

Getting started

The strong case for preventing violence against women



In 2012/13 there were over 60,000 family violence reports to Victoria Policeⁱ, 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-partnerⁱⁱ. 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 womenⁱⁱⁱ.

VicHealth has developed a primary prevention framework^{iv} 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

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

Compilation of evidence-based tools and resources www.vicpvaw.net.au

VicHealth Preventing Violence Against Women www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-violence.aspx

VicHealth Preventing Violence Against Women Short Course 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

National Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children 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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Concepts and definitions

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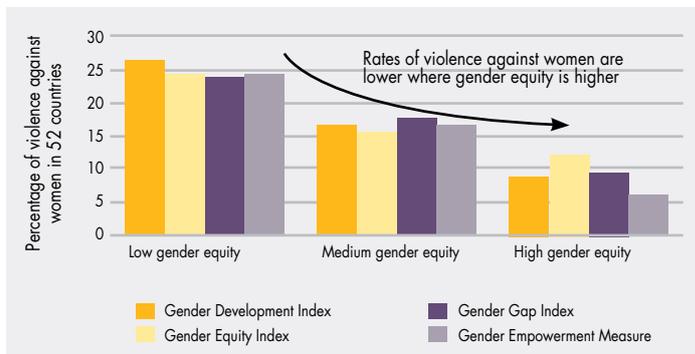


“Violence against women is deeply rooted in discrimination and inequality between men and women”

Investing in Gender Equality: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, UNIFEM, 2010

Violence against women is defined as: ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to womenⁱ. It can also include financial abuse, using intimidation, threats and isolation.

Primary prevention of violence against women (PVAW) refers to strategies aimed at preventing violence before it occurs. This includes changing behaviours and attitudes and building the awareness and skills of individuals. The central focus of work in primary prevention is on strategies that address the underlying structural and cultural drivers of violence against women, such as gender inequality and beliefs in rigid gender roles and stereotypesⁱⁱ.



UNIFEM, 2010, Investing in Gender Equality: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.

Tertiary services & programs aim to provide support and redress to victims/survivors of violence and deal with the consequences of violence. Social support services, health care providers, the criminal justice system and crisis accommodation are all examples of settings through which tertiary services and programs are delivered.

Social determinants of violence against women are the social and cultural conditions under which violence against women are more likely to occur. VicHealthⁱⁱⁱ, identifies the absence of equal and respectful relationships between men and women at the individual, community and societal levels as the most significant determinants leading to violence against women.

Gender refers to female and male identity that goes beyond the biological differences between men and women (known as sex). Gender expectations are shaped by social, political and economic influences and can differ from culture to culture, depending on what is considered socially acceptable behaviour for men and women.

Connecting preventing violence against women and gender equity

National and international research shows societies, communities and families have lower rates of violence against women when greater equality exists between women and men and girls and boys.

Women still do not enjoy equal opportunity in Australia today. This can be seen in all facets of society from the low numbers of women elected in government and a lack of representation in executive roles. Women continue to earn less than men, and the sexual objectification of women remains evident in aspects of our media and community life.

Gender equity takes into consideration the differences in women's and men's lives and recognises that different approaches may be needed to produce outcomes that are fair.

Gender stereotypes refer to expectations of how a person should behave or present because of their gender. This can result in women and men being expected to take on certain roles and a lack of tolerance when these stereotypes are challenged. Gender stereotyping can be harmful as it can promote the idea that women are less valuable than men^{iv}.

Sexism is discrimination against a person on the basis of their gender or sex. Sexist attitudes and beliefs can encourage the idea that women are not equal to men and don't deserve the same rights. Sexism can be in the form of 'jokes' that minimise the impact and seriousness of violence against women, and other attitudes supporting the continuation and acceptance of violence against women.



Women's health services - for regional information and resources, contact:

Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West
www.womenshealthbsw.org.au

Women's Health Goulburn North East
www.whealth.com.au

Gippsland Women's Health Service
www.gwhealth.asn.au

Women's Health Grampians
www.whg.org.au

Women's Health Loddon Mallee
www.whlm.org.au

Women's Health East
www.whe.org.au

Women's Health in the North
www.whin.org.au

Women's Health in the South East
www.whise.org.au

Women's Health West
www.whwest.org.au

Women With Disabilities Victoria
www.wdv.org.au

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
www.mcwh.com.au

Useful links

1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) www.1800respect.org.au

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria) www.fvpls.org

Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) www.casahouse.com.au

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV)
www.dvrcv.org.au

Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children
www.preventviolence.org.au

Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV) www.glvh.org.au

Intouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
www.intouch.asn.au

Municipal Association of Victoria
www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/Pages/default.aspx

National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022

www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children-2010-2022

No To Violence, Male Family Violence Prevention Foundation
www.ntv.org.au

Partners in Prevention www.partnersinprevention.org.au

Safe at Home, Safe at Work: Domestic Violence Workplace Rights and Entitlements Project www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au

The Look Out www.thelookout.org.au

UN Women www.unwomen.org.au

VicHealth Preventing Violence Against Women Program
www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Programs-and-Projects/Freedom-from-violence.aspx

Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and their Children 2012- 2015 Everyone Has a Responsibility to Act
www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/736056/preventing_violence_against_women_and_children_action_plan_102012.pdf

White Ribbon Foundation www.whiteribbon.org.au

World Health Organisation
www.who.int/topics/gender_based_violence/en

- ⁱ United Nations General Assembly, 1993, *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*, UN General Assembly, Geneva.
- ⁱⁱ VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: A Framework and Background Paper to Guide the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women in Victoria*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.
- ⁱⁱⁱ VicHealth, 2007.
- ^{iv} VicHealth, 2012, *More Than Ready: Bystander Action to Prevent Violence Against Women in the Victorian Community*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.



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Frequently asked questions



Q1: Is violence against women common in modern day Australia?

A: In 2012/13 Victoria Police attended more than 60,000 family violence incidents across Victoriaⁱ. That accounts for 167 homes a day. 1 in 3 women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, with 1 in 5 having experienced sexual violenceⁱⁱ.

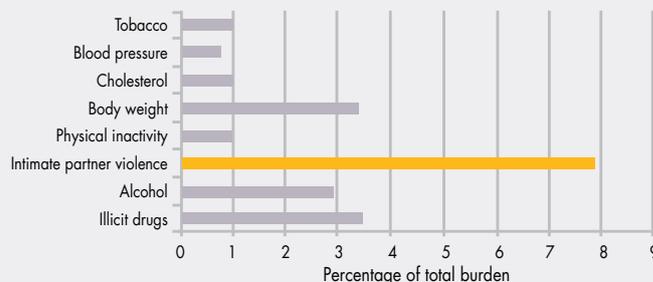
Q2: What about violence against men?

A: The evidence is very clear that most violence against men is perpetrated by another man, unknown to the victim and is more likely to occur in a public place. Conversely, most violence against women is perpetrated by a man that is known to the woman and more likely to occur in the homeⁱⁱⁱ. Another key factor in considering the differences between violence against men and women is that while violence experienced by men is declining, violence against women continues to increase^{iv}.

Q3: What are the impacts and costs of violence against women?

A: The impacts are very serious. For Victorian women aged between 15 and 45, violence from an intimate partner contributes to more ill health than any other preventable risk factor including smoking, alcohol, poor diet and physical inactivity^v. Violence against women results in physical, mental and emotional ill health, disease and sometimes death^{vi}. See Info Sheet 5 for more information.

Top eight risk factors contributing to the disease burden in Victorian Women 15 - 44 years



VicHealth, 2014, The Health Costs of Violence; Measuring the Burden of Disease Caused by Intimate Partner Violence, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

Q4: How can you prevent violence against women?

A: The term 'primary prevention' means stopping violence before it occurs. We need to focus on why violence happens in the first place and address those factors. Research conducted by VicHealth identified that one of the most important thing we can do to prevent and reduce violence against women is to promote equal and respectful relationships between men and women^{vii}. When councils get involved in initiatives, planning and policy development that promotes equity and respect between men and women, they are contributing to the prevention of violence against women.

Q5: What has preventing violence against women got to do with councils?

A: Victorian councils have become national leaders in prevention efforts. They engage in activities that have become critical in developing safe, inclusive and respectful workplaces and communities.

Councils are key settings through which individuals, families, organisations and communities are engaged and have an important role in influencing cultural and social structures. Councils are also major employers in the community, putting them in the position to influence the welfare of their own council community.

Q6: Which area of council is responsible for preventing violence against women?

A: Councils have successfully embedded preventing violence against women strategies into the diverse range of services and functions they provide to the community.

In many rural settings where one council staff member is often responsible for a variety of roles, there is a good level of understanding about where to channel efforts in their particular community and council. Councils have added preventing violence against women activities, such as ensuring more women and girls are included in organising and participating in sports clubs, into existing council initiatives while also working in partnership with key community groups. See Info Sheet 6 for examples of how councils have done this.

Q7: How can I get more information and link with others working on preventing violence against women?

A: The MAV hosts a Preventing Violence Against Women Network which meets quarterly. Rural councils are encouraged to attend and can do so via Skype or video conferencing. Visit the MAV website: www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity

Your women's health service will have information about preventing violence against women in your region. See Info Sheet 2 for a listing. Subscribe to the VicHealth E-news: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

Q8: Who is most vulnerable in my municipality and where can I find out about the levels of violence?

A: Women from all social, economic and cultural backgrounds experience violence. However, women with disabilities, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal women are more vulnerable to violence^{viii}.

You can find out the number of police callouts to family violence incidents in your municipality by visiting: www.socialstatistics.com.au and checking the family violence incidents section. Also contact your regional women's health service for more local information and sex disaggregated data (see Info Sheet 2).

Q9: I understand that councils are best placed to work on preventing violence before it occurs, but where can I get help if violence does occur?

A: It is inevitable that in working on the primary prevention of violence you may get queries or disclosures from women who have experienced violence. Women in rural communities face specific barriers in getting help and support. Lack of crisis accommodation, resources and services, long distances to travel to family, friends and health services and a lack of confidentiality in small close knit communities can make it hard to act when violence occurs. It is important to listen and believe women who disclose experiences of violence and offer to refer them to a local or state-wide service.



In an emergency, call 000. If you need information and/or support contact the national 24/7 service **1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)** or visit **www.1800respect.org.au**

- ⁱ Victoria Police, 2013, *Crime Statistics Official Release 2012/13*, Victoria Police, Melbourne.
- ⁱⁱ ABS, 2013, *Personal Safety Survey, Cat. No. 4906.0*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- ⁱⁱⁱ ABS, 2013.
- ^{iv} Victoria Police, 2013.
- ^v VicHealth, 2004, *The Health Costs of Violence: Measuring the Burden of Disease Caused by Intimate Partner Violence: A Summary of Findings*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.
- ^{vi} The Royal Women's Hospital, 2012, *Family Violence – Information for Women*, The Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne.
- ^{vii} 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.
- ^{viii} VicHealth, 2013, *Preventing Violence Against Women in Australia Research Summary*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.



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Building the case for action: using statistics and Research



Violence against women is a serious, prevalent crime. Evidence shows that it is also preventable. In addition to raising awareness about the roles councils can take in preventing violence against women, using sound evidence will help build a strong case for action.

Key statistics

- In Australia, 1 in 3 women have experienced physical violence, with 1 in 5 experiencing sexual violence, since the age of 15ⁱ.
- In Australia, 1 woman a week is killed by her partner or ex-partnerⁱⁱ.
- Victoria Police attended more than 60,826 family violence incidents, equating to 167 homes a day in 2012/13ⁱⁱⁱ.
- In Victoria, the cost of violence against women to the economy was estimated at \$3.4 billion in 2008/09^{iv}.
- Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and disease for Victorian women aged 15-44^v.
- The health impacts of violence against women include anxiety, depression, brain injury, chronic disability, fracture and breaks, unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, self-harm and suicide^{vi}.
- The broader social and cultural impacts include financial debt, unemployment, family breakdown, homelessness and social isolation^{vii}.
- 1 in 4 children and young people have witnessed violence against their mother or step-mother^{viii}, which can result in serious behavioural, emotional and mental health issues, physical ill health and delays in cognitive and other areas of development^{ix}.



Tips on using statistics and research effectively



Current statistics can be used as a powerful call to action when presented correctly. Consider the following:

- In written or visual materials, reference the original data source.
- Familiarise yourself with the source and find out what it is trying to convey.
- Be well-informed about your data source and why the research was undertaken.
- Be ready to respond to audience questions by considering what might be asked and preparing some answers.
- Have published resources on hand for people to review. This may help them to understand the issue in greater depth.

Common myths about violence against women

Myth 1: Women are just as violent as men

1 in 5 Australians believe that men and women are equal perpetrators of violence in the home^x. In fact, most violence in the home is committed by men. 95% of men and women who have experienced violence since the age of 15 have experienced this violence at the hands of a male perpetrator^{xi}.

Myth 2: Women need to modify their behaviour in order to avoid violence

All women and girls deserve to live free from violence, fear and intimidation (as do all men and boys). The responsibility for violence lies with the perpetrator, not the victim. Preventing violence against women is not about women needing to change what they say or do, or how they present themselves.

Myth 3: If she wanted the violence to stop, she would just leave

It can be extremely difficult to leave a violent relationship. Women often fear that leaving will result in an escalation of violence, to themselves, their children or their pets. Unfortunately this fear is often justified as evidence shows that violence can get worse just after leaving a violent relationship^{xii}.

Important practical considerations, such as where the woman (and her children) will live, what will happen to her pets after she leaves, how the children will get to school or childcare, and how to access finances and support can make leaving extremely difficult. In addition, sometimes a partner will use fear and intimidation to try to stop a woman from leaving.

Myth 4: Violence against women is caused by alcohol and drugs, mental health problems and poverty

Research shows that the most significant factors leading to violence against women are the acceptance of sexist and violence-supportive attitudes and the unequal distribution of power between men and women^{xiii}. These factors can contribute to the frequency and severity of violence, but are not the cause.

Myth 5: Rates of violence against women are exaggerated

Violence against women is vastly under-reported in Australia. Only around 20% of women who have experienced sexual assault and just over 35% of women who have experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator go on to report the incident to the police^{xiv}.

Myth 6: Violence is much more likely to happen in other cultures

Violence happens to women from all walks of life and is perpetrated by men from all socioeconomic groups and cultural backgrounds. However, women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds who are experiencing violence can face particular challenges, including language barriers, lack of social support and isolation.

- i ABS, 2013, *Personal Safety Survey*, Cat. No. 4906.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.
- ii Chan & Payne, 2013, *Homicide in Australia: 2009/10 National Homicide Monitoring Program Annual Report*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
- iii Victoria Police, 2013, *Crime Statistics Official Release 2012/13*, Victoria Police, Melbourne.
- iv Office of Women's Policy, 2012, *Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children*, Victorian Government, Melbourne.
- v VicHealth, 2004, *The Health Costs of Violence: Measuring the Burden of Disease Caused by Intimate Partner Violence: A Summary of Findings*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.
- vi The Royal Women's Hospital, 2012, *Family Violence – Information for Women*, The Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne.
- vii AIHW, 2008, *Australia's Health*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008, Canberra.
- viii Flood & Fergus, 2008 *An Assault on our Future: The Impact of Violence on Young People and Their Relationships*, White Ribbon Foundation, Sydney.
- ix Flood & Fergus, 2008.
- x VicHealth, 2010, *National Survey on Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women: A Summary of Findings*, Melbourne.
- xi ABS, 2013.
- xii Dobash & Dobash, 2009, *The Murder in Britain Study: Broadening the Analysis on Intimate Partner Violence*, Australia Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
- xiii VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: A Framework and Background Paper to Guide the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women in Victoria for Action*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.
- xiv ABS, 2013.



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Communication and raising awareness

Getting staff and the community talking



Raising awareness about violence against women and what can be done to prevent it is vital in mobilising your council and community to act.

Inform yourself and your community of the important facts

To garner support for preventing violence against women, you will need to get your community to understand:

- **What violence is** — including emotional, physical, sexual, social and economic abuse (see Info Sheet 2).
- **Why it is important** — convey the message that violence against women is serious, prevalent and preventable (see Info Sheet 3).
- **What the underlying factors that allow violence to occur are** — clarify that factors such as alcohol, poverty and mental illnesses can contribute to violence, but do not cause it (see Info Sheet 3).
- **What the picture in your community is like** — access family violence statistics for your municipality at www.socialstatistics.com.au.
- **What can be done about it** — giving examples of what other councils have done will inspire your colleagues and community to act (see Info Sheet 6).
- **Why councils are important** — as employers and providers of more than 140 services, councils have a unique reach and influence in the community.



This is a positive message about stopping violence before it happens. We do this by promoting and celebrating equal and respectful relationships between women and men, girls and boys. Focus on positive communications.

Know your audience by mapping out the key stakeholders you wish to engage, e.g. councillors, staff, sports clubs, men, young people or new parents. Note the best ways to communicate with these stakeholders, the kinds of messages you want to convey and the activities that best suit them. Draw on examples from other councils (see Info Sheet 6). Assess the strength of your relationships with these groups: are they strong, weak or non-existent?

Develop a shared understanding by choosing the right language to convey key preventing violence against women messages. Some councils talk about promoting gender equity, others talk about a right to respect for all. For others, it is about women and girls being of equal value. Vary the type of language according to your target audience. Test your messages with a sample group before finalising them.

Convey information and key messages through images and pictures as well as words. Use images of positive gender roles and relationships between men and women. The use of images in council bulletins and newsletters can be an opportunity to break down rigid gender stereotypes.

Consult with key players and visit different council areas or community organisations who have shown an interest in this work. Share information and knowledge, and promote opportunities for discussion. Raise awareness about why council has a role and should get involved and what other councils are doing.

Determine the human and financial resources available to you. Do you have internal capacity to support the development of communication materials, or will you need to out-source? Is there a social media guru in your council who can advise on innovative approaches?

Develop branded materials featuring an image and key messages to help build a strong and consistent public profile. Coming up with a phrase or sentence that best captures your approach or vision for your community keeps the message strong. You can then use these words and images in all the communication materials you produce. Test these materials before you finalise them.

Be aware there will always be people affected directly or indirectly when you talk about this issue because the prevalence of violence against women is high. You must always include information about support services, including phone numbers and web resources, such as 1800 Respect (1800 737 732) or www.1800respect.org.au.

Five awareness raising activities

- Hold an event for White Ribbon Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, International Women's Day or International Human Rights Day with guest speakers and invite interested agencies in your community. You could also organise a march through a major town, or dedicate a match at a local football or netball club.

- Establish a Preventing Violence Against Women or Gender Equity working group to build staff awareness, skill and commitment.
- Circulate a quiz testing staff knowledge of violence prevention and gender equity with a prize for the winner.
- Put up branded signs and posters. Consider creating bookmarks, fridge magnets, magnets on rubbish trucks or fleet cars, screen savers on council and library computers and on-hold messages on council phone systems.
- Use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to get conversations going, particularly to coincide with events such as White Ribbon Day.



Useful links

White Ribbon Foundation www.whiteribbon.org.au

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service (WDVCS) Survivor Advocate Program www.wdvcs.org.au/Survivors-as-Media-Advocates

The EVAs (Eliminating Violence Against Women Awards) Guide to Reporting on Violence Against Women www.evas.org.au/index.php/reporting-on-violence-against-women-vaw/guide-to-reporting-on-violence-against-women

VicHealth's Guide to Reporting on Violence Against Women www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/reportingVAV

Women's Health in the North: Love Control DVD www.whin.org.au/resources/preventing-violence-against-women.html#LoveControl

City of Monash: Monash Men Say No To Violence www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwQ9Ua5XHXU

Grampians Women's Health Act@Work Infographic www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVeq6ef3344

The Line www.theline.gov.au



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Embedding preventing violence against women into council business



Every area of council can play a role in the long-term cultural and social change needed for preventing violence against women. As a large employer and through its role in delivering over 140 services in the community, local government provides fantastic opportunities to embed actions into policy and practice. In addition, councils are legislated to build safe, healthy communities and provide equal access to services and facilities through the Local Government Act, 1989.

Below are some ideas to encourage reflection on how you can contribute to the ambitious, yet achievable, aspiration of preventing violence against women.

Getting your house in order

It is important to build your council's internal capacity to prevent violence against women and promote gender equity. This will include training, building the internal awareness of the causes of violence against women, and skilling up some passionate internal advocates. Many councils now have action teams, made up of staff who wish to lead activities on preventing violence against women (see Info Sheet 8 for more information). Review the learnings of Maribyrnong City Council, detailed in *Maribyrnong Respect and Equity: Preventing Violence Against Women Guide for Local Government*.

Community consultation

Ensure your community consultation framework includes processes that consider and document both men's and women's views.



Strategy and policy

Councils' high-level strategic documents, such as the Council Plan or the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, are increasingly expressing a commitment to gender equity as a key strategy in preventing violence against women. These strategic documents allow annual reporting and provide the opportunity to reflect, measure and build on the effectiveness of actions. More specific council strategies and policies, such as the youth strategy, emergency management plan or early years plan, provide scope to include tailored actions into these functions of council. Examples include the *Yarriambiack Shire Council Plan 2013-17*, and *Whittlesea City Council Plan 2013-17*.

Raising awareness and social marketing

Think about where you have the opportunities to saturate your council with consistent messages expressed in accessible language, such as notice boards, screen savers, on-hold messages, magnets on council fleet and garbage trucks or on posters at council buildings (see Info Sheet 5).

Youth services

Councils have great opportunities to work with young people, particularly on activities that build knowledge and skills on what constitutes equal and respectful relationships between women and men, and girls and boys. There are many resources on Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) – a good place to start is the Partners in Prevention (PiP) Network www.partnersinprevention.org.au.

Emergency management

Build an understanding of how disaster management and recovery affects men and women differently. Gender needs to be considered in planning, decision-making and service delivery. Awareness of gender roles and stereotypes, with the goal of achieving gender equity, promotes safe and effective recovery management. See the MAV Emergency Management fact sheet for more information www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/emergency-management/Pages/gender-emergency-management.aspx.

Library services

Procure children's books that challenge gender stereotypes and rigid gender roles. Communicate your council's commitment to preventing violence against women by displaying materials on library notice boards, computer screens, giveaway bookmarks and library bags.

Hold events at public libraries to recognise significant dates such as White Ribbon Day, Week Without Violence, International Women's Day or International Day of the Girl.

Human resources

Many council employees have access to family violence policies and/or leave provisions for women experiencing family violence in their Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBA). Contact the MAV Preventing Violence Against Women Network to be put in touch with councils who have done this. Encourage staff to participate in free online e-learning provided by the Safe at Home Safe at Work project to build understanding about family violence www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au/training.

Include prevention of violence against women messages and initiatives in staff induction or orientations sessions (see Info Sheet 9).

Local laws

There is a strong link between family violence and the abuse and neglect of animalsⁱ. Include provisions in your animal management strategy for accommodating pets when a woman needs to go to refuge. Ensure your local laws officers know how to identify family violence and make appropriate referrals. The Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF) is the most appropriate training for all frontline staff www.thelookout.org.au/training-events/elearning.

Recreation and leisure

Hold a special sports match to celebrate White Ribbon Day. Find out who is using council sport and recreation facilities by looking at participation levels of women and men, and boys and girls. Develop and implement strategies to address inequality and encourage underrepresented users to access services. See Moreland City Council's Active Women and Girls Strategy for inspiration.



Useful links

Compilation of evidence-based tools and resources www.vicpvaw.net.au

Whole of Organisation PVAW Assessment Tool whin.org.au/resources/preventing-violence-against-women.html#PVAWOrgTool

US preventing violence against women resources portal www.preventipv.org/materials

Building Whole of Organisation Prevention Capacity www.vawnet.org/DELTAPREToolKit

Week Without Violence www.worldywca.org/Take-Action/Campaigns/Week-Without-Violence

International Women's Day www.internationalwomensday.com

International Day of the Girl www.dayofthegirl.org

Examples of dedicated prevention of violence against women and gender equity strategies at a council level:

Darebin City Council Women's Equity Strategy 2012-15

Moreland City Council Prevention of Family Violence Strategy 2011-15

ⁱ Volant et al, 2008, *The Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: An Australian Study*, Journal of Interpersonal Violence:23: 1277, accessed 10 June 2014 at <http://jiv.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/23/9/1277>



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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.

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

Gender Equity and Local Government Factsheets 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

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

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

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 menⁱ.

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-righteousⁱⁱ.

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

ⁱⁱ No To Violence, 2012, *What Men Can Do: Working to Prevent Men's Violence Against Women*, at www.whatmencando.net/, retrieved 05/0514.



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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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Opportunities for staff induction

Why include preventing violence against women content in induction processes?



As major employers in the community, councils have a responsibility to provide employees with a safe and healthy workplace and can act as a positive model to other workplaces. A council's HR or organisational development unit can shape positive workplace cultures that prevent violence against women through gender equitable policies and practices, training and awareness.

1 in 3 women have experienced some form of violence since the age of 15ⁱ, so there will be women employed by councils who are currently experiencing or have experienced violence. In recognition of this, an increasing number of councils provide workplace support to those experiencing violence, either through a dedicated family violence policy or safety planning.



Ideas to consider

Induction session

- Connect preventing violence against women principles to the values of the organisation. For example, gender equity connects to respect for diversity and equal opportunities.
- Inform staff of preventing violence against women, gender equity and employee relations policies to ensure they are clear on what constitutes sexism and harassment.
- Raise awareness about what the council has done on White Ribbon Day and International Women's Day.

- Inform staff of policies and family violence leave provisions through your council's family violence policy or Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA), if applicable.
- Provide information on joining your White Ribbon or preventing violence against women action team, if appropriate.
- Include a brief presentation by a council director or other preventing violence against women leader.

Information to include in induction packs

- Definitions of sexism, harassment and unconscious bias.
- Ways to promote respect and equity in the workplace.
- Key facts and figures about violence against women.
- Useful service system referral information.
- Details of policies or domestic violence leave provisions for staff.
- White Ribbon publicity information, including details about your White Ribbon action team.
- Gender equity working group or preventing violence against women contact person in council, if applicable.

Principles to consider

Timing

Councils who consider preventing violence against women principles in their HR functions and induction processes have usually already implemented a program of work, having gained awareness and experience through activities or policies. Introducing preventing violence against women themes into staff induction is best considered when you have some experienced informed staff and have had some success with initiatives.

Engage your HR manager

Make sure your HR manager is informed about the following:

- **The essential facts about violence against women** – what constitutes violence and its prevalence and impacts, based on the evidence.
- **What councils have already done** – showcase the commitments other council areas have made to preventing violence against women and what other councils' HR areas have done.
- **Relevance** – preventing violence against women work is part of being a good employer as it is about respect, fairness and valuing staff. It also relates to providing a safe and healthy workplace.

Broaden understandings of HR's role in preventing violence against women

One key way to broaden HR's role in this work is by informing them ahead of events where you plan to raise awareness about council's preventing violence against women activities (such as a celebration on White Ribbon Day or International Women's Day). These events can often encourage women to disclose experiences that they may not have before. It is important that HR staff are informed and well prepared to deal with any disclosures of sexism or harassment at work, and have referral information for disclosures of violence at home.

Provide options and start the conversation

Inform HR staff of appropriate resources and training to include in your staff induction. Find a hook-in where there is already an interest, such as providing professional development for staff to apply a gender lens in their work. Your regional women's health service will have details of available training (see Info Sheet 2). Remember to include this type of material in the staff induction section of your council's Intranet site.

Enlist the support of a leader

Having a senior leader speak from a strongly informed perspective at induction can be a very effective way to get other staff thinking about preventing violence against women in their work. It is important for the director or manager to link gender equity and prevention of violence against women principles with how staff can apply them to their work.

Always provide information about local family violence services

Even if local services are sparse, which is often the case in rural municipalities, there is a real chance that some women attending induction have experienced or are experiencing violence. Therefore, including referral information in induction material is very important. Listing 1800 Respect (1800 737 732) or www.1800respect.org.au and your regional family violence service contact information can be the first step to a new reality for many women (see Info Sheet 3).

Doing something as part of induction, however small, will send the message to staff that preventing violence against women is important to council objectives.



Useful links

White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation Program

www.whiteribbon.org.au/workplaces

Safe at Home, Safe at Work Project www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au

Women's Health in the North Gender Analysis Tool

www.whin.org.au/images/PDFs/whin%20gender%20analysis%20tool.pdf

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



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Building long-term commitment



Continuing to build skill, capacity and commitment is crucial for achieving long-term social change. As the VicHealth preventing violence against women framework for action notes, it will take a long-term commitment from a raft of organisations and community groups to influence the social and community norms that lead to violence against women in the first place. Remember that this is about the role your council plays in influencing these changes – you are not responsible for changing the world single-handedly!

Building sustainability into your preventing violence against women work

Planning ahead – Identify barriers to sustainability and develop strategies to address them. Examples include exploring options for ongoing funding and organisational commitment, developing a plan to address competing and changing priorities, enhance and continually develop leadership capacities, ensure there is cross-organisational support so that work does not end when key staff leave, and continually promote the central role councils play in preventing violence against women.



Advocacy – Find channels through which to advocate for what is needed to sustain this work. This could be for funding (through council budget processes), leadership (keeping leaders inspired and committed) or ensuring organisational commitment to preventing violence against women (embedding prevention strategies into the key planning documents).

Policy development – Formalise your organisation's commitment and leadership to preventing violence against women by developing a policy or strategy. This can be a stand-alone policy or strategies integrated with existing documents, such as the Council Plan or Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. Also consider linking your work to key federal and state plans (see Useful links for both the national and Victorian plans).

Embedding preventing violence against women into core functions – Run education programs on respectful relationships through your council's youth or maternal and child health services (see more information about these approaches in Useful Links). Consider gender in emergency management and recovery planning to ensure preventing violence against women is considered as part of council's emergency management role (see Info Sheet 6).

Partnerships and collaborations – Sustained interest in work to prevent violence against women is more likely if you have a group of motivated and committed stakeholders involved. Especially if there is a clear vision seen to be of benefit to all. Stakeholders could be a committee of council and community members who bring important ‘capital’ such as influence, knowledge, skills and passion. Investing time into resourcing and supporting a group like this will lay strong foundations for the work to continue.

Keep the interest and conversations going – A long-term communication plan focused on raising awareness and maximising engagement will help influence community attitudes. Seek opportunities to promote messages and be prepared to tailor them according to your audience (see Info Sheet 5).

Skills and knowledge development – Keep your skills and knowledge up to date and be aware of new developments in the field. This will keep you motivated, inspired by new ideas and able to keep your council informed of best practice. Seek out preventing violence against women training such as the VicHealth or DVRCV preventing violence against women short course (see Useful links).

One of the most positive aspects of working in a council setting is the willingness to share knowledge across the sector. Having these avenues for support will help keep you and your council engaged for the long term.

Funding opportunities – Look externally and internally through annual budget bids. The MAV Preventing Violence Against Women (PVAW) Network provides information about funding opportunities when they arise. Allocate prevention work to a specific staff or management role, with key performance indicators to ensure adequate resourcing.

Evaluation and monitoring – Assess how effective your work has been to help guide future activity. Recording and analysing evaluation data will help identify learnings to be applied in future initiatives. Follow this link for more about evaluation techniques and skills www.betterevaluation.org



Useful links:

National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children-2010-2022

Victoria's Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/women-in-the-community/preventing-violence-against-women/action-plan-to-address-violence-against-women-and-children

VicHealth Preventing Violence Against Women Short Course www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Workforce/Short-Course-Listings.aspx

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria Preventing Violence Against Women Short Course www.dvrcv.org.au/training/courses

Respectful Relationship Education www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/DiscriminationandViolence/ViolenceAgainstWomen/respectful-relationships.ashx

Baby Makes 3 Program www.wchs.org.au/services/groups/baby-makes-3

MAV PVAW Network www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/Pages/preventing-violence-against-women-network.aspx

Program Sustainability Assessment Tool www.sustaintool.org/assess

i 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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Gender and Emergency Management

Factsheet

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) has developed a gender and emergency management (GEM) strategy which aims to reduce the negative consequences of gender-blind practices.

Studies have shown that the incidence of family violence increases post-disaster and that there are significant differences in how men and women experience and recover from disasters. In developed countries men are more likely to die in floods and bushfires than women, and men strongly influence family decisions to stay and defend homes during bushfires, sometimes with tragic results. Mental health issues, including suicide, can also manifest in different ways for men and women. To positively affect such outcomes, the influence of gender roles and differences must be understood and addressed.

The MAV's GEM strategy will help councils and their partners improve their understanding of gender differences and incorporate gender considerations into their emergency management policy, planning, decision-making and service delivery. As a first step this fact sheet has been developed to raise awareness of how gender and emergency management interact, and to provide practical advice to help councils make a positive difference.

Local government's role in emergency management

Local government plays an important role in emergency management, both in partnership with others, and through its own legislated emergency management obligations. Councils are not emergency response agencies, however they currently have the following roles:

- o developing emergency management plans
- o undertaking mitigation activities
- o communicating with, and providing information to, communities
- o providing support to response agencies, and
- o co-ordinating relief and recovery for local communities.

Why is gender relevant to emergency management?

Women and men experience disasters differently. Gendered roles such as caring for children or knowing how to operate a generator or water pump affect how women and men will experience and recover from natural disasters. Gender often shapes how people perceive what is risky, who makes decisions and how individuals get support or help following disasters. Being blind to these different needs can have serious implications for the protection and recovery of people caught up in disasters.

What are the benefits of integrating gender considerations into emergency management?

Addressing gender issues in emergency management will result in more resilient and equitable communities.

Emergency management is more effective when based on an understanding of the different needs, vulnerabilities, interests, capacities, contributions and coping strategies of women and men of all ages before, during and after disaster.

Integrating gender considerations into emergency management decision-making, policy development and service delivery will contribute to:

- o better targeting of council resources
- o increased community understanding of council support and services
- o reduced incidents of family violence
- o reduced levels of risk taking during and after an emergency
- o greater community participation and equality, and
- o increased social, economic and community resilience.

How can local government take gender into account in emergency management?

Emergency management committees, planning and decision-making

- o Include gender specific organisations and groups on committees.
- o Pre-disaster, develop an action plan with a contact list of gender specific support organisations.
- o Ensure committees consider gender representation.
- o Understand community composition when developing policy and plans.
- o Involve women, men, boys and girls in identifying and addressing local hazards.
- o Take into account different needs and capacities of women and men, girls and boys.
- o Identify groups of women and men who may be particularly vulnerable in the community.
- o Ensure disaster recovery packages are gender equitable.

Relief centres

- o Ensure there is a safe space for women and children.
- o Ensure relief staff are appropriately trained in identifying family violence and other predatory behaviours.



Communication

- o Tailor disaster risk and recovery information for women and men when needed.
- o Take notice of who attends community meetings and make it easier for women and men to participate.

Evaluation and performance measures

- o Ask questions about whether and how gender is considered in emergency management policies, plans, activities and the use of resources.
- o Analyse data by gender and age.
- o Include a gender focus in research.

Volunteers

- o Recognise how gender stereotyping affects the development and sustainability of emergency management volunteer groups.
- o Partner with existing women's and men's groups.
- o Extend the volunteer opportunities and roles available to women, men, girls and boys.

Recovery

- o Ensure support is available in ways that both men and women will find useful.
- o Provide women-friendly and men-friendly activities and outreach services.
- o Provide mental health and family violence information in formats and places where women and men already meet and support each other.



Useful resources and information

Municipal Association of Victoria

MAV gender and emergency management strategy

Further information and resources can be found on the MAV website.

www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/emergency-management-emergencymgt@mav.asn.au

Women's Health Goulburn North East

Information sheets, check lists, training, presentations and stories.

www.whealth.com.au/publications_information_sheets.html

Department of Human Services

Emergency Management Planning for Children and Young People: Planning guide for Local Government

www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Australian Journal of Emergency Management

AJEM Volume 28 Number Two, April 2013

- Gender edition

www.em.gov.au/ajem

Australian Emergency Management Knowledge Hub

Gender Resources Pack

www.emknowledge.gov.au/resource/?id=3526

Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre *Fire Note 101 - Gender and bushfire*

www.bushfirecrc.com/resources/firenote/gender-and-bushfire

Beyondblue

Beyondblue is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to increase awareness and understanding of depression and anxiety in Australia.

www.beyondblue.org.au

1800 RESPECT

1800 RESPECT is a 24/7 national counselling helpline, information and support for people experiencing sexual assault or domestic and family violence.

www.1800respect.org.au

Responding to family violence: the role of animal management

Animal abuse and family violence

Violence against women is preventable. However, it is a serious and widespread problem in Australia. On average:

- one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner
- almost 10 women a day are hospitalised for injuries perpetrated by a partner
- one in four women have experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner.
- women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence than women without disabilities¹.

In 2018-19, Victoria Police responded to over 82,600 reports of family violence².

Harming and/or killing animals – or threatening to do so – is a form of family violence^{3,4}. This includes pets, assistance and farm animals. Women with disabilities who rely on assistance animals, such as guide dogs for their independence are particularly vulnerable⁵.

Fear for an animal's safety can cause women experiencing violence to delay leaving.^{6,7}

Barriers to women leaving violent partners include lack of accommodation or housing that allow animals and the prohibitive cost of boarding animals (particularly horses).

Animal management teams and family violence

Animal abuse is a form of family violence; it is also a risk factor for family violence.

A woman whose partner has threatened to abuse her pets is five times more likely to experience family violence.

The risk assessment tools used by Victoria Police and Victorian family violence workers recognise animal abuse as increasing a woman's risk of experiencing violence⁹.

It is highly likely that local laws officers attending properties for animal management issues will also encounter family violence.

Case Study: City of Casey

In 2012, local laws officers in the City of Casey attended a property to remove two dogs. The owner of the dogs, a pregnant woman, pleaded with the officers not to take the animals, saying her partner would be angry to see the dogs gone when he returned home. She said her partner would blame her and may become violent. Not seeing a way around this, the officers took the dogs.

This incident prompted the City of Casey to review their animal management practices. Realising their local laws officers were well-placed to recognise the signs of family violence, they developed an innovative model which included:

- training to help officers understand family violence and identify risk
- establishing referral pathways
- developing partnerships with the local Police Family Violence Unit
- updating policies and standard operating procedures
- supporting housing of animals at risk during periods of family relocation following family violence incidents

City of Casey was the first council in Australia to respond to the link between animal abuse and family violence⁸. Officers shared their experiences with councils across Victoria, encouraging other local laws teams to learn how to recognise and respond to family violence.



Responding to family violence: the role of animal management

Case Study: Epping Animal Welfare Facility

In December 2015, the cities of Darebin, Moreland and Whittlesea entered into an agreement to develop and operate a regional pound in Epping.

The RSPCA was appointed to operate the facility which opened in October 2017.

The three councils are committed to supporting residents impacted by family violence.

Recognising that women experiencing family violence often delay leaving because they fear for their pet's safety, they developed a joint Domestic Animal Welfare Policy¹⁰. This policy provides a framework for managing requests for temporary boarding of cats and dogs at the Epping Animal Welfare Facility.

Councils may opt to cover costs, as is the case with Moreland – which provides free boarding for 7 to 10 days under its Safe Haven for Pets program¹¹.

How to: respond to family violence through animal management policies and practices

Provide Family Violence training

This training should equip local laws officers with the skills to identify where women may be experiencing or are at risk of family violence. It should also equip them with the knowledge and confidence to make an appropriate referral. For more information contact training@edvos.org.au

Find out what you can offer

Many councils can offer some form of free accommodation for pets while women are experiencing violence or attempting to leave violent partners. Women's refuges in Victoria are unable to accommodate pets—knowing that their pets are safe can help women make the decision to leave violent situations.

Update your animal management plan

Include reference to family violence and relevant council policies in your animal management plan. Appropriate training for officers and provisions for pet-owning residents who have experienced violence can also be included in this plan.

Work with other areas of council

Other areas of council, including health and wellbeing areas, are working to prevent violence against women. Different areas of council can support one another and share ideas and experiences.

Find out more: Be informed about family violence statistics in your council area and ongoing work to address and prevent it. Visit www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/socialcommunity/gender-equity



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¹ Our Watch www.ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts/. Accessed 2.10.20.

² Crime Statistics Agency www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data-portal/family-violence-data-dashboard/victoria-police. Accessed 2.10.20.

³ Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) s5(2)

⁴ National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book <https://dfvbenchbook.aija.org.au/understanding-domestic-and-family-violence/animal-abuse/>. Accessed 2.10.20.

⁵ Harpur, P. & Douglas, H. 'Disability and Domestic Violence: Protecting Survivors' Human Rights' (2015) 23(3) *Griffith Law Review* 405.

⁶ Roguski, M. 'Pets as Pawns: The Co-existence of Animal Cruelty and Family Violence' (Report, Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges, 2012).

⁷ Volant, A.M., et al, 'The Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: An Australian Study' (2008) 23(9) *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 1277.

⁸ www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/family-violence-prevention-strategy. Accessed 2.10.2020.

⁹ Victoria Police, Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence www.police.vic.gov.au/code-practice-investigation-family-violence. Accessed 2.10.2020.

¹⁰ www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/media/5318/domestic-animal-welfare-support-policy-20190903.pdf. Accessed 6.10.2020

¹¹ www.moreland.vic.gov.au/globalassets/areas/local-laws/domestic-animal-management-plan-2017-2021.pdf. Accessed 6.10.2020

The role of libraries

Victoria is home to nearly 300 public libraries. As well as their important role in providing equitable access to knowledge and resources, libraries are trusted, safe spaces that contribute to community wellbeing and cohesion.

Women and children living with family violence sometimes use libraries as places of refuge. Women experiencing violence in their homes may use the safety of library computers to explore options for getting help. Libraries can also be an “entry point”, connecting women with other relevant council services.



Libraries responding to family violence

There are a number of ways for libraries to respond to women and children who are experiencing or have experienced family violence. Consider some of the ideas below.

Make spaces safe

Ensure library car parks, footpaths and entrances are well-lit. Display family violence support service information on notice boards and counters.

Some libraries display stickers for the national family violence and sexual assault counselling hotline 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) on the back of bathroom doors www.1800respect.org.au

Undertake training

Identifying Family Violence (IFV) training will enable library staff to be able to identify where women or their children may be experiencing or at risk of family violence. It will also equip staff with the knowledge and confidence to make a referral to an appropriate service.

IFV training is underpinned by the Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF)—the evidence-based framework used across the family violence sector to respond consistently to women and children.

For more information about how to access training, see More Resources, over page.

Start your own program

Consider partnering with a local agency or another area of council to deliver a program for women and children in your municipality.

Some libraries are able to offer free legal advice to women while their children participate in the Story Time program.

Some libraries also offer after-school homework programs, providing vulnerable young people who may be living in violent homes with an important community connection and an opportunity to remain engaged in education in a safe and welcoming place.

For more information, contact the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) (03) 9667 5585 or knagle@mav.asn.au



www.mav.asn.au

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Libraries preventing violence against women

Libraries also have a role to play in the prevention of violence against women, by promoting messages of gender equity and respect. Gender inequity is the key cause of men's violence against women.

Many library programs demonstrate women's capability and contributions. Libraries can continue to reinforce gender equity by celebrating women's achievements, supporting women's writing, promoting books whose main characters are women and girls and that challenge limiting gender stereotypes and displaying resources that contain anti-sexist messages.

Consider the below ideas for doing violence prevention work.

Promote gender equitable books and media

Libraries can actively promoting gender equitable books and media.

Some books, films, video games and other media contain negative portrayals of women and girls, objectify women and girls, promote limiting stereotypes of what it means to be a woman or a man, a girl or a boy, or simply fail to include women and girls, at all.

Books and other media that include strong female characters—as well as nurturing male characters—reinforce gender equity. Celebrating books written by women authors also counteracts sexist attitudes which value men's work as better or more "literary" than women's work.

You could consider putting gender equitable books on display, or reading them to children during story time. See More Resources for lists of suggested books and media.

Participate in a campaign

Consider participating in an existing anti-violence campaign. Some libraries participate in the Week Without Violence campaign in the third week of October. Others participate in the United Nations 16 Days of Action Against Gender-based Violence in November. See More Resources for campaigns information.

Undertake training

As well as IFV, training in promoting gender equity across your workplace is available through regional women's health services. See More Resources.

Endorse anti-violence messaging

Consider using bookmarks, posters or computer screen savers to promote anti-violence or gender equitable messaging. Local family violence service contact information can be included on resources like bookmarks.

Libraries are promoting primary prevention messages developed through the Generating Equality and Respect Project. Some libraries have 'Say no to violence. Say yes to equality and respect' as computer screen-saver messages and posters with the message 'Stop violence against women. Violence against women is never acceptable' on display.

More resources

For more on councils preventing violence against women, see the MAV Info Sheets: <http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/pvaw-information-sheets/Pages/default.aspx>

For more information about the Generating Equality and Respect Program: <http://www.monash.vic.gov.au/Services/Health-Safety/Prevention-of-Violence-Against-Women/Generating-Equality-and-Respect-Program>

For information about Identifying Family Violence training, contact your Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator: <http://www.thelookout.org.au/sector-info/what-integrated-fv-sector/regional-integration-coordinators-rics>

You can find your regional women's health service at: www.equalityandsafetyforwomen.org.au

For the Monash Library Service's gender equitable picture booklist: <http://www.monash.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/our-services/violence-against-women/children-books-promoting-gender-equality-challenging-gender-stereotypes-booklist.pdf>

For information about the Week Without Violence campaign in the northern metro region: <http://www.nifvs.org.au/about/getting-involved/week-without-violence/>