

Promoting Gender Equity

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN LEADERSHIP STATEMENT

Victorian councils leading
progress in the prevention
of violence against women

An increasing number of Victorian councils are supporting or directly involved in preventing violence against women activity. Much of this work is guided by the current research showing that the key determinant of violence against women is the persisting inequities between men and women.

As a peak body for Victorian local government, MAV pledges to support councils to undertake this work and to provide leadership on the prevention of violence against women.

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POLICY CONTEXT

Violence against women affects approximately 1 in 3 women over their lifetime¹. The health, social and economic costs of violence against women are profound.

Compared with other risk factors, intimate partner violence is the top ranking contributor to preventable disease and premature death among Victorian women aged 15-44².

The social impacts of violence are closely associated with family breakdown, housing issues, drug and alcohol issues and can seriously undermine the mental and physical health of infants, children and young people.

Reported incidents of violence against women cost the Australian economy approximately \$13.6 in 2009, according to a KPMG study commissioned by the Commonwealth Government³.

Research shows that the key determinant of violence against women is the persisting inequities between men and women.

The approach in Victoria has been informed by the seminal work of VicHealth which advocates primary prevention activity in redressing the unequal distribution of power between men and women⁴.

This involves understanding societal and individual norms which privilege one gender over the other, which research shows to be common in every society and across all cultures.

For many years, Victorian councils have taken an essential role in responding to violence against women through the provision of direct services.

More recently, an increasing number of councils have engaged in activities and programs aimed at preventing violence against women, particularly given their role in creating healthy and safe communities.

Local government has been an early leader in this approach to violence prevention and will continue to model and promote equal and respectful relationships between men and women.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006.

² VicHealth, 2004.

³ KPMG, 2009.

⁴ VicHealth, 2007a.

VISION

Victorian local government shares the vision set out in the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.

Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities.⁵

The achievement of the vision outlined in the National Plan requires commitment and contribution from all levels of government, businesses, the media, schools, sporting groups, and other community organisations and community members.

⁵ National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2011.




STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The MAV commits to provide leadership in preventing violence against women through:


Advocacy to other levels of government to increase the resources in clarifying, enhancing and implementing legislation and influencing social norms for more equal relationships between men and women.

Building capacity within this organisation and the sector to understand the prevalence, seriousness and preventable nature of the problem and the roles that local government can play in addressing gender equity and promoting respectful relationships.



Promoting local government's role, achievements and best practice in preventing violence against women to the sector and other levels of government. In addition, championing 'whole of community' approaches to raising awareness and responding to opportunities to promote respectful relationships.

Supporting local councils in their community leadership roles by facilitating the provision of resources including advice, expertise, networks and policy support.



STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

1> Develop the workforce

Build knowledge and skill of a broad cross-section of your council to achieve organisation-wide capability and support for gender equality.

2> Share the learning

Talking about the successes and challenges assists in refining your efforts, can lead to further opportunities, and deepen understanding and ownership of the issue.

3> Raising the profile of primary prevention

Communicating the causes of violence against women and the barriers to equality requires tailoring messages appropriate to the audience, both within council and with the community.

4> Normalising workplace discussion about gender equity

Initiate and promote conversations about the causes of violence against women, to help people understand the role we all have in addressing the problem.

5> Influencing and adapting council business

Putting primary prevention and gender equity into mainstream council operations and practice promotes and supports respect and equity in the community. Continue to fine tune and examine your plans, policies and programs to embed real and lasting change.

6> Stimulating and nurturing leadership

Develop leadership at all levels and departments, to build expertise and capacity for reinforcing gender equity messages and behaviours.

7> Building relationships

Build informal relationships and formal partnerships to make the most of the broad range of council activities and networks to influence community attitudes. Pursue various opportunities through working with sporting groups, businesses, other councils and tiers of governments.

These seven strategies are abridged versions from the Respect and Equity: Preventing Violence Against Women Guide for Local Government developed by Maribyrnong City Council on behalf of VicHealth⁶.

⁶ Maribyrnong City Council and VicHealth, 2012.

MAV PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROJECT

This leadership statement represents a major component of the work undertaken by MAV to build the capacity of councils to prevent violence against women, and to foster leadership on this issue within councils and across the local government sector.

The MAV Prevention of Violence against Women Project is funded by the Victorian Government and includes:

- > resourcing a local government prevention of violence against women network
- > a gender equity section of the MAV website
- > hosting relevant professional development forums for councils
- > establishment of a leadership group consisting of senior level champions who have committed to progress leadership in the prevention of violence against women in the local government sector.

For further information about this project or work Victorian councils are undertaking in the prevention of violence against women, contact the MAV phone 9667 5555 or www.mav.asn.au

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NATIONAL PLAN REFERNECE TO COME

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