

Our Commitment to Engagement

Introduction

As uncovered through the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, many survivors shared that, at the time of abuse, adults responded poorly when they disclosed their abuse to institutional staff or management. Reactions almost always were negative.

The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse (the National Centre) recognises the critical role that victims and survivors play in creating change and will give voice to the experiences of victims and survivors of all ages, life stages and communities. The National Centre will collaborate with individuals, groups, organisations and agencies to increase the understanding of child sexual abuse, promote effective ways for protecting children and guide best practice responses and pathways to healing for survivors.

Our Commitment to Engagement articulates how the National Centre will elevate the collective voices and perspectives of victims and survivors and privilege their stories and experience as a rich and vital source of evidence to inform and drive changes in attitudes and responses at a systemic level. Our Commitment to Engagement is informed by best practice approaches to working with victims and survivors and will drive a culture and practice of ethical engagement. It sits alongside the National Centre's Stakeholder Engagement Strategy which outlines the approach and model to stakeholder engagement.

Our Commitment to Engagement

- Purpose** Provide safe, supported and diverse opportunities for victims and survivors to influence the National Centre's activities.
- Principles** Engagement principles guide the way the National Centre works with victims and survivors in all its activities.
- Practices** Practices outline what the National Centre's intended and practical steps will be to live our principles.
- Tools** Tools and support processes are being co-designed to support the practices outlined.

Forging partnerships with victims, survivors and other stakeholders to grow the knowledge base and drive generational change.

Our Commitment to Engagement Principles

Inclusive and Culturally Safe

- We recognise and value diversity
- We look for and engage diverse voices that might not usually be heard, including children and young people
- We acknowledge different approaches are needed and tailored to different groups and purposes
- We recognize that one voice will not represent all
- We empower people to make decisions about their inclusion

Participatory and Collaborative

- We create different opportunities to participate meaningfully
- We use co-design processes which respect people's experience
- We partner, avoiding replication or duplication
- We create partnerships built on transparency and trust
- We are clear with decision making and the degree of influence for each interaction

Trauma and Healing Informed

- We strive to cause no further harm
- We use engagement as an opportunity for healing and recovery
- We recognise the sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Culture and Communities
- We empower people through a strength-based approach
- We build safety and trust and challenge stigma where it arises

Elevate Victim and Survivor Voices

- We elevate and amplify victim and survivor voices
- We recognize victims and survivors as a critical source of knowledge
- We prioritise the safety of children in our work and engagement
- We value and respect the experiences, contributions of victims and survivors
- We believe victims and survivors can shape and design responses and services as leaders with lived and living experience

Rigorous and Aspirational

- We are curious and creative in how we lead for change
- We embed a reflective and learning approach in all we do
- We have a strong commitment to evaluation
- We consider evidence broadly; being inclusive of practice, research and lived experience perspectives
- We demonstrate courage and are not afraid to be disruptors to influence

Relevant and Translational

- We are purposeful in the work we do and decisions we make
- We make room at decision-making tables for victims and survivors
- We take a long-term sustainable view with an eye to practical implementation and change
- We share what works and what doesn't
- We partner strategically to achieve the most significant impacts

How we work with victims and survivors

There are a range of ways that the National Centre will partner, engage, consult, connect and communicate with victims and survivors through its work program and activities:

1. Formal National Centre governance engagement mechanisms → Survivor-led Adult College | Child and Young Persons College | First Nations College and through a range of activities and projects in development and design within the National Centre's workplan.
2. Informal communication and engagement through regular updates, media, social media, website, newsletters, pamphlets and videos.
3. Research and workforce change initiatives.
4. Community-wide education and awareness campaigns – change to community education and messaging.
5. Advocacy and media activities.

Regardless of the way we work with victims and survivors, the following practices will drive and activate our principles (unpacked overleaf).



The National Centre will partner with survivors in all its work, valuing their knowledge and experience.

Our Commitment to Engagement Practices Unpacked

Practice 1

Engagement → safe, accessible, tailored

Safe

- Clarify needs for physical and emotional safety
- Seek informed consent
- Safeguard privacy and confidentiality
- Articulate rights and responsibilities
- Adopt cultural protocols; be flexible around cultural needs
- All information is provided prior to activity
- Provide information in plain English

Accessible

- Welcoming and accessible physical environment
- Engage interpreters as needed
- Adapt physical environment as needed
- Provide appropriate notice time
- Be flexible about meeting time/length
- Adapt location or setting
- Appropriate language and meeting structure

Tailored

- Flexible and tailored approaches
- Allow different structures and approaches to meetings depending on participants
- Support artistic and creative expression

Practice 2

Support and development → induction, support, resources

Induction

- Provide an induction process
- Provide an organisational contact person
- Provide information on organisation policies or procedures
- Provide information regarding the supports and resources available
- Ensure that all involved, including National Centre staff, are trained in hearing and utilising lived and living experience and knowledge

Supports

- Access to trauma-informed strengths-based support throughout meetings and other activities
- Debriefing available after all meetings or activities
- Opportunities for training and professional development are available as relevant
- Well-being and self care is actively promoted

Resources

- Resource and support requirements are identified prior to activity or meetings
- Practical support is available with technology and access to internet
- Transport is available as required

Practice 3

Recognition → remuneration, reimbursement, acknowledgement

Remuneration

- Appropriate remuneration is provided to acknowledge contribution
- Clarity on remuneration is available prior to commitment
- Remuneration may be different for different activities
- In-kind payments may be negotiated, such as for training opportunities

Reimbursement

- All out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed promptly including parking, travel and incidentals
- Refreshments are provided including meals where appropriate
- Appropriate record keeping processes and procedures are in place

Acknowledgements

- People's experiences are acknowledged publicly (as appropriate)
- Contributions are recognised and acknowledged
- Intellectual Property is acknowledged and attributed
- We are respectful of time and contribution

Our Commitment to Engagement Practices Unpacked

Practice 4

Learning → reflection and feedback, complaints and disputes

Reflection and Feedback

- Improvement processes are active and include reflection on process and outcomes
- Review and evaluation of activities are undertaken
- Efforts to incorporate learning into activities is practised
- Feedback loops are closed with regular and timely feedback to participants including, where possible, the impact of their work and participation. This includes feedback to and from organisers and National Centre staff
- Exit processes include an opportunity for reflection and feedback

Complaints and Disputes

- Dispute resolution procedures are trauma-informed and respect principles of self-determination and natural justice
- All parties have access to support people as appropriate and required

Practice 5

Relationships → genuine, power and control, decision making

Genuine

- Time is invested and timelines appropriate for genuine, warm and trusting relationship building
- Clarify influence and constraints up front
- Staff and facilitators have the appropriate skills and experience to support trauma informed work and building of group dynamics
- Individuals have the right to exit at any time without repercussion
- Staff are supportive and accepting of emotionality

Power and Control

- Perceived or real power imbalances are discussed
- Tokenism is avoided
- Interests of participants are honoured
- People are free to express their views and challenge
- People are informed about and have access to complaints / feedback processes
- People should be facilitated to express their views however they need
- Participation – choice and freedom

Decision Making

- How decisions are made and who makes them is clear and transparent
- People are supported to decide how they participate and contribute (within the scope of the activity or meeting)
- People's roles and responsibilities are clear

References



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