

A **BIG hART** FILM

DIRECTED BY **AMELIA TOVEY**

CREATED WITH **YOUNG PEOPLE
FROM FRANKSTON, VICTORIA
AND ROSIE BATTY**

Screening Toolkit

**“VIOLENCE IS NOT INEVITABLE,
VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE.”**

ROSIE BATTY, FAMILY VIOLENCE ADVOCATE

IT STARTS WITH US

Hello, friend!

We are thrilled that you want to host a screening of *It Starts With Us*. The wonderful thing about watching a film together is the opportunity to share conversations, personal reflections, and experiences. This is the moment we create change—together.

It Starts With Us and Big hART produced this screening guide to assist you with sparking discussions. It doesn't matter what size the screening - whether it is in your home, at school, in a church hall, with colleagues, or with hundreds of people at a community arts centre, the issue of family violence impacts us all. It is almost certain that everyone in the room will have personal experiences of family or domestic violence, gender inequality, or indeed of just being a young person negotiating personal challenges within a school environment.

It is our hope that through watching the documentary and sharing knowledge, opinions, and experiences, we can help create an opportunity for deep listening and connection. As Rosie Batty says in the film:

“There won't be a shift in how adults treat each other unless we focus on the next generation and listen to young people.”

Documentary Synopsis

It Starts With Us follows a group of teenagers living in a community with high rates of family violence, and their transformative experiences as part of a groundbreaking arts-based prevention program aimed at stopping violence before it starts. This unique prevention program fosters connections between young people, artistic mentors, and advocates like Rosie Batty, giving young people the rare opportunity to be heard.

Through songwriting workshops, the teenagers—who struggle with housing instability, bullying, exclusion, family tensions, and low self-esteem—find a way to turn the stories of their lives into powerful lyrics that give voice to their often invisible experiences. Together they explore how to break generational cycles of violence and practice respect, equality, independence, and leadership. When they perform their original song at the school's awards night, they surprise their families and even themselves with what they've learned. *It Starts With Us* reveals the powerful and real-world impact of prevention in action.

It Starts With Us first screened on ABC TV in August 2025.





The Project

It Starts With Us is a documentary and social impact project, developed with family violence prevention advocate Rosie Batty and young people from Frankston North, Victoria. Produced by arts and social change company Big hART, it builds on Project O, a successfully evaluated arts-based prevention program, delivered over a decade with young people around the country, in areas with high rates of family violence.

Family violence is a national crisis in Australia, with 2 in 5 children under the age of 18 exposed.* There is an urgent need for innovative prevention programs for young people, yet prevention receives less than 5% of sector funding.** Without meaningful investment in prevention, how can we expect change?

It Starts With Us combines film and advocacy to raise awareness and drive funding toward youth-focused prevention programs across the country, focusing on the early behaviours and conditions that lead to family violence.

**Australian Child Maltreatment Study, 2023*

***Australia lacks consistent data on funding allocated to family violence prevention. This statistic has been derived from a range of sources in different states.*

Our Impact

Alongside the documentary, we are driving an impact strategy, and its main messages are:

- 1. Work with young people** – To prevent and eliminate family violence, there is a critical need to engage young people, and centre their voices and experiences
- 2. Fund & support prevention programs** - There is a significant gap in funding for programs that work with young people to explore the conditions that underpin family violence and promote respectful, healthy relationships, and aim to ‘stop violence before it starts’
- 3. Creative and youth-led methods** - Innovative approaches to prevention work that tap into creativity and self-expression will have more relevance and resonance with young people, resulting in a tangible and measurable positive impacts

You'll find information about how to support these aims throughout this guide, and by visiting itstartswithus.com.au

Logistics

1. You should have received the link to download the film. If you have any issues, please contact sophia@bighart.org
2. Create space for rich, interactive discussion - we encourage you to make it interactive. You could:
 - Print a few of the discussion questions and have your audience members pick one to discuss.
 - Organise a panel discussion. This allows you and your community to hear directly from people already engaged with prevention in your community, and to be curious together.
3. Invite your guests! Whether you're hosting a large screening for your workplace or just a small group of friends and family, gathering to watch the film and discuss afterwards is integral to exploring the power of prevention.

Curating a Panel

Invite panelists who can speak to different aspects of prevention, for example:

- Young people involved in prevention, advocacy or leadership
- Youth workers
- People working in the family violence sector, womens or family services
- Teachers engaged in PDHPE curriculum or Respectful Relationships education
- Political Representatives engaged in the issue
- Academics or Economists
- Art therapists, or artists working in education

Share the film and key messages to panelists before the screening so they have time to prepare.

Pre-screening

Introduce the film, and share your intentions in hosting. Consider sharing the project background:

This documentary was developed with family violence prevention advocate Rosie Batty and young people from Frankston, Victoria. Produced by arts and social change company Big hART, it builds on Project O, an arts-based prevention program, delivered over a decade with young people around the country, in areas with high rates of family violence.

Post-screening

1. Facilitate your discussion, where people can voice their experiences in a safe space. In this discussion, hear what the young people have to say! For discussion starters - see the next page
2. Ask audience/group to visit itstartswithus.com.au/take-action/ to learn how they can support
3. Encourage students to ask their teachers to watch the documentary and access the education resources here - itstartswithus.com.au/education/

Discussion Guides

Note: Talking about domestic and family violence (DFV) prevention can be sensitive, and people bring different lived experiences into the room. With care for one another, and awareness of who is present, these prompts encourage dialogue grounded in respect, safety, and empathy.

Starter questions

- What moments in the film stood out for you? How did they affect you?
- Which of the student's stories could you most relate to and why?
- Did the film change the way you think about DFV prevention? If so, how?
- How did the film make you feel about the role of creative arts in schools?
- How might creativity help people to express their feelings safely?

Questions for students

- What does Rosie mean by 'meet young people where they're at and give them a voice', and why is it important?
- What do you, as young people, need or want to talk about that you feel you don't get to?
- What is the value of using art to discuss difficult issues like violence?
- Why is it a good thing for Xiao that she's 'loud' now?
- Discuss Archie's simple but important final statement, "you can get along with anyone". What might have helped him to learn this?

Questions for all ages

- Nearly 40% of children in Australia have been exposed to DFV. With such high rates, why do you think children are not often included in conversations around the issue?
- Rosie says, "violence is not inevitable, violence is preventable." What do you think about that statement?
- Project O welcomed all students not just those exposed to DFV. Why is this important?
- Kaden said he wouldn't do songwriting outside of Project O. What helped him step outside of his comfort zone?
- Rish talks about "your idea of love". How is that relevant in the context of DFV?
- The Australian government stated in 2022 that they would end family violence in a generation. However, less than 5% of allocated spending goes to prevention. How might we balance resourcing crisis response (eg law and order, women's refuges, victim support) with prevention?
- After watching the film, how do you think you can be accountable to the young people in your village?

Support:

If this material has raised anything for you or your audience, you're not alone, and support is available if you need it. Talk to someone you trust— a friend, counselor, family member or youth worker. You can also contact the following support lines:

1800RESPECT – 1800 737 732

A free, confidential service for anyone experiencing sexual assault, domestic or family violence. Available 24/7 to talk, listen and help you find support.

13YARN – 13 92 76

A free, confidential support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Speak with a trained Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander crisis supporter 24/7.

Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800

A free, private and 24/7 phone and online counseling service for young people aged 5–25. You can talk about anything — big or small.

Contacts:

Project Enquiries:

Sophia Marinos
Creative Producer
Email | sophia@bighart.org

Media Enquiries:

Christina Donoghue
Communications & Media Manager
Email | chris@bighart.org

Be sure to tag your screening activity on socials, tagging #BighART and #ItStartsWithUs:



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