



## **WOMEN SPEAK**

A 6-week program for women who have been subjected to domestic and family violence

*“... there’s no award for the sort of brave that women are”*

### **Information for Referring Agencies**

Women Speak is a six-week information and support program which aims to reduce feelings of isolation and support personal agency by providing information and opportunities to reflect in a safe environment with other women and mothers who share similar experiences.

There are two groups each term. The program is facilitated by qualified and experienced Domestic and Family Violence Workers. Children Speak is offered alongside Women Speak.

Aims:

- Building safer families
- Building self esteem
- Building awareness of the effects of domestic and family violence
- Reduce isolation by sharing common feelings/experiences

Women Speak is grounded in the fact that the personal is the political. We aim to visiblise historical and current patriarchal structures that have and do result in gender inequalities. We aim to consistently position accountability where it belongs - with the perpetrator of the violence and with the patriarchal structures that enable it. We aim to consistently ask about and unearth women’s accounts of resistance, revealing 'pre-existing abilities, emergent capacities and feelings or acts of despair, determination, love or fear. Such responses inspire us to empathise and work in solidarity with women and children. It shifts our focus from working "on" to working "with" and "for" mothers, children and families' (Department of Communities and Justice, 2017).

The program has been ongoingly adapted with feedback from women who have attended. Women are the experts in their own lives. Current research, new ways of thinking, new laws and so on will inform changes and additions. In addition, as technology advances, it is important to keep updating the Technology Safety section. Whilst the groundwork of power and control stays the same, the ways in which power and control is exerted over women changes as it adapts to what is available, particularly with technological advances. We are currently updating the program during the COVID 19 Pandemic, where perpetrators have designed new ways to assert power and control over their families.

## **Sessions**

**Week 1** I am Woman, Hear me Roar

**Week 2** Domestic and family violence: the facts

**Week 3** Respectful relationships

**Week 4** Our children

**Week 5** Technology safety in a cyber world

Week 6 Bringing it all together

In the sessions we explore:

- *Unearthing and connecting to women's strengths*
- *Mindfulness*
- *Noticing discomfort/distress/fear- what's the first things you might notice and what might that tell you?*
- *Introduction to patriarchy and how this structure upholds violence against women*
- *Positioning accountability*
- *Myths about perpetrators of family violence*
- *Outlining patterns and tactics that perpetrators use in DFV*
- *Coercion and consent*
- *Power and control wheel*
- *Cycle of violence*
- *Safety planning including age-appropriate safety planning with children*
- *Safety when preparing to leave*
- *Victim survivor's acts of resistance*
- *What help is there*
- *What respectful relationships can look like*
- *Equality Wheel*
- *Are you living in a Respectful relationship?*
- *How history sabotages how we parent our children*
- *Maternal alienation*

- *How DFV has affected you as a mum*
- *Women's acts of protection*
- *The effects of DFV on children*
- *Effects of the DFV on their own children - what they noticed, what other people might have noticed eg school and how they might support that*
- *There's plenty we can do to support our children to recover*
- *Nurturing children's wheel*
- *Providing a safe and nurturing environment for their children*
- *Technology facilitated abuse*
- *Power and control wheel on technology & abuse*
- *Safe use of technology*
- *Useful resources on tech safety*