Local Government Preventing Violence Against Women Projects

**Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years**

**Darebin City Council**

**Project Process:**

Beyond the $26,000 provided by the Local Government PVAW grants program, Council contributed a project officer – preventing violence against women office for .2 EFT for a total of 48 days and supplemented funds of $1474.15.

Key activities to support the implementation of the project:

* Gender equity project team established with representatives from Darebin City Council, Darebin Community Health and Women’s Health In the North (WHIN). This included expertise from the early years and gender equity / preventing violence against women sectors. The team met on two occasions to support the development of the project. They undertook a 1.5 hours workshop with WHIN to ensure a shared understanding of gender equity in the early years, contributed to the development of resources and tools (gender equity assessment tools included in final resource).
* Women’s Health In the North were contracted to support the delivery of 3 training sessions, provide expertise to the gender equity project team and develop (in consultation with early years) a suite of assessment tools for the final resource.
* Early years and gender equity professionals participated in 5 supporting videos, filmed in interview style to support each section of the final resource.
* Council’s early years team supported the planning and delivery of an intentional playspace, focuses on creating gender equitable play environments. The intention of the play space was to learn about the various ways gender norms play a role in children’s development and what can be done to ensure ideas about gender roles are not limiting for children. The day included a showcase of a range of activities, books and learning materials that support gender equity in the early years.
* Gender equity in the early years training sessions were held with a total of 65 people, over three sessions, delivered by WHIN.

**Project achievements and successes:**

The final resource and associated tools have been developed as part of the project, delivered by Darebin City Council, with support and expertise from Women’s Health In the North. The project builds on work established in 2015, to build the capacity of Darebin City Council’s services and programs, and early years educators in Darebin to influence positive gender norms in the early years. This project was undertaken with guidance from a gender equity project team, consisting of early years and gender equity professionals from Darebin City Council, Darebin Community Health and Women’s Health In the North.

Particular achievements and partnerships to note include:

* Gender Equity Intentional play space / panel with experts – this was delivered in partnership with WHIN and early years experts and was testament to ongoing relationships that Council has with sectors.
* Development of supporting videos with early years and gender equity professionals – we were fortunate to have a number of experts and professionals contribute to these videos. They are a wonderful way to support learning in the sector more broadly, by hearing from experienced professionals.

**Project challenges and issues:**

Challenging gender stereotypes and focusing on different ways of making a positive contribution to peoples understanding of gender is challenging work in itself. There were challenges with working to an extremely tight timeframe of seven months to develop these tools and resources, as there was not opportunity to wait for ideas to grow and develop as much as we’d like when working with early years educators. However, due to the historical and ongoing relationship that Council has with early years educators and early years professionals (including those whom are Council employees), we were able to manage these timeframes.

A potential risk for this work, was to develop these tools and resources with the support and contribution of early years workers, to then not be funded to support the implementation. Council is in a fortunate position to have a full-time preventing violence against women positon, and therefore is able to ensure the implementation of these tools and resources in partnership with the Early Years strategy.

Another challenge that we faced through the development of this project was the time to pilot resources and tools in early years centres and services, to inform the development of eLearning videos. However, this was overcome by shifting the direction of the eLearning videos to training videos that supplemented the resource sections. It was a necessary shift and it contributed to a more substantial final resource.