

Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands and waterways on which we meet today and pay respect to the Elders past and present.

I extend respect to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who are present today and note the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander with whom we meet and work.



Diversity and Inclusion painting by artist, Chern'ee Sutton



CEVAW



PIPSI

Prioritising Intersectoral Practice:
Strategies and Innovations

Disrupting established policy and practice: the intersection of DFV and Substance Use

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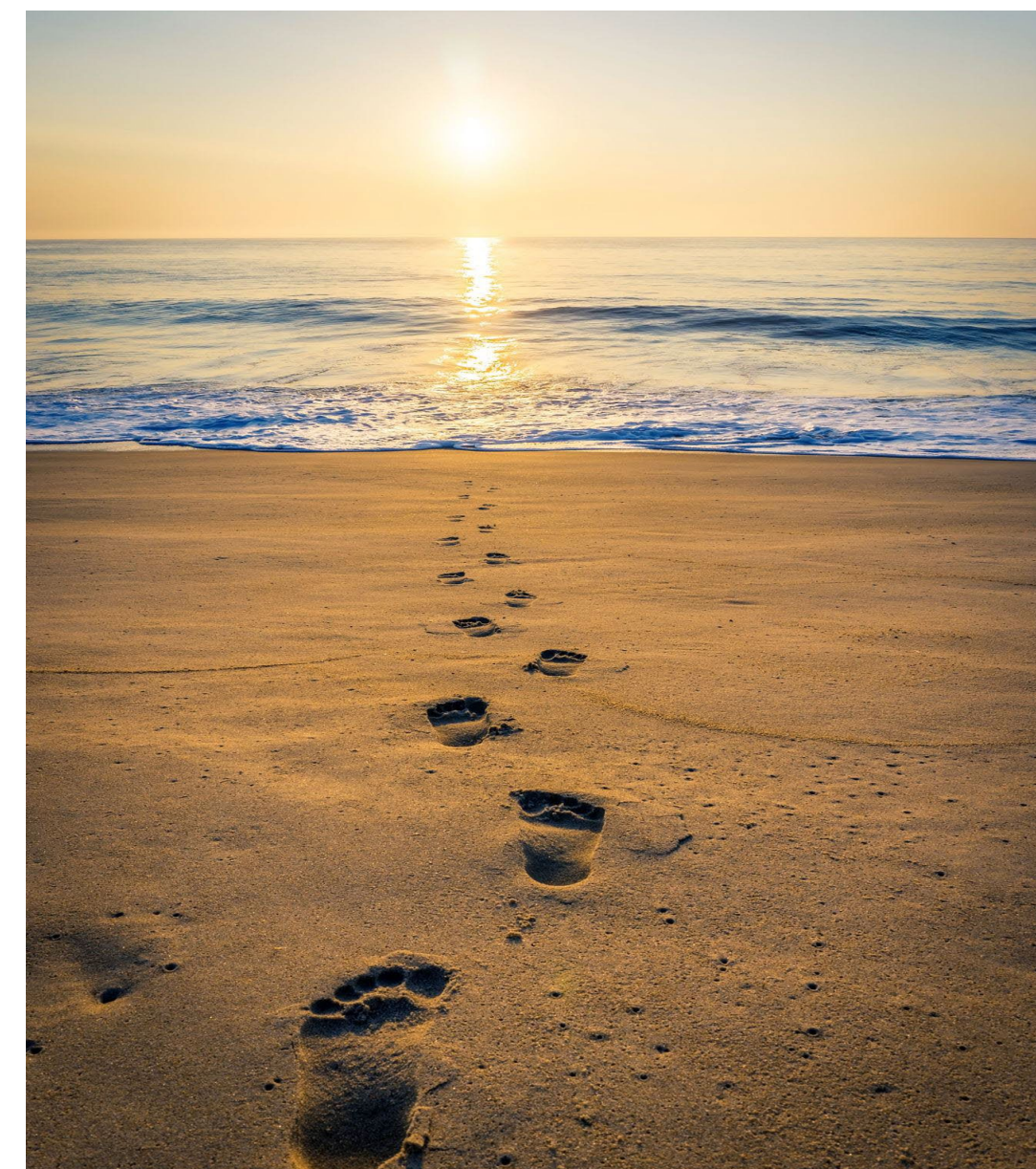
with Margaret Kertesz

AIFS conference 10th September, 2026
Melbourne Convention Centre

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Overview

- ❑ A brief journey across the evidence base
- ❑ Conceptualising substance use coercion
- ❑ PIPSI phase 1 findings - summary of paper
- ❑ What does this mean for practice?
- ❑ Animation link - <https://odyssey.org.au/media/>

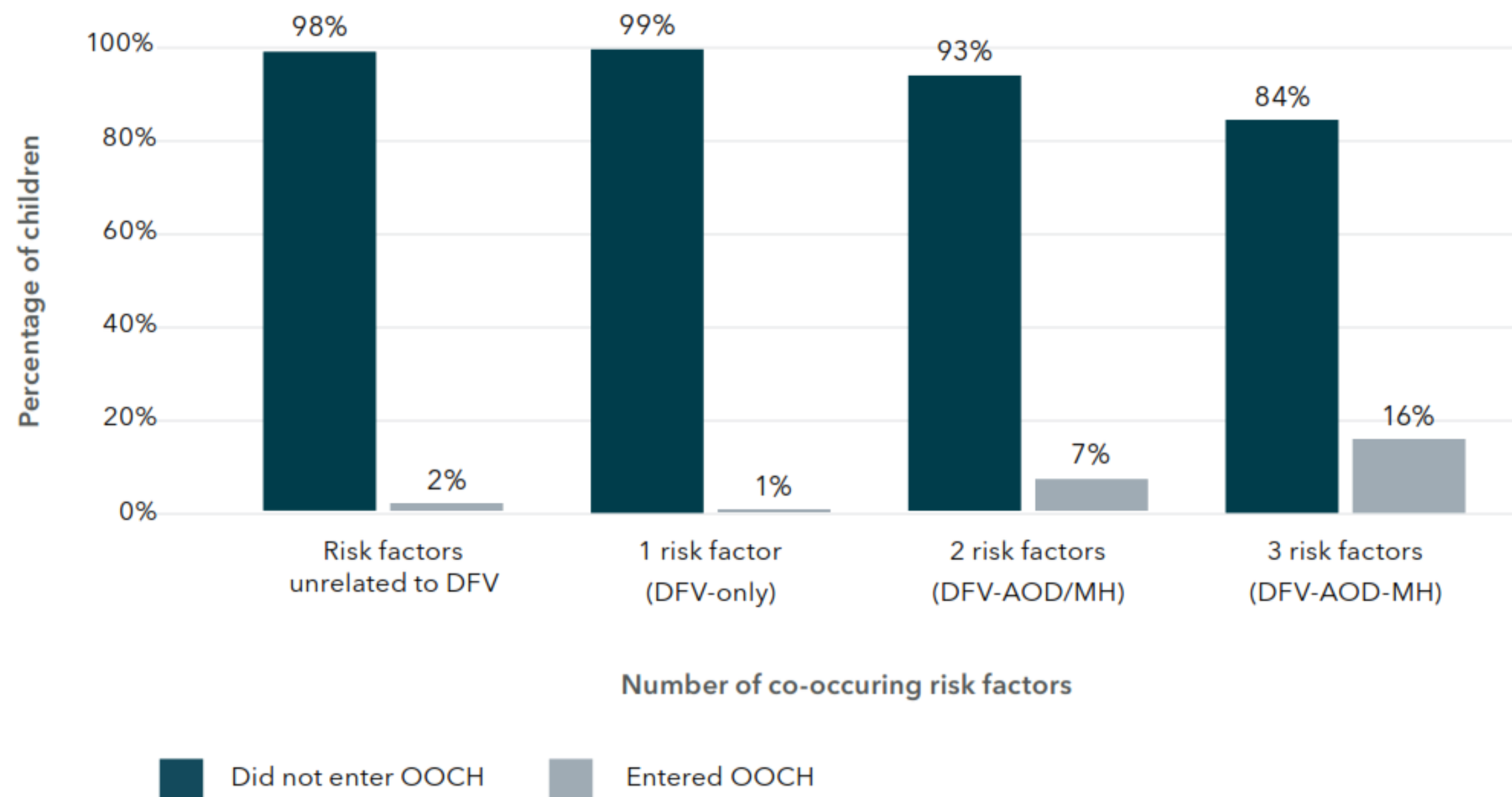


Programs of applied research and evaluation

- The Stella Project, London 2003
- THE STACY Project: Safe & Together Addressing ComplexitY; ESTIE, ALFies, CHRISTIE Projects
- KODY Project (Kids First and Odyssey House addressing intersections of AOD and DFV); Policy Stakeholder Group
- The PIPSI Project (Prioritising Intersectoral Practice: Strategies and Innovations) – a workstream in the wider CEVAW program

Risk factors increase the likelihood of entering OOHC (Luu et al, 2024)

Figure 9: Percentage of children with flags in their child concern reports for parental DFV, AOD use and/or MH issues prior to entering OOHC for the first time ($n = 584,365$)



Evidence about how DFV and AOD intersect (1)

- Substance use increases the frequency, severity and intensity of DFV
(Canfield, Radcliffe, D'Oliveira, & Gilchrist, 2019; Laslett et al., 2021; Ramsoomar, Gibbs, Chirwa, Dunkle, & Jewkes, 2021)
- Risk of severe physical injury twice as high when substances are involved (Mayshak et al, 2022)

Australian Domestic Homicide Data (Australian DFV Death Review Network, 2022)

- 240 women murdered by current or former male partner (2010-2018).
- 60% of offenders were substance affected at the time of the homicide

Australian Police Offence Data (Miller et al., 2016)

- 24%-54% of DFV incidents were alcohol related increased likelihood of child protection

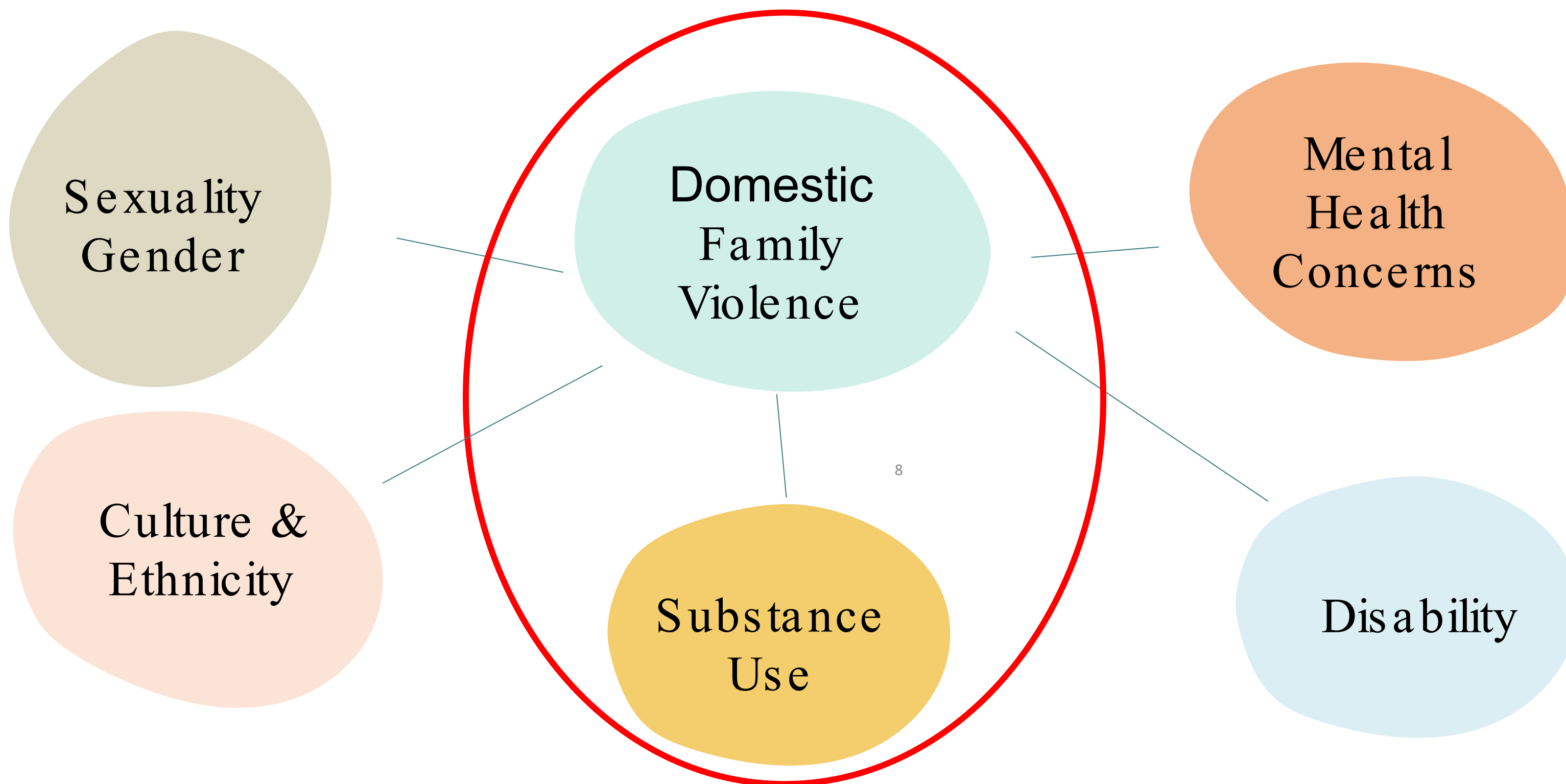
Evidence about how DFV and AOD intersect (2)

- **Violence severity**
34% of alcohol related IPV resulted in physical injury compared with 20% of incidents not alcohol related; 43% of drug related incidents resulted in physical injury compared to 22% with no drugs (Miller et al, 2016)

Victim-survivors may turn to using substances to cope with DFV (Phillips et al., 2020; Noonan et al, 2017)

- Exposure to these two issues reduces children's safety -
 - Increased likelihood of CP involvement (Victor et al., 2018)
 - forcible removal into out-of-home care (Canfield et al., 2017; Luu et al, 2024)

Understanding the intersections - connecting the dots



Substance Use Coercion

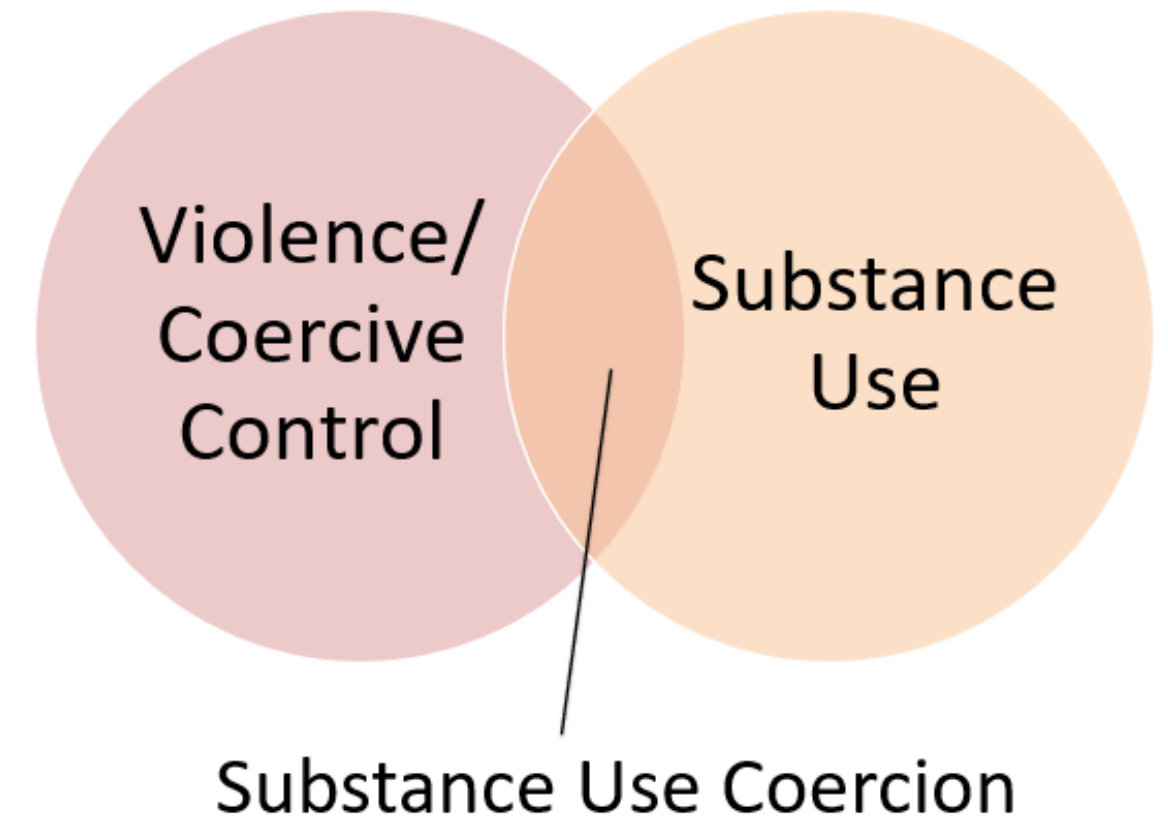
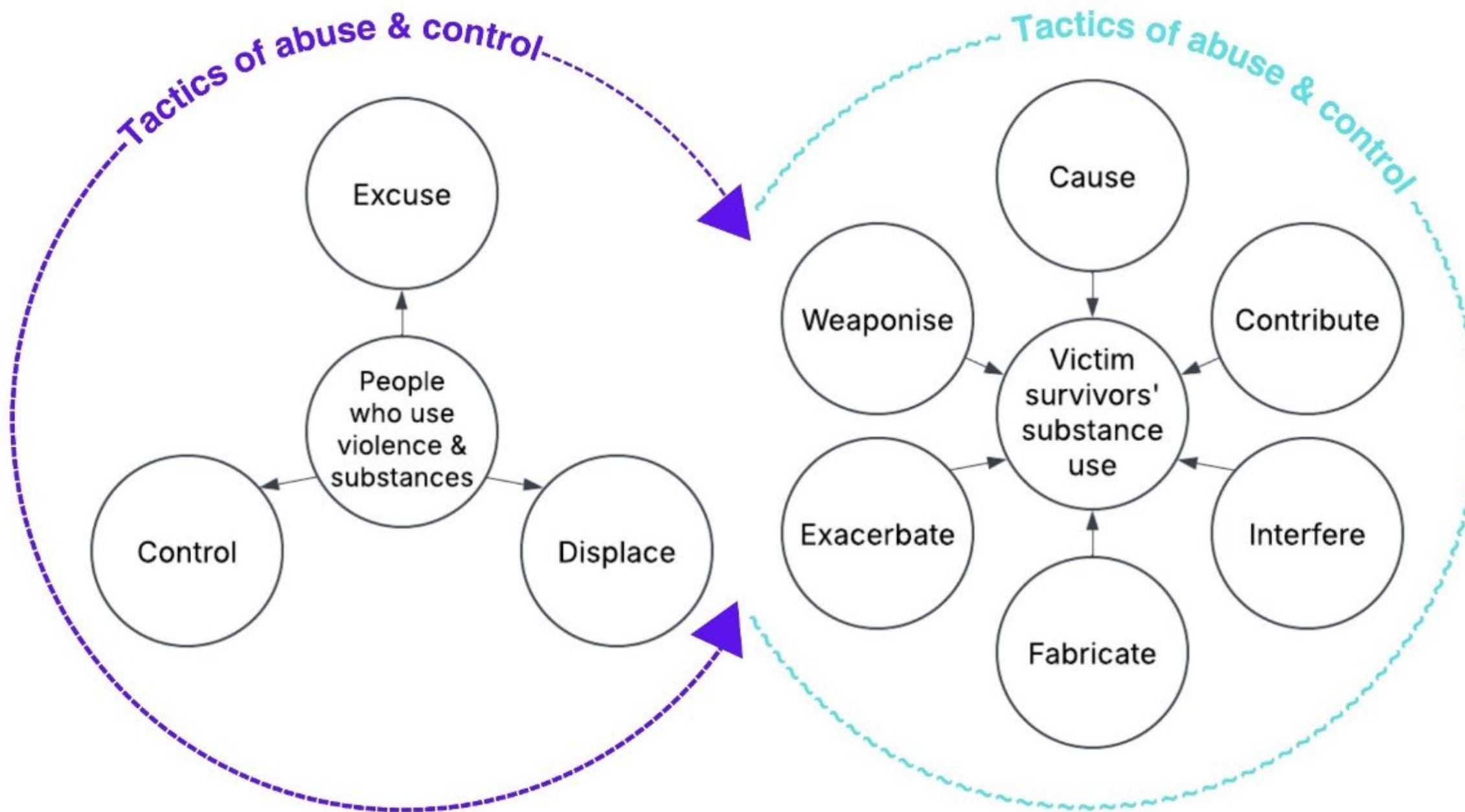
Substance use coercion is an aspect of coercive control and refers to a pattern of behaviors in which one partner uses tactics of abuse and violence to control or manipulate the other partner's substance use, or alternatively to exacerbate or excuse their own violence, often as part of a broader pattern of power and control.



Adult survivor data: US DV Helpline Data (Warshaw et al, 2014)

- 3,248 survivors surveyed about substance use
- 25% used substances to reduce physical pain caused by abuse
- 15% sought help for their substance use and 60% discouraged or sabotaged in accessing treatment
- Substance use actively used to discredit help-seeking

Substance use coercion



QNADA: DFV Capability Project

- Workforce survey result: 92% of AOD staff encounter clients experiencing DFV weekly
- Capability workforce assessment: Client centred practice - DFV aware but needs improvement in intake, assessment, documentation, consent processes
- Professional development - minimal training in DFV
- Organisational policy and quality - basic awareness of DFV in policy but not linked to quality improvement system
- System's integration - 31% not engaged with local DFV networks; 7.5% active participation in cross-sector response; no specific funding

PIPSI

Prioritising Intersectoral Practice:
Strategies and Innovations



PIPSI Phase 1

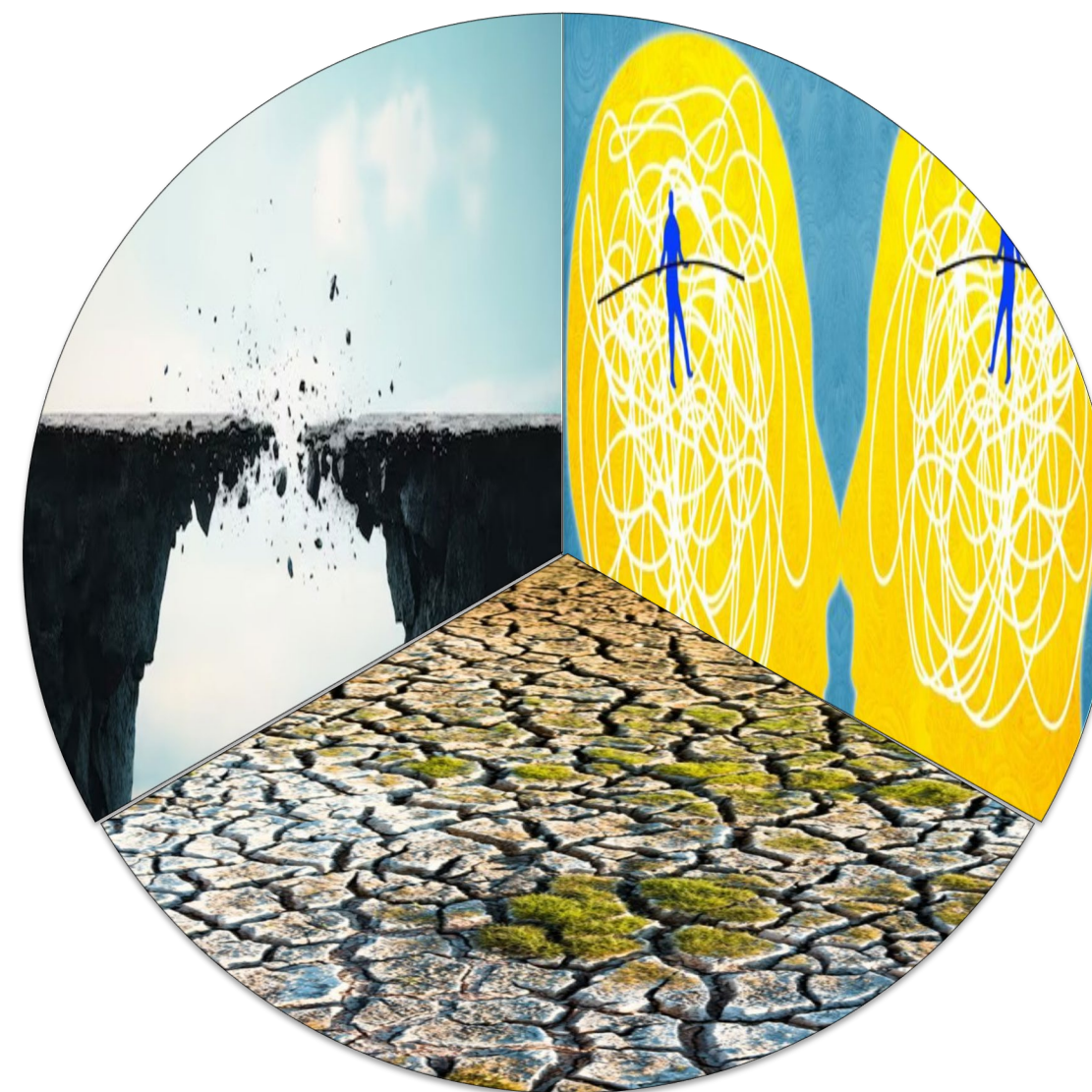
- Supporting frontline practice responses
- Strategic Policy Group set up
- Consultations with:
 - 31 professionals from the DFV, substance use and family services sectors
 - 7 lived-experience experts, all victim-survivors of DFV

Organisational Ethnography: The PIPSI project



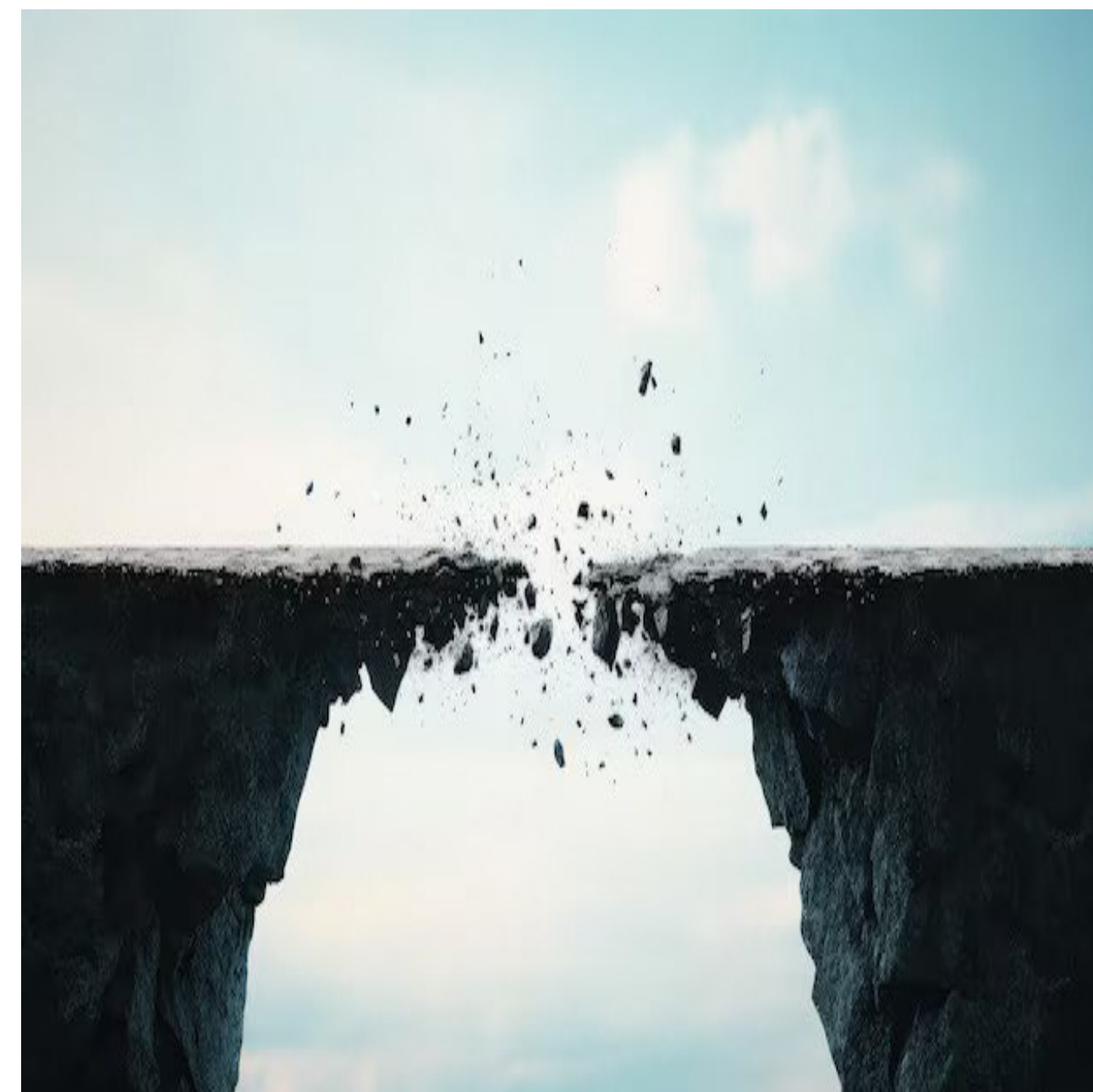
Three Themes -

- Silencing: Gaps Are Actively Produced
- Naming: Contested Meanings, Real Consequences
- (In)Action: Local Change Without Systemic Support



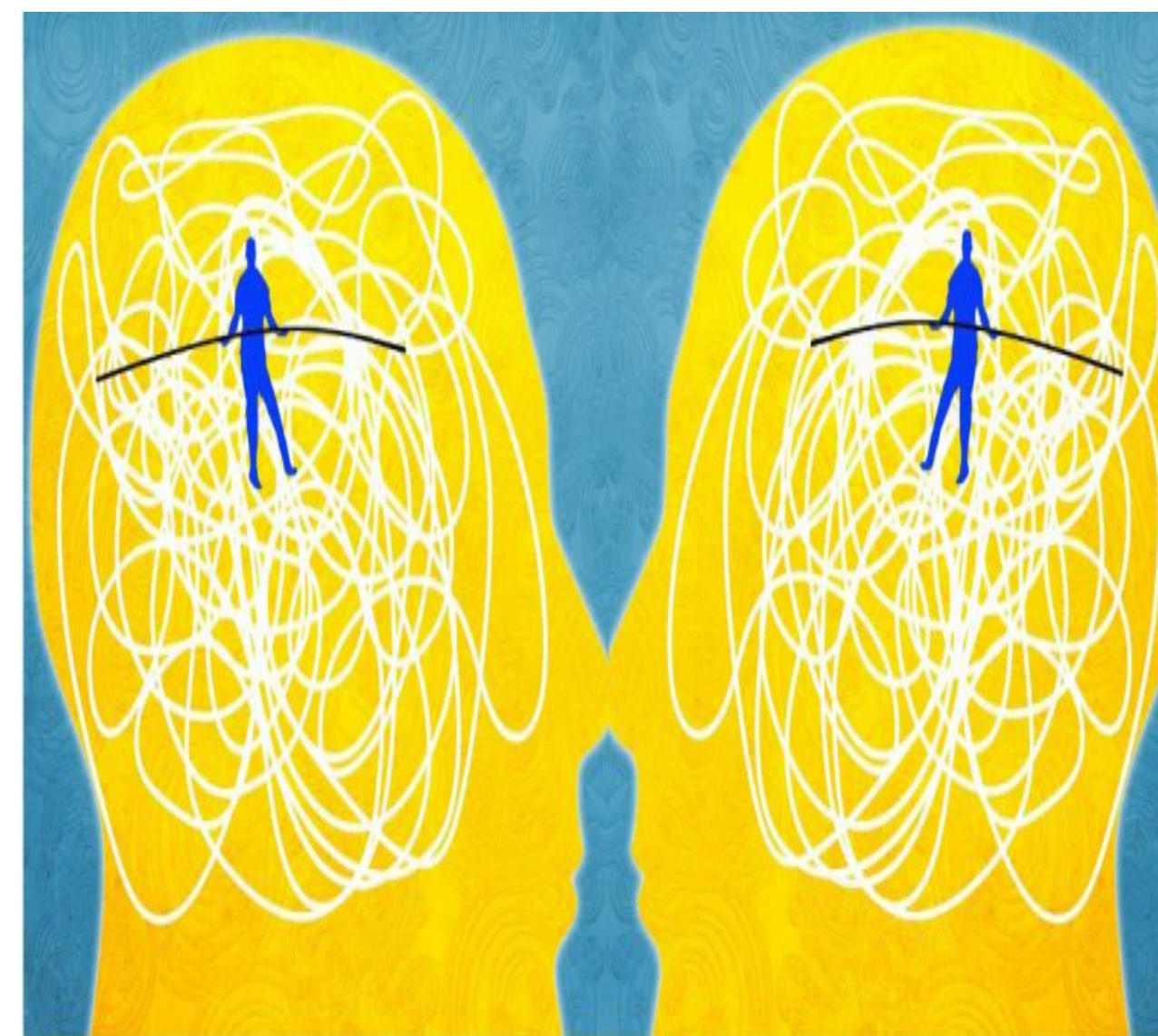
Silencing: Gaps Are Actively Produced

- 'Other issue' seen outside scope of practice
- Boundaries reinforced by organisational and funding structures
- Lack of knowledge or training about the 'other issue'
- Practitioners in both sectors feel ill-equipped to respond to the 'other' issue



Naming: Contested Meanings, Real Consequences

- Substance use coercion as a form of coercive control
- Role of substance depends on context - a source of harm or a coping strategy
- Different approaches to understanding and assessing risk
- Balancing trauma and accountability



Local Change Without Systemic Support - (In) Action

- No shared frameworks, guidance, or principles
- Responsibility often dispersed across government portfolios and jurisdictions.
- Separate funding arrangements can reinforce siloed ways of working
- Fragmentation within the DFV sector, including differences in priorities and approaches, can make collective advocacy more difficult

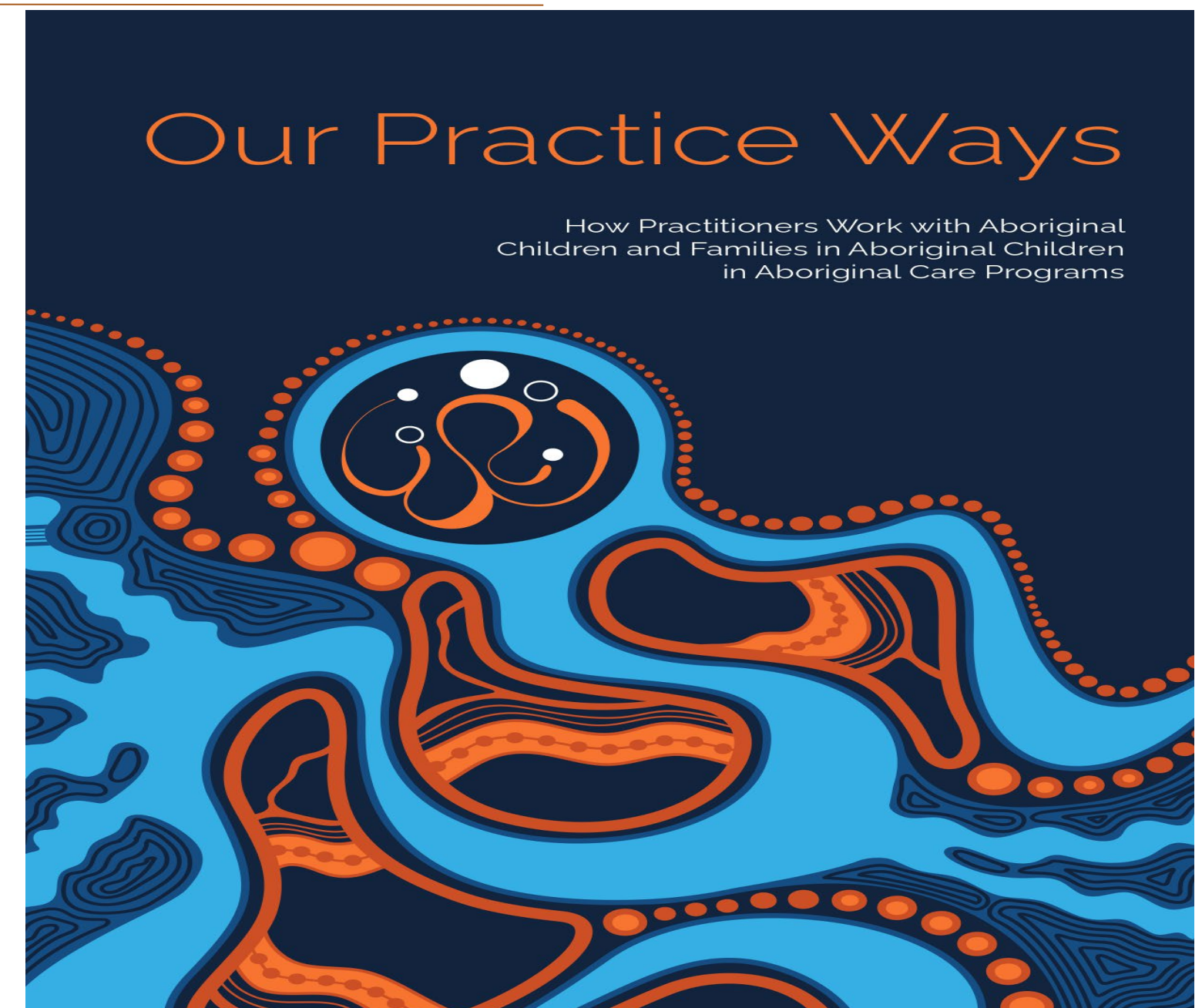


Implications for Policy and Practice: Assessing a functional system for responding to substance use

- Efficacy -does it produce its intended outcome? Providing a service to men, women and children where there is SUC)
- Efficiency (does it do this with the best use of resources?)
- Effectiveness (does it achieve a higher-level or longer-term aim? The safety of women and children; accountability for the person using violence; and desistance from AOD)
- Ethicality (are the purposes of the system met in ways which are congruent with principles and values which promote respect and justice for children and others affected by domestic violence and substance use coercion (usually women)

Our Practice Ways: How Practitioners Work with Aboriginal Children and Families in Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care Programs

- Culture and history shape practice
- Relationships are central to work
- Safety is understood holistically
- Empowerment ways mean working with Aboriginal families to strengthen their ability to make decisions, solve problems and improve their own circumstances



DV West Children's DFV Specialist Program

- Works across safety, health, education, housing, parenting, legal, Culture and Kinship through coordinated, wrap-around support.
- Keeps the perpetrator's pattern of behaviour visible while recognising mothers' protective strategies and strengths.
- Aboriginal specialist workers and cultural governance embed culturally safe, Kinship-inclusive practice.
- Carer AOD issues were identified in 19 of 107 cases, highlighting intersecting needs within families.

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children removed into care

Of the 32 families who were current clients of [DCJ]. Not one family had a child or their children removed whilst they were engaged with DV West.

- DV West Evaluation, 2024

Priorities for 2027: Where should the research go next?

01

Workforce capability

- Joint cross-sector training
- Understanding coercive control
- Workforce knowledge & confidence

02

Risk & identification

- Risk assessment
- Recognising substance-use coercion
- Practical guidance & tools

03

Working across sectors

- Intersectoral collaboration
- Secondary consultation
- Shared language & understanding

04

Integrated practice

- Connecting DFV, AOD & family services
- Referral and response pathways
- Integrated models of practice

05

Organisational & system support

- Information sharing
- Organisational enablers
- System and policy barriers

06

Building the evidence

- Synthesis of sector workforce surveys
- Common workforce gaps & needs
- Opportunities for further research
- Meta analysis of sector workforce surveys

Policy/Practice issues to be addressed

- Attention to intersection of AOD and DFV written into national plans -Drug Sector; Alcohol Sector; National Family Violence Plans (Aboriginal; Woman and Children; Mistreatment of Older Adults)
- Resourcing a funding stream that addresses substance use coercion - AOD services and DFV services (services for women; services for children; services for men) have siloed funding streams?
- Bring together key leaders across sectors to strategically plan the intersection of DFV and AOD (peak bodies are siloed but can develop work together)

Policy/Practice issues to be addressed

- DFV Risk assessment and risk management implemented in AOD organisations
- Police training on mis-identification of the primary perpetrator of violence and abuse (system's abuse) (Who is in fear?)
- Chairs of high risk panels (SAMS; RAMPs etc) trained to respond to substance use coercion
- Safe & Together™ Model (or the principles of S&T) implemented across sectors working with children -attention to complexity
- Harm minimisation in refuges

Policy/Practice issues continued

Agreeing a plan for addressing substance use coercion:

- a) Workers trained to address substance use coercion - joint training?
- b) Strategic advisors for secondary consultations with each sector?
- c) Alcohol counsellors based in a MBC program or specialist FV sector organisations for adult and child survivors?
- d) Joint case management is funded and information sharing is legislated?
- e) Development of programs that address substance use coercion (U-turn; Advance; KODY Caring Dads; All of family programs)?
- f) Generic family services and child protection workers trained to respond to substance use coercion

Where to from here?

- The evidence is clear
- The practice is not....
- The policy settings are not....
- There is an appetite for change....



Animation Video on substance use coercion

- <https://odyssey.org.au/media/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44ZIMU2gEBQ&t=9s>

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