



**yourtown**  
POWERING kids helpline

# Review of the Queensland Charter of Victims' Rights

A submission to the Office of the  
Victims' Commissioner

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**yourtown** is a trusted provider of services for young people, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing, parenting and early childhood development, long-term unemployment, prevention of youth suicide, child protection, and support for those experiencing domestic and family violence. **yourtown** has evolved to helping hundreds of thousands of young people each year through a range of service offerings, supporting them through many difficult challenges.

### Our services

- Domestic and family violence refuge, transitional housing, and therapeutic supports for women and their children, including post-refuge support
- Accommodation and therapeutic supports for young parents and their children at high risk
- Early intervention mental health services for children aged 0-18 years old and their families
- Parentline, a telephone and online counselling and support service for parents and carers in the Northern Territory and Queensland
- Young Parents Program providing parenting support to help with child development, life skills and health and wellbeing activities in safe, supportive environments.
- Kids Helpline, providing professional counselling and support 24x7 to 5–25-year-olds across Australia since 1991
- Kids Helpline @ School delivering early intervention and prevention programs to primary and secondary schools nationally
- My Circle, a confidential, private, online peer support network for 13–25-year-olds to share information and build coping skills, and
- Employment, education, and social enterprise programs to support young people at risk of long-term unemployment to re-engage with education and/or employment.

### Family and Domestic Violence Refuge and Transitional Housing

**yourtown's** Family and Domestic Violence Refuge provides safe, supported accommodation for women and children for up to 12 weeks, or longer depending on individual needs. The refuge is staffed by a specialised, trauma-informed team where families can begin to rebuild their lives. The service is designed to foster empowerment, restore self-agency, and support women and children to reconnect with their strengths, aspirations, and sense of control.

Families exiting the refuge may transition into **yourtown's** Transitional Housing Program, which offers continued safety and stability for up to 12 months. This program is a critical bridge to long-term, independent living and includes wrap-around support tailored to each family's goals. This includes assistance with legal and financial matters, employment pathways, education access, therapeutic support, and helping children settle into school and community life.

The refuge also offers an Outreach Program at exit, enabling families to maintain connection with the refuge and receive ongoing support after their stay. This continuity of care ensures women and children remain supported as they navigate their next steps for as long as they need. In 2024-25, **yourtown** supported: 29 parents and 48 children through refuge accommodation and 21 parents and 38 children through transitional housing.

### Face-to-face Programs for Children and Families

**yourtown** provides accommodation and intensive individualised support to vulnerable at-risk young parents and their children through our San Miguel service. For over 40 years, San Miguel has provided a place to call home for vulnerable and at-risk families. In 2024-25, San Miguel supported 33 parents and 41 infants and young children.

**yourtown's** Care Plus program in Port Pirie is an early intervention and family support service that aims to improve the development and wellbeing of children. We support students to continue to engage meaningfully in their education. On average, Care Plus supported 25 children and young people each month in the last financial year.

**yourtown's** Starfish program supports children and young people aged up to 18 years to improve their emotional health and wellbeing. We provide outreach early intervention and prevention support in the Moreton Bay and Logan communities. The program supported 270 families in the last financial year.

**yourtown** is the Facilitating Partner for Deception Bay Communities for Children services. These community-based prevention and early intervention strategies support the development and wellbeing of children up to 12 years of age. In 2024-25, Coordinated Advocacy and Referral for Early Intervention assisted 114 families, Wolbai (a culturally safe, appropriate, and socially inclusive program that supports children and families) assisted 110 families, and Connected Families (which aims to strengthen parenting, wellbeing, and community connections for families) supported 182 families.

**yourtown's** Penrose Young Parents Program in Port Pirie South Australia and Glugor Young Parents Program in Deception Bay Queensland provide practical parenting support to help with child development, life skills, and health and wellbeing activities in safe, supportive environments. In 2024-25, Penrose supported 45 parents and 42 children and Glugor supported 31 parents and 42 children.

## Kids Helpline

**yourtown's** Kids Helpline is Australia's only free and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for those aged 5 to 25. It offers children and young people a range of care options that are right for their needs and circumstances. Our commitment to being there anytime, and for any reason, has meant that we have responded to more than 9.0 million contacts from children and young people nationally in the 34 years since our service was first established, while also providing tens of millions of self-help interactions via our website and social channels. In 2024, our Kids Helpline counsellors responded to 133,386 contacts from children and young people across Australia, including 4,632 crisis responses for children and young people at imminent risk of harm.

## Parentline

Parentline offers free confidential phone and webchat counselling and support for parents and carers of children in Queensland and the Northern Territory. It offers a safety net for families by providing support when it is most needed. This includes after hours and weekends, where families feel isolated and where local services are unavailable. In 2024-25, there were more than 6,000 counselling contacts with parents and carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

## Employment Services

For over 20 years **yourtown** has been delivering specialist youth employment services. Our employment services programs, including Transition to Work, Skilling Queenslanders for Work, and Get Back in the Game provide young people with training to expand their options and help them find sustainable employment. During 2024-25 almost 5,000 young people were supported in our employment services and programs in South Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales.

## Social Enterprises

**yourtown** has worked with young people and employers to break down barriers to sustainable employment for 25 years. As a leader in work-based enterprises we provide young people at risk of long-term unemployment paid jobs in the following areas: construction, landscaping, and asset maintenance to help their transition to open employment. In 2024-25, almost 300 young people were employed in our social enterprises across South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, and Tasmania.

**yourtown** welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Queensland Government's Review of the Charter of Victims' Rights (the Charter) and supports the Office of the Victims' Commissioner's efforts to make the Charter clearer, more inclusive, and easier to use for victim-survivors.

**yourtown** is a trusted provider of services for young people, focusing on mental health and wellbeing, parenting and early childhood development, long-term unemployment, suicide prevention, child protection, and support for those experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV). Each year, **yourtown** supports hundreds of thousands of children, young people and their families through a diverse range of services, including early intervention mental health programmes, refuge and transitional housing, therapeutic supports for families, employment and social enterprise initiatives, and 24/7 counselling support through our nationally recognised Kids Helpline.

Our submission draws on **yourtown's** DFV service experience, advocacy, and research. It is informed by young people from the Your Voice 2025 project<sup>1</sup>, representatives from our Youth Network, and the children, young people and women we support. We recommend strengthening the Charter with clearer definitions, inclusive language, trauma-informed practices, and accessible systems. Key themes include respectful and dignified treatment, accessible information, long-term care, transparent complaint mechanisms, and recognition of diverse victim experiences, ensuring the Charter better reflects the lived realities and needs of those often overlooked.

## Consolidated Themes: Key Principles for an Effective Charter

Through our advocacy, research, and frontline work, we have heard from young people and victim-survivors about their experiences and applied their learnings to recommend what is needed for the Charter to be effective and meaningful.

Importantly, children and young people must be recognised as victims. Exposure to DFV whether direct or indirect can cause significant and ongoing harm. Children are not merely witnesses or extensions of adult victimhood. The Charter must reflect their unique experiences and ensure that responses are child-centred, trauma-informed, and uphold their rights to safety, support, and participation.

### Recommendation

Amend the Charter to explicitly **recognise children and young people as victims**, ensuring that all rights and obligations reflect their distinct experiences of domestic and family violence. This includes embedding child-centred and trauma-informed principles throughout the Charter, and guaranteeing their rights to safety, support, and meaningful participation in decisions that affect them.

Further, the Charter must be informed by the voices and lived experiences of children and young people. To ensure the Charter is relevant, accessible, and empowering, its development and ongoing review should incorporate co-design<sup>2</sup> and human-centred design<sup>3</sup> methods. These approaches help ensure that the Charter contains information that is youth-appropriate, culturally safe, and responsive to the diverse realities of children and young people, including those with disability, from LGBTIQ+ communities, from First Nations communities, and from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

<sup>1</sup> **yourtown**. (2025). Your Voice report. [https://ytn-p-](https://ytn-p-001.sitecorecontenthub.cloud/api/public/content/b4109320b71d4f5b97c9105a8fa142c3?v=8e264ef3)

[001.sitecorecontenthub.cloud/api/public/content/b4109320b71d4f5b97c9105a8fa142c3?v=8e264ef3](https://ytn-p-001.sitecorecontenthub.cloud/api/public/content/b4109320b71d4f5b97c9105a8fa142c3?v=8e264ef3)

<sup>2</sup> Co-design refers to collaborative processes where children and young people are actively involved in shaping policies and systems that affect them, not just consulted after decisions are made.

<sup>3</sup> Human-centred design ensures that solutions are built around the real needs, preferences, and contexts of users.

#### Recommendation

Ensure the Charter is developed and reviewed through **co-design and human-centred design processes that actively involve children and young people**. This includes establishing mechanisms for their meaningful participation in shaping the Charter's content, language, and implementation strategies.

These themes are drawn directly from **yourtown's** Your Voice 2025 project and our extensive DFV service delivery experience and can be applied across the various areas and consultation questions explored by the Review:

- **Respectful and dignified treatment:** Young people and victim-survivors who engaged with Your Voice 2025 reported feeling dismissed, invalidated, or unsupported by institutions such as schools, police, and child protection services. DFV service participants described experiences of being retraumatised or misunderstood by professionals, highlighting the need for clear guidance on respectful engagement that ensures dignity and compassion in every interaction.
- **Accessible and inclusive information:** Evidence from Your Voice 2025 shows that young people face barriers such as long wait times, unclear eligibility, and communication that is not youth friendly. DFV service users have identified that information and resources must be easy to understand, available in multiple formats, and tailored to diverse needs, including disability and LGBTIQ+ communities.
- **Trauma-informed, long-term care:** Both Your Voice 2025 participants and DFV service users emphasised the importance of sustained, holistic support for recovery. Young people called for continuity of care and advocacy. In parallel, DFV programs highlighted that trauma-informed approaches—such as consistent emotional support, culturally safe practices, and survivor-led decision-making—are critical in helping victim-survivors regain stability and rebuild their lives.
- **Transparent and safe complaint mechanisms:** Your Voice 2025 highlighted young people's fear of retaliation, confusion about complaint processes, and lack of confidence in institutional responses. DFV service delivery has shown that complaint pathways must be clearly explained, youth-appropriate, and independently monitored to ensure victims feel safe seeking redress.
- **Inclusivity for diverse victims:** Insights from Your Voice 2025 and DFV services reveal that the Charter must reflect the experiences and address the needs of all victims, including children and young people, those affected by non-violent offences, people with disability, and LGBTIQ+ communities.

#### Recommendation

Amend the Charter so that the principles of **respectful and dignified treatment, accessible and inclusive information, trauma-informed and long-term care, transparent and safe complaint mechanisms, and inclusivity for diverse victims** underpin all rights and obligations within the document.

## Additional Themes

In addition to the consolidated themes that apply across the Charter, this submission examines several specific areas.

## Victims covered by the Charter

The Charter currently applies to victims of violent crime, which means a crime that harms someone physically, psychologically or emotionally. It includes physical violence, robberies, sexual violence, and domestic and family violence. Evidence from **yourtown's** service delivery and Your Voice 2025 show that the Charter does not adequately address the needs of children and young people affected by DFV, nor does it recognise victims of non-violent offences who also experience significant harm. Young people report feeling dismissed and unsupported when seeking help, and institutions such as schools, police, and child protection services are often perceived as unresponsive. Barriers to accessing support—such as long wait times, unclear eligibility, and inaccessible communication—are particularly pronounced for young people, people with disability, and LGBTIQ+ communities. These gaps undermine the Charter's effectiveness and its relevance to the lived experiences of young victim-survivors.

The Charter's definition of sexual violence focuses on the absence of freely given consent and includes both physical and non-physical acts. However, insights from Your Voice 2025 reveal that young people's understanding of sexual violence is broader and more nuanced—emphasising coercion, manipulation, and the systemic contexts in which harm occurs. Their lived experiences highlight gaps in how the Charter currently frames and responds to sexual violence.

Importantly, Your Voice 2025 participants described sexual violence in terms that strongly align with the Charter's definition—emphasising the absence of freely given and informed consent, and highlighting experiences of coercion, manipulation, and pressure. Their accounts reflect a nuanced understanding of consent that includes psychological and emotional coercion, not just physical force. This reinforces the need for the Charter to explicitly recognise coercive dynamics and indirect forms of pressure that compromise a person's ability to consent.

Young people also situated sexual violence within a broader social and institutional context, reporting experiences across relationships, schools, workplaces, and community settings. This contextual complexity underscores the importance of recognising sexual violence as a systemic issue, not just an interpersonal one. The Charter must reflect this reality by acknowledging the diverse environments in which harm occurs and ensuring that institutional responses are equipped to address it.

In addition, Your Voice 2025 participants identified image-based abuse and sextortion as critical forms of sexual violence. These include the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, threats to distribute such content, and coercive demands for sexual acts or materials. While these harms may not always meet criminal thresholds, they cause profound psychological, social, and reputational damage. The Charter must expand its scope to include these online-enabled harms and affirm the rights of victims to protection, support, and redress.

A persistent problem in public awareness campaigns and institutional responses is the tendency to present victims through narrow or stereotypical lenses, often focusing on certain types of relationships or demographics. This can inadvertently exclude or marginalise those whose experiences do not fit these common portrayals. It is essential that the Charter recognises that anyone can be a victim, regardless of the form or nature of their relationship. By explicitly acknowledging the diversity of victim experiences and avoiding the reinforcement of stereotypes, the Charter can ensure that all individuals feel seen, supported, and able to access their rights and services without fear of being dismissed or overlooked.

**yourtown** advocates for the Charter be broadened to include victims of serious non-violent and/or online-enabled harms because these harms can cause profound psychological,



social and economic damage yet are excluded by the current violence-focused test. Examples to include are image-based abuse and image publication that fall short of criminal thresholds; doxxing and publication of private information that creates safety risks; sustained online harassment and coordinated mobbing; cyber-enabled impersonation and account takeover causing reputational damage; and sextortion and sexual coercion that are not prosecuted under existing categories. Expanding the Charter to cover these categories would ensure consistent rights to information, support and fair treatment from government agencies and victim services and better reflect the full spectrum of contemporary victim experiences.

#### Recommendation

Amend the Charter to broaden its scope beyond violent crime to **include victims of serious non-violent and online-enabled harms**. It should recognise victims of crimes related to **coercive and manipulative behaviours, systemic contexts of sexual violence, and digital harms such as image-based abuse and sextortion**. The Charter should establish **universal rights for all victims**, with **differentiated provisions based on the nature and impact of harm**.

### Other people who have rights under the Charter

Current definitions of “family member” and “dependant” in the Charter are too narrow and do not reflect the realities of young people, including those affected by DFV. Evidence from **yourtown’s** youth engagement initiatives, including Your Voice 2025, show that young people conceptualise family in relational and emotional terms, often identifying grandparents, cousins, and close friends as central to their support networks—especially in contexts of trauma or family estrangement. Moreover, these definitions fail to accommodate First Nations kinship systems or the varied family arrangements of CALD communities. **yourtown’s** DFV programs further highlights that extended and chosen family members, such as grandparents acting as primary caregivers, play a pivotal role in providing stability and care when parents are unable to do so. In addition, the definitions do not account for “found family” relationships, which are particularly significant for LGBTIQA+ young people who may rely on chosen support networks outside of traditional family structures. Similarly, young people’s understanding of “dependant” extends beyond financial reliance to include emotional, developmental, and practical support, such as help with housing, transport, and navigating services. Revising these definitions to include broader forms of familial and dependent relationships will ensure the Charter is inclusive, responsive, and aligned with the lived experiences of victims and their care network and is reflective of the diverse ways communities define and experience family and support.

#### Recommendation

**Revise the Charter’s definitions of “family member” and “dependant” to reflect the diverse, relational, and culturally grounded understandings of family and support.** “Family member” should include grandparents, cousins, close friends, and ‘found family’ who fulfil familial roles, while “dependant” should encompass emotional, developmental, and practical forms of reliance.

### Who has to uphold Charter rights?

The Charter does not clearly mandate which government services are responsible for upholding the rights to respectful treatment, access to information, support services, and complaint mechanisms. This ambiguity leads to inconsistent application across agencies, undermining the Charter’s intent and limiting its effectiveness—particularly for young people navigating multiple systems.

The Charter must apply uniformly across all government services, including those not traditionally associated with justice or health, to ensure consistent, trauma-informed responses.

**yourtown's** Your Voice 2025 youth engagement initiative reveals that young people frequently experience invalidation, retraumatisation, and systemic barriers when interacting with government services such as Centrelink, the NDIS, and education systems. These services, while not directly responding to violent crime, significantly influence victims' recovery and wellbeing. When they fail to uphold the Charter's principles, they risk compounding trauma and eroding trust.

Furthermore, **yourtown** advocates for embedding trauma-transformative frameworks across all government services. This includes education, housing, employment, and social services, recognising that victim-survivors require holistic, coordinated support across multiple domains. However, accessing this support often requires individuals to uproot their entire lives—changing schools, jobs, homes, and social networks. This process takes time, which many victims simply do not have, especially when they are being actively tracked or threatened by an offender. The Charter must acknowledge this urgency and ensure that trauma-informed responses are not only comprehensive but also rapid, accessible, and protective.

Exempting certain agencies from the Charter creates confusion and inconsistency, particularly for young people who often engage with several systems simultaneously. It also signals a lack of accountability in some institutions, contradicting the Charter's foundational values.

#### **Recommendation**

To uphold the principles of the Charter, it must be legislatively **mandated across all government services—not only those traditionally linked to justice or DFV—to ensure consistent, trauma-informed support for victim-survivors.**

## **Charter Rights**

### **Recognition and respect**

The Charter affirms the right of victims to be treated with courtesy, compassion, dignity, and respect. However, current interpretations of "respect" often lack clarity and consistency in practice. Young people, particularly those affected by DFV, frequently report experiences of being dismissed, retraumatised, or misunderstood by systems and professionals. This undermines the Charter's foundational commitment to respectful treatment.

The Charter should strengthen the right to respectful treatment by explicitly defining what respect entails in practice. This includes timely, trauma-informed, culturally safe, and inclusive responses that recognise each victim's unique identity, lived experience, and support needs. The Charter should also mandate that services demonstrate cultural safety, accessibility, and accountability in their interactions with victims.

**yourtown's** Your Voice 2025 youth consultations reveal that respectful treatment is experienced through being believed, listened to, and supported. Young people described feeling invalidated by professionals and harmed by systemic delays or indifference. For example, LGBTIQ+ youth reported discriminatory treatment by religious institutions, while young people with disability highlighted the need for accessible communication and support tailored to their energy and cognitive needs.

Delays, complexity, and lack of transparency in service responses were consistently cited as compounding trauma and eroding trust. These findings underscore the need for systemic



change to ensure that respect is embedded in every interaction and decision affecting victims.

*“Domestic violence - police response was greatly inadequate, much more could have been done to help, there was victim blaming” 18–25-year-old female Your Voice participant from Queensland*

#### Recommendation

Amend the Charter to:

- Explicitly define **respectful treatment as timely, trauma-informed, culturally safe, and inclusive of diverse identities and experiences.**
- Require **all services to demonstrate accountability** in upholding this right to recognition and respect, incorporate mechanisms such as victim recognition statements to validate lived experiences.

#### Support, advice, advocacy

The Charter affirms the right to support, advice, and advocacy<sup>4</sup>, yet its current language and scope lack clarity, specificity, and inclusivity. Phrases such as “at the earliest practicable opportunity” are vague and fail to convey the urgency victims experience. Additionally, the Charter does not adequately define the types of support available or ensure equitable access for diverse victim groups, particularly young people, First Nations peoples, those with disability, and individuals from CALD or LGBTIQ+ communities.

The Charter should adopt clearer, more directive language to ensure timely and accessible support. It should specify the types of assistance available, affirm the right to help in navigating services, and guarantee access to interpreters and accessible information formats. The Charter must also recognise the importance of tailored, trauma-informed, and culturally safe support, particularly for marginalised groups. In addition to professional support, the Charter should recognise the value of peer support and youth advocates, as many young people feel more comfortable seeking help from others with similar lived experiences. These reforms will ensure that the Charter delivers timely, understandable, and equitable support to all victims, particularly those facing systemic barriers to access and recognition.

Participants in **yourtown's** Your Voice 2025 youth summit reported that delays in accessing support services exacerbated trauma and fostered feelings of abandonment. Young people also expressed confusion about available services and how to access them. They called for clear, youth-friendly resources outlining specific supports—such as counselling, legal advocacy, housing, and court accompaniment—and how to obtain them. This need is particularly acute for victims with disability, CALD backgrounds, or limited literacy.

*“When the support was timely, clear, and personalised, it made a real difference in solving my problems and meeting my needs. However, there have also been times when the services felt slow, uncoordinated or difficult to navigate, which created frustration and delays. Overall, I appreciate the efforts made but believe there is still room for improvement, especially in communication, follow-up and user-friendliness.” 18–25-year-old male Your Voice participant from Queensland*

Children navigating family law, child protection, and criminal justice systems – particularly in cases involving family violence, sexual abuse, or police disclosures – often face significant barriers to having their voices heard and understood. These systems can be overwhelming, retraumatising, and developmentally inappropriate. Holistic, trauma-informed advocacy is

<sup>4</sup> Individual advocacy means active support for victims of crime by working directly with a victim to secure practical help, information, legal or service access, safety planning, or representation

essential to ensure children are supported to safely express their views, participate meaningfully, and have their wellbeing prioritised across all legal and protective processes.

To ensure children's concerns are not dismissed or deemed unsubstantiated due to fear or trauma responses when they disclose information, the Charter should require the use of trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate disclosure protocols across child protection and family law systems. Being believed from the outset is crucial, as it can significantly influence whether someone feels safe to seek help and engage with support services. These protocols include creating safe, supportive environments for children to share their experiences at their own pace, using communication methods suited to their age, neurodiversity, and cultural background. Professionals should be trained to recognise non-verbal cues and indirect disclosures, and systems should avoid placing the burden of proof solely on the child. Embedding these practices will help ensure that children's safety concerns are taken seriously and interpreted within the context of their lived experience.

**yourtown** emphasises the value of wrap-around support and case management, especially for women and children in refuge and transitional housing. These services are essential for navigating complex systems and rebuilding lives. Furthermore, young people highlighted the need for interpreters, translated materials, easy-to-read formats, and digital accessibility tools. They also advocated for trained staff who understand their identities and needs, and for recognition mechanisms such as victim statements or peer-led debriefs to validate their experiences.

#### Recommendation

Amend the Charter to **ensure timely, inclusive, and trauma-informed support** for all victims by:

- Replacing vague language such as "at the earliest practicable opportunity" with **clear, time-sensitive commitments that reflect the urgency victims experience.**
- **Specifying the types of support available**, including counselling, legal advocacy, housing assistance, court accompaniment, and case management, and affirming the **right to help in navigating these services.**
- Recognising and facilitating **access to peer support and youth advocates**, acknowledging that many young people feel more comfortable seeking help from others with similar lived experiences.
- Guaranteeing **access to interpreters, translated materials, easy-to-read formats, and digital accessibility tools** to ensure equitable access for victims with disability, CALD backgrounds, and limited literacy.
- Embedding **trauma-informed, culturally safe, and developmentally appropriate practices across all services**, particularly for children and young people navigating complex systems such as family law, child protection, and criminal justice.
- Mandating the **use of trauma-informed disclosure protocols to support children in safely expressing their experiences**, including training for professionals to recognise indirect disclosures and non-verbal cues.
- Introducing **optional victim recognition mechanisms**, such as victim impact statements, peer-led debriefs, and personalised support plans tailored to individual preferences and identities.

#### Information and updates

The current wording of the Charter lacks clarity regarding the timing, scope, and responsibility for providing such information. This ambiguity contributes to inconsistent communication, delays, and confusion, particularly for young people and other vulnerable groups.

The Charter should be revised to clearly define which agencies are responsible for delivering specific types of information and when this information must be provided. It should also expand the scope of information rights, require services to explain victims' rights in accessible

formats, and ensure victims are informed and consulted before decisions that affect their safety or participation in the justice process. These reforms will ensure that all victims receive timely, clear, and inclusive information that supports their recovery and participation in the justice process.

Insights from **yourtown's** Your Voice 2025 youth engagement initiative highlight that delays in communication and lack of clarity around processes significantly impact victims' wellbeing. Participants reported feeling overwhelmed and unsupported when systems failed to provide timely updates or explain their rights.

Young people also called for clearer explanations of available services, including examples such as counselling, legal advocacy, housing support, and court accompaniment. They emphasised the need for youth-friendly, easy-read, and translated materials, as well as digital tools and webchat options to improve accessibility. These needs are particularly acute for victims with disability, CALD backgrounds, and LGBTIQ+ identities. To further improve accessibility and engagement, information and updates should also be delivered through short videos, webchat, and social media platforms, as these are often the first places young people seek information.

**yourtown** supports the importance of wrap-around support and case management, particularly for women and children in refuges and transitional housing. These services play a critical role in helping victims navigate complex systems and access the support they need.

Victims also expressed a desire to be consulted before decisions are made that affect their safety or participation—such as changes to charges, parole conditions, or court support arrangements. Additionally, the Charter should affirm the right to request a review of decisions made by police or prosecutors, providing a vital accountability mechanism.

#### Recommendation

Amend the Charter to:

- Specify agency responsibilities for **providing information and defining clear timeframes for delivery.**
- Mandate that **victims be informed and consulted prior to decisions affecting their safety or participation.**
- Require services to **explain victims' rights in accessible, culturally appropriate formats.**
- Incorporate **youth-informed service features such as webchat, peer support, and self-guided resources** written in plain language

## Safety

The Charter lacks sufficient clarity and scope to address the lived realities of victims regarding privacy and safety—particularly for young people, people with disability, and survivors of DFV. **yourtown's** service experience and youth engagement initiatives reveal that victims face ongoing risks due to inadequate privacy protections, unclear safety protocols, and limited trauma-informed practices across systems.

Safety measures must reflect the intersectional realities of victims whose identities span multiple marginalised groups. Young people who are disabled, neurodiverse, First Nations, LGBTIQ+, or from CALD backgrounds often face compounded risks and systemic barriers. The Charter should adopt an intersectional framework that recognises how overlapping identities shape safety needs and service experiences. This includes tailored protocols that address the unique vulnerabilities of individuals navigating multiple forms of discrimination or disadvantage.

The Charter should be revised to strengthen privacy protections, define safety measures in practical terms, and embed trauma-informed, culturally safe practices across all services. It



should also affirm workplace protections, ensure victims' control over who communicates with them, and provide accessible mechanisms for feedback and complaints. These reforms will ensure the Charter reflects the diverse safety needs of victims and embeds trauma-informed, inclusive practice across all systems.

Young people engaged through **yourtown's** Your Voice 2025 summit expressed concern about the misuse or accidental sharing of sensitive information, including school, health, and housing details. Participants highlighted the need for clearer boundaries around confidentiality, particularly for disabled and neurodiverse youth. The Charter should explicitly list protected information types and require services to implement trauma-informed protocols for data collection, storage, and sharing.

Safety must be understood beyond physical separation. Victims of DFV require emotional and psychological safety, including separate court waiting areas, remote testimony options, and support workers during proceedings. **yourtown** emphasises the harm caused by retraumatisation when victims are forced to recount abuse without adequate support or encounter perpetrators in shared spaces.

Privacy commitments should mirror those in South Australia, ensuring that services do not intrude unless necessary. This includes seeking consent before sharing information, explaining data use, and offering anonymous or pseudonymous engagement options—this is particularly important for LGBTIQ+ victims and those fearing discrimination or retaliation.

Digital safety must be embedded across all service platforms and communication channels. Victims, particularly young people, face risks from insecure digital systems, including accidental data leaks, cyberstalking, and coercive control via technology. The Charter should require services to implement secure digital communication protocols, offer opt-in notification systems, and provide guidance on safe technology use. These protections are essential to ensure that victims can engage with services without fear of digital exposure or harm.

**yourtown's** youth consultations reveal that victims often feel unsafe or misunderstood when staff lack training in cultural safety, disability inclusion, trauma recovery, or supporting children and young people as victims. Safety cannot be guaranteed without a skilled, trauma-informed workforce. The Charter should require all justice and support services to implement mandatory, ongoing training in these areas. This will ensure that staff are equipped to respond sensitively and effectively to the diverse safety needs of victims.

Workplace protections must extend to all victims of violent crime, not just DFV survivors. This includes the right to flexible leave for court attendance or recovery. Additionally, victims should have choice in who communicates with them, including staff gender, cultural background, and access to peer support. **yourtown's** youth consultations emphasised the importance of "functional help" and trained staff who understand victims' identities and needs.

### Recommendation

Amend the Charter to embed a **comprehensive and intersectional approach** to victim safety that **reflects the lived realities of children, young people, and other marginalised groups**. This includes:

- Strengthening **privacy protections** by explicitly listing categories of sensitive information (e.g. school, health, housing, and digital data) and requiring **trauma-informed protocols for data collection, storage, and sharing**.
- Defining **safety measures to include emotional and psychological safeguards**—such as separate court waiting areas, remote testimony options, and access to trained support workers—to prevent retraumatisation and ensure dignity.
- Adopting a non-intrusion principle requiring services to **seek informed consent before sharing information, explain data use clearly, and offer anonymous or pseudonymous engagement options**, particularly for LGBTIQ+ victims and those fearing discrimination or retaliation.
- **Mandating digital safety standards across all service platforms**, including secure communication protocols, opt-in notifications, and guidance on safe technology use to protect victims from cyberstalking, coercive control, and data breaches.
- Requiring mandatory, ongoing **training for all justice and support service staff in trauma-informed care, cultural safety, disability inclusion, and youth engagement to ensure victims feel safe, understood, and supported**.
- **Extending workplace protections to all victims of violent crime**, including flexible leave for court attendance or recovery, and ensuring victims have choice in service interactions—such as staff gender, cultural background, and access to peer support.

### Help to recover

The current provisions in the Charter lack clarity and breadth in addressing the practical, emotional, and financial needs of victims—particularly young people and those affected by DFV. **yourtown's** service experience and youth engagement initiatives highlight gaps in guidance for victim impact statements, property handling, financial recovery, and access to trauma-informed care.

The Charter should be revised to strengthen victims' rights across four key areas: (1) support in preparing victim impact statements, (2) clear protocols for property handling, (3) recognition of financial burdens, and (4) access to sustained, trauma-informed recovery services. These reforms will ensure the Charter reflects the lived realities of victims and provides meaningful, practical support for recovery. It also recognises that recovery can take time and victims may need to return for support at different stages.

Victim impact statements are a critical tool for recognition and healing. Young people engaged through **yourtown's** Your Voice 2025 project emphasised the importance of being heard but also expressed uncertainty about how to prepare their statements. The Charter should mandate the provision of accessible resources, templates, and trauma-informed support to guide victims through this process.

Property handling protocols are currently underdefined. Victims have reported distress due to delayed returns, poor condition of items, or misallocation. For DFV survivors, mishandling of personal items—such as phones containing evidence or sentimental belongings—can exacerbate trauma. The Charter should require timely return of property, secure handling, transparent communication, and a right to appeal decisions regarding property. To further support transparency and empower victims, information about these protocols should be made readily available online, ensuring victims can easily understand what to expect at each stage of the process.

Broader recovery needs must also be addressed. **yourtown** advocates for a trauma-transformative framework that includes psychological care, legal support, parenting assistance, education, employment, and long-term wrap-around services. The Charter

should reflect this holistic approach and affirm victims' rights to sustained, trauma-informed recovery support.

#### Recommendation:

Amend the Charter to:

- Guarantee **support for preparing victim impact statements**, including templates and trauma-informed guidance.
- Establish **clear protocols for property handling**, including timely return, secure storage, and appeal rights.
- Affirm **access to long-term, trauma-informed recovery services** tailored to individual needs.

## Complaints

The Charter affirms the right to make a complaint when victims' rights are not upheld. However, this right is not well understood or easily exercised by many victims, particularly young people, First Nations peoples, CALD communities, and those affected by DFV. **yourtown's** youth engagement and DFV services indicate that the complaint process is often inaccessible, fragmented, and intimidating, undermining victims' ability to seek redress and accountability.

The Charter should be revised to clearly define the complaint process, ensure it is accessible and inclusive, and embed trauma-informed practices across all services. It must also guarantee that victims are informed of their complaint rights from the outset and supported throughout the process. These reforms will strengthen the Charter's role as a meaningful safeguard and ensure all victims can exercise their right to be heard and respected.

Participants in **yourtown's** Your Voice 2025 project described feeling overwhelmed by complex systems and unsure of how to raise concerns. Barriers include lack of awareness, fragmented complaint pathways, fear of retaliation, and limited accessibility for victims with disability, low literacy, or limited digital access. The Charter should provide options for anonymous feedback, recognising that some young people may not wish to make an official complaint but still want their concerns or experiences to be heard.

**yourtown** emphasises the importance of advocacy and case management in helping victims navigate systems and assert their rights. Without trauma-informed support, victims may feel retraumatised or invalidated when attempting to make a complaint. To uphold the Charter's commitment to dignity and fairness, victims must be empowered to advocate for themselves through clear, safe, and responsive complaint mechanisms.

*"There is still a significant need for greater inclusivity, efficiency and respect for users' time and dignity. Listening to people's real experiences and acting on their feedback can lead to stronger, more responsive systems that truly meet the needs of the community."* 18-25 year old male Your Voice participant from Queensland

#### Recommendation

Amend the Charter to:

- Clearly **outline where and how victims can make complaints**, using plain language and visual formats.
- Require services to **inform victims of their complaint rights at first contact**.
- Establish **youth-friendly, culturally safe, and accessible complaint pathways**.
- Ensure complaints are **handled by trained staff using trauma-informed approaches**.
- Guarantee victims **receive feedback on complaint outcomes** and have the **right to request a review**.



## Conclusion

**yourtown** supports the Queensland Government's efforts to strengthen the Charter and ensure it reflects the diverse realities of those impacted by crime. Our submission highlights the urgent need for clearer definitions, inclusive language, trauma-informed practices, and accessible systems that uphold dignity, safety, and justice for all victims, particularly children and young people and those impacted by DFV. We welcome the opportunity to explore these ideas with you in further detail. Should you require further information about any issues raised in the submission, please do not hesitate to contact Tracy Adams, CEO of **yourtown** via email at [advocacy@yourtown.com.au](mailto:advocacy@yourtown.com.au)