

The role of men



“What will hurt us most is not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

- Martin Luther King

Most men are not violent and do not support violence against women. However, men need to actively demonstrate that violence against women is unacceptable. Men play a critical role in changing the cultures that allow violence to continue by advocating for the right of every woman to live free from violence.

While we know both men and women can be violent, research indicates most violence against women is perpetrated by menⁱ. Therefore we need to think about violence against women as a men’s issue, instead of a women’s problem, with both men and women working towards meaningful and lasting changeⁱⁱ.

The power of engaging men

Men are important to preventing violence against women because:

- Men can support the extraordinary work done by many women over many decades.
- Men can be positive role models for their male peers.
- Male leaders can be effective champions in their spheres of influence.
- Men can advocate and model the sharing of institutional power to promote social change.



Understanding the role of men – discussion points

- Explore some of the facts and myths relating to male violence against women (see Info Sheet 4).
- Highlight the persisting inequalities between men and women in the areas of raising children, earning money, household chores, contributing to public life and decision-making.
- Outline the disadvantages for men in sticking to rigid gender roles and stereotypes and how these contribute to violence. Discuss gender stereotypes for both women and men.
- Workshop the role factors such as alcohol, stress and poverty play as contributors, but not causes of violence. While anger and frustration may be a response to these factors, violence is always a choice.

Men's action teams



Victorian councils are increasingly creating men's action teams as an effective way to progress their preventing violence against women efforts in council and their communities. These teams have had great success by planting the prevention seed among peers and the council community, building their own and colleagues' awareness and commitment to prevention and gender equity initiatives.

Action team structures vary from informal and voluntary membership, to mandated participation from all council directorates. Whatever form the action team takes, it's important to reflect on why people should get involved and why men are part of the solution.

What a men's action team can look like?

- While it consists of a group of men, some women may be involved initially to resource and guide the group due to their expertise in the area (not to take minutes, make tea or participate in other traditional roles!).
- It should meet regularly and have terms of reference (including roles, what you want to achieve and who is part of the group).
- Having a well-respected, articulate, informed and committed male advocate who can talk about the issues of violence and the role men play in preventing it can be crucial to success (see Info Sheet 7).

What can an action team do?

- Facilitate discussions to raise awareness about violence against women and what men can do about it. Establish shared language and agreed principles.
- Hold activities and events to mark significant days such as White Ribbon Day, Mother's Day, International Women's Day or Father's Day. This could be a barbeque, morning tea or music event, with a speaker addressing the audience.
- Raise awareness through facilitated discussions, a quiz or by producing a flyer.

- Initiate projects, such as getting leave provisions for those experiencing family violence into the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA), contributing to a gender equity policy or advocating for preventing violence against women to be part of a major council policy.
- Get some relevant violence prevention training for your council.

While men need to demonstrate leadership in the community indicating their stance on violence against women, they must regularly consult and add their support to women who have been leaders in this work for many years. This will ensure they contribute to promoting greater equity between men and women rather than unintentionally undermining it.



Useful links

No To Violence – Working to Prevent Men's Violence Against Women
www.whatmencando.net

Jackson Katz (Ted Talks) www.jacksonkatz.com
www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTvSfeCRxe8#t=26

A Call to Men www.youtube.com/watch?v=GG9fefzuFWs

Chief Police Commissioner Ken Lay www.heraldsun.com.au/news/laworder/have-a-look-at-yourself/story-fni0fee2-1226682799029

Monash Men Say No to Violence Against Women (City Of Monash Generating Equality and Respect - White Ribbon Campaign 2013)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwQ9Ua5XHXU

White Ribbon Foundation www.whiteribbon.org.au

'Where Men Stand' White Ribbon Prevention Research Series, Flood, 2010 www.whiteribbon.org.au/resources/research

i ABS, 2013, *Personal Safety Survey*, Cat. No. 4906.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

ii VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: A Framework for Action and Background Paper to Guide the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women in Victoria*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne



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