

# Getting started

## The strong case for preventing violence against women



In 2012/13 there were over 60,000 family violence reports to Victoria Police<sup>i</sup>, with rates increasing for every municipality across Victoria. In Australia, almost 1 woman a week is killed as a result of violence from a current or ex-partner<sup>ii</sup>. Research has shown us that the most significant factors leading to violence against women are the acceptance of sexist attitudes and the unequal distribution of power between men and women<sup>iii</sup>.

VicHealth has developed a primary prevention framework<sup>iv</sup> identifying councils as key influencers of change, alongside other levels of government and community entities (such as sports clubs, workplaces, faith settings and schools). The evidence underpinning the framework notes that violence against women can be eliminated if key groups across our society work consistently over time to address the persisting inequalities between men and women.



## Council's role in preventing violence against women

Over the last decade, Victorian councils have become leaders in preventing violence against women efforts. Councils engage with individuals, families, organisations and communities, and therefore can play an important role in influencing cultural and social norms.

Council involvement in the primary prevention of violence against women is critical in creating safe, inclusive and respectful workplaces and communities. It is called primary prevention because it considers the underlying factors that lead to violence and aims to prevent violence before it occurs.

## This is your opportunity to contribute to important social change

Using council as a setting to prevent violence against women and promote gender equity will contribute to creating a fairer, more peaceful society with better outcomes for all.

It is important that your efforts, no matter how large or small, are guided by the evidence about what works (see Info Sheet 6).

### Tips to get your council started on preventing violence against women



#### Look at what others have done

There has already been some great work done on preventing violence against women by Victorian councils. See Info Sheet 6 for lots of examples from metro, regional and rural councils.

#### Ensure you have a good understanding of how violence against women links to other issues

Violence impacts on a woman's physical and mental health and has broader implications for children, families and communities. Having this information will enable you to build a good case for why preventing violence is important work for councils. See Info Sheet 4 for some key facts and statistics.

#### Look out for appropriate training and opportunities for skill development

Join the MAV Preventing Violence Against Women (PVAW) Network. This will put you in touch with officers from other councils doing this work who can be a potential support to you. Contact VicHealth for details of their preventing violence against women short course and contact your regional women's health service for advice on professional development opportunities in your area.

#### Start small and simple

Start with something 'do-able'. Involve willing participants, so you gain a sense of success and are inspired to keep going. Councils often start by organising an afternoon tea to mark White Ribbon Day (25 November, the UN Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women). This can be an ideal way to start raising awareness and can act as a springboard leading to further understanding, skill and commitment to preventing violence against women.

#### Know your local facts

Informing decision makers in councils about violence against women in your community will help to build a case for action. Victoria Police collects annual statistics on call outs to family violence incidents for every municipality in Victoria, available here: [www.socialstatistics.com.au](http://www.socialstatistics.com.au)

### What's the best approach for your council?

#### Ask the following:

- Where are you most likely to get traction?
- Which people of influence are most likely to be motivated to get behind this work?
- Does your health and wellbeing plan have an area of focus on preventing violence against women?
- Is your community grants team looking for a new strategic direction?
- Is there something already happening you can attach your work to, such as International Women's Day or a local sporting event?

#### Get leaders on board

Having a committed and passionate leader behind you will add credibility to your work. A good leader is someone who is in a position of influence, open to information and inspired about their role to affect change.



#### Useful links

**Preventing Violence Against Women - Leading Change in the Victorian Local Government Sector** [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)

**Compilation of evidence-based tools and resources** [www.vicpvaw.net.au](http://www.vicpvaw.net.au)

**VicHealth Preventing Violence Against Women** [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-violence.aspx](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-violence.aspx)

**VicHealth Preventing Violence Against Women Short Course** [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/shortcourse](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/shortcourse)

**MAV Preventing Violence Against Women Network** [www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/Pages/preventing-violence-against-women-network.aspx](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/Pages/preventing-violence-against-women-network.aspx)

**National Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children** [www.preventviolence.org.au](http://www.preventviolence.org.au)

- Victoria Police, 2013, *Crime Statistics Official Release 2012/13*, Victoria Police, Melbourne.
- Chan & Payne, 2013, *Homicide in Australia: 2009/10 National Homicide Monitoring Program Annual Report*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
- 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.
- VicHealth, 2007.



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