



PREVENTING
VIOLENCE
TOGETHER

Western Region Action Plan to
Prevent Violence Against Women

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Preventing Violence Together was first developed and published in 2010 and revised and reprinted in 2013. *Preventing Violence Together* is a truly collaborative effort, and without the ongoing commitment and hard work from participating organisations, this action plan would not be possible. The organisational partnerships to prevent violence against women are critical, and through the process of developing and implementing *Preventing Violence Together* it is clear that many strong partnerships in the western region have been established and further strengthened.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the *Preventing Violence Together*: Western Region Action Plan Implementation Committee, representing all partner organisations, for undertaking the hard work of developing and implementing ***Preventing Violence Together***:

Women's Health West

HealthWest Partnership

Inner North West Primary Care Partnership

Doutta Galla Community Health Service

Djerriwarrh Community Health Service

ISIS Primary Care

Western Region Health Centre

Brimbank City Council

Hobsons Bay City Council

Maribyrnong City Council

Melbourne City Council

Melton City Council

Moonee Valley City Council

Wyndham City Council

Indigenous Family Violence Regional
Action Group

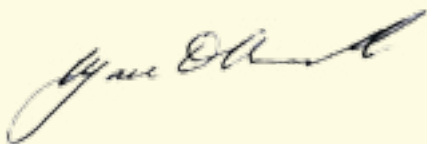
Western Region Integrated Family Violence
Committee

We would also like to acknowledge Western Region Health Centre for their involvement in the Action Research Group that preceded the *Preventing Violence Together* Implementation Committee.

We wish to thank the members of the Expert Advisory Group who so generously offered their time and expertise to comment on the final draft of *Preventing Violence Together* – Professor Ann Taket, Professor Bob Pease, Professor Helen Keleher, Associate Professor Kelsey Hegarty and Professor Jill Astbury. Wei Leng Kwok also very generously contributed her time and expertise to advise us on the evaluation strategy.

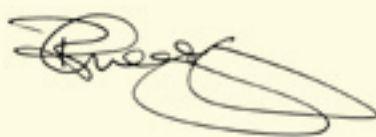
We wish to thank Philip Martin and the Communications students from RMIT University for participating in the development of the communications strategy – the creativity and enthusiasm of the students was truly delightful.

Preventing Violence Together is an ambitious but achievable plan of action for organisations in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne. Since 2010 partner organisations have committed to a series of actions for implementation outlined in the back of this action plan.



Gail O'Donnell
Executive Officer

HealthWest Partnership



Robyn Gregory
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Violence against women –
prevalent, serious and
preventable**



It was only after attending the 'Becoming Free' Women's Group that I learnt about the cycle of violence and how it can influence our lives. Now I can stand outside the cycle. This is what my mandala signifies, a new beginning for myself and my family. The yellow is a positive sun radiating energy, light and life.

Jeanette

Violence against women is a human rights scandal of unparalleled dimension, and its impact on women, children, and families is deep and shattering. Violence against women takes many forms and affects all communities, irrespective of class, race or culture. Over one in three Australian women experience physical violence during their lifetime, and nearly one in five experience some form of sexual assault (ABS, 2006). According to Victoria Police reported crime data, women in the western region of Melbourne are particularly at risk of violence from their intimate partners, with a rate of 6.23 reported incidents per 1,000 –

higher than the state average. The number of reported incidences of violence against women by their intimate partner between 2008 and 2012 rose from 3,970 to 6,026.4 per 100,000 (<http://www.police.vic.gov.au/>).

Violence against women is preventable (VicHealth, 2007). By responding to the known determinants of violence against women – such as unequal power relations between women and men – it is possible to change the underlying factors that cause violence, and stop it from happening in the first place.

Why have a western region action plan for the prevention of violence against women?

Organisations in the western region have long advocated for the development of a regional plan, recognising that it is not possible to end violence against women with disparate initiatives, short-term funding and one-off projects (Amnesty International, 2008). In particular, coordination, organisational capacity building and partnerships have been identified as key to maximising the impact of our efforts.

Preventing Violence Together facilitates a coordinated, action-based approach across local government and community and women's health services, tailored to the particular characteristics of the western region. The action plan supports the work of partner organisations and provides opportunities to engage in a series of practical and strategic prevention initiatives. Preventing Violence Together is closely aligned with the Victorian government's prevention of violence against women policy. This ensures that our regional action plan builds on the current momentum for preventing violence against women at the state level.

Summary of action plan content

The ultimate vision of Preventing Violence Together is communities, cultures and organisations in the western region that are non-violent, non-discriminatory, gender equitable and promote respectful relationships. To contribute to achieving this, the action plan proposes a series of mutually reinforcing actions to be implemented within and between signatory organisations. Many actions may be embedded within existing programs and policies, while others call for a renewed commitment or approach. The proposed actions draw on the VicHealth evidence-base and respond to the determinants of violence against women that is, the factors that cause men to commit violence against women in the first place. Our ultimate goal is to foster cultures of gender equity, non-violence, and respect. Proposed actions for signatory councils and organisations include:

- Developing tools and building the capacity for organisational change and workforce development.
- Prioritising preventing violence against women in Integrated Health Promotion Plans, Municipal Public Health And Wellbeing Plans and Council Plans
- Strengthening community leadership to take action to prevent violence against women

What have signatory organisations committed to?

Preventing Violence Together has been designed as an enabling and coordinating action plan for organisations in the western region to prevent violence against women. It recognises work currently being undertaken and adds the value of coordinated efforts. We have proposed a number of actions over seven strategy areas, each designed to complement and reinforce one another. Each partner organisation has committed to a number of actions.

"I think we have made incredible progress. The PVT [Preventing Violence Together] Action Plan has led to the council including it in our EBA [Enterprise Bargaining Agreement] and we are currently developing a PVAW [Prevention of Violence Against Women] strategy. This would not have happened without the PVT Action Plan." (PVT evaluation for the Department of Health, 2012).

Why organisations have committed to the action plan?

Preventing violence against women is everyone's business, and local governments, community and women's health services each have a unique role to play. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 compels us to not only respond effectively and compassionately to violence against women after it has occurred, but also to protect and actively promote human rights.

The western region is recognised as a leader in preventing violence against women for our past, current and planned initiatives, and this action plan ensures that our region continues to lead efforts in this area. The momentum and political will to prevent violence against women is strong, and growing. All partner organisations continue to implement *Preventing Violence Together* strategies, and by doing so increase opportunities for collaborative action, sharing skills, resources and evidence of successful practices, and to avoid duplication.



PREVENTING
VIOLENCE
TOGETHER

Western Region Action Plan to
Prevent Violence Against Women

PREVENTING VIOLENCE TOGETHER:

**The Western Region Action
Plan to Prevent Violence
Against Women**

*Our family
Of me
Of the flower with my five children
being the petals of love united.*

Turquoise



‘Violence against women is a human rights scandal of unparalleled dimension; it is a cultural, social and political malignancy rooted in prejudice, bigotry and discrimination whose eradication must be sought without reservation, without equivocation, and without delay.’

Kate Gilmore, Previous Executive Deputy Secretary General, Amnesty International

What is violence against women?

Violence against women is prevalent, serious and preventable (VicHealth, 2007). It is an issue of social justice, social inclusion and human rights, and its impact on women, children and families is deep and shattering. Violence against women takes many forms, and affects all communities, irrespective of class, race, or culture.

The 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women as

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Violence against women encompasses physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family and in the general community, including battering, sexual abuse of children, dowry-related violence, rape and other practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, forced prostitution, and violence perpetrated or condoned by the state (World Health Organisation, 1996).

The term ‘violence against women’ is also sometimes used interchangeably with ‘family violence’, ‘intimate partner violence’ or ‘domestic violence’. *Preventing Violence Together* uses the term ‘violence against women’ in order to include other forms of violence, such as trafficking in women, that form part of the continuum of violence perpetrated against women. Importantly, ‘violence against women’ also highlights the fact that violence perpetrated against women is invariably gendered in nature – it is violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or violence that affects women disproportionately (End Violence Against Women, 2008).

The Victorian Police Crime Statistics for 2011-2012 show that the incidence of family violence remains unacceptably high, with 50,382 family violence incidents reported in Victoria, up by 23.4 per cent from the previous year. In the western region alone 5,225 family violence incidents were reported in the year 2009/2010 (Victoria Police 2009/2010 Crime Statistics, extracted from LEAP 18 July 2010).

While women can sometimes be perpetrators of family violence, the evidence demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of abuse and violence is perpetrated by men against women (National Council, 2009) and the greatest risk factor for becoming a victim of sexual assault and/or domestic violence is, simply, being female (National Council, 2009). *Preventing Violence Together* therefore uses the term ‘violence against women’ to reflect the gendered patterns of victimisation and perpetration, and to ensure that we can respond to women’s experiences of violence in a range of contexts. The term also reflects current usage in national, state and local good practice initiatives.



How prevalent is violence against women?

Violence against women is unacceptably prevalent in our community. While the known prevalence of under-reporting means that the available data on violence against women cannot capture the true extent of violence perpetrated against women, the reported incidence alone constitutes significant cause for alarm. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006 Personal Safety Survey:

- Over one in three Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15
- Nearly one in five Australian women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15
- A significant proportion of Australian women – 16 per cent – have experienced violence at the hands of a current or previous partner
- According to Victoria Police reported crime data, women in the western region of Melbourne are particularly at risk of violence. With a rate of 6.23 per 1,000, efforts to prevent violence in the region are urgent (Victoria Police, 2009/2010 Crime Statistics, 2010).

While violence against women affects all communities, evidence shows that certain groups of women are particularly vulnerable to violence. Women with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women in communities affected by socio-economic disadvantage (including rural communities affected by economic downturn or drought), women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and women who are newly-arrived migrants or refugees are all at higher risk of being subject to violence (VicHealth, 2007). As VicHealth observes, for some groups general prevention and intervention strategies may be less effective, and should be supplemented with tailored approaches that meet their particular needs. While *Preventing Violence Together* is not a comprehensive blueprint for universal and tailored interventions, we believe that the principles of diversity and inclusion require the provision of adequate and additional resources to prevent violence against women who are at particular risk. As we have outlined in the action plan, such efforts must be undertaken in partnership with organisations that are closest to women from these at risk groups, for example the Western Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group.

How serious is violence against women?

The right to live free from violence is a fundamental human right. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 compels us to not only respond effectively and compassionately to victims/survivors of violence after it has occurred, but to protect and actively promote human rights (State Government of Victoria, 2009). The human rights imperative means that not only must we act to provide adequate services and a just legal response to women after violence has occurred, but also that we must engage in the primary prevention of violence against women before it occurs. Local governments in Victoria are also required to satisfy legislative requirements included in the Charter, which ensures that government and public authorities consider human rights when making decisions and providing services.

In addition to the fundamental human rights imperative to prevent violence against women, the economic, health, and social consequences of men's violence against women are significant. For instance:

- For women aged 15-44 in Victoria, violence is the leading cause of illness, death and disability – greater than any other factor including tobacco, alcohol-related harm, and physical inactivity combined
- Violence against women cost Victoria \$3.4 billion in 2009. According to a KPMG report, if ignored, this figure will increase to \$3.9 billion by 2021
- Preventing the experience of violence for just one Australian woman would mean avoiding over \$20,766 in costs (State Government of Victoria, 2009)

How can organisations prevent violence against women, and what does 'primary prevention' mean?

Violence against women is preventable (VicHealth, 2007). While there is no single cause of violence against women (WHO, 1996), a range of consistent determinants have been identified. Many of these relate to ongoing social inequalities between women and men. As the well established VicHealth evidence-base demonstrates, the key determinants of violence against women include:

- Unequal power relations between men and women
- Adherence to rigid gender roles and gender stereotypes
- Broader cultures of violence

Primary prevention initiatives are those that aim to stop violence from occurring in the first place. The policy and practice framework devised by VicHealth – *Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria* – recommends that the primary prevention of violence against women be guided by three intersecting components that concentrate on these key determinants.

They are:

- Promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women

- Promoting non-violent social norms and reducing the effects of prior exposure to violence
- Improving access to resources and systems of support

The factors that contribute to violence against women occur in settings in which we live our daily lives; homes, workplaces, schools, sporting clubs and in the community (VicHealth, 2006:57). Opportunities for preventing violence against women therefore also lie in these environments and *Preventing Violence Together* therefore works within five key settings:

- Education and Training
- Local Government, Health and Community Services
- Sports and Recreation
- Workplaces
- Media, Arts and Popular Culture

Coordinating existing regional prevention efforts with new initiatives at the state level is key and the work of *Preventing Violence Together* therefore reflects the work of the State government in this area.

Preventing Violence Together: Western Region Action Plan is at the forefront of the prevention work, promoting a mutually supportive environment for the prevention of violence against women between the western region and the state. Our work strongly reflects the state plan to maximise the opportunities for coordination.



Photo featured courtesy of Douita Galla Community Health

Why have a western region action plan for the prevention of violence against women?

Organisations in the western region have long advocated for the development of a regional plan, recognising that it is not possible to end violence against women with disparate initiatives, short-term funding and one-off projects (Amnesty International, 2008). In particular, coordination, organisational capacity building and partnerships have been identified as key to maximising the impact of our efforts. *Preventing Violence Together* facilitates a coordinated, action-based approach across local government and community and women's health services tailored to the particular characteristics of the western region. The action plan builds on the range of work already underway in the region, and provides opportunities for organisations to engage in practical and strategic prevention initiatives at a number of levels.

"The involvement and representation of Preventing Violence Together has enabled the agency to really be part of something that they regard as important and it is agreed that [Preventing Violence Together] is important at a high management level" (PVT evaluation for the Department of Health, 2012).

Preventing Violence Together continues its work to increase the capacity and the political will of organisations to prevent violence against women; to promote the prioritisation of the prevention of violence against women as core business; to establish and strengthen effective partnerships and structures; and to formalise and strengthen links with state and national plans to prevent violence against women.

How does Preventing Violence Together build partnerships to prevent violence against women?

Preventing Violence Together recognises that working in partnership with other organisations is critical to an effective regional response to violence against women.

All partners have developed and signed on to a number of actions, which are implemented within individual partner organisations. Partners work together and share resources, skills and expertise and are also able to receive specialist support from members of the Expert Advisory Group.

The members of the Executive Governance Group act as ambassadors, advocating for the western region

prevention of violence agenda with state governments and members of parliament.

The work of *Preventing Violence Together* allows for the structural differences as well as the different stages of readiness within each organisation.

It is through these relationships that the partnerships continue to be built and strengthened.

What is the role of local government and community and women's health services in preventing violence against women?

Preventing Violence Together continues to be implemented in a series of phases. This allows for flexible responses to the changing prevention of violence against women sector. A staged approach also allows for high-quality evaluation processes and ensures identified goals are being achieved. In its first phase *Preventing Violence Together* targets local government and community and women's health services. After a number of foundational strategies have been implemented and a thorough evaluation has taken place *Preventing Violence Together* will be expanded to include other organisations, sectors, and settings.

"Being a signatory to Preventing Violence Together has enabled us to not even question preventing violence against women being the priority for our next [health promotion] plan. So for us it has meant that the next four year plan will have PVAW as a priority area" (Comment taken from the evaluation for the Department of Health, 2012).

Local government

Local government has a critical role in creating and supporting environments that enable everyone in the community to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. This role is legislated under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008) section 24 and the Local Government Act 1989 (3c) (3d), which mandates councils to act as representative, informed and responsible decision makers in the interests of their communities. (Victorian Local Government Act 1989, http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/lga1989182/s3c.html).

This means responding to the interests and needs of both women and men across all aspects of council activity. Reducing gender inequity for women and creating a more just, inclusive and fair society for both women and men is a key strategy to prevent violence against women and achieving this legislated goal.

As such, local governments in Australia and internationally are increasingly engaging in gender equity and primary prevention strategies. This occurs through coordinating, facilitating, planning, developing policy and programs and workplace reforms, which champion gender equity and prevent violence against women before it occurs. The research of VicHealth notes that 'primary prevention efforts are most likely to be effective when a coordinated range of mutually reinforcing strategies are targeted across levels of influence' (VicHealth, 2007).

The rationale

- Local governments are visible and accessible to their local community and as an arm of government, have a democratic mandate to lead and implement change;
- By role modelling gender equity, supportive work environments and a zero-tolerance approach to violence against women, local governments can create a shift in culture and lead by example, sending a strong message to partners, stakeholders and the community;
- Local governments provide a range of community services, public spaces, community facilities and public infrastructure, which a gender lens can be applied to and can be used as a platform to influence change;
- Existing local government mechanisms, structures, networks, partnerships, relationships and infrastructure can be accessed to generate a whole of community approach;
- Local governments are also large workplaces within the municipality. As such they can drive workplace change to improve gender equity, provide flexible and supportive working environments for men and women and create opportunities to support women in leadership; and
- Local government elected political representatives are best placed to advocate for, drive and champion policy, program and workplace reforms that build a fairer community for all.

The Gender Equitable, Safe and Inclusive Communities project has showcased examples of how local government can work in collaboration to prevent violence against women and increase gender equity. Through the sharing of resources, joint events, capacity building and organisational development learning from the project suggests that working at a regional level in partnership with neighbouring local governments can enhance capacity and scope to undertake primary prevention initiatives.

Community and women's health services and Primary Care Partnerships

Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) are well established as a flexible and robust platform for partnership work in Victoria. HealthWest Partnership and the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership have provided local leadership and support through the *Preventing Violence Together* Implementation Committee.

PCP member organisations include local governments, community and women's health services and other not-for-profit organisations within the community. PCPs are therefore well placed to foster partnerships for a whole-of-community response to preventing violence against women. PCPs recognise that all organisations involved in the partnership have an important role to play in:

- Promoting a positive example to the community that violence against women is unacceptable
- Promoting the integration of planning and actions to ensure preventing violence against women appears in other strategies and programs being coordinated by their agency
- Advocacy at all levels to respond to violence against women; and
- Policy input relating to violence against women

All organisations within the partnership have a role to play in responding to the determinants of violence against women as befits their organisational mandate. Community health services, for instance, can play a role in responding to the determinants of violence against women by developing initiatives aimed at early intervention and primary prevention. Existing connections with communities and the expertise of community health services in engaging with local communities provide many opportunities for effective violence prevention.

Women's health services, such as Women's Health West, work across the spectrum of violence against women, from initiatives to prevent violence against women to the provision of support services for victims/survivors. Women's health services have significant expertise and capacity to advise on the prevention of violence against women and build the capacity of other organisations. Ending violence against women is core business for women's health services, and so they are well placed to play a central role.

Through existing infrastructures and services, local government and community and women's health services provide many opportunities to embed and lead primary prevention initiatives. These organisations have extensive reach, and work across areas that benefit people at various stages of life.

The Western Integrated Family Violence Committee

The Western Integrated Family Violence Committee

The Western Integrated Family Violence Committee (WIFVC) is also a key partner in western region efforts to prevent violence against women. The WIFVC is a representative, whole-of-sector reference group comprising service providers currently engaged in the Victorian Government's integrated family violence service system reforms. The WIFVC is guided by *Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women & Children - Everybody has a Responsibility to Act 2012-2015*, and has developed a regional action plan. One of the actions is to address the underlying causes of violence against women and children through engaging organisations and communities to promote gender equity and stop violence.

While the primary prevention of violence against women is distinct from tertiary responses (such as crisis accommodation, case work, counselling, and outreach provided by organisations within the WIFVC), complementary roles along the 'stream' of violence against women exist and mutual efforts to build capacity and expertise are critical to an effective, holistic response to violence against women.

What's in the action plan?

Preventing Violence Together builds upon a strong evidence-base of sound research and best practice frameworks.

Vision

The ultimate vision of *Preventing Violence Together* is to contribute to communities, cultures and organisations in the western region that are non-violent, non-discriminatory, gender equitable and promote respectful relationships.

Strategies and actions

Preventing Violence Together outlines a series of mutually reinforcing strategies to build the capacity of organisations to prevent violence against women. Many actions may be embedded within existing programs and policies, while others call for a renewed commitment or approach. Drawing on the VicHealth evidence-base to respond to the determinants of violence against women – that is, the factors that cause men to commit violence against women in the first place – these actions are designed to foster cultures of gender equity, non-violence, and respect.

What is the timeline?

The first phase of *Preventing Violence Together* included the developmental phase with implementation commencing in late 2011.

In 2012 new funding was secured through the Department of Justice for *United: Preventing Violence Against Women in the West*. This further enables the implementation of a range of strategies with and across all partner organisations during the period of 2012 and 2015. This project builds on, and greatly extends, *Preventing Violence Together*.

Preventing Violence Together and *United* are inextricably linked, where *Preventing Violence Together* is the regional agreement and plan to prevent violence against women before it occurs, *United* will enable further support of partner organisations to implement agreed strategies.

How was Preventing Violence Together developed, and who was consulted?

Preventing Violence Together was developed under the guidance of an Expert Advisory Group, consisting of academic experts on violence against women. The Preventing Violence Against Women Working Group that developed the action plan was comprised of representatives from community health services, women's health services, PCPs and local government. High-level guidance on *Preventing Violence Together* was provided by the Project Management Group, comprised of the Executive Officers of HealthWest Partnership and the Inner North West PCP, and the Chief Executive Officer of Women's Health West.

Consultation was undertaken with key groups and networks throughout the development process, including the HealthWest Health Promotion Network, the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, the Moonee Valley Melbourne PCP Healthy Communities Advisory Group, the North West Metropolitan Region Community and Women's Health CEOs, the Local Government Community Services Director's Meeting, and the Western Region Local Government Preventing Violence Against Women and Family Violence Prevention Network. The Office of Women's Policy also provided ongoing support and guidance throughout the development of *Preventing Violence Together*.

How is Preventing Violence Together evaluated?

Preventing Violence Together is evaluated throughout the different phases and all partner organisations are involved in this process. The results of the evaluation are made available to all partner organisations. In addition, the extensive evaluation of the *United: Preventing Violence Against Women in the West* project will inform our future strategies and the extension of *Preventing Violence Together* to other organisations, sectors, and settings beyond 2015.

What have signatory organisations committed to?

Preventing Violence Together has been designed as an enabling and coordinating action plan for organisations in the western region to prevent violence against women. Many local governments and community and women's health organisations have been involved in prevention work before *Preventing Violence Together*, but often our work was limited in scope, or restricted by resources or time pressures. *Preventing Violence Together* responds to the evidence base that has found that to be successful, prevention work must be sustained. *Preventing Violence Together* proposes a range of mutually reinforcing actions across seven strategy areas to ensure that our regional approach is comprehensive, but allows flexibility for organisations to tailor actions to their own organisational mandate. This approach recognises that different organisations have different roles to play in preventing violence against women.

Preventing Violence Together has been designed to assist organisations coordinate prevention work, and to maximise the impact of our efforts. The proposed actions complement and reinforce one another. Each signatory organisation has committed to a number of actions, including organisational prevention policies, training on the use of gender equitable planning tools, undertaking gender diversity audits and developing strategies to increase women's participation in decision-making.

As noted above, effective prevention consists of both 'whole-of-population' strategies, as well as those that are tailored to meet the needs of particular groups. *Preventing Violence Together* is not intended to provide a comprehensive guide to developing these universal and tailored strategies, but rather, as a framework and an action plan to guide and inform this work. The funding provided by the Department of Justice for the *United: Preventing Violence Against Women in the West* project will further enable partner organisations to implement a range of strategies.

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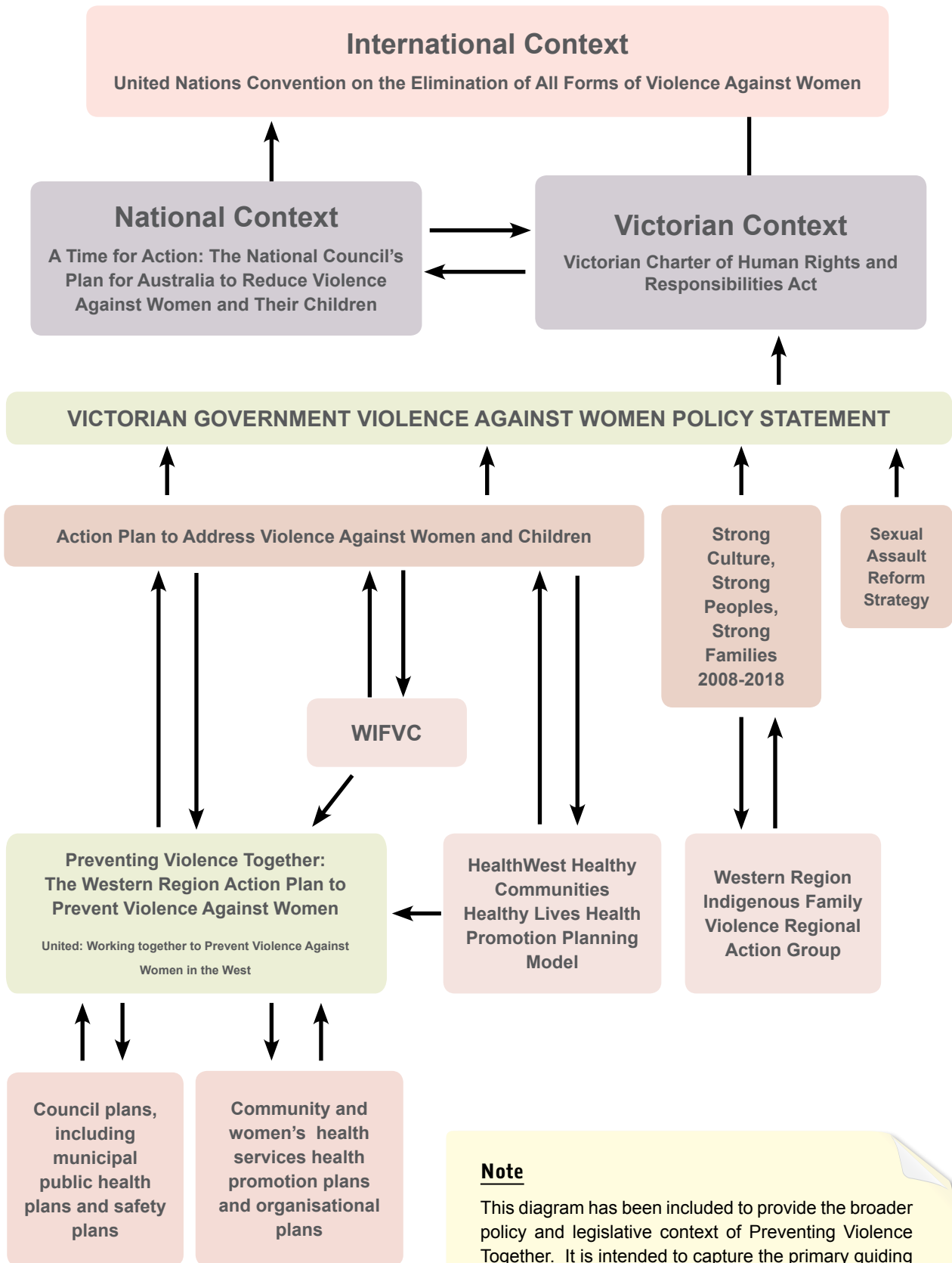
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Victoria Police Crime Statistics, 2009/2010, recorded family Incidents reports, extracted from LEAP 18 July 2010, at www.police.vic.gov.au.

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Note

This diagram has been included to provide the broader policy and legislative context of Preventing Violence Together. It is intended to capture the primary guiding policy documents that inform work across the spectrum of violence against women at a national and state level and, in particular, in the Western Region.



STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

We believe that violence against women is a fundamental violation of women's human rights. We believe that all people have the right to live free from violence, irrespective of their gender, sexuality, marital status, ethnicity, religion, abilities, culture, or any other element that informs identity. In taking a human rights-based approach to preventing violence against women, we recognise that due diligence involves not only responding appropriately to violence when it has occurred, but working to prevent it from happening in the first place.



No one knew what was happening in my home. I could not see out at times.

A house not a home. A fortress on the inside. Shadows everywhere. Now the shadows have been replaced with joy. A new home filled with respect and caring. The windows are back and the light on.

Cindy

Vision:

Communities, cultures and organisations in the western region that are non-violent, non-discriminatory, gender equitable and promote respectful relationships

Partnerships and Structures

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
<p>Establish effective partnerships across government and non-government organisations and accountable leadership structures for sustainable prevention</p>	<p>1.1 Support the establishment of, and the participation of staff in, a new Western Region Prevention of Violence Against Women Steering Structure. The steering structure will comprise representatives from Preventing Violence Together signatory organisations and other key stakeholders in the region, and will have responsibility for resourcing and monitoring the implementation of Preventing Violence Together.</p> <p>1.2 Strengthen partnerships with the state government by linking the Preventing Violence Together steering structure to the high-level Victorian plan</p>	<p>1.3 Use setting-based (e.g., Sports) tools, resources and implementation plans generated at the state level via the steering structure to strengthen and support regional prevention of violence against women initiatives.</p> <p>1.4 Support the implementation of work in other settings within the community where possible, for example in respectful relationships education in schools.</p> <p>1.5 Support the strengthening of links to the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group and PCPs through participation in the steering structure.</p>

Community Leadership

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
<p>Strengthen community leadership to drive change to prevent violence against women</p>	<p>2.1 Develop strategies to promote the full and active participation of a diverse range of women in community life.</p> <p>2.2 Provide opportunities for women from the groups that are particularly vulnerable to violence to take a leadership role in preventing violence against women.</p> <p>2.3 Link with and support Indigenous community leaders, the Indigenous community, and the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group to develop locally-based prevention strategies based on identified community priorities.</p>	<p>2.4 Support women in your community to build connections to social networks and support services, for example neighbourhood houses, support groups, recreational activities, community initiatives and mentoring programs.</p> <p>2.5 Support community groups to take a stand against violence, for example, providing media training, resources and other forms of support.</p>

Capacity and Tools

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
Build capacity and tools for organisational change and workforce development	<p>3.1 Provide opportunities and incentives for staff at all levels of the organisation to attend preventing violence against women and gender equity training, in particular the VicHealth short course on preventing violence against women.</p> <p>3.2 Take active measures to seek out funding to implement projects to prevent violence against women.</p> <p>3.3 Ensure efforts to prevent violence against women strive for best-practice and are guided by the VicHealth <i>Preventing Violence Before it Occurs</i> framework.</p>	<p>3.4 Participate in prevention of violence against women events that support and enhance work across the region, such as the Western Region Leaders' Lunch.</p> <p>3.5 Invite experts to staff meetings and other organisational events to increase staff understanding and capacity to prevent violence against women.</p> <p>3.6 Use gender equity and diversity tools in all policy and program work, such as the Department of Health <i>Gender and Diversity Toolkit</i>.</p>

Communications, Advocacy and Champions

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
Implement multiphase communications campaigns and programs, engage champions and undertake media advocacy to promote equity and non-violence	<p>4.1 Establish a White Ribbon Day Action Group to undertake White Ribbon Day activities. Engage and support men at all levels across the organisation to participate in prevention of violence against women activities and act as champions.</p> <p>4.2 Ensure that all internal and external organisational communication is respectful and gender equitable, for example, by ensuring that pronouns used in publications are gender neutral, and that representations of women and men in organisational materials are not based on gender stereotypes.</p> <p>4.3 Engage with external media (for example, local newspapers) to improve the portrayal of violence against women and the portrayal of gender roles and relations in the media.</p>	<p>4.4 Actively advocate for the progression of the preventing violence against women agenda within the organisation and with partner organisations.</p> <p>4.5 Identify and support high-profile people in communities to act as champions and ambassadors for non-violence, respect and equity.</p> <p>4.6 Identify and support champions and ambassadors within organisations, ensuring they are prioritised as recipients of training, and supported and valued organisationally in this role.</p> <p>4.7 Support women from groups that are particularly vulnerable to violence to actively participate in community decision-making and setting community priorities.</p>

Skills, Attitudes and Social Norm

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
Develop and strengthen systems and programs that build respectful relationships skills and influence social norms, attitudes and behaviours	<p>5.1 Demonstrate high-level leadership by integrating prevention of violence against women as core organisational business, and reflect this at all levels of the organisation.</p> <p>5.2 Implement prevention of violence against women programs and projects that respond to the identified determinants of violence against women.</p> <p>5.3 Provide opportunities for men within your organisation and community to engage in programs that explore and promote positive masculinities, for example, programs to promote responsible fatherhood.</p>	<p>5.4 Take opportunities to incorporate attitudinal indicators on topics concerning gender equity, non-violence and respectful relationships in community and client surveys, using established best practice indicators such as the VicHealth Community Attitudes Survey questions.</p> <p>5.5 Undertake an internal organisational survey on staff attitudes concerning gender equity, non-violence and respectful relationships, using established best practice indicators such as the VicHealth Community Attitudes Survey questions.</p>

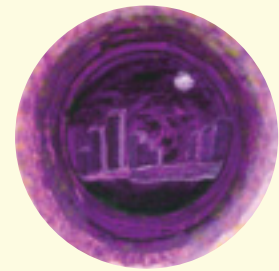
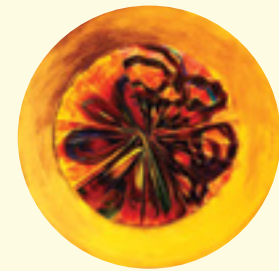
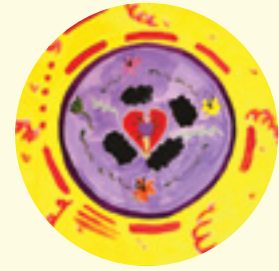
Research and Evaluation

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
Undertake research, evaluation and monitoring of policy and programs to ensure continuous improvement	<p>6.1 Provide support for the evaluation and ongoing improvement of <i>Preventing Violence Together</i>.</p> <p>6.2 Use the evidence concerning the determinants of violence against women as the basis for prevention of violence against women initiatives.</p> <p>6.3 Ensure that specific actions and plans in all organisational and regional efforts to prevent violence against women are aligned with relevant regional and state Indigenous-specific prevention strategies.</p>	<p>6.4 Recognise and reward organisations and individuals in the region who demonstrate commitment to preventing violence against women by participating in a regional primary prevention of violence against women awards event.</p> <p>6.5 Contribute to research partnerships that help build the evidence-base for prevention of violence against women initiatives.</p>

Embedding

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
Improve policy, regulation and legislation to embed prevention of violence and gender equity	<p>7.1 Integrate preventing violence against women as a human rights obligation into all relevant organisational guiding documents that redress discrimination, disadvantage and abuse within communities and organisations, including municipal public health plans and strategic plans.</p> <p>7.2 Embed principles of gender equity into all relevant organisational projects, plans, programs, policy, services, work plans, research, and partnerships.</p> <p>7.3 Ensure that gender equity and violence against women is explicitly considered in existing and new programs that address other health and social issues within the community.</p>	<p>7.4 Work with local, state and federal governments to ensure consistency in policy, planning and regulations pertaining to violence against women.</p> <p>7.5 Examine organisational culture, policies, and practices and ensure they promote the conditions required for gender equity</p> <p>7.6 Develop organisational strategies to promote gender equity within executive management, for example, by mandating the percentage of women in executives.</p>





The images throughout *Preventing Violence Together* are used with permission by women from the Women's Program Support Group (Family Violence Prevention Programme) Djerriwarrh Health Services. The art therapy project gave women who are survivors of violence an opportunity to use art to create a representation of their lives living with violence and abuse. The mandalas are a symbolic depiction of their resilience, and the long road they have walked with their children to lives that are safe and free from violence. We thank them for sharing their beautiful art work with us.