

# Communities Free from Violence

Local government leading change



Overview	4
Investing in Long-Term Change	7
Nillumbik Shire Council	9
Yarra Ranges Council	10
Walking the Talk in Workplaces	11
Hepburn Shire Council	12
Latrobe City Council	12
Gender Equity in Employment	13
Whittlesea City Council	13
Safe, Equitable and Inclusive Public Space	14
Casey City Council	14
Community Engagement and Mobilisation	15
Wodonga Rural City Council	15
Kingston City Council	16
Glenelg Shire Council	17
Community Leadership	18
Greater Bendigo City Council	18
Mitchell Shire Council	19
Whitehorse City Council	19
Gender Equity in Sports Settings	20
Moonee Valley City Council	20
Moreland City Council	21
Gender Equity in the Early Years	22
Darebin City Council	22
Monash City Council	23
Melton City, Surf Coast Shire, Moorabool Shire and Mildura Rural City councils	23

## Acknowledgements

The MAV would like to thank the 35 councils funded under Free from Violence for their hard work and commitment in implementing the projects and for providing the detailed project reports that form the basis of this publication. Thank you to the council officers who assisted the MAV with compiling the case studies.



The MAV acknowledges Aboriginal Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pays respect to their cultures and Elders past, present and emerging.

For further information please contact the MAV on 03 96675555 or visit [www.mav.asn.au/genderequality](http://www.mav.asn.au/genderequality)

Photo credits: Front cover photos (L-R) courtesy of Casey City Council, Latrobe City Council and Greater Bendigo City Council. Photos used with council case studies were provided by the relevant councils. Additional photos on pages 8 and 18 courtesy Greater Bendigo City Council.

© 2021 Municipal Association of Victoria and Victorian Government

The MAV acknowledges the Victorian Government's financial and in-kind support for the Free from Violence Local Government Grants Program.

[www.mav.asn.au/genderequality](http://www.mav.asn.au/genderequality)

## From the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence and for Women

We know that gendered and family violence can happen in any community, and I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to ending violence in every community.

Five years ago, the Royal Commission into Family Violence handed down its report and the Victorian Government committed to implementing all 227 recommendations. Since then, we have invested more than \$3.5 billion toward rebuilding our family violence response system and stopping violence before it starts.

Meaningful systemic change starts when organisations, and the people in them, examine and challenge the harmful norms, behaviours and attitudes that lead to gender inequality and violence against women.

I thank the councils profiled in this publication for leading the way, in partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). The featured projects have been supported by the Victorian Government's Free from Violence Grants Program – the largest of its kind in Victorian history.

In 2018, the Victorian Government invested \$2.7 million to support 35 councils to implement gender equality and primary prevention initiatives, both within their organisations and in the communities they serve. These grants recognised the unique position of local government to interact with Victorians at all stages of life in the spaces they naturally live, work, learn and play.

Pilot projects have also gone on to form the evidence base for future council-led primary prevention activities, providing councils with practical, effective, real-world examples of work that makes a real difference.

I commend MAV and the councils involved for their commitment to building a safer, fairer, more gender equal Victoria.  
Yours sincerely,



*Gabrielle Williams*

**Gabrielle Williams MP**  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs  
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence  
Minister for Women

## From the MAV President

Victoria's councils are playing an important role in preventing family violence and violence against women. International and national evidence shows that this crucial prevention work requires significant change. This is a long-term effort that must be applied to all of the places and contexts in which communities live, work and play.

Councils are leading this change in their workplaces and communities to create a safe, inclusive and equitable society.

This publication brings together the achievements of the 35 Free from Violence council projects. It includes case studies that demonstrate the breadth and depth of activity and highlight different approaches.

We, at the MAV, have a strong commitment to preventing family violence and violence against women. We have been supporting councils in this work for over a decade. There are many projects that we know are happening across the local government sector.

We supported the Free from Violence projects through the coordination, networking and mentoring to the 35 councils to support effective project delivery. This support was recognised by the councils as highly valuable and has resulted in an increase in councils' participation in other violence prevention activities, such as the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

I would like to thank the Victorian Government for its strong support of preventing family violence and violence against women, and congratulate the 35 councils on their achievements.



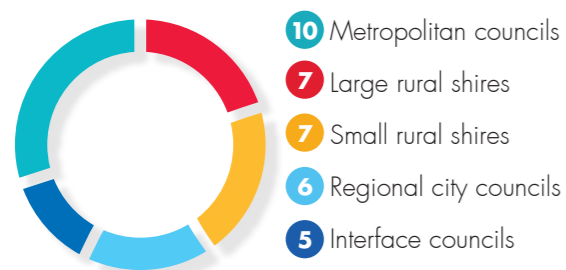
*David Clark*

**Cr David Clark**  
MAV President

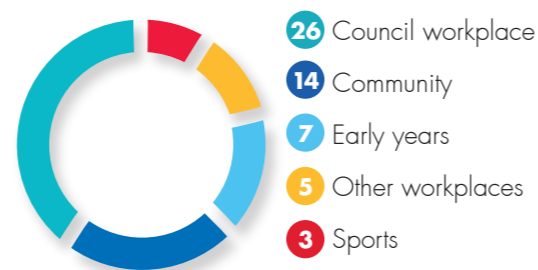
Thirty-five councils were funded by the Victorian Government under the Free from Violence Local Government Grants Program to implement projects in the workplace and community to prevent family violence.

The program delivered hundreds of training programs, events and activities for community members and council staff, as well as change in systems, policies and structures.

## 35 Free from Violence Local Government Grants projects



## Settings



Further information is available on page 6 (which lists settings against councils)

## Grant funding

**\$2.7 million**  
Free from Violence funding

**\$1.5 million**  
Council contributions  
(\$460,456 cash, \$1,034,519 in-kind)

Grant amounts ranged from **\$28,000** to **\$100,000** and councils made co-contributions to the projects through a mix of direct funding and in-kind (usually staff positions).

The contributions varied from small rural councils which were not required to contribute financially, to large metro councils, some of which more than matched the grant amounts.

## Supporting infrastructure

- Project coordination by the MAV and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- MAV Gender Equality and Preventing Violence against Women and Gender-Based Violence Network
- MAV expertise and 1:1 mentoring, plus additional consultancy support for workplace projects
- Two communities of practice (facilitated by workplace consultant and DV Vic/DVRCV)
- Online platform for sharing ideas, learning and resources

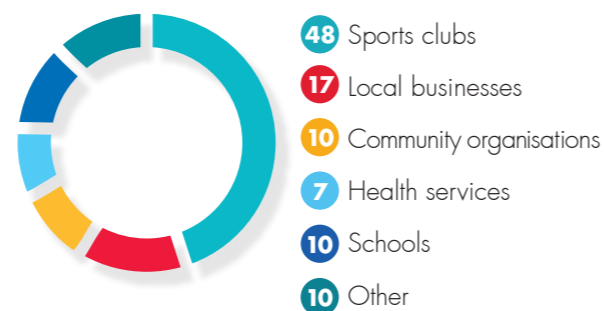
## Partnerships and collaboration

**7 councils** formed new or expanded community coalitions, with a total of **88 partners**, including health, community, business, sports and media organisations.

**32 councils** worked with external experts to deliver training and/or consultancy, the majority (22) being regional women's health services.

**17 councils** provided training and support to more than **100 local partners** to improve gender equity and prevent family violence.

### Local partners that received training or direct support included:



## Participants

Free from Violence project activities had more than **9,000** direct participants.<sup>1</sup>

### More than



## Policy change

**25 councils** implemented policy changes, including new policies and reviews.

**18 councils** created new gender equity or prevention of family violence action plans.

## Media and resources



## Primary prevention

The Free from Violence Local Government Grants Program took a primary prevention approach, which aims to stop family violence and violence against women from occurring by changing the underlying causes, referred to as the 'gendered drivers'.

### The gendered drivers of violence against women are:

- Condoning of violence against women
- Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence
- Stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
- Disrespect towards women and male peer relations that emphasise aggression

Many of the Free from Violence Local Government projects focussed on increasing gender equality, as the underlying context for these drivers. There is emerging evidence on other drivers of family violence, such as the drivers of elder abuse and family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities.

For more information on primary prevention and the drivers of family violence, see [www.vic.gov.au/free-violence-victorias-strategy-prevent-family-violence](http://www.vic.gov.au/free-violence-victorias-strategy-prevent-family-violence)

1. Participation figures only include direct participation activities funded under the Free from Violence grants. Figures are conservative estimates and do not include associated activities nor participation in surveys, social media or communications.

2. Includes representatives of local community, sports, health and business organisations, as well as general community members.

Council	Project	Setting				
		Workplace - Council	Workplace - Other	Community	Early Years	Sports
Alpine Shire	Promote Gender Equity and Respectful Relationships at Alpine Shire Council	●				
Ballarat City	Ballarat. Step Up. Speak Out	●				
Brimbank City	Brimbank Dads				●	
Cardinia Shire	Together We Can - Business Solutions	●	●			
Casey City	Embedding Change; Creating a Safe and Inclusive Casey	●		●		
Central Goldfields Shire	Changing our Story	●		●		
Darebin City	Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: Whole-of-Service Pilot				●	
East Gippsland Shire	Factors of Change, becoming Free from Violence	●				
Glenelg Shire	Project Respect Heywood – Supporting Change	●		●		
Greater Bendigo City	Growing Gender Equity in Greater Bendigo	●	●	●		
Greater Dandenong City	Increasing Gender Equity Across Greater Dandenong City Council and Community	●		●		
Hepburn Shire	Integrating Gender Equality within Hepburn Shire Council and the Community	●				
Hobsons Bay City	Hobsons Bay City Council: Embedding Gender Equity	●		●		
Horsham Rural City	Gender Equity in Community Engagement	●		●		
Kingston City	Courage to Change: Embedding Family Violence Prevention in Kingston	●		●		
Latrobe City	Safe and Strong Latrobe	●	●			
Loddon Shire	Leading Gender Equity in our Workplace and Community	●				
Macedon Ranges Shire	Local Government Workforce Challenge: Macedon Ranges Pilot	●				
Mansfield Shire	Leading the Change in Mansfield	●				
Melton City	Baby Makes 3 in the City of Melton				●	
Mildura Rural City	Community Leadership for Primary Prevention	●		●	●	
Mitchell Shire	Free Mitchell from Violence: Organisational Primary Prevention Pilot Program	●		●		
Moira Shire	Moira Shire Council – Equity Ready	●		●		
Monash City	Playing Fair				●	
Moonee Valley City	Ready, Set, Equity! – Addressing Gender Equity in the Local Sport Setting					●
Moorabool Shire	Moorabool @ Home, Work and Play – Free From Violence	●			●	●
Moreland City	Count Me In Too					●
Nillumbik Shire	Gender Equity Advocates	●				
Strathbogie Shire	Conversations Create Change	●				
Surf Coast Shire	Surf Coast Free from Violence Project	●			●	
Towong Shire	Community Systems Mapping for Violence Free Living	●		●		
Whitehorse City	Whitehorse Strengthening Local Action for Family Violence Prevention Project	●		●		
Whittlesea City	Improving Gender Equity through Employment for Women	●	●			
Wodonga Rural City	Striving for Gender Equality in Wodonga: A Whole of Community Approach		●	●		
Yarra Ranges	Gender Equity and Inclusion – Our Commitment, Our Responsibility, Our Future	●				

‘Making the connection between rigid gender roles/ stereotypes, gender inequity and violence against women was the most important motivator for educators.’  
Darebin Free from Violence project report

Preventing family violence and violence against women requires long-term social and structural change – change in people’s attitudes and behaviours, policies and laws, the way organisations are run, the way public infrastructure is designed, and the way community services are delivered. The Free from Violence Local Government Grants encouraged initiatives that embedded changes and would have a long-term impact.

Through the application process, the grants program recognised that successful primary prevention work would require leadership support, organisational readiness, cross-sector collaboration, intersectional practice and structural and systems change.

## How did councils embed long-term change through the Free from Violence projects?

### Leadership support

Executive leaders and councillors were engaged in various ways. While leadership support is critical for a project’s success, it is also an element in sustaining change beyond the project term. At least six councils had an executive leader on the project working group or committee, others delivered executive and council briefings, and about half engaged executives in training. Leaders were also involved in developing public statements.

### Building capability

All projects included training to build staff and/or community capability, creating the foundation for ongoing impact.

### Workplace culture change

Creating safe, inclusive and equitable workplaces can impact not only staff, but also the services they run and the communities in which they live.

### Policy and systems change

Councils used gender audits to build gender equity into policies and systems.

### Community partnerships

All councils built or strengthened partnerships through Free from Violence. Partnerships support long-term change by generating momentum and a shared responsibility that can help sustain action. They also enable pooled or shared resources and reduce duplication. Projects worked directly with a total of at least 188 local organisations, through coalitions and direct support.

### Whole-of-council approaches

Many projects used cross-council working groups, diverse staff activities, and whole-of-council action plans to involve all parts of council in the project, creating many opportunities for lasting change to occur.

## How did councils demonstrate good primary prevention practice?

### Intersectional practice

Across Free from Violence projects intersectional practice was demonstrated through:

- Involving women from diverse backgrounds in project planning to draw from lived experience
- Incorporating cultural, ability and age lenses in gender analysis tools
- Connecting gender equity work with councils’ other social justice and equity work
- Including intersectionality as a training topic
- Creating/ revising resources to use more inclusive, culturally sensitive and/or non-binary language that recognises intersectionality.

### Safe foundations

The grants recognised that a foundation of good primary prevention practice is to have established policies and procedures for identifying and responding to disclosures of family violence from staff and program participants. All projects were required to develop or enhance these as part of the grant. Councils developed guides for staff, delivered training, and created referral pathways and checklists. This was proven to be an important component of the grants as many councils reported that disclosures increased during the project.

### Community engagement

Some councils engaged local community in the design of primary prevention initiatives, to tailor activities to the local context and bring diverse views into the project concept.

### Preparing for resistance

Effective primary prevention approaches anticipate and prepare for resistance. At least five councils provided staff training in managing resistance and almost half (16) gave examples of how they used resistance as an opportunity for change.

## Evaluation of the grants program

An analysis of the councils' evaluation reports by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) found that the projects had demonstrated good progress

### Three-year outcomes:

- There has been increased quality leadership from government and civil society
- There has been growth in the number and expertise of the prevention workforce
- Quality prevention programs are being delivered
- There have been positive reforms in policies and laws
- There are increased standards and cooperation.

### The ANROWS analysis found:

#### Three main project activities had built capacity in councils and/or community:

> Training, participation in committees/networks/groups, and using tools, such as gender audit tools.

#### The main facilitators of effective project implementation were:

> External networks, and CEO and executive support.

## Dealing with disasters

For many councils the 2019–2020 bushfires meant a disruption to their main project activities, as councils and communities dealt with disaster. Following this, all councils faced COVID-19, which impacted the activities that councils had planned as follow-on

## Rural councils: Opportunities and challenges

Rural councils often faced challenges such as scarce resources, lack of dedicated gender equity positions, and less options for external training. But they were also able to leverage opportunities: smaller workforces meant a small number of training sessions could reach a high percentage of staff and, as large local employers, this training can have additional influence on the wider community.

'Council is the largest employer in the municipality; this project has provided a flow-on effect through staff taking their skills and knowledge into the communities they reside and the committees they represent.'

Loddon Shire Council Free from Violence project report

towards the following three- and ten-year outcomes, based on the Free from Violence Outcomes Framework:

### Ten-year outcomes:

- Victorians hold beliefs and attitudes that reject gender inequality and family violence
- Victorians actively challenge attitudes and behaviours that enable violence
- Family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated
- Preventing and responding to family violence is systemic and enduring.

#### Sustainable aspects of the Free from Violence projects were:

> The implementation of a strategy or plan, changes to policies and procedures, increased staff and community capacity and awareness, establishment of an ongoing group, and integration of the work in a permanent staff position.

It also found that the MAV was effective and efficient in the program management, adding value through its expertise and networking role.

initiatives from their Free from Violence projects. Updates from councils in 2021 indicated that many of these follow-on initiatives are restarting this year.



## Nillumbik Shire Council

### Creating cultural change through gender equity advocates

The Free from Violence grants saw several councils achieving substantial success and sustainability through 'advocates' or 'champions' models, which leverage the influence of passionate and committed individuals to build knowledge and effect cultural change across the organisation.

Nillumbik Shire Council's Gender Equity Advocates (GEA) project was a standout example of this approach, which aimed to embed gender equity into organisational culture and practice. Fifteen advocates were recruited from all directorates and staff levels, including two members of the executive team. A tailored training program was designed by the Gender Equity Officer with external OHS trainers and Women's Health in the North, and delivered over two half-day sessions to the 15 advocates and 11 other staff.

An important enabler of the project was the authorising environment created through the participation in the training of the CEO and four members of the Executive Management Team. The Gender Equity Advocates also completed two community of practice sessions about intersectionality and responding to resistance.



To embed their knowledge across the organisation, the advocates worked in pairs to deliver 29 presentations to a total of 243 staff (60% of total staff).

The success of the project was seen in the advocates achieving a high level of reach and engagement across the organisation that would not have been possible for one officer. As a result of the presentations, staff started to include gender equity into their day-to-day practice. This included gender equity being considered in procurement, in early years service level agreements, in the Communications Writing Style Guide, in staff inductions, and in the new enterprise agreement. Six gender equity articles were featured in the annual report.

Since the Free from Violence project, Nillumbik has continued to fund the program, and 10 additional Gender Equity Advocates were recruited and trained in 'gender and intersectionality'. The advocates have delivered a second round of presentations on that topic to each team across the organisation. 'Gender, access, equity and inclusion' is now a permanent agenda item for all team meetings, with a quarterly survey capturing data on what teams are discussing and implementing.

The advocates delivered 29 presentations to teams across the council, using Nillumbik's [Gender Equity Policy Statement](#) as a cornerstone, with a focus on considering gender equity in service delivery. They covered Change the Story, the link between gender inequality and family violence, council's Family Violence Leave Policy, and the new gender equity intranet page. The Gender Equity Officer mentored the advocates and assisted them to tailor the presentations to each team. The project also included two gender analysis workshops with the community safety team, a gender analysis of maternal and child health centres, and work with council's communications team.

'My involvement in the GEA project has opened my eyes massively to a whole range of issues including family violence, gender equality, poorly formed stereotypes readily accepted by society and men's mental health. I apply a gender lens to everything I do in life now, things I read, people I interact with, conversations I start.'

Tim, Nillumbik Gender Equity Advocate

## Yarra Ranges Council

### Embedding gender equity into business as usual

Yarra Ranges Council in Melbourne’s outer east is a leader in gender equity and prevention of violence against women. The Free from Violence grant enabled council to take its work to the next level, providing an example of sustainable change.

Throughout 2018, prior to the grants, Yarra Ranges Council initiated a gender equity advocates program and rolled out a gendered bystander cultural change program to all staff. Council staff recognised that the next step in primary prevention work was to change systems and structures. Through the Free from Violence project the council commenced embedding gender equity and inclusion into ‘business as usual’ across the organisation, with accountability measures creating a shared responsibility.

Ten teams across council were selected to participate in the pilot, including executive leadership, human resources, traffic and transport, and maternal and child health.

The council’s two Gender Equity Officers designed and delivered 20 tailored gender lens workshops to the 10 teams (86 staff). Each team attended two workshops, where they learnt how to apply a gender lens to their work, undertook a team self-assessment using an adapted version of the Workplace Equality and Respect Standards (see page 11), and created a team-specific gender equity action plan. Ninety-two per cent of participants who completed evaluation surveys reported an increased understanding of why it is important to apply a gender lens.

Teams were responsible for resourcing and implementing their actions, supported by the gender equity officers, gender equity advocates, an online resource hub and four community of practice meetings. To create shared responsibility for gender equity, two methods of monitoring and accountability were trialled: three teams included actions in the council’s corporate performance

*‘Traffic & Transport’s nine team members, all qualified or student engineers, admit that they walked into the Gender Equity and Inclusion Project feeling uncertain about why they were selected to participate or how they could engage with the materials. Team members asked themselves what traffic, parking and footpaths had to do with gender, equity or inclusion. Now, a year after embarking on the project, team members reflect freely on how much they have learnt. They talk about what it has been like to apply a ‘whole new lens’ to their work. [...] The team has deepened its understanding of how and why people might use traffic, parking and footpaths differently based on their gender, and how this might affect the focus or type of requests that different community members submit.’*  
Free from Violence project report

management software (CAMMS Strategy) and seven introduced a standing agenda item for team meetings, with CAMMS being the preferred method.

By the end of the project, the creation of team-specific gender equity action plans was observed to have increased the spread of responsibility and ownership for gender equity initiatives at Yarra Ranges Council. The council’s Gender Equity Officer, Kathy Oliver, said another valuable long-term outcome was the level of commitment and investment from the executive team. ‘I’ve seen a consistent language and understanding of gender equity and intersectionality’ Ms Oliver said.



The workplace has long been identified as an important setting for primary prevention of family violence and violence against women. Workplaces provide opportunity to reach large numbers of people and shape social norms and behaviours in ways that can benefit the organisation and the wider community.

Twenty-six Free from Violence projects included the council workplace as a setting for action, and five councils supported workplace cultural change in other organisations, for example, Wodonga’s Balance for Better: Business Program.

Among the 26 projects that focussed on the council workplace setting:

- 26 delivered staff training
- 26 delivered internal communications
- 25 undertook policy development
- 23 conducted audits/assessments
- 19 created a strategy or action plan
- 18 conducted a staff survey

### Workplace Equality and Respect Standards

The Workplace Equality and Respect (WER) Standards, created by Our Watch, provide a framework for what workplaces can do to promote gender equality and respect, and prevent violence and harassment. Applying the WER Standards involves a step-by-step process that includes forming a working group, collecting data from a staff survey and a gender audit, applying a workplace

self-assessment, developing an action plan and rolling out staff training. Nineteen projects implemented the WER Standards to some extent. Some completed the full process, and others used the WER materials to inform their activities. Of these, three also worked with other workplaces to encourage and support them to implement WER (Latrobe, Wodonga and Bendigo).

### Building staff capability

Collectively the Free from Violence projects delivered a vast quantity of staff training. A variety of providers were engaged to deliver this training, the most common being women’s health services. There were also examples of where training was

delivered by council gender equity officers or other staff who had been trained and mentored in primary prevention. Councils chose different training topics, depending on their current situation and the outcomes they hoped to achieve.

The most common types of training could be grouped as follows:

Training types/topic	Staff trained
Active bystander	1750
Gender equity and prevention of family violence	748
Family violence identification and referral	375
Unconscious bias	374
Respectful relationships	141
Gender analysis	114

Other training included women’s leadership, intersectionality and managing resistance. Some councils chose training to address sexual harassment, for example Kingston City Council used the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission’s Raise it! program.

their projects (Nillumbik, Casey, Hobsons Bay, Mansfield and Kingston) and two councils had existing groups (Yarra Ranges, Central Goldfields). In total, 126 staff participated in advocates programs during the project timeframe.

‘Advocates’ or ‘champions’ models were also used as successful strategies to build staff capability. Five Free from Violence projects initiated groups of ‘gender equity advocates’ as part of

## Hepburn Shire Council

### Small rural shire, big achievements

Situated in western Victoria, the small rural shire of Hepburn achieved workplace change with the lowest Free from Violence grant (\$28,100). The project, Integrating Gender Equity within Hepburn Shire Council and the Community, partnered with Women's Health Grampians to roll out the [Act@Work](#) cultural change program.

Activities included a staff survey, organisational audit, and development of a three-year action plan. The audit considered the following areas: leadership and management, organisational culture, policies and strategies, human resources, facilities, promotions and communications, programs and services, and community/client engagement.

Training was delivered to staff on preventing violence against women (91 staff), unconscious bias (10 managers/executives)



and bystander approaches (20 coordinators) – reaching 82 per cent of all staff – and was included in the annual staff induction. Communications included CEO messages and staff and community events.

At the end of the project, Hepburn had an Act@Work Action Plan, which identified 18 actions, to be implemented over three years. Actions were chosen carefully to consider the financial capability of the small rural council, to ensure they were feasible. The leadership support was seen as a key factor in success – the Act@Work Project Working Group included the CEO and two executives – along with the partnership with Women's Health Grampians. Following on from this work council produced a leadership statement and has approved the implementation of a Gender Equity Advisory Committee.

**'The commitment to the program demonstrated by the organisational CEO increased the profile and visibility of our project. Communications were coming from the 'top down' (CEO) rather than the 'bottom up' (officer level), which assisted with buy-in from the entire organisation.'**  
*Free from Violence project report*

## Latrobe City Council

### Engaging large workplaces in Workplace Equality and Respect

Latrobe City Council engaged eight large local employers in a project to set the foundation for the Workplace Equality and Respect (WER) Standards. As a regional industry centre, Latrobe has many large employers. The council successfully recruited to the project local branches of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, Energy Australia, AGL Loy Yang, Gippsland Water, Latrobe Valley Bus Lines, Australian Paper Maryvale, Maryvale Private Hospital and Department of Health and Human Services.

The eight organisations signed memorandums of understanding and nominated representatives to a 'change agents' working group. The change agents met eight times to work through the WER Standards and hear from guest speakers. The project also

included two public leadership forums, with 59 attendees, and excellent local media coverage, including a *Win News* TV piece and article in the *Latrobe Valley Express*.

A highlight of the change agents group was sharing across the different organisations, which was seen as very valuable. For example, AGL, one of Australia's largest companies, was advanced in workforce inclusion and diversity, and Gippsland Water was experienced in use of social media to promote gender equity and diversity.

While the project timeframe did not allow for the WER Standards to be implemented at the eight organisations, the change agents agreed to participate in an ongoing network.

**'The most important thing from the project is that we all have something to share and something to learn [...] We got a lot of feedback [from the change agents] that it was great to be able to meet with other people who are passionate about this work [gender equity and inclusion], who are having the same challenges. It keeps them going, provides motivation.'**  
*Liam Bantock, Coordinator Active and Liveable Communities*

Many councils have tackled gender equity in employment by focussing on cultural change in workplaces and holding events for women in business. Whittlesea City Council took a structural approach to examine gendered employment patterns and consider how councils could influence industry over the long-term to create more opportunities for women to pursue their careers close to home.



## Whittlesea City Council

### Tackling structural barriers to gender equity in employment

Drawing on research that showed women in growth area communities face particular barriers to employment, Whittlesea City Council's Free from Violence project set out to examine this in the local context.

The Gender Equity in Employment Report explains the issue: 'Families move to growth areas for affordable housing and the security of owning their own home. These residential communities are however a long way from jobs. Once they have moved in, families can find themselves making trade-offs between work and family life that reinforce unequal gender roles. [...] We found women trade their careers and financial independence for lower skilled/paid jobs close to home, to be available for caring responsibilities, and men trade their caring responsibilities and time with their families for long days with long commutes to maintain their careers.'

Project actions included detailed analysis of employment data to map gendered employment patterns, focus groups and interviews with local women from backgrounds, and the creation of short films highlighting these stories. The research found that women living in growth areas were more likely than men to have tertiary qualifications but they were less likely to be employed in jobs that reflected that level of qualification. The analysis consistently showed a greater proportion of tertiary qualified women earning less than the median income than for men, and that this gap was greater in growth areas than inner city areas.

At the conclusion of the project Whittlesea held a forum to develop recommendations that councils could use to improve women's access to local employment that matches their skills.

Recommendations included: support women-led businesses, facilitate access to co-working places, prioritise local people for employment, advocate to state government for more 0-2 year childcare places and transport infrastructure, promote the municipality to industry sectors that provide diverse employment opportunities, use gender-disaggregated data in economic development and city planning, and implement gender responsive budgeting.

Since the Free from Violence grant, Whittlesea has continued to implement the recommendations, including investigating integrating a co-working space into a new community centre in Mernda and considering best practice in terms of childcare provision, technology and user agreements. The project also influenced an organisational redesign process and recruitment practices, and informs economic development policy, including a new Investment Attraction Plan. The short films and project report are available at [www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/news-publications/plans-strategies-and-policies/equal-and-safe-strategy-2019](http://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/news-publications/plans-strategies-and-policies/equal-and-safe-strategy-2019)



### Impacts of COVID-19 on work practices

An unanticipated outcome of Whittlesea City Council's Gender Equity in Employment project is that it provides an important foundation for understanding the gendered impacts of COVID-19 on work practices in growth areas. While COVID-19 has brought to light gender imbalances of paid work and care giving, it has also demonstrated the benefits of working from home, particularly for women, some of whom are able to re-engage in paid work because of the flexibility of working from home.

Whittlesea City Council is now looking at the ongoing impact of these changes and how they may provide new opportunities to create local skilled employment in growth areas.

Design of public space can have a big impact on who uses it and community perceptions of safety, equity and inclusion. Councils can improve public space by applying gender equitable design tools and seeking community input to assess and improve council infrastructure, including leisure centres, community hubs, sports pavilions, parks, bike paths and streetscapes.

## Casey City Council

### Safe in Her City gender audit tool

In partnership with Monash University's XYX Lab, Casey City Council designed the Safe in Her City Gender Audit Tool. The tool incorporates the voices of women and girls into city design planning to promote safety and belonging in public places and spaces.

**The Safe in Her City Gender Audit Tool used a gender lens on public space design. The gender audit tool has four themes based on gender and design principles:**

- **Safe and secure:** women and girls feel safe here.
- **Connection and belonging:** women and girls feel welcome here.
- **Access and movement:** women and girls can safely get to, and move freely, here.
- **Look and feel:** women and girls feel good being here.

The tool considers equity and inclusion in its themes and measurements. For example, universal toilets that are inclusive of all genders and abilities, adequate lighting, active and passive surveillance, and assessing who is using the space with an intersectional lens.

Several Free from Violence projects included activities to apply gender audits to aspects of council's public space management. Involving women in decision-making about public space promotes women's independence and safety, an essential part of primary prevention of family violence and violence against women.

In 2021, Casey City Council recruited and trained a Gender Equality Taskforce, which comprised 23 women from diverse backgrounds. The taskforce, along with council staff, piloted the Safe in Her City Gender Audit Tool in day and night settings in Cranbourne.

In addition to the public space project, the Free from Violence funding enabled the council to partner with Women's Health in the South East to deliver active bystander training to more than 500 council staff and community members. Council also trained a group of 14 'Champions of Change' from across the organisation to support its broader gender equality and family violence prevention strategies. Since then, the group has grown to 60 staff.

To enquire about Safe in Her City Gender Audit Tool, contact Krissy Nicholson, Family Violence Prevention Officer, at [knicholson@casey.vic.gov.au](mailto:knicholson@casey.vic.gov.au)



Community engagement and social marketing are important primary prevention techniques for raising awareness and building the capacity of the community to take action to promote gender equity and prevent family violence. Fourteen Free from Violence projects included a specific focus on community settings.

**'The voice of young people [at the community events] demonstrates how powerful creativity can highlight issues in an engaging and compelling way, to instigate conversation, action and be a catalyst for change.'**

*Central Goldfields Shire Council Free from Violence project report*

**Methods of engagement included:**

- Community events and activities to raise awareness and influence attitudes
- Community involvement in creating local action plans
- Training sessions for community members to build capability for action
- Social marketing, including newspaper articles and social media.

Other examples were the development of a Gender Equity Community Engagement Audit Toolkit by Horsham Rural City Council to improve community involvement in council processes, and programs involving youth ambassadors and youth-led social marketing, implemented by Greater Dandenong and Central Goldfields councils. See <https://youth.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/projects/youth-united-against-family-violence>

### Engaging men and boys

The past few years have seen a growth in primary prevention initiatives that specifically engage men and boys. Previously seen as a gap in primary prevention, research from [VicHealth](#), [Our Watch](#) and [Jesuit Social Services](#) helped to highlight this area of practice and councils across Victoria quickly responded with new initiatives.

Common approaches in the Free from Violence grants included community forums or workshops on challenging unhealthy masculine stereotypes, involving men and male community representatives in gender equity training, and promoting father-inclusive practice.

## Wodonga Rural City Council

### Striving for gender equality with workplaces and community

Wodonga Rural City Council's Free from Violence project took a whole-of-community approach, with a wide range of community events and social marketing, plus a targeted program with three local workplaces. [The Balance for Better: Business program](#) delivered a series of workshops to three organisations – North East Water, Aligned Leisure and North East Catchment Management Authority – to support them to develop gender equality action plans aligned to the Workplace Equality and Respect Standards. The council also provided information to more than 30 local businesses and held an Accelerating gender equality business breakfast with 75 attendees.

While the initiatives with local workplaces formed the core of Wodonga's project and has had ongoing impact, Wodonga was also a standout example of working with men and boys to challenge unhealthy masculine stereotypes. The council delivered three events targeting men. Thinking Outside the Man Box: Men and Masculinity Forum drew 71 attendees, with 31 attending a follow-up workshop, and 30 students from Year 9 at Wodonga Middle Years College attended a Tomorrow Man workshop.

The Free from Violence activities were integrated with two behaviour change social marketing campaigns developed by Wodonga (under other funding): [Reflect Respect](#), a modern day guide for gentlemen, and the follow-on youth campaign, [OK NOT OK](#), which has videos on sexting, consent and peer pressure. A range of other community engagement activities included a

reading of *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*, Rainbow Story Time, and a cross-border Albury-Wodonga calendar of events for the 16 Days of Activism Campaign.

**'More of these events should happen in Wodonga showing that this country town is stamping out disrespectful behaviour'**  
*Men and Masculinity Forum attendee*





## Kingston City Council

### Training multicultural and multi-faith community leaders

The City of Kingston in Melbourne's bayside area has a diverse community, with 30 per cent of residents born overseas. The council's Free from Violence project, Courage to Change, had a dual focus on capacity building internally and in the community. While the staff capacity building was considerable (training hundreds of staff members including through a new e-learning module), the community engagement is a highlight of a well-planned and tailored approach.

In the first phase of the project, the council consulted with 88 community members from diverse cultural and faith groups and 10 key staff. This informed the development of a training plan that addressed community needs and interest regarding gender equity and family violence. Training providers Women's Health in the South East and the Australasian Centre for Human Rights and Health were engaged to deliver a customised, culturally-sensitive two-day training program for community leaders.

*'I never knew about gender imbalances or the right to be tired at the end of a work day. I was just used to things being that way.'*  
Female participant speaking about home duties

Twenty-seven community leaders and influential community members participated in the training (11 men and 16 women). Training content covered family violence and the gendered drivers, bystander skills, legal matters and respectful relationships. Participants came from a range backgrounds, including South Sudanese, Chinese,

Indonesian, Iranian, Indian, Rohingya, Samoan, Polynesian, and Bangladesh cultures, and Buddhist, Eckankar, Muslim, Islam, Hindu and Christian faith groups.

Council staff found that the project provided valuable learning on the application of an intersectional cultural and faith lens to the prevention of family violence which continued to be a focus of the council's gender equity work.

Reflecting on the project, Kingston's Preventing Family Violence Officer, Samantha House, highlighted the importance of allowing time for meaningful collaboration with cultural and faith groups.

'This deep engagement helps to build trust, particularly where council is engaging these groups for the first time, and identify critical insights and community need.' Ms House said.

Five weeks after the training, six participants reported they had taken action to prevent family violence, including:

- 'Educating students a lot more about different forms of abuse and encouraging them to challenge gender norms'
- 'Much more conscious of casual sexism ... and being much less tolerant towards it'
- Updating relevant policies within the community organisation
- Having conversations in their faith community about gender and creating respect and equality, receiving positive feedback.



## Glenelg Shire Council

### A place-based community approach

Project Respect Heywood was a place-based approach focussed on the town of Heywood, in the rural shire of Glenelg in south-west Victoria. The grant enabled the council to hold events and build the capability of community members and staff to prevent family violence.

A success of the project was engaging 14 community representatives in two full days of gender equity training, delivered by Leisure Networks. The attendees represented nine sports clubs, one sports association, as well as Heywood SES, Heywood Model Trains,

Promoting Heywood and Heywood Wood Wine and Roses Committee. The project also delivered two workshops on challenging unhealthy masculine stereotypes, run by The Man Cave, which were attended by community members, youth workers, teachers and Year 9 and 10 students.

A creative community event, Sketch Respect, saw a graphic recording artist live-capture the thoughts and ideas of 25 community representatives in visual form, producing impressive artwork to guide community action.



### Creative community events

Councils used diverse events to promote gender equity, challenge gender stereotypes and generate community action for preventing family violence, with some creative examples from Mildura Rural City and Hobsons Bay City councils.

#### Mildura Rural City Council

Mildura Rural City Council ran successful events with local community group Gender Equity Action Sunraysia:

- Dad's day out
- Gender equity sporting panel breakfast
- Women's discussion panel
- Women's empowerment morning tea for women from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- A series of online workshops and 'lunchbox sessions' on bystander approaches, equality and inclusion

#### Hobsons Bay City Council

Hobsons Bay City Council's project supported a range of council teams to run gender equity events, including:

- International Women's Day event featuring Aboriginal opera singer Shauntai Batzke
- Financial capability for women over 50
- We're All Superheroes gender equity show for children during school holidays
- Stalked the Human Target library event
- Women in science panel
- You the Man performances
- Manhood, Mates, Me community forum
- Feminist community choir
- Gender Equity Active Bystander Workshop for young people.

Councils can have significant impact by leveraging their community leadership roles to bring together local organisations and groups to promote gender equity and prevent family violence. Through partnerships, forums and leadership, councils can raise awareness of these issues and generate momentum for change.

Seven councils implementing Free from Violence projects led coalitions of local organisations that were working together for gender equity and prevention of family violence, involving a total of at least 88 organisations. Some of these were formed as part of the project and others were existing groups that were strengthened and extended through Free from Violence.



## Greater Bendigo City Council

### Leading a local coalition for gender equity

The Greater Bendigo Coalition for Gender Equity is an example of the impact a council can have by bringing together local organisations to address entrenched social issues.

Following a 2018 gender equity forum, Greater Bendigo City Council saw an opportunity to form an ongoing partnership with local organisations. As part of the Free from Violence project, the council was able to formalise the Coalition for Gender Equity, a collective of 25 local organisations committed to advancing gender equity in Greater Bendigo. Member organisations demonstrated their commitment to a collective impact approach by launching a joint [Leadership Statement](#). They also provided training for members and held joint activities for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

Bi-monthly meetings and two training sessions – on the Workplace Equality and Respect (WER) Standards and managing resistance – built the capability of coalition members. A collaborative action planning session formed the basis of the Coalition's Gender Equity Strategy 2020-2025, which is currently being implemented by three dedicated action groups: workplaces, emergency management/COVID-19 recovery, and sport and recreation.

During the Free from Violence project, the coalition's member organisations increased from 23 to 29, and it has continued to grow, with 35 organisations in 2021, representing 8,500 employees and members in the private, public and community sector in Greater Bendigo. At the end of the Free from Violence project, 10 coalition organisations reported they had taken action to implement WER or adopt/reorient activities to gender equity and family violence prevention.

In addition to leading the coalition, the council conducted a gender equity community survey (532 responses), produced gender equity videos, ran a social media campaign, held a

public launch of the Leadership Statement, and co-produced a family violence resource booklet in Karen language. Internal council initiatives involved the implementation of the WER Standards, with a staff survey, gender audit, and self-assessment workshop.



### Greater Bendigo Coalition for Gender Equity Leadership Statement



## Mitchell Shire Council

### Family violence roundtables create momentum for change

Family violence prevention is a key focus for Mitchell Shire Council thanks to the commitment of the Free from Violence working group and two roundtable events.

Holding a public event or forum to generate cross-sector commitment to preventing family violence has been a successful strategy for many councils. Mitchell Shire Council held two roundtables, with strong support from the council's executive team. The first event, with 87 attendees, focussed on building family violence awareness and a shared vision for change. The second was a practical planning session for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

A key success of the project was bringing together the working group, which Mitchell Shire Council formed with seven other organisations including health services, the local paper and local police. Following the conclusion of the funding period, the working group – which has grown to 11 organisations – delivered another successful 16 Days Campaign in 2020 and conducted a survey to measure change over time.

Within council, the 'Free Mitchell from Violence' project also enabled a gender equity review of 125 council policies plus training for all senior and executive leaders.

'The forum [...] provided council with the opportunity to set the scene of family violence as an issue within the Shire, and cemented council's position in having a significant role in contributing to the delivery of primary prevention activities.'  
*Free from Violence project report*



## Whitehorse City Council

### Collaborative action for family violence prevention

Leading a partnership of local organisations not only supports mutually-reinforcing change across multiple settings, but is also a method for bringing diverse community perspectives into a council's prevention plans.

In 2018, Whitehorse City Council established the Prevention of Family Violence and Violence Against Women Collaborative Action Working Group (CAWG) with diverse community organisations. The purpose of the group was to take collaborative action to prevent family violence and violence against women.

The Free from Violence grant allowed Whitehorse to further develop this group, with the creation of a sub-group to guide the

development of Whitehorse's Family Violence Prevention Action Plan. The final action plan included 32 actions across 15 areas of council.

Over the project the CAWG increased from 20 to 23 organisations and continues to meet bi-monthly. An indirect outcome from the project was collaboration with Nadrasca, a local disability service, which established a Stop Abuse Committee to promote equal and respectful relationships in the workplace.

'The Action Group is brilliant to be a part of and the philosophy to work towards a common goal is very strong within the community. The Plan itself has such power and information for the benefit of all people within the City of Whitehorse as an aspirational and realistic working document.'  
*General Manager, Nadrasca (local disability service)*



### Whitehorse Strengthening Local Action for Family Violence Prevention

*A community where everyone is valued and safe*

Sports and recreation is an important setting because it provides an opportunity to reach large groups of community members, including young men, and the sports context can exert a powerful influence on gender relations. Councils have influence over sports and recreation settings through the management of community infrastructure and public space, contractual relationships with sports clubs, and provision of a wide range of direct participation sports and recreation programs and services.

Three Free from Violence projects focussed on sports while many others included one or more activities targeting sports clubs. Initiatives aimed to create systems and structures that promote gender equality, increase the participation of women and girls in sports, and challenge gender stereotypes – all essential actions for the primary prevention of family violence and violence against women.

## Initiatives in the sports and recreation setting



**Whitehorse City Council's** Gender Equality Sports Club pilot engaged 69 girls and 65 boys from local junior football clubs in training.



**Moorabool Shire Council** worked with two clubs to increase female participation. This included using a gender equity self-assessment tool, running workshops and supporting each club to create a Girls in Sport Action Plan.



**Greater Dandenong City Council** arranged training for a sports club on gender equity, preventing violence against women and bystander action.



**Hepburn Shire Council** provided seven sports clubs with small grants of \$500 each to implement primary prevention activities, for example, a respectful relationships session.

## Moonee Valley City Council

### Ready, Set, Equity!

Ready, Set, Equity! aimed to increase the visibility, profile, representation and participation of girls and women in sport in Moonee Valley; as players, coaches, leaders, and decision-makers.

Through the project, Moonee Valley City Council aimed to implement a whole-of-setting approach to working with sports clubs, with direct participation reinforced by social marketing and support for three clubs to embed gender equity principles, using the [Creating a Place for Women in Sport](#) self-assessment tool developed by Yarra Ranges and Knox City councils.

The project included a 'Women and Girls in Sport Forum', with 114 attendees representing 37 clubs, a sports development workshop with 14 clubs, and gender equity training for council's sports and recreation team. An analysis of the local newspaper found more than 90 per cent of the sports articles and photos were about men. In response, the project created resources to promote participation of women and girls, including [10 case studies of local sportswomen and videos](#) profiling gender equality at seven local sports clubs. See <https://mvcc.vic.gov.au/my-council/what-we-do/women-and-girls-in-sport>



## Moreland City Council

### Increasing sports participation of young women from diverse backgrounds

Moreland City Council has cemented its position as a leader in promoting gender equity in sports with the addition of a targeted program that increased participation of women and girls from diverse cultural backgrounds in mainstream sporting clubs.

'Count Me In Too' was delivered by Moreland City Council in partnership with Merri Health and Melbourne University. It followed on from the previous award-winning Melbourne University pilot project Count Me In, which aimed to engage young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in sports and found that girls and women faced additional barriers. Count Me In Too formed partnerships with 10 sports clubs, three sporting bodies and seven schools to deliver 56 culturally-inclusive sporting opportunities. These events attracted 601 women and girls, with participants aged 3-75 years from 28 diverse cultural backgrounds and 33 suburbs across Melbourne. Capability building activities were held with the sports clubs and staff to develop their competency in designing culturally-appropriate programs for women and girls.

An important feature of the project was that the needs of culturally-diverse women and girls were at the centre of planning and delivery. A project officer with strong community ties was recruited to work with young women from diverse backgrounds throughout the project and to support clubs to address participation barriers and promote program activities. The program also aimed to increase women's and girls' leadership within sports clubs and provided 65 women and girls with leadership and personal development opportunities.

Evaluation found that participation in organised sport by women and girls from diverse backgrounds had increased and that 78

program participants had signed up as club members for cricket, basketball, bowls, badminton, football and tennis. Participating clubs are reported to be more capable and trusted by Moreland's culturally diverse community and have become role models for other clubs. In 2021, Count Me In Too won the LGPro Award for Excellence in the Community Partnerships category.

Moreland has a long-term strategy to increase sports participation for women and girls across the municipality, widely recognised as a successful model that facilitated an increase in female sports participation from 8 per cent in 2008 to 24 per cent in 2019. Count Me In Too demonstrated the benefits of complementing system-level changes with a targeted initiative to reach an under-represented group. View the Count Me In Too video at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7heHITj7sxU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7heHITj7sxU)

*'The most important part was having Nazish's role, someone who is respected and admired by the community. Nazish listened, gained the trust of and worked with women/girls to support them to discover their potential to play sport in a kind and supportive manner. [...] The outcomes were amazing, and demonstrate what can be achieved with an investment into people and a true partnership approach.'*

*Tamara Mason, Female Sport Participation Officer, Moreland Council*



Early years settings present an opportunity for councils to have a positive impact on high numbers of families by creating gender equitable environments for children and promoting respectful relationships among parents. Services provided by councils range from maternal and child health, a universal service reaching nearly

## Darebin City Council

### Gender equity in the early years: a whole-of-service pilot

Two kindergartens and a long day care centre applied a whole-of-service approach to creating gender equitable environments for young children under Darebin City Council's Free from Violence grant.

The project built upon Darebin's previous work by piloting the approach and tools from [Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A Resource for Local Government](#). An Early Years Gender Equity Officer worked directly with educators at pilot sites in a mentorship capacity. Gender Equity in the Early Years Training was delivered by Women's Health in the North to 38 staff across the three services. The mentoring and training enabled the educators to understand the powerful role the early years sector has in preventing gender-based violence and built their skills in providing services that are gender equitable and positive gender norms.

As part of the whole-of-service approach, all three sites implemented gender equity and diversity assessments of their practice, spaces, toys and books, and developed gender equity policies.



every new family, to playgroups which welcome diverse and vulnerable families, and early childhood education and care centres. Seven Free from Violence projects implemented initiatives to create gender equitable environments for young children.

An evaluation by the University of Melbourne found positive shifts in educators' knowledge, attitudes and practices.

#### Examples included:

- **Changes in use of gendered language** ('I avoid saying things like "you're a pretty girl"')
- **Challenging gender stereotypes** ('I found some terrific images of the female astronauts')
- **Setting up and negotiating gender equitable use of spaces and toys** ('now the boys and girls in my group are playing in the same space').

Early years educators also identified the importance of the combined components of the resources: 'I don't think you could have done this without the training, without the mentorship and without the physical book resources,' one educator said.

One educator said, 'the evaluation demonstrated the usefulness of the resource and identified 14 findings that provide insight into the opportunities for respectful relationships education and primary prevention in early years settings. Darebin has continued to deliver further training and a community of practice for early years educators and provides gender equity information and advice to early years sites'.

**'Educators began to see how some spaces and activities were dominated by boys/girls, to then consider what was driving these patterns/behaviours, and reflect on how their choices in program and room design could contribute positively to gender equity. Educators had discussions with each other, and also the children, to explore why these patterns existed. [For example] the layout of the room previously had a large carpet area flanked with resources usually favoured and dominated by boys, including construction, trains and cars. Girls were using the peripheral areas and not comfortable engaging in the carpet area play. Educators moved the carpet area, and changed the placement of resources. This immediately changed the interactions/power dynamics between children and their access to resources.'**

*Free from Violence project report*

## Monash City Council

### Playing Fair inclusive playgroup resources

Playgroups can have a positive impact on diverse and vulnerable families. Recognising this, Monash City Council produced a suite of resources to support playgroup facilitators to understand the link between gender equity and preventing violence against women and to include gender equity in their practice.

Starting with a literature review, the project developed and piloted Playing Fair, playgroup gender equity assessment tool and training package for playgroup facilitators. This was piloted with six playgroup facilitators (paid staff and volunteers) across three playgroup sites.

#### The three Playing Fair training modules apply a culturally competent and intergenerational lens and encompass:

1. Exploring playgroups and the role of the facilitator including child development and the value of play
2. Setting up inclusive environments, linking families together and with services
3. Embedding gender equity and challenging gender stereotypes in playgroup settings and practices.

Monash City Council's playgroups engage more than 1400 families, including caregivers and grandparents from diverse cultural backgrounds, with a particular focus on vulnerable families. Playing Fair has been included in the recruitment and professional development program for playgroup staff.

The evaluation identified that at the end of the project playgroup staff were routinely undertaking gender equity assessments. Staff said the project had 'opened their eyes to reviewing what's on the walls, equipment, posters – everything. I can now point out to other playgroup staff what's there'.

**'Through this welcoming model, we have had more fathers, grandfathers and same-sex couples participate in our playgroups which in the past have been more difficult groups to engage.'**  
*Coordinator, Playgroup and Early Years Engagement*



## Melton City, Surf Coast Shire, Moorabool Shire and Mildura Rural City councils

### Baby Makes 3

[Baby Makes 3](#) is a direct participation program for new parents that aims to build knowledge and skills in practicing equal and respectful relationships. Developed by Carrington Health, the program is delivered over three sessions through the maternal and child health service's new parents program.

Four councils used Free from Violence grants to bring this to their municipality. Across the four councils, 72 people attended training to become Baby Makes 3 facilitators and 364 parents attended the three-session program. The councils complemented this with workshops for maternal and child health staff to embed the Baby Makes 3 principles across their services.

Mildura Rural City Council's project enabled the training of eight facilitators for the Balit Booboo Narkwarren Building Strong Families program, a culturally adapted model of Baby Makes 3 designed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

At the end of the Free from Violence projects, councils reported positive impacts on staff awareness and practice. For example, Melton City Council found that staff had an increased focus on father inclusive practice and had seen increased involvement from male caregivers in council services.

In 2021, Mildura Rural City and Surf Coast Shire councils have self-funded the continued delivery of Baby Makes 3 using online and in-person sessions, extending the program impact even further.

#### Melton City Council's Baby Makes 3 program engaged 200 parents. Evaluation showed that at the conclusion of the program:

- 95.5 per cent of participants reported a better understanding of relationship equality
- 78 per cent believed they communicated better with their partner
- 64.6 per cent had increased equality in the division of parenting tasks and responsibilities.





[www.mav.asn.au/genderequality](http://www.mav.asn.au/genderequality)

© 2021 Municipal Association of Victoria and Victorian Government