



It Starts With Us: Why Youth Voices are Critical in the Conversation on Gender-Based Violence Prevention

SYDNEY | CANBERRA | MELBOURNE

During the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, arts and social change organisation Big hART is joining with peak bodies, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre (WAGEC), and Respect Victoria to launch their education resources and impact strategy. Impact activity includes screenings of documentary *It Starts With Us* followed by panel discussions with young people from the film along with leading cross-sector voices.

These impact events and associated educational resources will facilitate place-based conversations with political and community leaders to reaffirm commitments to prevention as a priority in the fight against gender-based violence. They show how and why young people's voices must be included in the co-design of prevention initiatives at every level of planning and implementation.

Four out of ten young people are exposed to family violence according to the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (2023). Yet conversations on prevention that include the voices of young people are rarely heard. A new documentary *It Starts With Us*, demonstrates an innovative arts-based approach to stopping violence before it starts, featuring young people from Frankston North Victoria and advocate **Rosie Batty AO**.

The film follows a 10-Year school-based program using creative arts to reveal the extraordinary impact of engaging young people in prevention work, as participants navigate challenges including housing instability, bullying, family tensions and low self-esteem through creative expression and mentorship. Through powerful songwriting workshops, the teenagers transform their lived experiences into compelling lyrics, culminating in an original song "I'm Dreaming" that gives voice to their often-invisible struggles.

These education resources and documentary arrive at a critical time when prevention programs receive less than five percent of sector funding** despite their potential for long-term impact and government savings at the crisis end of the issue.

"There won't be a shift in how adults treat each other unless we focus on the next generation and listen to young people," said Rosie Batty, whose involvement in the project highlights the urgent need for youth-centred approaches to violence prevention.

Beyond the Screen: Education and Impact

The comprehensive suite of education resources features short films, lesson plans, and educator guides designed for high school students, and complements existing Respectful Relationships education. These materials are available through the ClickView education platform and the project website, extending the documentary's impact into classrooms and community spaces nationwide.

Key Quotes

"Whether you sit in a boardroom, a classroom or a seat on the bus, you have influence and you can contribute to the seismic shift towards a world free from violence."

Rosie Batty AO, 2025

"Ending domestic, family and sexual violence hinges on getting it right for children and young people and we cannot do that unless they are involved at every step, on their own terms." - Dr Tessa Boyd-Caine, ANROWS CEO, ANROWS Conference 2025

"Prevention in education settings is a critical part of the puzzle if we're going to make meaningful change and end gender-based violence - both for today's children and young people and for our future generations.

Project O is a beautiful example of how art, music and creativity can change lives. It builds individual confidence for young people to be the best versions of themselves and supports those critical conversations about respect, equality and safety."

Moo Baulch, Our Watch Chair and Director of Primary Prevention, Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre 2025

Impact Screening Details

Impact screenings and panel discussions are scheduled over the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

Canberra | in partnership with ANROWS (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety)

Panel includes: Jodie Belyea MP; Tessa Boyd-Caine, CEO of ANROWS, young people from the film

Date: 24 November 2025

Time: 12pm-2pm

Location: Canberra Parliament House Theatre

RSVP Here: <https://events.humanitix.com/it-starts-with-us-impact-screening>

Melbourne | in partnership with Respect VIC

Panel includes: Paul Edbrooke MP; Tim Richardson MP; Helen Bolton, CEO Respect VIC; Rosie Batty; Angela Dickson, Economist, young people from the film

Date: 1 December 2025

Time: 10am – 11.30am

Location: Kino Cinema, 45 Collins Street, Melbourne

RSVP Here: <https://events.humanitix.com/it-starts-with-us>

Sydney | in partnership with Women and Girls Emergency Centre (WAGEC)

Panel includes: Dr Hannah Tonkin, Inaugural Women's Safety Commissioner; Dixie Link-Gordon, Full Stop Australia & WAGEC, Nicole Yade, CEO WAGEC; Matthew Balane, Community Development Practitioner, young people from the film

Date: 5 December 2025

Time: 5.30pm - 7.30pm

Location: State Library, Auditorium, 1 Shakespeare Pl, Sydney

RSVP Here: <https://itstartswithus.raiselysite.com/>

Websites:

View film, education resources & project background at website: www.itstartswithus.com.au

For more information on Big hART visit: www.bighart.org

Duty of Care for Young People - Note to journalists & editors: The young people featured were not selected based on personal experiences of domestic violence and should not be portrayed as such. When reporting on this story, please refer to established guidelines for reporting on family and domestic violence available through Our Watch and the Australian Press Council.

Media are welcome to attend these events. Please RSVP on the above links & email chris@bighart.org.au to notify of your attendance. Media interviews available on request.

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