

# Leadership



Local government leadership is crucial to prevention of violence against women initiatives. With the support of leaders, you will get this issue on your council's agenda and keep it there. Leaders can be councillors, senior or middle managers or council officers who are passionate and informed about the issue and can garner support and motivate people. They will reinforce the prevention message in their teams and within their networks and look for opportunities to implement initiatives and strategies.

Leadership is also about working at a high level within your council to get preventing violence against women principles adopted and embedded into key policy areas such as the Council Plan, Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan.

## Identifying leaders

Enlist the support of people already committed to the issue. Leaders are those who are well informed, respected and energetic about their role as advocates, with skills to inspire action.

It is ideal to have both male and female champions. They can appeal to their peers about taking responsibility to end violence against women and demonstrate positive, respectful behaviour. This work requires all of us to influence change in all those areas in which we live, work, learn and play – men have just as important a role to play as women on advocating for gender equity.



## What leaders can do

- Enlist peers to support the work by talking about what you are doing and why.
- Develop strategies to engage and influence key decision makers.
- Join forces with relevant organisations or people in positions of influence to increase council and community engagement.
- Lead a gender equity or preventing violence against women cross-organisational committee or working group.
- Act as a draw card for an event you want other leaders to attend.
- Be a point of interest to attract media attention.
- Undertake the VicHealth half day preventing violence against women master class for senior leaders [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Workforce/Participation-for-Health-Short-Course.aspx](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Workforce/Participation-for-Health-Short-Course.aspx).

### Leadership ideas



- Provide managers from different council areas with examples of what others in local government have done. Managers will know their area of council very well, but might not know the key statistics about violence against women, or how councils can play a role in preventing it.
- Have a vision for what you want to happen and champion these strategically up and down the organisation. Both vision and influence are essential to success.
- Examine other councils' policies and provide advice and support to get approaches embedded into council plans.
- Provide regular updates, information on training opportunities and support for staff and managers on preventing violence against women.
- Provide an opportunity for leaders in the community to consider the implications of gender in their workplaces and possibilities for action within their sphere of influence.
- Hold a forum with a high-profile speaker to inspire, persuade and inform decision makers.
- Strategically plan on integrating preventing violence against women initiatives into public and staff events, forums and important gatherings.



### Useful links

**MAV PVAW Leadership Statement (2012) & Leading the Change in the Victorian Local Government Sector (2013)** [www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/pages/default.aspx](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/pages/default.aspx)

**Gender Equity and Local Government Factsheets** [www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/prevention-plans-resources/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/prevention-plans-resources/Pages/default.aspx)

#### Male Champions of Change

[www.humanrights.gov.au/male-champions-change](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/male-champions-change)

#### More Than Ready: Bystander Action to Prevent Violence Against Women in the Victorian Community Research Report, VicHealth, 2012

[www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/PublicationsandResources/Freedom-from-violence/Bystander-Research-Project.aspx](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/PublicationsandResources/Freedom-from-violence/Bystander-Research-Project.aspx)

**Preventing Violence in the Workplace: An Evidence Based Review: Summary Report, VicHealth, 2012** [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Economic participation/2012 workplace/VH\\_Preventing\\_violence\\_against\\_women\\_09.ashx](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Economic%20participation/2012%20workplace/VH_Preventing_violence_against_women_09.ashx)

**What Men Can Do: Working to Prevent Men's Violence Against Women: No To Violence** [www.whatmencando.net](http://www.whatmencando.net)

### Everyday leadership - Bystander action

Men and women need to work as allies to challenge sexism and the cultural norms contributing to the continuation of violence. 'Bystander action' means identifying, acting and speaking out about specific incidents of sexism, harmful gender stereotypes and other incidents promoting the idea that women are less valued than men<sup>i</sup>.

Taking bystander action is a form of personal leadership and is an effective way to engage in shaping community attitudes that contribute to violence. This could be in a workplace, at a social event or on public transport. Responding to these incidents sends a message to the person who made the comment and, just as importantly, to those who have witnessed what was said and felt uncomfortable.

It is important to assess the situation to ensure you are not putting yourself in physical danger before stepping in. Evidence suggests there are many instances where people feel it is appropriate to step in but don't necessarily know the best way to intervene. Here are some suggestions:

- Ask them to repeat themselves (this can prompt people to reflect on what was a throw-away line).
- Just say: "That's really not funny."
- Say what you think – "I think that's a pretty sexist thing to say..."
- Be respectful and calm, not self-righteous<sup>ii</sup>.

<sup>i</sup> VicHealth, 2012, *More Than Ready: Bystander Action to Prevent Violence Against Women in the Victorian Community*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>ii</sup> No To Violence, 2012, *What Men Can Do: Working to Prevent Men's Violence Against Women*, at [www.whatmencando.net/](http://www.whatmencando.net/), retrieved 05/0514.



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