturally appropriate services and outreach.

This was the most supported idea by a significant margin. A large number of people came up with this idea independently (at different tables). Evidence of support for this idea can also be seen by the number of people who wanted to develop this idea up into more detail; 1/3 of participants at the conference wanted to support the development of this idea. It is unusual for such a large group who hasn't met regularly on this issue to show such significant agreement on what is needed moving forward.

## 2. Accessing funding to extend support services to child and adolescent victims of crime. (Using the \$200m Victims of Crime Fund)

This idea is self-explanatory. It is proposed that government put in place mechanisms to spend the funds accumulating in the Victims of Crime Fund on young victims– whether it is through initiatives such as those outlined in this paper or on other initiatives (such as increasing levels of compensation, research or training).

It is proposed that an Advisory Committee be re-established under the fund, to provide advice to government about expenditure.

Some of the challenges in implementing this include – politics, fragmentation and the difficulties that government funded agencies face in criticising the government about this issue.

### 3. Advocates in Court

The court system should protect children's rights and not re-traumatise vulnerable young victims of crime. We need to make the court process less intimidating for children, we need to assist children facing the justice system and give them a sense of empowerment through telling their story. Primarily we need to understand how trauma impacts on development and help the child through the justice system.

The South African model has been held up as an example of how the justice system can involve young victims of crime without exacerbating their trauma. This model includes intermediaries for children and adolescents and 'liaison' advocates that sit across entire legal and therapeutic process.

Intermediaries in South Africa can be appointed for children under 18 who would suffer "undue mental stress or suffering" if they testified without an intermediary. Intermediaries operate at trial only, sitting with the child in separate CCTV rooms, where they paraphrase and relay every question and answer. They act as an interpreter, communicating each question in simplified, age-appropriate language, and then relate the child's answers back to the court, including non-verbal statements. The child cannot see or hear anyone besides the intermediary, who wears headphones to communicate with the courtroom. The court can appoint a wide range of people to act as an intermediary: anyone qualified as a social worker, paediatrician, psychiatrist, family counsellor, child care worker, teacher or psychologist.<sup>1</sup>

A similar pilot is proposed to start in NSW in 2016.

In South Australia legislation does not currently allow for this type of approach. Legislative reform would be essential to implementing this approach.

#### Resources

Success will require support from the judiciary and the retraining and upskilling of intermediaries. This initiative will need to be funded and supported to succeed.

Whilst new resources would be needed, there is existing infrastructure which would support implementation including CCTV, video interviews in the court process etc.

### 4. Fly in Service for Indigenous Communities

One of the current challenges is providing services to rural and remote communities, particularly indigenous communities. This idea proposes providing an outreach service to these communities through a 'fly in' service. Such a service would improve the timely access of services.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.justice.govt.nz/publications/global-publications/a/alternative-pre-trial-and-trial-processes-for-child-witnesses-in-new-zealands-criminal-justice-system/section-2/questioning-of-child-witnesses>

## Resources

New funding would be needed for this initiative however we could 'piggy back' on the existing infrastructure provided through the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Alternatively philanthropic or private sector funding could be sought i.e. Richard Branson could be approached for Virgin to sponsor through the donation of a plane to RFOs and donation of frequent flyer points. Lawyers could be asked whether they would undertake pro bono work. The idea will need appropriately trained social workers and psychologists.

## 5. Appoint a SA Commissioner for children

This idea proposes appointing an advocate for system change to improve supports for child victims of crime. They would have an educational role and listen to children's views in formulating and advocating for improved services / reform that improves the system for children.

This role fills an existing gap and will assist children to access services.

Funding is seen as a key challenge in implementing this idea.

Agreement would need to be gained as to what the precise role would be for this person.

There may be challenges in finding the 'right' person.

## 6. Access mentor in schools for kids to be supported

This idea proposes to train social workers in schools about trauma and that they then work with the family and child in the long term. Providing long term support would prevent these kids falling through the gaps in support but also ensure stable, unbroken and consistent support.

It would include a compulsory debrief each year for every young victim.

## Resources

Training and the sufficient provisions of social workers in schools are the key costs associated with this initiative.

Finding funding for this initiative may be challenging. However the opportunities created for early intervention are compelling and will have long term benefits, preventing that child (and then adult) experiencing problems later in life.

## 7. Improving quality of services

This idea focuses on making services child centric, relevant to the individual and most importantly, tailored to the child's age. It would include services which help the child transition to adult services.

There needs to be a national child protection database accessible by relevant stakeholders involved in a client's care. Improved assessment processes (through a common assessment tool) are also needed to improve the identification of trauma in children.

Effective implementation of this idea will reduce secondary trauma, ensure continuity of service and prolonged engagement. This in turn will reduce offending into the future. It will increase services available to children.

The greatest obstacle to this idea is the funding required to implement it well. There will be costs in training, IT, the cost of additional services and in improved communication between organisations.

## Afternoon sessions

A broad range of themes were discussed as part of expert sessions in the afternoon, in particular;

- Legal perspectives on young victims of crime.
- Relationship between young victims and adult offenders.
- Aboriginal perspectives.
- Educational perspectives.
- Working with teenage victims of crime.
- Experiences of children in care.
- Experiences of children with a disability.

The aim of selecting these themes was to explore the services that are currently available for young people aged under 18 years who have experienced and been traumatised by crime, and to start a process of identifying key gaps in service provision.

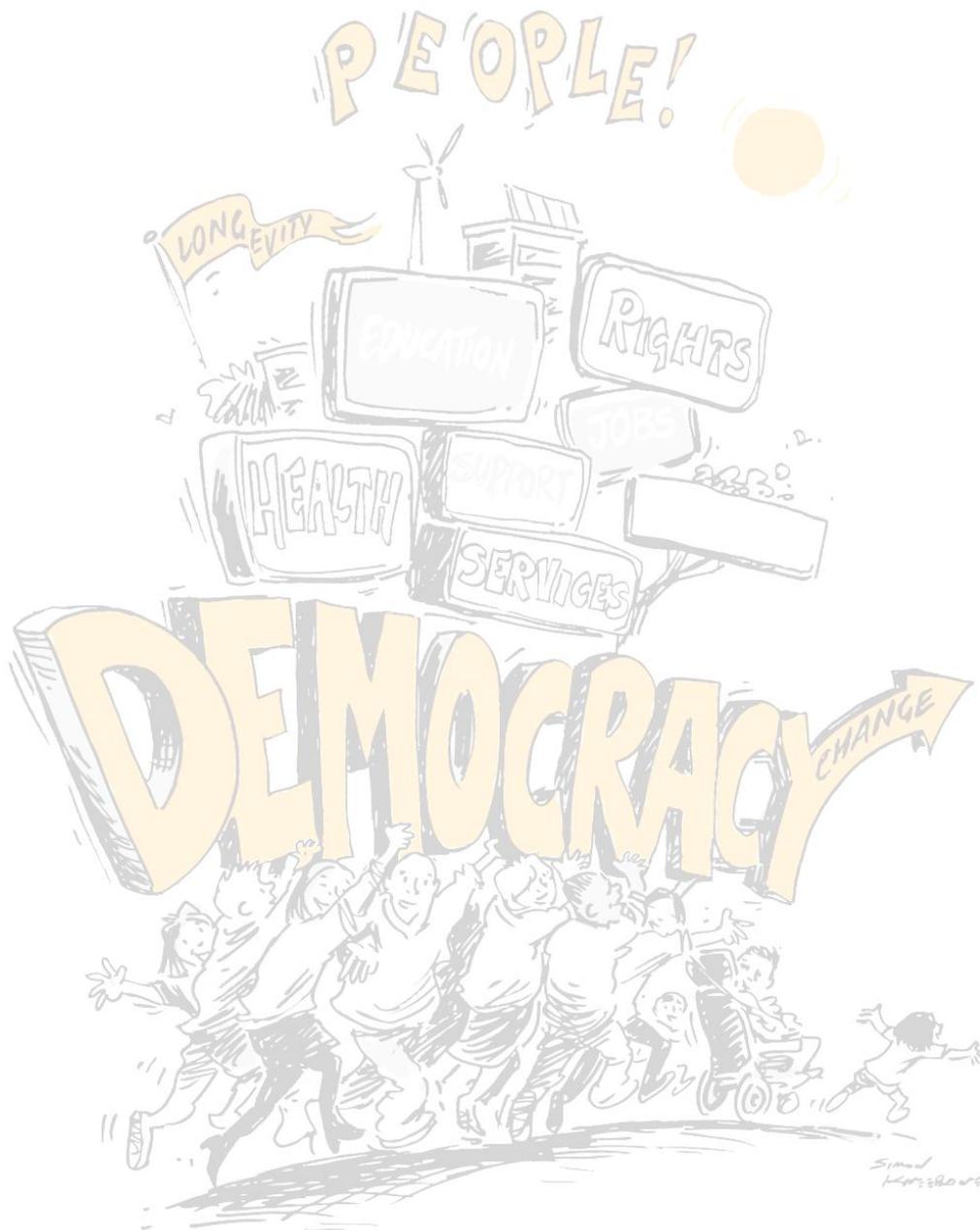
A diverse range of speakers from the justice, education, health sectors, from government, non-government, education and community agencies addressed these themes to assist the group in identifying:

- What do we know? What do we know about child victims of crime? What are the available services and programs for young people who have experienced crime?
- What works? What are the proven and emerging strategies for effectively working with young victims of crime?
- What are the knowledge gaps? The service gaps? What may be opportunities? How can we better support children and young people affected by crime to recover and thrive?

## Next steps

Together with participants who indicated their interest in remaining involved in the process, VSS and Anglicare intend to progress these ideas.

Participants who indicated their interest in being involved in the ideas that the conference generated will be approached to collaborate on the next steps.

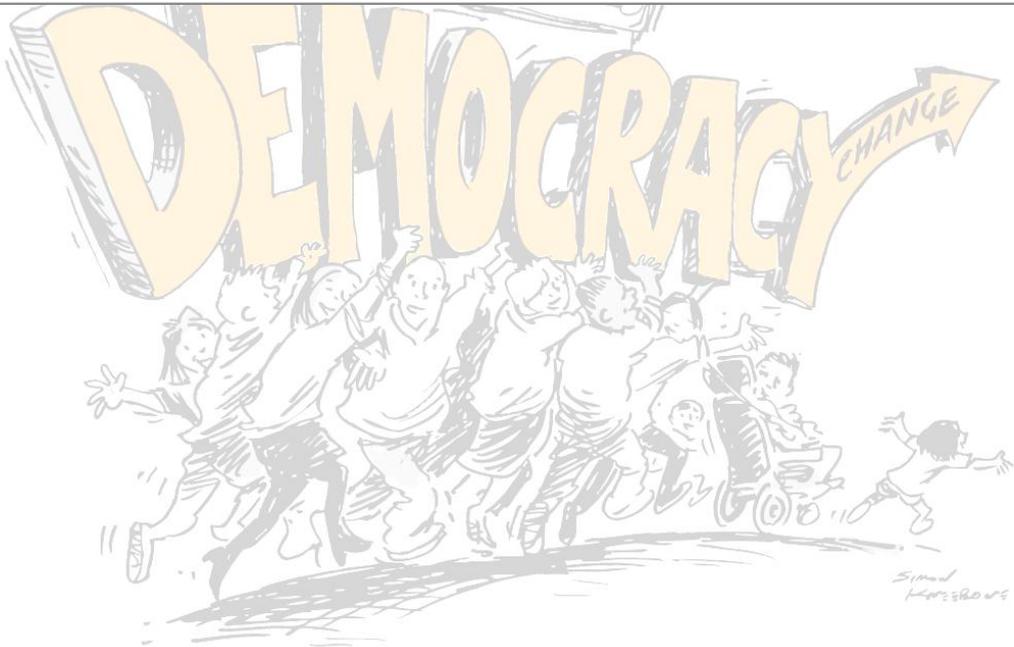
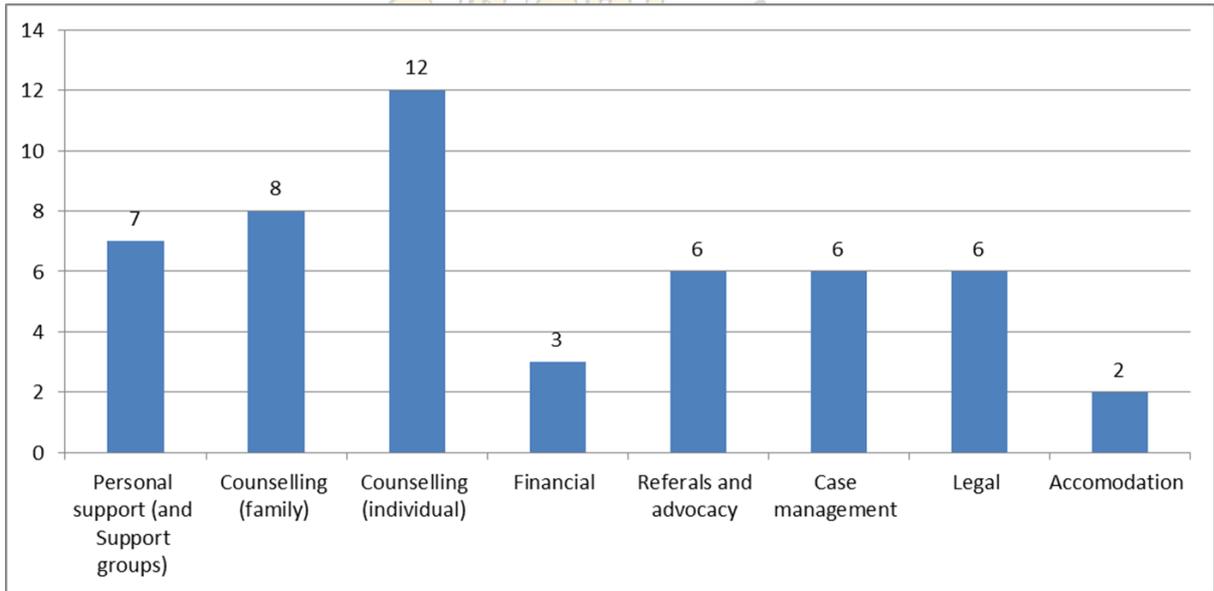


# Attachment A: Pre Conference Survey Results

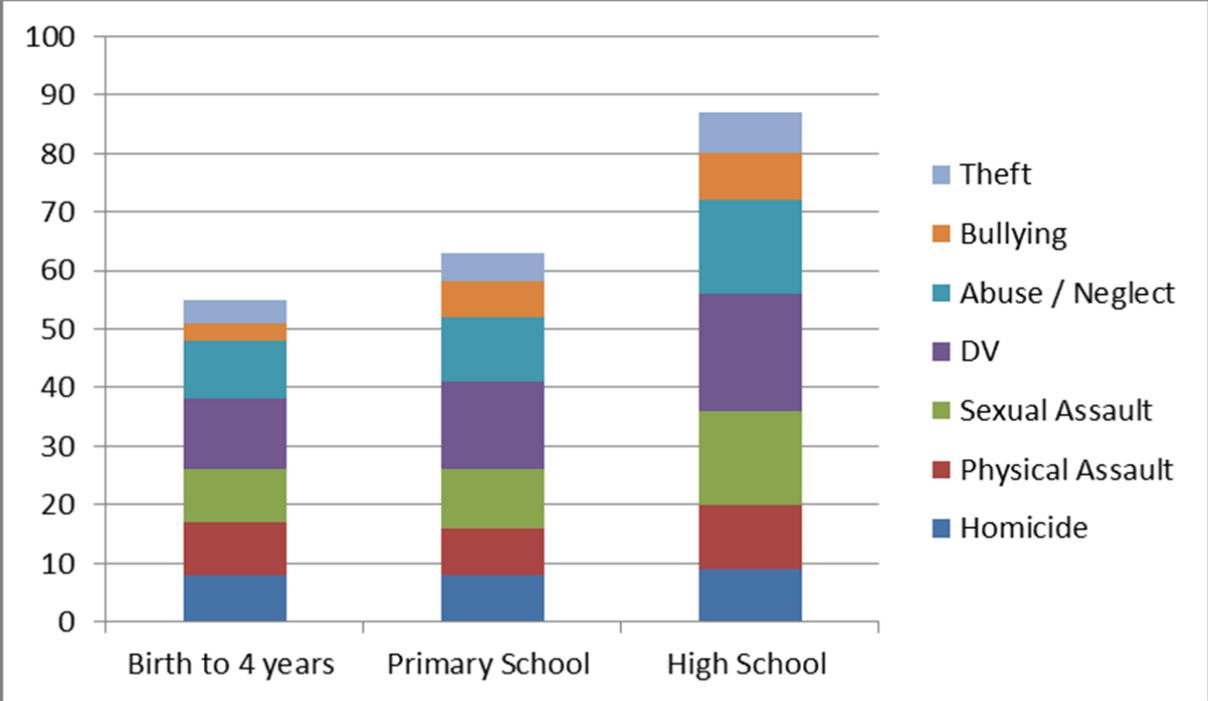
The following is a summary overview of the findings from the preconference survey.

- More than 50% respondents said they provide support services to young victims
- Of these – The focus was on supporting high school students (21) - followed by Primary school (16) and preschool (13)

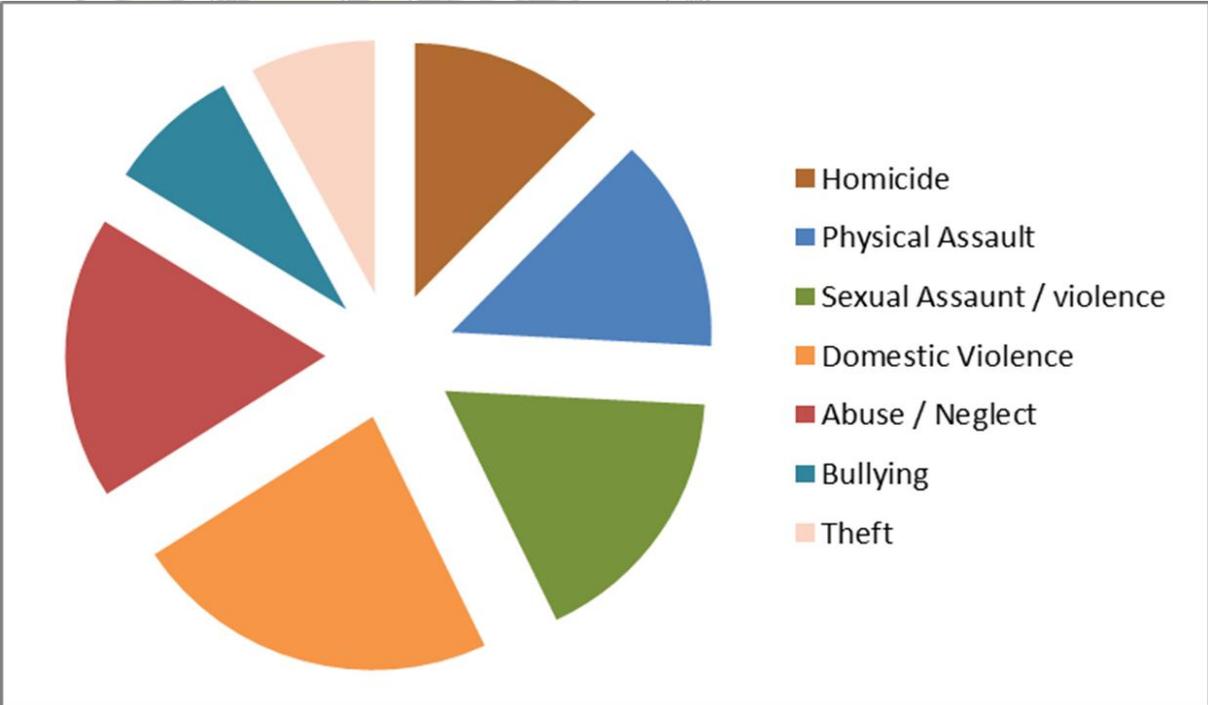
### What services are provided?



**Services by age**



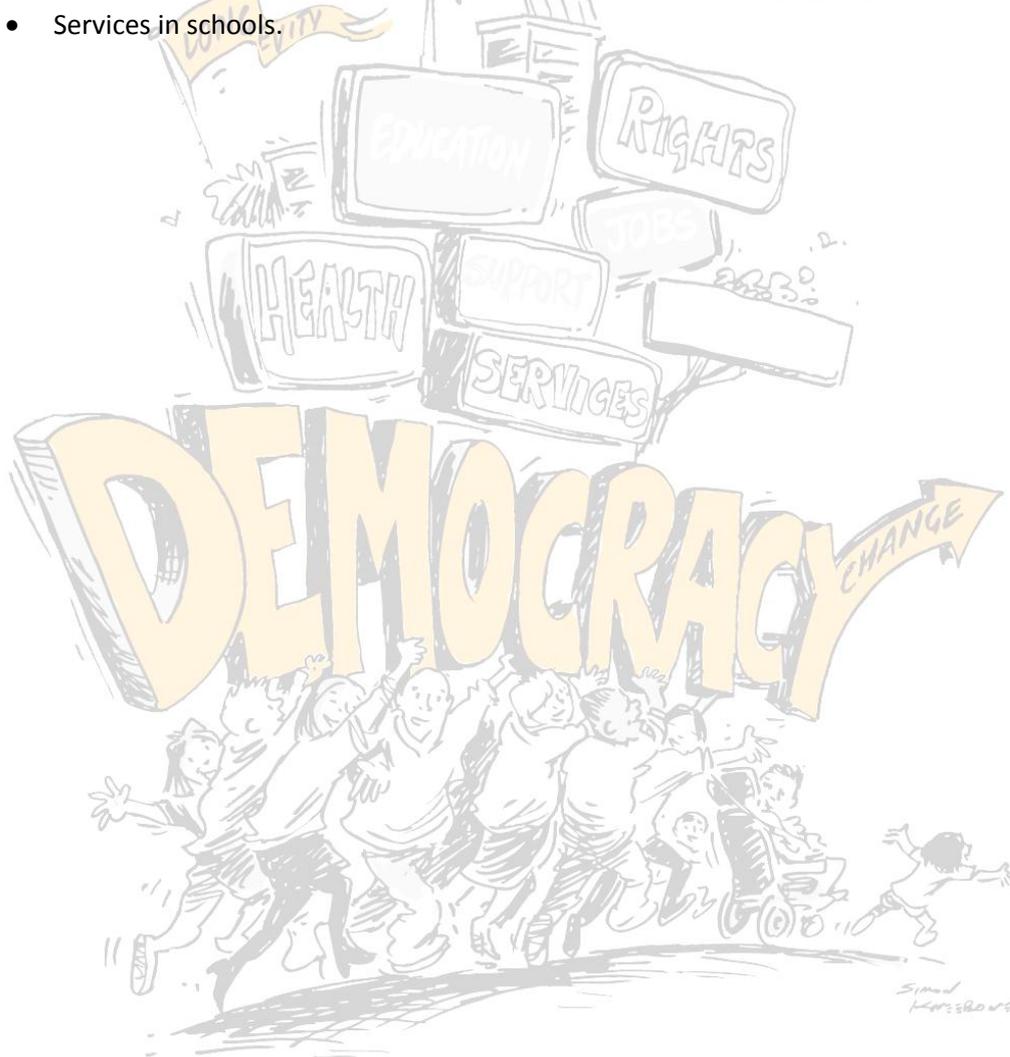
**The greatest proportion of services was focused on supporting victims of domestic violence**



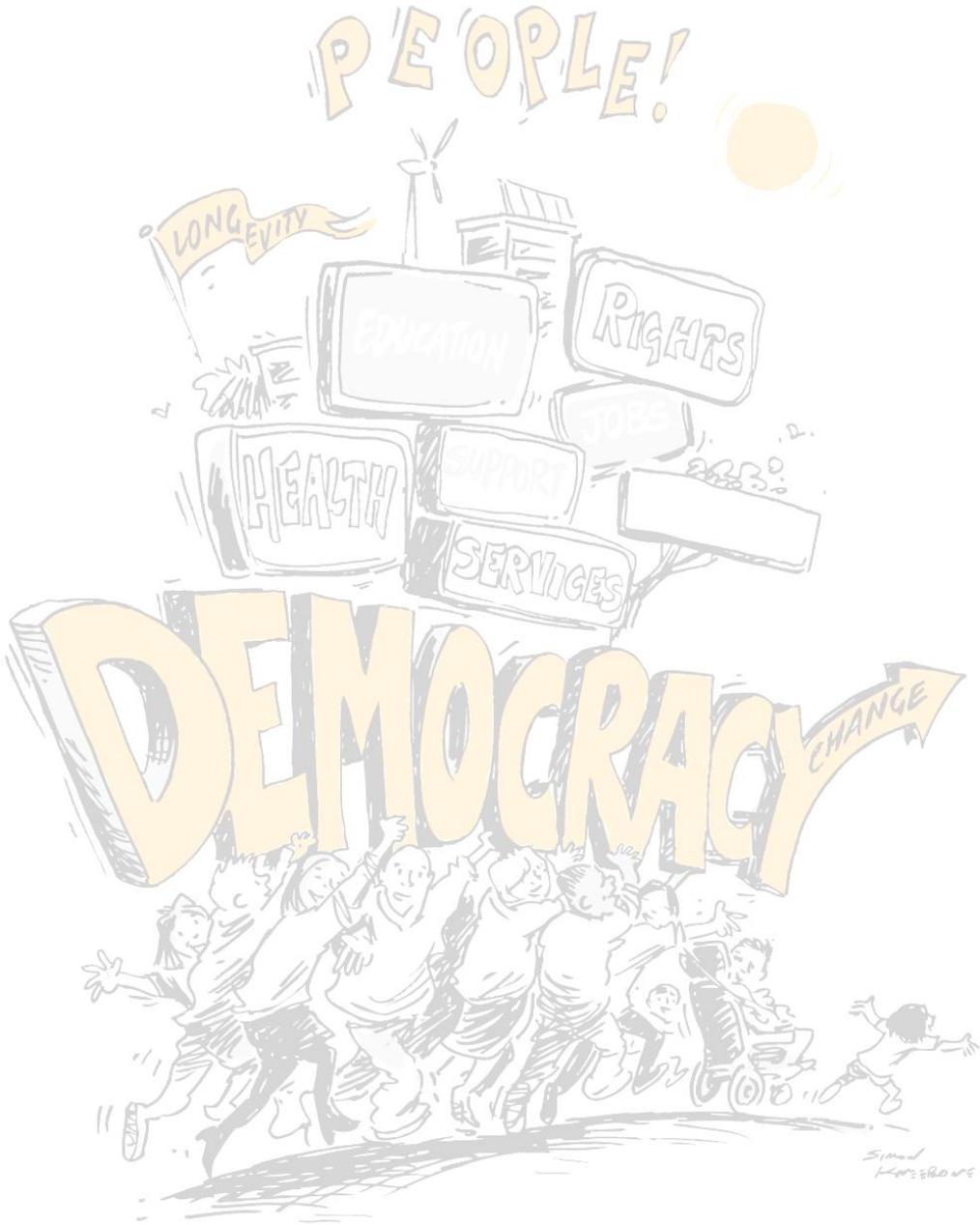
**What is needed?**

In response to a question about what attendees felt was needed prior to the conference, the following was provided;

- More of same services.
- More child-focused advice and counselling service.
- A Children's Commissioner.
- Specialist courts to deal with cases of CSA.
- Holistic approach that is able to case manage the child's needs as completely as possible.
- Improved coordination between existing services.
- Increased awards of compensation for pain and suffering and loss of opportunity.
- Therapeutic services with a focus on healing, not just case management work.
- More counselling services (which is age appropriate, more flexible, includes outreach).
- Services in schools.



ATTACHMENT B: Conference Program



## Attachment C: Attendee List

The following individuals attended the conference;

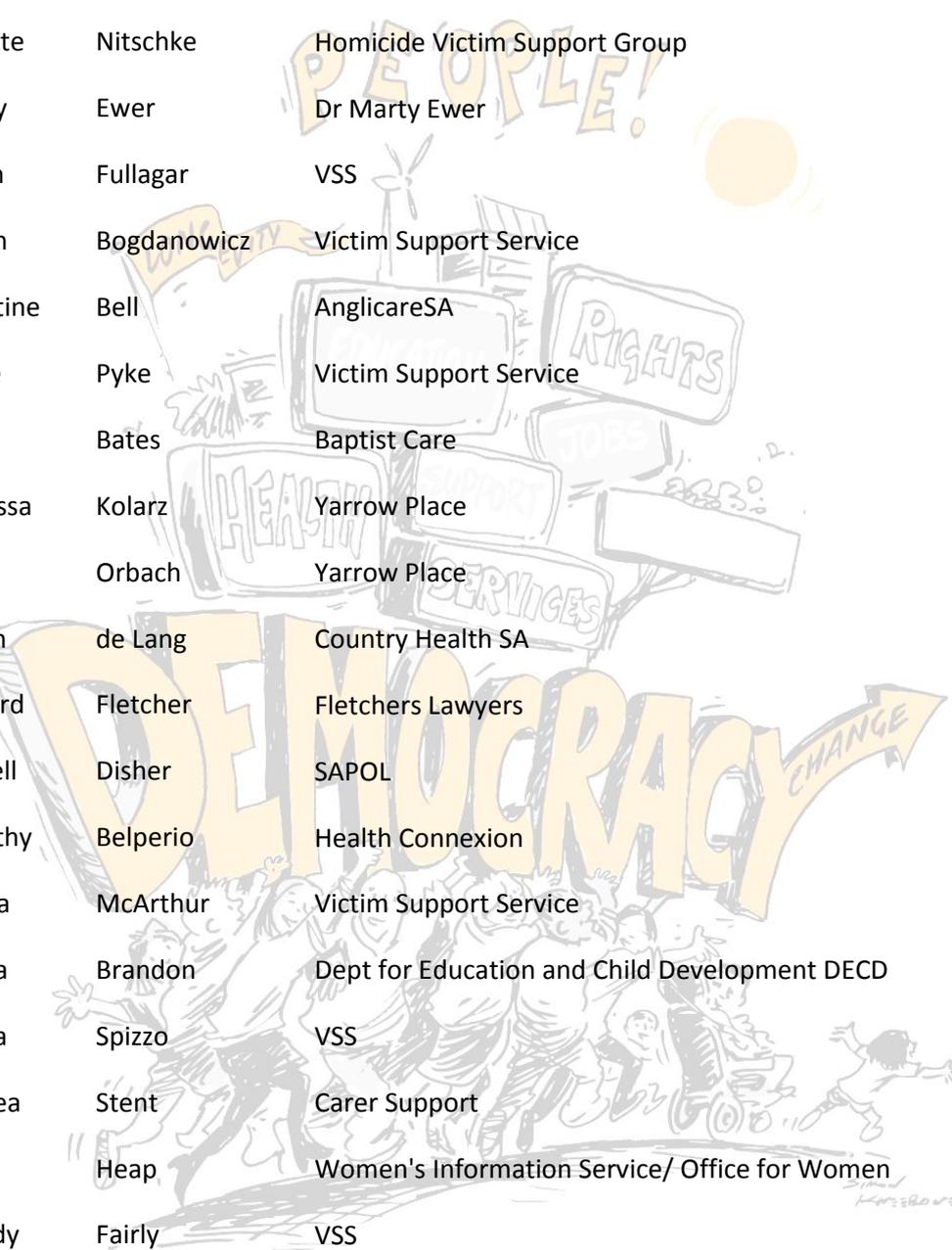


Angela	Dessart	Uniting Communities
Janet	Renfrey	AnglicareSA
Nyrelle	Adams	Anglicare-SA
Paige	Mower	AnglicareSA
Helen	Whittington	Centacare
Mary	Moran	Legal Services Commission
Julie-Anne	Toohy	UniSA
Christine	Gibson	Australian Centre for Child Protection
David	Morfey	Families SA, Dept for Education and Child Development
Ida-Marie	Tullio	Anglicare SA
Naomi	Brown	Northern Community Mental Health Service
Julia	Lamont	Families SA, Department for Education and Child Development
Audrey	Swanbury	Anglicare SA
Fabiana	Vielle	DPP
Lisa	Minervini	Barkuma Inc
Matthew	Mitchell	Matthew Mitchell Solicitors
Ally	Drew	SA Coroners Court
Kelly	Stubing	SAPOL
Betty	Campbell	Matthew Mitchell Solicitors
Craig	Hughes-Cashmore	Survivors & Mates Support Network
Kylie	van Alphen	St Johns Youth Services
A	Barelds	CAFWA-SA
Jac	Taylor	Victim Support Service
Heather	McMillan	Victim Support Service

Sarah	Zisos	Victim Support Service
Ruth	Coulter	Victim Support Service
Nikki	Lamshed	Victim Support Service
Carolina	Haro	Relationships Australia SA
Raina	Nechvoglod	VSS
Vic	Laughton	Victim Support Service
Louise	Bastian	VSS
Jeanette	Laughton	VSS
Justine	Button	AGD ODPP
Emily	Adcock	NDVS
Rick	Sarre	University of South Australia
HVSG	Participants x 3	Homicide Victim Support Group
Andi	Tran	Victim Support Service
Johanna	Barnard	Centacare
Steven	Allen	Port Adelaide Football Club
Catherine	Whittington	Uniting Communities
Katherine	McLachlan	VSS
James	Vigus	AnglicareSA
James	Vigus	AnglicareSA
Bec	McNicol	Uniting Communities
Brian	Peat	WCH
Carole	Stone	AnglicareSA
Nikki	Venter	Relationships Australia
Burley	Ricky	SA Police
Julian	Roffe	VSS
Joanne	Spadavecchia	Mobile Psychological & Health Services



Jo	Chapley	Chapley Group / VSS Board Member
Ellie	Hodges	Uniting Communities
Jennifer	Lewis	Victim Support Service
Chelsea	Hannaford	Crown Solicitor's Office
Ksharmra	Brandon	Department for Education & Child Development
Lynette	Nitschke	Homicide Victim Support Group
Marty	Ewer	Dr Marty Ewer
Karen	Fullagar	VSS
Alison	Bogdanowicz	Victim Support Service
Christine	Bell	AnglicareSA
Jayne	Pyke	Victim Support Service
Lani	Bates	Baptist Care
Vanessa	Kolarz	Yarrow Place
Kylie	Orbach	Yarrow Place
Judith	de Lang	Country Health SA
Richard	Fletcher	Fletchers Lawyers
Russell	Disher	SAPOL
Dorothy	Belperio	Health Connexion
Emma	McArthur	Victim Support Service
Krishna	Brandon	Dept for Education and Child Development DECD
Debra	Spizzo	VSS
Andrea	Stent	Carer Support
Mel	Heap	Women's Information Service/ Office for Women
Wendy	Fairly	VSS
Sue	Bourke	VSS
Magdalena	Madden	Council for the Care of Children



Narelle	Chester	Murray Bridge North School and South Primary School
Natasha	Jackson	Safe Places for Children
Alicia	Wilcock	DECD

