

# Prevention of Violence Against women

Leading change in the Victorian  
local government sector



# Foreword



## Cr Bill McArthur

MAV President and White Ribbon Ambassador

**Violence against women is prevalent in our society; it is real and it cannot be ignored. From the most affluent municipalities to the most remote corners of Australia, we cannot hide from the fact that violence against women is occurring every day.**

The harrowing statistics like one woman is killed every week by a current or former partner, and one in three women over the age of 15 will be the victim of physical or sexual abuse at some time during their life, brings home this truth. Then, there is the massive financial burden on the nation estimated to cost our economy \$13.6 billion each year, and this figure is rising.

Preventing violence against women is a responsibility of everyone involved in local government – from elected representatives and senior management to all council employees. The position we hold in our respective councils puts us on the frontline of whole-of-life service delivery – from maternal and child health through to aged care – and includes designing our public buildings and spaces. This makes our role vital in preventing violence against women.

Councillors and council officers cross paths with their communities constantly and consistently. This provides enormous opportunity for us to ensure women feel safe and connected in our communities. It also ideally positions everyone who works in the local government sector to show leadership for behavioural change in attitudes towards women.

In Victoria, our councils are leading the way with programs, activities, policies and initiatives that aim to prevent violence against women starting at a very local level. In our state, White Ribbon Day is not just another annual event on the calendar – it is every day.

This booklet captures some of the outstanding work that has been achieved by Victorian councils working in the area of preventing violence against women, and gender equity more broadly. These examples show leadership in what is a national issue, and are useful models that can be adapted and implemented by councils around the country.

Speaking as a White Ribbon Ambassador, local government councillor, husband and father, I urge every local government association to make the prevention of violence against women a high priority, and for every council in Australia to take a stand on this issue.

Local government peak body associations can start with developing a Prevention of Violence Against Women Leadership Statement, as the MAV did in 2012. A leadership position commits councils to take action and supports the development of strategies and initiatives.

Councils can start by ensuring appropriate use of language in gatherings, and by speaking up when inappropriate behaviour towards women occurs in the workplace, among families or in the immediate community.

When we become a councillor or a council officer we take on the role of community representatives and activists. When issues come across our radar, it is our responsibility to take a keen interest and lead the community.

Please do not stay silent on this issue.

Preventing violence against women should be on the agenda of every single council because with odds like one in three, we are all bound to know a woman somewhere experiencing some form of abuse and it is our job to change this culture.

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# Preventing violence against women – a local government responsibility

## What is violence against women?

*Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. (UN 1993)*

Victorian local government is a national leader in preventing violence against women. This has been achieved through numerous high profile, localised and internal campaigns and activities, along with advocating for gender equity – ensuring equal and respectful relationships between men and women exist.

Primary prevention strategies seek to prevent violence before it occurs while interventions can be delivered to the whole population, or particular groups that are at higher risk of using or experiencing violence in the future. Some primary prevention strategies focus on changing behaviour and/or building the knowledge and skills of individuals. Strategies that do not have a particular focus on violence against women, but address its underlying causes such as gender inequality, are also primary prevention strategies. (*Preventing Violence Before it Occurs*, VicHealth, December 2007).

Working closely with individuals and families, along with many community organisations, puts councils in the prime seat to lead and engage whole-of-community efforts to start improving gender equality, which has been identified as a key determinant of violence against women.

In Victoria, councils have been actively working in the area of primary prevention of Violence Against Women, or PVAW (pronounced pee-vaw) as it is known throughout the sector, since the mid-2000s.

The framework to prevent violence against women before it occurs was developed by Victoria's health promotion foundation, VicHealth. It focuses on addressing social and cultural conditions that allow violent attitudes and behaviours to exist. It is this evidence-based framework that largely guides primary prevention efforts in Victoria.

Led by local government peak body the Municipal Association of Victoria since 2010, and guided by the seminal work of VicHealth that dates back to 2002, PVAW is now on the agenda of almost all Victorian councils at some level.

VicHealth, whose research work is both nationally and internationally recognised, has also been a significant funding body for a number of projects that support the local government sector in Victoria to take on leadership in the primary prevention of violence against women, and across a range of other sectors (*Respect, Responsibility and Equality Snapshot*, VicHealth, 2012).

In 2009, VicHealth funded a pilot project to enhance local government's capacity to foster safe and inclusive environments for women and men. This two-year investment was managed in partnership with Darebin City Council. The pilot focused on developing initiatives that supported councils already working in the area, along with resources, training programs and networking opportunities for councils newer to PVAW-focused work. (*Local government preventing violence against women: Networking and capacity building project. Evaluation report*, VicHealth).

The success of the pilot translated into the establishment of a full-time PVAW position funded by the former state Labor Government

in 2010, to be based at the MAV. Through this dedicated PVAW resource, now funded by the Coalition Government and VicHealth until at least 2014, the MAV has been instrumental in advocating and promoting gender equity, and ensuring the momentum among Victorian councils on PVAW issues continues to grow.

The MAV PVAW program complements a diverse range of activity occurring in the local government sector. This includes nine councils participating in the Office of Women's Affairs Preventing Violence Against Women in our Community Project, along with the VicHealth-funded PVAW demonstration project occurring through Monash City Council and Monashlink Community Health. What is clear, and demonstrated by the case studies included in this publication, is the work occurring at a local government level is building in volume, sophistication and diversification across a range of work areas.

The MAV's leadership in this area is underpinned by a commitment statement, which was launched in mid-2012. The Prevention of Violence Against Women Leadership Statement commits the organisation to a series of approaches that aim to prevent violence against women and represents a major component of the activities being undertaken to build sector-wide PVAW capacity.

The Leadership Statement formalises the MAV's commitment to preventing violence against women. It provides a range of strategies that councils can implement at a local level, based on Maribyrnong City Council's successful evidence-based and evidence-building work (see page 6).

The MAV commits to provide leadership in preventing violence against women through:

- Advocacy to other levels of government to increase the resources in clarifying, enhancing and implementing legislation and influencing social norms for more equal relationships between men and women.
- Building capacity within this organisation, and the sector, to understand the prevalence, seriousness and preventable nature of the problem and the roles that local government can play in addressing gender equity and promoting respectful relationships.
- Promoting local government's role, achievements and best practice in preventing violence against women to the sector and other levels of government. In addition, championing 'whole of community' approaches to raising awareness and responding to opportunities to promote respectful relationships.
- Supporting local councils in their community leadership roles by facilitating the provision of resources including advice, expertise, networks and policy support.

# Victorian local government achievements

**The MAV's Prevention of Violence Against Women (PVAW) program has benefited from the political framework nationally through the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, and by successive state governments recognising the significance of this issue, currently through *Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children 2012-2015*. All of this has been underpinned by research and evidence developed by VicHealth as outlined in the framework to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria.**

There has also been a significant shift in attitudes of key authorities such as Victoria Police since the introduction of the Code of Practice in 2004, which has resulted in greater confidence in reporting incidents of violence against women. This is reflected in Victoria Police data showing over 50,000 attendances at family violence incidents in 2010/11 – an increase of 23 per cent on the previous 12 months. For primary prevention work to be effective a strong and well supported service response is essential.

Achievements of the MAV PVAW coordination role 2010-2012 include:

## Leadership group

The MAV has established a leadership group consisting of council senior managers who have become PVAW ambassadors within the local government sector. This group is a sub-committee of the MAV Human Services Committee. Leadership engagement and harnessing opportunities to grow the PVAW effort across councils will be an area of focus in 2013 to capitalise on the commitment and momentum shown by councils to progress this work.

## Leadership Statement

The MAV launched its Prevention of Violence Against Women Leadership Statement at a State Council Meeting in May 2012. This statement sets out the MAV's commitment to continue its work on PVAW and to further engage councils to take leadership on this issue. The leadership statement allows for mainstreaming this area of work as core council business to be integrated into existing and new council plans and policies. The leadership statement has been endorsed by a number of councils, and some have been successful in using this statement to highlight their position on violence against women through mainstream media channels.

## Establishing a network

The MAV convenes a quarterly PVAW network meeting. The network came into being through the former Local Government Networking and Capacity Building Project in 2010 and has gone from strength to strength through the MAV's stewardship. The network has its own terms of reference and an elected executive of council representatives, who provide a formalised and sustained structure for the network. Membership is primarily made up of local government officers, with some councillors also attending, along with representatives of state government departments, VicHealth, community and women's health services, family violence services and other related peak bodies. These meetings offer professional development opportunities for members with a range of keynote speakers highlighting the diversity

of engagement councils have with PVAW from communications and the media to local laws and animal management, maternal and child health, and recreation and leisure.

Attendance at the network meetings has grown considerably since the first meeting in 2010 of 15 attendees (10 from councils), to 46 in December 2012 (32 from councils).

*"The meetings provide a good networking opportunity and validate the role of local government in this work. There are many other meetings/networks in the family violence sector, however I find it's important to meet with those who are doing what I am doing – doing PVAW in a local government setting,"* eastern metro council.

## Strategic Leadership Engagement Sessions

The MAV developed a Strategic Leadership Engagement session around gender equity and preventing violence against women through funding received from the Victorian Office of Women's Affairs in October 2012.

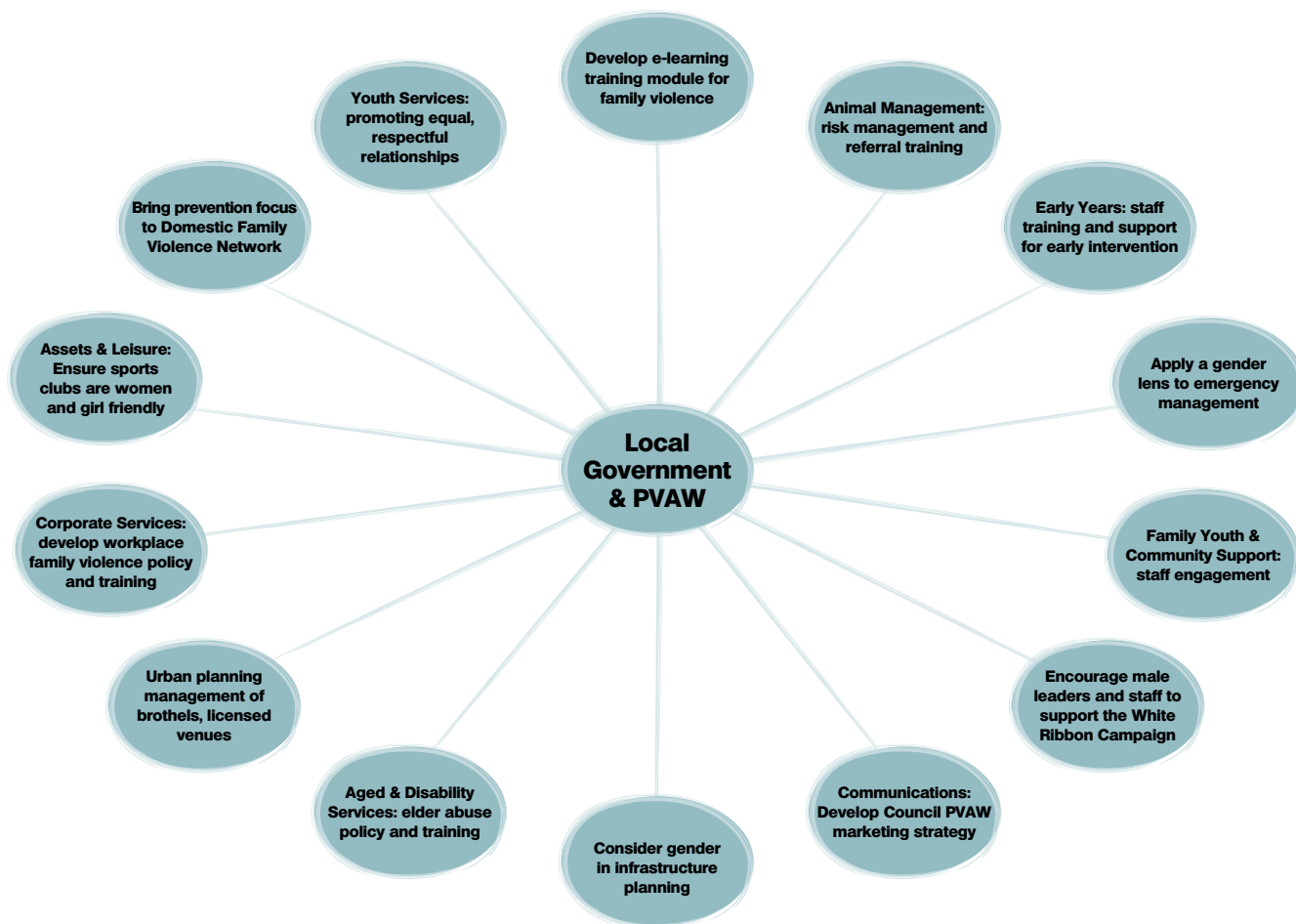
The two-hour session was delivered to executive and senior management teams from councils in three cluster areas – Western Metro (Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Wyndham), Central Victoria (Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander and Greater Bendigo) and Outer East Metro (Maroondah, Knox and Yarra Ranges).

The aim of the session was to engage senior leaders in thinking about applying a gender lens to core pieces of council work such as council plans and strategies, and budgets.

An evaluation at the end of the session revealed 99 per cent of the 90 participants 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the session was useful. Among a range of other comments, participants felt they:

- Could consider gender equity issues within infrastructure planning; and
- Review the environments available to women at leisure facilities and shift them to be more welcoming and inclusive.

The case studies in this booklet represent just a few examples of Victorian councils' increasing engagement in preventing violence against women and broader strategies around improving gender equity. To be truly effective in achieving cultural change requires a long-term commitment and a whole-of-council approach. This includes the delivery of activities, policies and plans being mutually reinforcing, either through services and program delivery, internally addressing organisational and workplace policies, or in partnership with our community and stakeholders.



*"The collegial atmosphere of the network is brilliant. I have learnt so much from others there and developed great working relationships,"* western metro council.

*"The network provides a great opportunity to find out what's happening across different local government areas and to network with key stakeholders working in PVAW,"* Regional Women's Health Service.

### Email network

The MAV maintains an email network group where a regular update of items relating to PVAW and gender equity more broadly is circulated. The email network has grown from 80 subscribers in July 2011 to 252 members, which includes 161 local government representatives (as at January 2013). Non-Victorian subscribers include people from councils in other states, other state governments, a number of national bodies, and a representative from UN Women based in New York. It is important to build engagement with diverse areas of council through the email network to ensure issues related to PVAW and gender equity are not seen as a 'women's issue' or solely the realm of health and safety, but considered a core responsibility of council across a range of business areas.

### Ongoing network support

In addition to the quarterly network meetings, the MAV's PVAW coordinator supports the network both formally and informally. The PVAW coordinator responds to daily enquiries ranging from advice to where to find resources such as best practice plans or policies.

### Website

The MAV has developed a gender equity section on its website, providing councils with access to a range of resources and information and includes quarterly updates on PVAW activities from network member agencies. Visit: [www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/Pages/default.aspx)

**The following pages showcase eight Victorian councils' work in the area of preventing violence against women. They are inspirational examples of leadership that clearly demonstrate what the local government sector can achieve.**





**Council:** Moreland City Council

**Location:** 8 kms west of Melbourne

**Population:** 155,027

## Women on equal playing field

Moreland City Council is one of Victoria's leaders in working to prevent violence against women and has focused much of its work on addressing gender equity, one of the key determinants of violence against women.

One of the most instrumental pieces of work in undertaking Moreland's primary prevention approach was the adoption of a sport and recreation policy in 2009 that requires sports clubs to demonstrate active participation of women and girls.

The policy is directly linked to sporting ground allocations and any club wishing to apply for grants must demonstrate the role girls and women have at their clubs.

The driving force behind introducing this policy was council's recognition that males dominated many clubs operating in its municipality and the need to open facilities up to be more inclusive.

Director of Social Development Andrew Day said council saw an opportunity to actively intervene by making it a policy requirement that women and girls had active roles in sporting clubs to improve gender equity.

"Council appointed an Active Women and Girls Officer to look at creating more opportunities for females to be included in sport and sporting activities," Mr Day said.

"The evidence around determinants of violence and gender equity was presented to council, which supported the development of a policy to address this issue via both policy and direct action."

Now, any sporting club that wants to access community-owned facilities for their sports teams must have active female participation.

Council has seen a substantial increase in participation levels by females since the implementation of the policy, in addition to other positive spin-off effects that are driving the prevention of violence message further.

"Moreland has a very active White Ribbon Action Team and we have found our capacity to engage sporting clubs in the White Ribbon Campaign has been enhanced through the policy position on gender equity," Mr Day said.

"This approach is led from the top of the organisation with Mayor Oscar Yildiz and CEO Peter Brown both White Ribbon Day ambassadors.

"When we have put the call out for clubs to get involved with the White Ribbon campaign, to talk about prevention of violence against women, to raise the issue at sporting clubs, or mention at forums or through newsletters, clubs have been amenable to promote the issue."

Moreland is currently reviewing its Family Violence Prevention action plan and is expecting to report on its success later this year.

"It is all about continuing to raise the bar," Mr Day said.

### About the White Ribbon Campaign

The White Ribbon Campaign is an international movement to end men's violence against women. The campaign has proven an effective vehicle for engaging men and women from diverse areas of local government to work collaboratively to prevent violence against women. A number of councils have formalised their engagement with preventing violence against women, through creating White Ribbon Action Teams, and are meeting throughout the year to progress whole-of-council efforts to make a difference in this area.

In 2012, the vast majority of Victorian councils, along with the MAV, participated in the campaign, some for the first time and others in a more high profile way than in previous years.

White Ribbon Day is acknowledged on 25 November each year, coinciding with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. This begins the 16 days of activism against gender violence, ending on 10 December – the International Day of Human Rights. For more visit [www.whiteribbon.org.au](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au)





**Council:** Darebin City Council

**Location:** 5-15 kms north of Melbourne CBD

**Population:** 143,047

## Inclusion policy guides women's strategy

A policy developed by Darebin City Council is being used to inform the design and implementation of programs and services across the organisation to ensure better inclusion of women in the community.

The Darebin Equity and Inclusion Policy 2012-2015 sets council's direction on how it addresses social inclusion, equity and access principles such as social justice, human rights, accountability, participation, empowerment and diversity.

Developed on a human rights-based approach to effectively address barriers to inclusion experienced by people living in Darebin, the policy has assisted in the implementation of a number of key strategies including the Women's Equity Strategy 2012-2015.

### **Darebin City Council is a pioneer of Victorian local government's PVAW work. To date, council's achievements include:**

- The highly-acclaimed Family Violence Help Cards (in partnership with northern metro Local Government Areas and Women's Health in the North)
- Forming the Darebin White Ribbon Action Team and developing a strategic plan to raise awareness both within council and the broader Darebin community
- Developing a Staff Family Violence Policy
- Signing a Declaration Against Family Violence by council and the Darebin Interfaith Council
- Development of a council-funded PVAW officer role
- Development of the Women's Equity Strategy and associated action plans.

Darebin's Equity and Diversity Coordinator Mandy Bathgate said the policy was a formal commitment by council that has become an enabler to implement strategies with an integrated approach.

"Having this policy enables us to drill down and consider actions and partnerships from a rights-based approach and requires all aspects of the organisation to identify groups that could be considered at risk of exclusion when developing programs and services," she said.

Other strategies to cascade out of the Equity and Inclusion Policy include anti-racism, multicultural and affordable housing.

The policy will be activated and practiced utilising an Equity and Inclusion Planning and Audit Tool that has been developed as a resource for all levels of council to use in their planning, development and evaluation of policies, services and programs.

Since the endorsement of the Equity and Inclusion Policy, the Women's Equity Strategy 2012-15 has commenced implementation through two annual action plans – Preventing Violence Against Women and Gender Equity.

"In these plans we have a range of gender equity and preventing violence against women actions working across a number of council departments," Ms Bathgate said.

Under the Prevention of Violence Against Women Action Plan 2012-13, Darebin will conduct Family Violence Awareness Training for staff in relation to the Darebin Family Violence Policy that was developed in 2009 to support women experiencing violence at home.

"In addition to this training, we are developing an e-learning module on the Family Violence Policy to further increase awareness and re-energise this policy across council."

Among a long list of items within the Gender Equity Action Plan 2012-13, council will coordinate the provision of gender analysis training for council staff in consultation with the People and Development Unit, and in partnership with Women's Health in the North.

Council is also looking to promote leadership and training opportunities for women employees across the organisation. The aim is for at least 50 per cent of participants attending leadership/management training and professional development to be women. Other actions include ensuring gender balance across internal council committees and working groups, and council is seeking to include gender equity as a commitment in the next Council Plan 2013-2016.



# Working together, from within

**Council:** Maribyrnong City Council

**Location:** 5-11 kms west of Melbourne

**Population:** 75,297

Maribyrnong City Council's successful approach to internal capacity building by changing behaviours towards women in its own workplace is being used across Victorian local government through access to their Respect and Equity Guide for local government.

Maribyrnong City Council has been actively working in the prevention of violence against women space since the mid 2000s.

In 2006, it participated in *Gender, Local Governance and Violence Prevention (GLOVE)* – a three-year local government prevention project to reduce violence against women – which included the development of council's first Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan.

As part of this action plan Maribyrnong outlined a number of strategies to stop violence before it occurred and embedded these into council's core business through policies, programs and practices. One strategy was to conduct audits of a number of its sporting club facilities, maternal and child health centres, libraries and community centres to ensure they were inclusive environments for women.

Maribyrnong's commitment to the GLOVE project was recognised by VicHealth in 2008, which awarded council funding to build on its achievements through the highly acclaimed *Respect and Equity Preventing Violence Against Women Project*.

Consolidating and strengthening activities undertaken within the action plan, the *Respect and Equity Preventing Violence Against Women Project* focused council on driving cultural change and harnessing support for preventing violence against women inside the walls of its own organisation.

Maribyrnong's approach to the *Respect and Equity Preventing Violence Against Women Project* was underpinned by five defining principles:

- Focus on primary prevention
- Get council's house in order
- Apply gender analysis
- Pay attention to council's environment
- Leverage council's strengths, reach and proximity

Based on these principles, seven strategies were then developed:

- Developing the workforce
- Sharing the learning
- Raising the profile of primary prevention in council and community
- Normalising workplace discussions about gender equity
- Influencing and adapting council business
- Stimulating and nurturing leadership
- Building relationships

Maribyrnong's evidence-based and evidence-building approach was proven successful and at the conclusion of the project in 2011, a guide was developed for councils embarking on a whole-of-organisation culture change program, the Respect and Equity Guide for local government.

This project has been used as a best practice guide for local government and abridged versions of its strategies have been



included in the MAV's Preventing Violence Against Women Leadership Statement.

Quick wins under each principle have been identified in the guide. Among these, Maribyrnong encourages council to join and participate in peak association network committees to collaborate with other like-minded council officers, councillors and community stakeholders. It also suggests encouraging key influencers within council to speak at conferences and events; to talk about gender equity with colleagues in both formal and informal environments; and start a White Ribbon working group to engage men and boost their knowledge to support the prevention of violence against women.

Maribyrnong also recommends involving all council officers in building skills to create an integrated approach to gender equity and preventing violence against women. This includes applying a gender lens to all council operations from sports and recreation to local laws, maternal and child health and youth services.

Coordinator Gender Equitable, Safe and Inclusive Communities Emma Wilkinson said she worked closely with officers across the





organisation to talk about prevention of violence against women, and even implemented a secondment model within council.

"We seconded someone from the communications department to work on our projects for one day a week over a few months," she said.

"By doing this, our communications officer was around to learn first hand about what we were doing and take that learning back to her own team, which has resulted in developing a very close working relationship with the communications department."

Ms Wilkinson, who sits in the Community Infrastructure and Social Development department, said the internal capacity building work done by Maribyrnong also assisted inter-departmental work on gender equity.

"We now work collaboratively on lots of projects," she said.

"From developing joint initiatives and applying for funding to just getting a 'heads-up' about projects or activities coming up that we could apply a gender lens to, it is all very encouraging and shows that we have been able to build a strong core across a lot of departments."

Youth Services is another example where gender equity and prevention of violence against women is being integrated into its work with the community.

The two teams have worked together to bring the popular hip hop workshops to young people living in the City of Maribyrnong. Offering participants the opportunity to workshop their hip hop skills, write and record lyrics and music, and create video clips, the program also teaches about gender equity and carries these messages through their lyrics.

"The program is supported by youth workers who are also artists themselves and delivered through an informal peer mentor model where the young people develop technical and lyrical skills and the confidence and experience to write, perform and record their own raps," Ms Wilkinson said.

"Through hip hop, young people create positive non-violent spaces and messages and explore social justice issues such as violence against women, gender inequality, race-based discrimination, homelessness and youth bullying.

See the Urban Voices video at [www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au](http://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au)



**Council:** Strathbogie Shire Council

**Location:** North-central Victoria, about 150 kms from Melbourne

**Population:** 9,486

Council joined players and officials from Eurora Football Netball Club at the inaugural White Ribbon Day game in 2012. Picture: (far left) Cr Colleen Furlanetto; (fourth from left) Eurora Football Netball Club President Scott Watson; (middle – blue shirt) Strathbogie CEO Steve Crawcour; and (far right) Cr Graeme Williams.

## Playing for prevention

Sport can be a great community binder. It brings men and women, boys and girls of all ages together through a common interest – whether they are players, administrators or spectators.

In 2012, Strathbogie Shire Council, which has a vibrant sporting culture, saw an opportunity to partner with a local football and netball club to raise the profile of preventing violence against women.

Following an editorial to the local newspaper by new President of the Eurora Football Netball Club Scott Watson in which he wrote a powerful story under the headline *My Town, My Team, My Jumper*, Strathbogie Councillor Colleen Furlanetto saw a potential synergy for the club and council to work together.

With support from Strathbogie CEO Steve Crawcour, a White Ribbon Ambassador, Cr Furlanetto started discussions with Mr Watson about enhancing respect in the community and highlighting prevention of violence against women.

Mr Watson was supportive of the partnership and became a White Ribbon Ambassador ahead of making plans for a White Ribbon Day football game to be included in the 2012 season fixture.

With a minimal budget, council and the club made an impact at two White Ribbon Day games held in June 2012.

A booklet with information and where to find help was developed and placed in the league-wide Football Record for those rounds. The booklet was also placed in the clubrooms of both teams competing at the Eurora ground and handed out to spectators. White ribbons and wristbands were sold in the kiosk.

Cr Furlanetto said the White Ribbon matches were successful in raising awareness about preventing violence against women.

“A number of disclosures resulted out of these events with many locals asking where this information was 20 years ago, and spectators from the opposition team asked where to find information for their local area,” she said.

“Thanks to participating in the VicHealth PVAW short course I know how to respond appropriately to disclosures and provide them with information of support services available.”

Over the past few summers, council has also worked with a local senior cricket side and a junior MILO cricket team to raise awareness of prevention of violence against women. Players wear white ribbons and information is available at the clubs.

Council is aiming for White Ribbon Day matches to be held annually and extended to netball in the future.

### The bigger picture

In August 2010 Strathbogie was among a number of councils that presented at a Local Government and Community Leaders Preventing Violence Against Women Conference held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). In the year leading up to this conference, which attracted over 300 local government representatives and community leaders, Strathbogie was chosen as a pilot council under the VicHealth-funded Local Government Preventing Violence Against Women project, which aimed to build capacity and transfer knowledge across the sector. As part of the pilot, Strathbogie hosted the two-day VicHealth Preventing Violence Against Women short course for local community health services, has actively promoted the White Ribbon campaign by selling ribbons all year round, provided education sessions for staff, and engaged local sporting and community groups to help raise awareness. Prevention of violence against women is embedded in Strathbogie’s Council Plan, Municipal *Health Plan* and is a priority in its *Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2010-14*, which enables councillors and staff to drive change around respect. CEO Steve Crawcour is a White Ribbon Ambassador and has Key Performance Indicators around prevention of violence against women built in to his employment contract.





**Council:** Surf Coast Shire Council

**Location:** south-western Victoria, 125 kms from Melbourne

**Population:** 26,493

# Groundbreaking EBA includes family violence clause

Surf Coast Shire Council earned itself a place in Australian industrial relations history as the first organisation in the world to introduce a family violence clause into its Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA).

In 2010, staff at Surf Coast became eligible for 20 days special leave each year to deal with family violence under a new EBA, which was negotiated between council and its employees. The negotiations were fully supported by the unions, particularly the Australian Services Union (ASU) which tabled the clause.

At the time the agreement was hailed as groundbreaking, with research and advocacy group Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse calling it a 'world-class standard in supporting employees who may be impacted by domestic and family violence'.

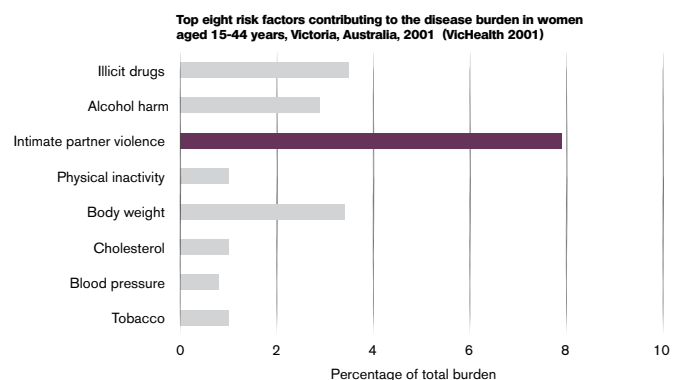
Various studies have estimated the annual cost of domestic violence to Australian employers is around \$500 million per year due to staff turnover, absenteeism and lost productivity.

**“With one in three Australian women having experienced violence in their relationships, and with children present at around a third of incidents attended by police, this means some councillors, executives, officers and staff have most likely been exposed to violence at some stage in their life. Please, be mindful that some employees may have a reaction when asked to engage on PVAW issues. Always ensure support service information is available.”**

While council embraced the inclusion of a family violence clause in its EBA to support staff and continue improving the working environment, it also took the view that the best way to reduce the effects associated with family violence was to ensure any employee suffering was well supported.

The clause in the EBA safeguards the security of employment for workers experiencing family violence, as well as providing workplace support to enable them to be safe at home, and at work.

The 20 days special leave can be used for medical appointments, legal proceedings and other activities relating to family violence.



Carer's leave is also offered for employees who are supporting a person experiencing family violence.

"Part of the reason for getting a family violence clause in our EBA was to enshrine it in law to show our staff and community that we have made a strong stand on the issue and set the standard for a workplace that will not tolerate violence," Surf Coast Human Resources Coordinator Wendy Hope said.

"When we developed the policy we looked at the Family Violence Protection Act and, with the help of URCOT (an independent research centre specialising in work and workplaces), created a document to define our stance and the commitment to our employees."

Surf Coast's family violence policy includes information about family violence, frequently asked questions, and how to access services and resources for people experiencing family violence.

"Council also developed a factsheet that is available in common areas such as the kitchens and staff rooms for people who might not want the full policy but might be inclined to look at a summary of the information," Mrs Hope said.

As part of the family violence clause, council has also trained a staff member in family violence and privacy issues as a liaison point, and has included family violence professionals in its Employee Assistance Program.

## Paid family violence leave

- More than 1 million Australian workers covered by paid family violence leave agreements.
- 20 Victorian councils now offer paid leave to staff experiencing domestic violence.
- Agreements vary from offering a specific number of days to unlimited leave, and some include flexible working hours.
- More information is available on the *Safe at Home, Safe at Work* website – [www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au](http://www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au)





**Lead Council:** Warrnambool City Council

**Location:** south-western Victoria, about 260 kms from Melbourne

**Population:** 32,592

**Partner councils:** Corangamite, Glenelg, Moyne and Southern Grampians shire councils

## Rural councils pull together to deliver leading program

A group of rural Victorian councils and two health service providers have partnered to attract funding for a prevention of violence against women program aimed at first time parents.

The Great South Coast Councils includes Warrnambool City Council, and Corangamite, Glenelg, Moyne and Southern Grampians shires. Together they will partner with Whitehorse Community Health Service, and Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West to deliver the successful Baby Makes 3 program, initially developed with Whitehorse City Council through funding from VicHealth in 2009.

Warrnambool started its prevention of violence against women journey in early 2011 with a review of council's health and wellbeing program. During the process, council uncovered violence against women as a significant issue in the community, much greater than highly publicised street violence.

Conversations moved outside Warrnambool City Council to nearby Glenelg and Southern Grampians, who were also experiencing high incident rates of violence against women.

The three rural councils then agreed to take a Great South Coast approach in advocating for the development of a Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy.

**“ We needed a program that would work in our communities but also that we could pick up and run with. ”**

Initially, a partnership was formed between the councils and the newly formed Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West resulting in funding of \$30,000. Regional Development Victoria Barwon South West matched the funding, doubling the overall project budget to \$60,000. These funds have been used to appoint expert consultants who will be guided by a Project Reference Group that includes representatives from the three councils, local police, family violence service providers and a range of other stakeholders.

In October 2012, the group, along with Whitehorse Community Health Service and Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West were successful in receiving \$570,000 funding over three years from the state government through the Crime Prevention Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children grants.

*Baby Makes 3*, which aims to support men and women during the transition to parenthood while encouraging equal and respectful relationships, was identified as a program that would work in rural communities across the five municipalities.

Warrnambool Director of Community Development Vicky Mason said a program that had a solid amount of research behind it was required.

“We needed a program that would work in our communities but also that we could pick up and run with,” she said.

“*Baby Makes 3* is effective in that we can incorporate the program into first time parents groups, which are offered to every new family. This is a traditional time when engagement between new parents, council and health services occurs.

“It is also a program that can be adapted to give it a local context and we can design the program so it works in our communities.”

Part of the funding has gone towards the appointment of a dedicated project officer and a range of program facilitators, who will undergo training in March with the goal of commencing delivery of the program from mid-2013. A cost benefit analysis will also be completed to assess the program's outcomes in a rural and regional setting.

### More about Baby Makes 3

In 2007 VicHealth-funded a research project that explored the engagement of first time fathers in the primary prevention of violence against women. Out of this research came a recommendation for innovative primary prevention programs for first time parents. In 2009, VicHealth provided two years funding to Whitehorse Community Health Service in partnership with Whitehorse City Council for the development and implementation of *Baby Makes 3* – an innovative and world-first approach to preventing violence against women. The project aims to assist first time parents adapt to the demands and expectations of parenthood and can be adapted by councils to suit their community. First time parents are a key target group for preventing violence against women since the transition to parenthood is also a time when women are particularly vulnerable to violence (VicHealth, 2007).



**Council:** Whittlesea City Council  
**Location:** 20 kms north of Melbourne  
**Population:** 160,371



A new sports pavilion has been designed to be accessible and inclusive for women.

## Building for gender and space

Sports pavilions in Melbourne's northern suburbs have become the setting for prevention work with Whittlesea City Council owned facilities being upgraded to become more accessible for women and girls.

While many sporting clubs are male oriented in their design, Whittlesea City Council has applied a gender lens\* to infrastructure development to promote respectful relationships at these facilities and ensure women have the opportunity to be fully involved in community life.

At the design phase for these pavilions, the first of which is in progress, an adaptation of Maribyrnong City Council's facility audit tool will be used to emphasise equity of use of the new multi-purpose community space, where netball, football and cricket will be played.

The physical structure of the pavilion has been designed with conscious decisions around lighting, the angle of the building and surrounding vegetation all made with the safety of women in mind.

Whittlesea Health Promotion Officer Elizabeth Meade said embedding primary prevention and gender equity into council core business was a high priority.

"Given the relationship between gender, space and power, the form and function of the built environment can make a difference to women and men's use of a space, and should not be overlooked," she said.

"Planning and design processes can unintentionally exclude or discriminate against groups in our community.

"Planning policy can ignore the fact that women and men use public space differently."

Sporting pavilions are a social meeting space used by men, women and children, meaning everyone's needs must be considered.

"It has been argued that urban and suburban spaces support stereotypically male activities and planning methodologies reflect a male dominated society," Ms Meade said.

"For example, while some recreation clubs are focused around a bar, this one will focus on a social meeting space that can be used by other groups.

"Sale of alcohol will continue, but it will be a closed-off section rather than a focal point.

"This is where we can tie prevention of violence against women principles into the design in order to support women's groups to be more active and have meeting spaces at the pavilion."

During non-sporting times other groups can use the facilities, ensuring it is maintained and remains alive and active all year round.

"Infrastructure that is poorly maintained and not designed with safety in mind can impact on people's use of public spaces, as well as their perceptions of safety," Ms Meade said.

The new facility will include unisex change rooms for umpires and four sets of change rooms that are suited for males or females. Individual cubicles will be specified rather than communal facilities, making it suitable for women as both players and umpires.

"Currently, with limited changing space at the pavilions, the women's or girls' teams have to wait for the men's or boys' teams – or sometimes they just go home," Ms Meade said.

*\*Find out about a 'gender lens' on page 6.*

### What is a Facility Audit Tool?

Maribyrnong City Council's Facility Audit Tool has been shared with, and adapted by, a number of Victorian councils when implementing strategies to prevent violence against women.

It is used as part of a process to create settings in both the built and social environment that ensure safe spaces are available for women.

The audit tool assesses lighting, sightlines, isolation, possible assault sites, maintenance, signage, stairwells, elevators, car parks, movement predictors and possible entrapment sites and raises questions about real and perceived community safety along with promotion and communication methods.



**Council:** Casey City Council

**Location:** 40 kms south-east of Melbourne

**Population:** 260,000

## Local laws team taking a stand

It is well documented that the City of Casey, which is located south east of Melbourne, has the highest incidence of family violence reports to police in Victoria with women and children most at risk. With a population of approximately 260,000 people it is estimated that 40,000 women in Casey have experienced violence from a male person in their lifetime and even more children, making it a significant public health issue.

Casey City Council has a strong commitment to preventing violence against women. Some key projects being undertaken by council include extensive work with faith communities through the Promoting Peace in Families project, receipt of a \$600,000 grant from the Department of Justice for a male leadership project titled *Challenge Family Violence*, and work internally with a men's action group.

Casey City Council local laws staff are exposed on a daily basis to law enforcement, dispute resolution and amenity concerns. Due to this interaction with the community, local laws staff are exposed to many and varied aspects of human emotions. Accordingly, officers are also exposed to various levels of violence directed at them and to other members of the community. Staff are trained to handle hostile and difficult customers, and in situational awareness for their own safety and that of others.

Family violence prevention was identified as a training and development opportunity for local laws staff as a result of senior staff involvement in the men's action group. Currently, one in three Australian women has experienced violence in their lifetime and local laws officers are often exposed to incidents of family violence, interact with perpetrators and victims and witness negative attitudes towards women when impounding animals, investigating breaches of the law and issuing infringement notices. In some cases, women were being assaulted by their male partners after animals were impounded or other similar action.

Local laws officers realised that they had a responsibility to ensure that their actions minimised the risk to women and preventing violence occurring.

With the support of council's health promotion team and a partnership with the Victorian Police, all officers received a training session on family violence prevention which equipped them to understand violence, its gendered nature, and gave them a framework in how to respond and be role models and active bystanders in the community, to send a message that violence against women is unacceptable.

After the training the council's standard operation procedures for local laws were updated with specific sections dedicated to family violence being included within the animal management, OH&S and traffic sections. Male officers wear white ribbons in the community, are active bystanders and all officers have family violence information on hand. The team leader from local laws was accepted as a White Ribbon Ambassador to highlight his dedication to the issue.

Local laws officers are now capable of seeing the early signs that may identify situations that have potential to result in family violence. They are better resourced when faced with this issue, and feel that they can make a difference. It has led to the local laws team having an increased community profile and broadened their role from enforcement to include public health and a strong partnership has been formed with the police.

Officers are utilising their new skills out in the field to great effect. One example being where an officer approached a vehicle that was parked illegally in a designated disabled parking bay, a female was in the passenger seat without any other people present. The officer informed the female passenger that he would issue an infringement for the offence. The woman became quite distraught and mentioned that her partner will not be happy with the infringement. The officer took this as a sign that she may get the blame for the issuing of the ticket. He then waited until the male returned to the vehicle and issued the infringement notice directly to him, taking the female passenger out of the loop entirely and keeping her safe.



# Recommendations

The PVAW journey at a local government level in Victoria has developed in leaps and bounds over the past decade, with a number of innovative councils leading the way and sharing their learnings. The momentum, developed through VicHealth's Local Government Networking and Capacity Building Project in 2009-11 has continued to grow under the auspice of the MAV. The leadership and profile provided by the MAV to the local government sector has been successful in providing legitimacy to engage councils in this work.

It is clear from the MAV's first 18 months in PVAW work, and from the council case studies, that local government is successfully modelling gender equitable approaches to planning and service delivery. This work is having a significant impact on shaping local government as a workplace, and community and individual expectations, which is contributing to respectful, inclusive and equitable environments.

**Below are some tips to becoming 'PVAW ready', along with ideas to get your council started.**

## Getting started

### Be informed by the front line

Ask your local police and family violence service providers for a briefing on the extent of reported violence against women in your council area – you may be surprised by how many incidents are occurring in your municipality.

### Look to the bigger picture

Review the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-22, which brings together the efforts of governments across the nation to make a real and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women. Find out what your state or territory has committed to and see where the work of local government fits within this.

### Engage senior leaders

Brief your councillors and executive managers about violence against women, providing them with an overview on the magnitude of the issue and the impact locally. Highlight the opportunities through council's reach and influence to make a difference in creating healthy, safe and connected communities.

## Build organisational capacity

### Establish an action team

Invite senior, influential and/or passionate colleagues from across council to form an action team. Together, identify opportunities to link the prevention of violence against women to broader areas of council work. Through this action team's leadership you will build capacity throughout the organisation.

### It is ok to start small

Don't be overwhelmed into thinking you need to start with a whole-of-council prevention of violence against women strategy. Start with a range of actions that are 'quick wins' like supporting the White Ribbon campaign by encouraging senior staff to become ambassadors. You could also include information about violence against women on your council website or telephone on-hold message. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Look around at other models and see how they can be adapted to suit your council and community.

### Ask your neighbours

Find out if neighbouring councils are engaged in preventing violence against women activities. You might uncover interest in establishing a regional preventing violence against women network. Alternatively, there may be an existing network where this issue could be included on the agenda.

## Build the gender equity profile

Ensure your current data collection methodology enables analysis by sex. Who have you consulted with? Who is benefiting from the community grants program or sports and leisure facilities? Who is accessing your libraries? Who is on your emergency management committee? Applying a gender lens will identify and mitigate unintended inequity for both women and men.

## Provide leadership for primary prevention

### PVAW partners

Find opportunities to work with local sporting groups, schools, businesses, police, community and women's health services or other community groups and see what can be achieved when a variety of expertise and diverse networks join together.

### Use the evidence base

Utilise the VicHealth Framework to prevent violence against women before it occurs. This framework can be used to develop a coordinated, whole-of-community approach that contains a comprehensive range of mutually reinforcing strategies to promote non violence, gender equity and respectful relationships throughout the community. This ground-breaking piece of work informs government and communities planning to prevent violence against women and recognises local government as the tier of government closest to the people, as an essential setting for this work to happen.

### Contact your state association

Find out whether your peak body association is engaged at a statewide level and ask if they are aware of activity occurring in other councils. Perhaps scope interest for hosting a forum and providing councils an opportunity to showcase the work happening at a local level.

### Communications and media

Develop a communications strategy that identifies opportunities to raise PVAW issues. Keep the community informed about PVAW projects through the media, bulletins and publications. In developing your communication strategy, review the best practice principles that have been developed by VicHealth and Domestic Violence Victoria specifically for talking about violence against women in the media. For more visit [www.evas.org.au](http://www.evas.org.au)

# Peak body involvement

As Victoria's peak body for local government, there have been clear and tangible benefits of delivering the PVAW project through the MAV, due to the organisation's reach and influence.

Like other state and territory local government associations, MAV has the ability to engage councillors and officers from a wide breadth of metropolitan, rural and regional councils.

State and territory associations are well positioned to lead by example, to embed principles of gender equity and the prevention of violence against women into their member councils, as well as advocate to federal and state government departments and agencies.

Encouraging the use of a gender lens as best practice in the development and review of policies, procedures and service delivery will provide opportunities for all areas of council operations to play a role in preventing violence against women. Some of these areas include maternal and child health, local laws, cultural diversity, human resources, positive aging, sport and recreation, libraries, and events.

In our work to support councils, state and territory associations continue to advocate for the interest of local government

by utilising their networks with government departments and agencies. These networks can provide added value to the existing and inspirational work of councils in preventing violence against women.

The increasing engagement and leadership shown by the MAV and Victorian councils in preventing violence against women demonstrates an understanding of the opportunities and responsibilities we all share to ultimately achieve healthy, safe and connected communities.

State and territory associations can demonstrate leadership in the prevention of violence against women by:

- Seeking out opportunities to brief the association's Board and relevant committees on work happening in this area
- Scoping interest for developing a statement of commitment to provide leadership to the sector on preventing violence against women and promoting gender equity
- Including the prevention of violence against women as an area of council business in speeches and presentations
- Promoting your commitment to gender equity as a principle, and also as a key determinant in preventing violence against women.



[www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity)