



Royal Commission
into Family Violence

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SCOTT ANDREW HOLMES

I, Scott Andrew Holmes, Healthy Workplaces Senior Advisor, of 582 Heidelberg Road, Fairfield in the State of Victoria, say as follows:

- 1 I am authorised by YMCA Victoria to make this statement on its behalf.
- 2 I make this statement on the basis of my own knowledge, save where otherwise stated. Where I make statements based on information provided by others, I believe such information to be true.
- 3 I refer to the submission made to the Royal Commission into Family Violence by YMCA Victoria. I refer to and adopt that submission. Attached and marked **SC-1** is a copy of the YMCA Victoria submission.

Current role

- 4 I am currently employed as the Healthy Workplaces Senior Advisor at YMCA Victoria. I have been employed in this role at YMCA Victoria since the commencement of the Y Respect Gender Project in February 2012.
- 5 I was specifically tasked with implementing and facilitating the Y Respect Gender Project across YMCA Victoria throughout the life of the project.

Background and qualifications

- 6 After completing an undergraduate degree at university, I worked as a Librarian for approximately 11 years.
- 7 In 1991 I commenced study at Trinity College in Melbourne to become a priest in the Anglican church. I was ordained in 1995. I worked in Anglican parishes around Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula for approximately 20 years.
- 8 In approximately March 2011 I moved out of ministry and commenced a role at the Darebin City Council as Project Co-ordinator for the Northern Interfaith Respectful Relationships Project, a project that was funded by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (**VicHealth**). The project had already been running for two years; I came into the role in its third and final year.

- 9 After the Northern Interfaith Respectful Relationships Project concluded, I commenced in my current role of Healthy Workplaces Senior Advisor running the Y Respect Gender Project at YMCA Victoria.
- 10 In approximately 2014 I also began facilitating some training courses generally in the area of promoting respectful relationships. I facilitate Carrington Health's 'Baby Makes 3' program as well as VicHealth's short course in Preventing Violence Against Women.
- 11 I have had a long standing interest in gender issues. My work in parish ministry very much exposed me to the way gender norms and gender stereotypes impact on people's lives, and particularly the way they do so in a negative sense for both women and men. Accordingly, my work over the last few years, particularly my work at YMCA Victoria, has been a very happy coming together of a range of long standing interests.
- 12 Since becoming involved in this space, I have completed the VicHealth short course in Preventing Violence Against Women. I have also done a course called 'Mentors in Violence Prevention Training'.
- 13 As at the date of this statement, my current position with YMCA Victoria is due to cease at the end of June. I will then commence work with YMCA Australia on 10 August 2015, to coordinate a similar project at a national level. YMCA Australia has initial funding for this role for three days per week for six months.
- 14 I have the following qualifications:
- a. Bachelor of Social Science majoring in Librarianship;
 - b. Bachelor of Divinity (Post-Graduate); and
 - c. Diploma of Ministry.

Cultural change as primary prevention

- 15 I am passionate about the primary prevention of violence against women. By that, I mean working within communities with a view to preventing violence before it occurs. Research into the social determinants of this violence indicate that gender inequality and inequity, and rigid gender role expectations play the largest roles in creating the conditions for violence against women to continue.

- 16 Preventing violence against women therefore involves working to change the social attitudes, practices, and systems connected to the reinforcement of inequitable and rigid approaches to the function of gender in our society.
- 17 In that context, I have experience in facilitating cultural change programs within workplaces and faith communities as a primary prevention method. In carrying out my work I have had particular reference to the research papers published by VicHealth, including 'The health costs of violence' (2004), 'Preventing violence before it occurs' (2007), and 'Preventing violence against women in the workplace' (2012). I have also had reference to a paper written by Antonia Quadara and Liz Wall, titled 'What is effective primary prevention in sexual assault?' (2012) and the paper written by Liz Wall titled 'Gender equality and violence against women' (2014).

WORKPLACE CHANGE - Y RESPECT GENDER PROJECT

YMCA Victoria

- 18 YMCA Victoria has been operating since 1853 and is part of the worldwide YMCA Movement founded in the UK in 1844. With its partner associations across Australia, YMCA Victoria's mission is to empower young people, promote health and well-being, and have a positive social impact.
- 19 YMCA Victoria carries out its mission in a variety of sectors, including recreation centres, camping, student accommodation, youth work, swimming lessons, health promotion and child-care. Across 160 sites it employs around 6000 people and engages with over 1500 volunteers. Most of these staff and volunteers are young people, and approximately 70% are female. YMCA Victoria regularly partners with other like-minded stakeholders, such as VicHealth, to achieve its goals.

Background of the Y Respect Gender Project

- 20 In 2012 VicHealth launched its Creating Healthy Workplaces program in order to build evidence of good workplace health promotion practice. Five organisations were chosen to implement five different health promotion interventions, one at each organisation. The five areas included:
- a. preventing workplace stress;
 - b. reducing prolonged sitting;
 - c. preventing race-based discrimination and supporting cultural diversity;

- d. reducing alcohol-related harm; and
 - e. preventing violence against women.
- 21 YMCA Victoria entered into a partnership with VicHealth and The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (**ARCSHS**) at La Trobe University to implement the health promotion project in the area of preventing violence against women, called the Y Respect Gender Project (**Y Respect Gender**).
- 22 Y Respect Gender's aim, over three years, was to explore what could be done within a workplace to
- a. build a more gender-equitable and respectful workplace culture and
 - b. equip women and men to relate more equitably and respectfully.
- 23 Building gender equality and respectful relationships has been identified as a significant way society can address the causes of men's violence against women, and workplaces provide an ideal environment for actions that do this.
- 24 Y Respect Gender involved the development and trial of strategies that promote equal relationships between men and women, increase women's representation and leadership in the workplace and create a positive, respectful and equitable culture and working conditions.
- 25 Y Respect Gender sought to generate positive change amongst YMCA Victoria staff, and through staff to clients and the broader community. In partnership with VicHealth and ARCSHS, Y Respect Gender also contributed to the growing evidence base of what works to prevent men's violence against women.

Evaluation of Y Respect Gender

- 26 In order to contribute to the evidence base, systematic evaluation was carried out as part of the Y Respect Gender project. The method used was called constructivist evaluation. This is a method which works to redress power imbalances and expand learning for everyone involved.
- 27 It does not limit the kind of research tools available to the evaluator but does provide opportunities for continuous improvement through feedback. This kind of evaluation contributes to planning by providing feedback on progress and is also a way of checking accountability, continually improving the program as it develops, increasing organisational and personal capacity to deliver the program and

promoting a better understanding of the issues that emerge. The method still allows different phases of the program (processes, outcomes and impact) to be evaluated, and employs the range of research techniques available to the evaluator.

- 28 Whole of staff surveys were conducted at the beginning of the project and during the third year to understand changes over time. During the course of the program, interviews were conducted with a range of staff and board members from pilot sites and head office, observations were carried out at various sites and a range of meetings were regularly attended as the project developed.
- 29 An evaluation report was co-written by YMCA Victoria and ARCSHS titled Promoting Equality, Preventing Violence: Report of the Y Respect Gender Project at YMCA Victoria 2012 – 2015. A copy of this report forms Attachment 1 to the submission made by YMCA Victoria, which can be found at Attachment 'SC-1' to this statement.

Implementation of the Project

- 30 In carrying out the Y Respect Gender project, there were three major areas of focus:
- a. promoting respectful relationships between staff members and in doing so, improving the way in which staff members related to each other;
 - b. increasing women's representation in leadership; and
 - c. reviewing working conditions within YMCA Victoria and improving its workplace policies and practices.
- 31 As part of the project, four YMCA centres were engaged as Y Respect Gender pilot sites. Those sites used an action-learning approach to developing local actions to build their culture.

Promoting respectful relationships between staff members and improving the way staff members related to each other

- 32 In working to promote respectful relationships between staff members, a significant amount of awareness-raising work was carried out. The sort of action that was taken in this respect included the following.

- a. Regular articles on gender equality and respectful relationships in the weekly Staff and Volunteer e-newsletter, weekly Management e-newsletter, and quarterly People and Culture e-newsletter.
- b. Presentations on gender equality and respectful relationships made at managers forums, regional leadership meetings, and other leadership gatherings.
- c. Training on understanding gender, gender stereotyping, and gender equality provided for staff groups at pilot sites and other YMCA centres.
- d. Centres encouraged to hold activities on White Ribbon Day and International Women's Day, plus centralised events also held on these days.
- e. Training on what it means to be pro-active bystander when you witness sexist or discriminatory behaviour.
- f. Development of video to be displayed on TV screens at YMCA centres and uploaded to centre Facebook pages.
- g. Development of marketing material that encouraged equal and respectful relationships.
- h. Implementation of a 'roadshow' to reinforce key messages of the Y Respect Gender Project at YMCA centres.

Increasing women's representation in leadership

- 33 In respect of working towards increasing women's representation in leadership, the sort of action that was taken included the following.
- a. Newsletter articles published and presentations given to raise awareness about the relevant issues.
 - b. Information on unconscious bias incorporated into leadership training facilitated by the Learning and Development team.
 - c. Discussion paper on women's leadership prepared and circulated amongst senior staff.
 - d. VicHealth 'Leadership for Preventing Violence Against Women' forum arranged for senior YMCA Victoria staff, of whom 20 attended.

- e. I personally engaged with senior male staff on a regular basis, including the CEO and Executive Officers, to effect capacity building for their sponsorship of women's leadership.
- f. I took responsibility for the completion of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency annual reporting.
- g. Small number of senior female staff supported to attend relevant leadership courses.
- h. Senior staff invited to attend White Ribbon Day and International Women's Days events as capacity building exercise.
- i. Internal forum held on parental leave and return to work, including guest speakers from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.
- j. Senior women actively engaged with the project team. I worked with some of the female staff to discuss where the blockages were within the organisation, and how we could change or combat those blockages. I tried to link women with external stakeholders to provide external support and guidance.

34 Increasing women's representation in leadership was the most difficult part of the project. It was difficult partly because is so complex; there is no one single reason why women don't progress through to leadership positions. It was also difficult because, within YMCA Victoria particularly, the structure is very flat and there are hundreds of middle managers. There are far fewer opportunities at the most senior levels.

35 There are also a range of difficult and nuanced issues that come up when discussing women's leadership that can make these conversations feel very personal. More women in the senior positions necessarily means less men in those positions, which can feel threatening to men. Further, when the question of merit is discussed, it can feel as though it is being suggested that the men who are in senior positions don't necessarily deserve to be there. In the one on one conversations I held with senior men in the organisation, some of the men at times felt under threat, awkward and confused. The conversations on this topic involved delicate issues.

- 36 The complexities also existed because of the structural and organisational questions that arise, including, for example, whether as an organisation YMCA Victoria was recruiting enough women, whether it had sufficiently flexible work arrangements in place and whether there were any barriers to promotions that existed.

Reviewing working conditions within YMCA Victoria and improving its workplace policies and practices

- 37 In reviewing the working conditions within YMCA Victoria, I worked with the organisation's policy writers to encourage them to apply a 'gender lens' when writing policies. This often involved one on one conversations. Some of the action taken included the following.
- a. Information on YCMA Victoria's expectations for staff relationships included in the central induction process and content on building equitable and respectful culture delivered (by the project coordinator) as part of the central induction program.
 - b. Gender audit of policies conducted and draft report written.
 - c. Minor amendments made to some policies and procedures to strengthen their support of gender equality principles.
 - d. Content on building equitable and respectful culture included in manager training on bullying and harassment.
 - e. Development of Guidebook for Centre Managers on building respect and equality within YMCA centres.
 - f. Gender equality expectations included as part of organisational risk register.

Challenges faced during the life of the Project

Sustainability

- 38 In my view, the sustainability of projects like the Y Respect Gender Project is often problematic. YMCA Victoria made some significant advances during the life of the project. However, I am concerned about the sustainability of these changes when my role as Healthy Workplaces Senior Advisor and effectively as the Project

Officer implementing and facilitating the Y Respect Gender Project comes to an end.

39 YMCA Victoria has changed some of its policies in small ways and some documentary resources have been developed for managers which will continue to have an impact into the future. However, I think that a strong focus on policy work is necessary to ensure sustainability of changes beyond the life of the particular project which has created the change.

40 Difficulties are thrown up with working primarily in the policy space because systematic change is only possible where it is supported by attitudinal change. The people who create and implement the systems need to understand why the change needs to be made or they will not support the change in the first instance. Attitudinal change must occur simultaneously with systemic change to ensure the efficacy of those systemic changes.

Resistance to change

41 Throughout the life of the project I encountered some resistance to the Y Respect Gender project itself, the changes proposed, and to the ideas behind the project.

42 At the lower levels within the organisation there was a level of lack of interest. It was often not clear to employees why we needed to discuss gender equity issues or family violence issues.

43 I also encountered resistance from the more senior levels of the organisation. To my view, this resistance was largely based on defensiveness. As I stated above, discussions around gender issues, particularly around women's representation in senior positions, can be personal and threatening. Gender as a concept is a particularly hot topic at the moment and can be a very political issue within an organisation.

Insufficient focus on middle management

44 We considered that a top down/bottom up approach would be most effective in creating change. As a result, our focus was predominantly on senior management and the employees at the lower levels of the organisational structure. We didn't focus to the same extent on the middle managers. As I have said, YMCA is a fairly flat structure and has hundreds of middle managers. As the project progressed, we learned that the engagement of middle managers was in fact extremely important. In many ways, the middle level of management are gatekeepers

between the changes being effected at the top of the hierarchy and the action on the ground. In order to ensure the changes are effectively implemented, middle managers need to be driving them to a large extent.

- 45 We did shift our focus towards the end of the project to the middle managers. We introduced, as I have stated, a Guidebook for Centre Managers on building respect and equality within YMCA centres. However, I am unsure of the extent to which this has been utilised.

Prioritising operations over cultural change

- 46 I found that carrying out work to implement cultural change within an organisation is often not perceived as core business of the organisation. It is difficult to see a direct link between a healthy, happy workforce and an organisation's goals. It is difficult to measure how a healthy workforce affects the bottom line. There is no immediate or tangible benefit.

- 47 Further, I was doing something specific within the cultural change space which was seen as quite esoteric. One of the aims of the Y Respect Gender Project was to impart messages about gender equality so that our own employees behaved differently out in the world and ultimately had an impact within their respective spheres of influence. Other than at the senior levels, the idea that an organisation has a responsibility beyond its own business was a difficult message to impart.

- 48 As a result, I found that operational needs of the business often trumped the cultural change work I was carrying out. By way of example, I found it difficult to secure time with various centres to speak at their monthly meetings. It was not uncommon that the time that had been set aside for me to speak to staff about a certain initiative or the Y Respect Gender Project generally would be rescheduled in order to make way for a more immediate topic that needed to be discussed. In the competition between cultural change and the day to day demands of running a centre, the immediate demands of the centre would prevail. A further factor is that in the not-for-profit sector there is often little resourcing available and the same staff are attempting to deal with both operational and cultural issues in a time-poor and high customer demand space.

Size and scope of organisation

- 49 YMCA is a very large organisation, with 160 sites and 6,000 employees. The employees consist of a number of part time and casual staff. It is a huge challenge to reach out to the whole organisation. In that respect, it might be difficult to

transfer the models and learnings developed in this organisation to other organisations which are more limited in terms of personnel and geographical reach.

Underestimating the level of understanding of gender inequality

- 50 I experienced many instances of both men and women who had very limited understanding of gender issues. Further, they did not have the language to discuss these sorts of issues and to articulate their thoughts. It was regularly necessary to first teach people the language before discussing any of the wider issues.
- 51 Sometimes I felt slightly uncomfortable as a male discussing these sorts of issues and concepts with females. My view is that women so often swim in the sea of gender inequality that they don't see it as an issue anymore. Rolling out some of the parts of the program required consciousness-raising, for both sexes.

Learnings from the Project

Realistic expectations

- 52 Realistic expectations are necessary for what can be done both in terms of scale across which change is effected and how fast the change can be effected.
- 53 It is difficult to measure the effects of programs of this type. While concrete improvements are always desirable and encouraging, it is often the case that changes resulting from this sort of program are incremental and intangible.
- 54 For example, in relation to women's representation in leadership, it was never going to be possible to increase women's representation in the very senior levels to 50% of those positions (something VicHealth had originally wanted us to achieve) within three years. However, it might be the case that attitudinal and policy changes have been made within the organisation which will lead to greater representation of women in senior positions in future.
- 55 I note that on this particular issue of female representation, there were in fact three appointments of women made during the life of the Project to management positions that women had not previously held.

Engagement styles

- 56 A variety of styles of engagement were needed in carrying out this work. I had to engage in many different ways to bring people to a point where they were ready to have a conversation and be able to think about the issues. In some cases, this included giving employees the language to begin thinking about a topic which they had never thought about before.
- 57 I found that utilising a pedagogical approach was most effective in engaging with employees. Essentially, this means working interactively with participants, rather than adopting a lecturing style of imparting information. I spoke *at* people as little as possible. Employees were required to think and to contribute and as a result, remained more engaged. This model also means that employees were required to think about their own social norms as a group. For example, what is going on in this group and how does that illustrate what we were talking about? Are men doing all the talking? Where are people sitting?
- 58 Some examples of the sorts of exercises I used that worked well are as follows.
- a. Using flashcards wherein employees had to match definitions to terms.
 - b. Showing employees a Huggies nappies advertisement that had been aired on television to discuss the difference between gender in terms of social constructs and gender in terms of biology and how that line is blurred in popular culture and media.
 - c. Role-playing various scenarios in the context of the bystander intervention model.
- 59 I also found that one on one conversations were very effective, such as time spent over a coffee with a number of individuals, particularly those at the senior levels. I often had more than one such conversation with an individual. I knew if I could relate to the person on an individual, human basis, changes could nearly always be made to the way they saw gender issues. My approach was informal and conversational; we would discuss their lives and families. It often made a difference to bring it back to their own experiences. Sometimes it was enough to ask a man what sort of workplace he would want his daughter to be part of, and the sort of opportunities he would want available to her as she progressed through her career. It is difficult to establish this personal connection in a group setting.

External support

60 I found that supporting the work I was doing with external programs and initiatives made a difference. For example, as I have stated, I organised for a number of employees to attend a VicHealth 'Leadership for Preventing Violence Against Women' forum. Exposure to another agency who considered this to be an important issue, and becoming aware of the wider context of the issues I was discussing with them, was important in validating the work we were doing within the organisation.

Effectiveness of this work within workplaces

61 In my view, workplaces provide a valuable space within which work of this type can be carried out. First, there are a whole range of issues that exist within workplaces regarding gender, gender stereotyping and gender inequality. Secondly, most people spent a significant portion of their life at work and interacting with people at their workplace.

62 Workplaces are places within which change can be effected. Ultimately, I believe that those changes will transcend the workplace and become apparent within the community more broadly.

FAITH COMMUNITIES**Faith communities as a setting for primary prevention**

63 As far as I can tell, relatively little primary prevention work has been carried out in faith communities to date. However, from my perspective, they are a really important setting for work of this type. This is for several reasons.

64 The first is that faith communities often offer a place where people go to find solace, meaning, comfort and support. They may not be places that women go to disclose that they are experiencing family violence (although it would be wonderful if they were) but they are places where women go to seek practical help.

65 The second is that for those who subscribe to that faith, the religious organisation has authority and the power to influence their behaviour.

66 Finally, generally speaking, it is an important setting because it is actually a fairly problematic setting. There are many issues of gender inequality within faith communities. Often they are patriarchal and perpetuate outdated ideas of gender roles. There are many violence supporting beliefs within faith traditions and

gender inequitable supporting beliefs that need to be challenged in a way that is perceived as respectful to faith tradition. For the most part, from what I have witnessed, the leaders of these faith communities are blind to the issues.

- 67 I think there is a huge amount of influence within faith communities. Within many faith communities, an unfortunate intersection exists between being a place where people are being cared for and being a place where gender stereotypes and inequalities are being reinforced.

Northern Interfaith Respectful Relationships Project

- 68 As I stated above, I spent 12 months working for Darebin City Council running the Northern Interfaith Respectful Relationships Project (**NIRR project**).
- 69 Just before I was brought on board, the NIRR project had nearly been abandoned. It was an extremely challenging project. It had initially been conceived of as one of a number of projects designed to increase the evidence base for the primary prevention of violence against women. Funded and supported by VicHealth, these projects operated in different settings, and were done in partnership with other appropriate stakeholders. The setting for the NIRR project was the faith sector.
- 70 The project was done in partnership with the Darebin City Council and operated across the other four northern areas of Banyule, Hume, Moreland and Whittlesea.
- 71 The background of the NIRR project was the work of Darebin City Council and Darebin Interfaith Council in building awareness of the need to prevent violence against women, resulting in the establishment of a one year project named Darebin Interfaith Council Taking Responsibility: reducing violence against women. This project was then scaled up to become NIRR. Involvement with VicHealth ensured that both projects worked with a primary prevention focus, based on the social determinants model of health promotion, and an ecological model of violence. These contexts stress the importance of mutually reinforcing strategies to prevent violence by addressing the determinants of that violence in different settings and at different levels of society.
- 72 Initial strategies used by both the Taking Responsibility and the NIRR project included forums and workshops for faith leaders to raise awareness of domestic violence, development of an interfaith declaration against violence, production of a resource kit, and promotion of White Ribbon Day activities amongst the faith communities.

- 73 Significant obstacles led to the review of these strategies and the development of a new action plan for the project, covering the last year of its funding, March 2011 to February 2012. This is when I came on board. We reconsidered the expectations of the project and ultimately scaled it right back to work only with Christian communities, although I did meet with interfaith groups during the 12 months in which I worked on the project.
- 74 It was difficult because it was an interfaith project. In this context, we had to deal with a widely varying range of belief systems, cultural norms and ethical standards. Questions of formal and informal leadership within faith communities, of the relation between faith and culture, of the religious use and understanding of language around gender, and of the complex diversity of the faith setting posed challenges to a clear sense of project direction and purpose. There were some faith communities, for example, that didn't even believe there was such a thing as a distinction between gender and sex. There were also issues around some communities feeling as though the Western or majority groups were criticising their faith and ethical constructs; there seemed to be a feeling that the majority groups were telling them how to behave.
- 75 Strategies in this final year of the project included the development and trial of a peer mentoring program, development of an expanded version of the resource kit, capacity building for primary prevention with the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, continued promotion of White Ribbon Day and other respectful relationships activities, and capacity building for primary prevention within the partnering organisation.

Peer mentoring program

- 76 I developed a Peer Mentoring Program which was devised for faith leaders to get together in pairs. It was directive in both the content for discussion by the mentor and mentee, and the process of that discussion. The content was based firmly on the primary prevention and social determinants focus of the project, and was broken down into six topics: why promote respectful relationships; gender roles and definitions; gender equality, equity and power; gender and violence; promoting respectful relationships; and where to from here.
- 77 The process for discussion was based on a version of the ecological model which recognised that our beliefs and attitudes are formed by experiences and learnings from our personal life, from our participation in the faith community, and from our involvement in the society in which we live. For each topic a series of discussion

questions were developed which directed conversation to each of these areas, and the program participants were encouraged to discuss at least one question from each area.

- 78 In order to consolidate the focus and direction of the conversations, a set of resources were provided for each topic. These consisted of such things as journal and newspaper articles, facts sheets, and personal stories. Finally, in order to encourage a practical response by the participants, each set of resources also included an example of a primary prevention activity that could be replicated in the participants' ministry setting.
- 79 Attached and marked **SC-2** is a copy of the Peer Mentoring Program booklet.

Manual and tool kit

- 80 The manual and tool kit was designed to assist faith communities in taking a primary prevention approach to the issue of violence against women. It was designed specifically as a resource for those in leadership who want to encourage their faith community to become proactive in preventing violence against women.
- 81 The manual is divided into three parts; an introductory section, a program section and a tools section. The introductory section gives a more detailed overview of the purpose and structure of the manual. The program section consists of ten steps, each with suggested actions and connected tools. Finally there are the tools themselves, which are arranged into fact sheets, resource lists, survey and audit tools, and 'Taking action' tools.
- 82 Attached and marked **SC-3** is a copy of the manual and tool kit, titled *Promoting Equal and Respectful Relationships in Faith Communities: a Manual and Tool Kit (working together to prevent violence against women before it occurs)*.

Primary prevention in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

- 83 Given my background as an Anglican minister, I suggested looking at developing a model within the Anglican community to be used in work within faith communities in preventing violence against women. As a result, the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Violence Prevention Pilot Project was developed.

- 84 The aim of this pilot program was to:
- a. use the VicHealth preventing violence against women framework to identify areas for action within the Anglican Diocese through a process of investigation;
 - b. increase awareness within the Anglican Diocese of the existence and impact of violence against women through a process of education;
 - c. encourage within the Anglican Diocese a commitment to primary prevention through active participation in national, local and Diocesan primary prevention programs; and
 - d. develop an ecumenical/interfaith taskforce to guide ongoing work in the future.
- 85 Attached and marked **SC-4** is a copy of the report on the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Violence Prevention Pilot Project titled *Preventing violence against women: what works and what doesn't in Anglican communities*.

Evaluation of NIRR project

- 86 The NIRR project explored the ways in which faith organisations can be encouraged to take their part in the work of primary prevention to change the patterns of behaviour and attitudes – the determinants – implicated in violence against women. Despite facing some challenging obstacles, this report of the findings of the NIRR project make it clear that faith communities are concerned with preventing violence against women. A range of strategies to equip faith communities to do the work of primary prevention have been trialled, with a number being shown to have significant impacts.
- 87 The Peer Mentoring Program was successful in building the capacity of leadership in understanding and practicing primary prevention and is indicated as an important tool for future work. Development of the strategic policy within the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne highlights the possibilities that exist for individual faith traditions to become engaged with prevention of violence against women. And the manual and tool kit is a significant new resource that will enhance the potential for faith communities to make a start in their commitment to a process of change.
- 88 We also learned that these programs cannot be applied in an interfaith context. From my experience, because so many faith traditions have gender inequality

reinforcing norms, or violence reinforcing norms, or religion is used to support those norms, it is very problematic to have a one size fits all approach and deal with these issues in a multi-faith context. The work involves such sensitivity to the tenets of each faith. Each group needs to be supported and appropriately resourced to do the work themselves and to recognise the need to reflect within own community to consider, for example, how their religious texts are being used and how this can be changed, without challenging their faith. There is also a natural defensiveness to carry out this sort of work in the presence of people you know think differently to you on certain points.

- 89 Attached and marked **SC-5** is a copy of the project report titled *Northern Interfaith Respectful Relationships: Project Report*.

Religious setting for training

- 90 I trained for ordination in Melbourne at Trinity College from 1991 to 1994. I received no specific training in family violence. I understand this is still the case today.
- 91 In my view, it is imperative that there should be training in this space; not just in relation to family violence but in relation to gender and gender stereotypes. Leaders in every religious communities are in a position to identify problems and model behaviour, including at the very detailed level that exists in the faith settings, like the hymns we choose to sing and the pictures we display. It is important to be trained to recognise the multitude of tiny little things we do that reinforce gender as a dividing category, which leads to gender inequality and family violence.
- 92 In addition, in work such as marriage counselling which is carried out in many faiths, religious leaders are in a unique position to identify and respond to issues of family violence.

Religious faith

- 93 Humans have used many different methods to try and make sense of the joys and sorrows of what it means to be alive. Religious faith is one of the oldest of these methods and shows no sign of departing. It is therefore vital that any work to improve the well-being of humanity incorporates the religious organisations and ideas that continue to be a part of our society. Both the challenges and the successes of the NIRRR project highlight how important it is include the faith setting in the task of preventing violence against women.



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Scott Andrew Holmes

Dated: 26 June 2015