

# ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH  
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

*to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children*

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **New insights into the impacts of violence and trauma during childhood could support reduction in youth offending**

A new ANROWS report, *Adverse childhood experiences among youth who offend: Examining exposure to domestic and family violence for male youth who perpetrate sexual harm and violence*, provides further evidence that experiences of trauma and neglect in childhood lead to patterns of violent offending among male youth in Australia.

Researchers from Griffith University used the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) framework to examine two large existing Queensland youth offender datasets, and found that young males who went on to commit offences had commonly experienced high rates of ACEs in their childhood. This was especially true for young men who had committed sexual offences. Sexual offending was also strongly correlated with childhood exposure to domestic and family violence, along with overall experiences of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse and neglect in their childhood.

The insights generated from these findings will support policymakers and practitioners to identify critical timing for trauma-informed interventions for children and young people and will enhance processes to identify children most at risk of later offending. The authors also recommend collaboration and communication between support, health and justice services to reduce further engagement with the youth justice system.

Additionally, the project revealed that there is further work to be done to reconceptualise the ACEs framework and to develop tools and methods to assess ACEs among First Nations children to ensure responses recognise and understand the impacts of colonisation, structural racism and intergenerational trauma on First Nations youth. This work needs to be led and informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ANROWS CEO Padma Raman PSM welcomed the new report, noting that it creates opportunities to intervene early in the lives of young Australians who have experienced ACEs. "This new report significantly enhances our capacity to respond to children experiencing harm, before they go on to commit offences. It equips Australian policymakers with new knowledge that can be used to effect generational change."

The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services, applauded the report's sophisticated analysis. "Using data to understand the lives of vulnerable children is critical if we want to take meaningful actions for change. This report is an example of how we can learn from

the experiences of families to develop evidence-informed, integrated policies that lead to positive outcomes for Australian children”.

#### Additional information:

The ACEs framework includes a checklist of 10 conditions of maltreatment and dysfunction:

- emotional abuse
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional neglect
- physical neglect
- parental separation or divorce
- exposure to domestic violence
- caregiver substance abuse
- caregiver mental health
- family incarceration.

This research is the second and final report from the “Adverse childhood experiences and the intergenerational transmission of domestic and family violence in young people who engage in harmful sexual behaviour and violence against women” project.

The report examines young men who have encountered the Youth Justice system for offending. No conclusions can be drawn about the likelihood that an individual with ACEs will go on to commit offences.

The first report, [\*Exploring the onset, duration, and temporal ordering of ACEs in young people adjudicated for sexual offences: A longitudinal qualitative study\*](#), recommends examining the timing and placement of several early developmental experiences known to be correlated with later involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Journalists are invited to request an embargoed copy of the report.

**For further information, contact Johanna Gleeson at ANROWS on +61 0426 529 959 or email [johanna.gleeson@anrows.org.au](mailto:johanna.gleeson@anrows.org.au)**

#### About ANROWS

Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety Limited ([ANROWS](#)) is a not-for-profit independent national research organisation.

ANROWS is an initiative of Australia’s *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. ANROWS was established by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments of Australia to produce, disseminate and assist in applying evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women and their children.

ANROWS is the only such research organisation in Australia.