

Embedding preventing violence against women into council business



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

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

Getting your house in order

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

Community consultation

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



Strategy and policy

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

Raising awareness and social marketing

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

Youth services

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

Emergency management

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

Library services

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

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

Human resources

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

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

Local laws

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

Recreation and leisure

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



Useful links

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

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

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

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

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

International Women's Day www.internationalwomensday.com

International Day of the Girl www.dayofthegirl.org

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

Darebin City Council Women's Equity Strategy 2012-15

Moreland City Council Prevention of Family Violence Strategy 2011-15

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