



**A summary of
program evaluations**
October 2023



INTRODUCTION

HELPING GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN THRIVE, NOT JUST SURVIVE

Recent research conducted by the Australian National University, Mission Australia and the YWCA show that girls and young women in the ACT and surrounding areas feel overwhelmed, stressed, and uncertain about their future.

Friendship issues, relationships, expectations to do well at school, body image and changes, and social media are all reported as contributing factors.

ALARMINGLY, STATISTICS INDICATE:

60%

are concerned about coping with stress, compared with **30% for males.**

42%

report thinking about self-harm at age 14-15 or 16-17, compared to **18% of boys.**

66%

feel their mental health is a barrier to achieving their study or work goals, compared with **41% of males.**

59%

are concerned about their mental health, compared with **25% of young men.**

33.7%

report feeling lonely all or most of the time, compared with **16.3% of males.**

33%

of girls and young women are confident in achieving their study or work goals after school.

52%

are concerned with their body image, compared with just **15% for males.**

36.7%

feel positive or hopeful about their future.



**THE PROGRAMS
ARE SIGNIFICANTLY
RELEVANT AND
APPROPRIATE TO
THE NEEDS OF
PARTICIPANTS**

While mentoring and support programs for boys and young men have been running within the ACT and surrounding communities for several years, Fearless Women recognised that a significant gap existed by not offering similar, girls-only programs.

Established to meet the ever-increasing needs of girls, young women, and their families within the ACT and surrounding regions, and with its strategic objective to “intervene early”, Fearless Women aims to reduce:

- Emergency Department presentations
- Self-harm
- Eating disorders
- Drug use
- Non-consensual sex
- Being trapped in abusive relationships
- Getting obliterated
- Homelessness
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Suicide

The free mentoring and education programs offered by Fearless Women provide support, positive role modelling, a sense of belonging, healthy skills development, and aim to increase:

- Employment
- Completion of school
- Participation/positive contribution to:
 - Family and community
 - Enjoyable consensual sex
 - Positive relationships

The team at Fearless Women is dedicated to providing the support, programs, and tools girls and young women need to fearlessly find their way in life, live with confidence, courage, resilience, and hope.

This document reports on Fearless Future, a school education program. It also provides a summary of the Fearless Women Mentor Program’s evaluations with the two pilot groups. The evaluations were carried out at the six- and 12-month points of participation.

**FEARLESS FUTURE EDUCATION PROGRAM
COMMENCED IN JULY 2022**

CREATING FEARLESS FUTURES FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

Fearless Future is a 50-minute foundation course delivered by Fearless Women educators in schools across the Canberra region. The discussion focuses on the importance of well-being, self-empowerment and self-values with girls in years 5 to 10.

The Fearless Future program aims to meet the urgent need for awareness and understanding of the issues girls and young women face, help participants build their skills, and become aware of available support.

With content appropriate for the age and skill level of participants, activities are engaging and content reinforces the work schools are already undertaking with students.

Clear messaging, delivered by an external voice of authority, provides a much-appreciated variety of delivery and content within the school environment.

By the end of 2023, Fearless Future sessions will have been delivered 106 times to approximately 4900 girls and young women in 70 schools (government and independent) in Canberra and surrounding NSW, to groups sized from 15 to 240. There is strong evidence to support the program's success, including:

- 1** An increasing high level of demand. Participants stated that the program content is highly relevant to them and, as a result of the workshops, they have acquired knowledge and learned skills that they intend to continue practising.
- 2**
- 3** 92% of attendees stated that they would recommend the program to others.



**"EXCELLENT!
THE MESSAGES
WERE JUST
WHAT THE
GIRLS NEEDED"**

ACT SCHOOL WELLBEING COORDINATOR

FEARLESS WOMEN MENTOR PROGRAM

HELPING GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN SEE WHO AND WHAT THEY CAN BE

The **Fearless Women Mentor Program** is offered to girls and young women, aged 10 to 25, in the Canberra region who are struggling with life's challenges. Volunteer female mentors provide a positive role model and share their wisdom, experience, and knowledge, plus support and guidance.

The program commenced in June 2022 with a cohort of 12 young women each paired with their own mentor. In September 2022, a second cohort of 11 started their two-year journey of fortnightly catch-ups and group activities.

Mentees within the program have universally been identified as experiencing anxiety. Many are also experiencing depression, PTSD, social media addiction, the absence or death of a parent or have been subjected to DFV making them withdrawn, hesitant to try new experiences, and limiting their social connections.

Although mentees were initially hesitant about going to events, all found the courage to attend, with parents and mentors reporting that motivation quickly shifted to a desire to attend all events and to have more included within the program.

There is strong evidence to support the program's success. Mentees have experienced positive healthy growth and have enhanced their personal and social skills during their first year with the program. The one-year evaluation found that the young women participating in the program had moved from being passive to being engaged, were expressing gratitude and are willing to try new things.

Particularly, parents noted that they are listening more to others' ideas and points of view and are seeking out others to discuss options. Many have shown an improved ability to express emotions, can now identify personal strengths and skills, and have implemented social and self-management skills which contribute to healthy relationships and confidence.

ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE THOROUGHLY ENJOYING THE EXPERIENCE AND BELIEVE THE PROGRAM DELIVERS A HIGHLY BENEFICIAL SERVICE

MENTORS

- 1** All mentors see the potential for themselves and their mentees.
- 2** Most mentors have an improved sense of purpose and feel their own mental health and wellbeing has improved.
- 3** **100% of mentors** stated that they would recommend the program to others.

MENTEES

- 1** **100% of parents** have seen positive changes within their mentee daughter—including their overall confidence and self-esteem, trialling healthy behaviours, a willingness to seek support, and a positive outlook on their future.
- 2** Parents noted that their children are becoming more willing to leave the house. Mentees are invariably returning home in positive states; happy, proud, engaged, affirmed, and excited.
- 3** **All parents** would recommend the program to others.

CASE STUDIES



GREATER HAPPINESS

Last year before the school principal let me know about Fearless Women, my girls were a little bit what would the word be? Not aligned. They were still learning to live without their mum; and were all angry. The program has helped us as a family. The fact that they have mentors, female role model in their lives that they know and can speak to has helped us at home.

My youngest daughter has been a bit of a bully and did not have many friends. Now she has a circle of friends and she's grown to be quite emotionally mature. Recently something was said to her that was upsetting; related to losing their mum. She just ignored it, but I think it probably hurt her. She's doesn't let that kind of thing bring her down anymore.

The most significant change for her has been her happiness. She is always looking forward to seeing her mentor, doing different one on one and Fearless Women group activities. She wasn't the happiest child but now is such a bunch of joy.

This year she's the school captain for a sporting activity; she volunteered to be the captain. She competed in Wakakirri and really wanted to put on a good show for her mentor, so she practiced hard. It brought so much joy for her to have her mentor supporting her.

WILLING INDEPENDENCE

It's been a good experience for my daughter. Quite a relationship has developed with her mentor over the year. Although it took them a while to get into the hang of it - how to catch up and just get to know each other. Now they are comfortable spending time on their own together and in group activities.

She's growing more confident compared to when they started. She's been able to be more engaged with her relationship with her mentor. Her ability to decide what they're doing together in the past year is a sign of growth and confidence. One significant change is her adult ownership of things, her independence. It's really been quite a change -she is making her own arrangements. She started studying and been very successful. I wouldn't have predicted that was going to be possible. Her mentor is an enthusiastic person. The relationship they have built so far has had positive impact on my daughter's life.

"SHE DOESN'T LET THAT KIND OF THING BRING HER DOWN ANYMORE"



PROGRAM OUTCOMES

CREATING HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE AND CONFIDENT YOUNG WOMEN AND A MAKING POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE ACT COMMUNITY

The key finding of the evaluations is that the current Fearless Women programs (Fearless Futures and the Fearless Women Mentor Program) are progressing towards delivering the targeted objectives.

Key data in many evaluation outcomes revealed that higher-than-anticipated benchmarks are being achieved.

The evaluations found that the programs are based on robust research, objectives, and key factors that are proving to be accurate. The programs have shown to be contributing to building confidence, independence, healthy relationships, personal resilience and ... fearless women.

HIGHER-THAN-
ANTICIPATED
BENCHMARKS ARE
BEING ACHIEVED





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