

MARIBYRNONG CITY COUNCIL

Royal Commission into Family Violence

26 May 2015



We declare our commitment to a community where opportunities for success are equally available to women and men; where our mothers, daughters and sisters live free from the cycle of violence; where their thoughts, ideas and opinions are heard and respected and their choices and goals in life celebrated and supported.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Royal Commission goals are enhanced to include:
 - Foster a *gender equitable* violence free society
 - Build respectful *interpersonal* relationships *between men and women*
 - Increase awareness of the *cause, types of*, extent and effects of family violence.
2. All levels of government undertake a gender audit of existing and new laws, budgets, policies and regulations over which it has jurisdiction/control and implement changes that will lead to gender equality. [Page 10](#)
3. The State government develop a communication strategy to promote gender equality laws and policies to ensure they are understood and adhered to by governments, business, academic institutions and the non-government sector. [Page 10](#)
4. Funding be provided by State government for primary prevention programs that have a strong and clear focus on redressing the determinants of violence against women and working towards long term outcomes. [Page 12](#)
5. The State government develop long term policy and an action plan to prevent men's violence against women and their children. The plan must be intersectoral, intersectional, evidence based, outcomes focused and accompanied by an action research evaluation framework. [Page 12](#)
6. Regular updates be published on the progress of state and local government prevention of violence against women plans, as well as evaluation reports from programs funded under these plans to ensure knowledge exchange that informs practice. [Page 12](#)
7. Dedicated ongoing funding be provided by State government to:
 - a. Resource state and regional partnerships and specialist organisations, including prevention and response agencies, to develop and implement programs designed to prevent violence against women.
 - b. The primary prevention sector, especially all local governments, to ensure activities can be developed across the community to continue, and expand the work of preventing violence against women. [Page 12](#)
8. The findings and recommendations made by the Australian Institute of Criminology in the Preventing Violence Against Women in our Community program evaluation be considered by the Commission. [Page 18](#)
9. Investment by all employers, is made in workforce development strategies, such as those outlined in the Australian Human Rights Commission 2010 Gender Equality Blueprint's 15 recommendations. [Page 18](#)

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is prevalent, serious and preventable.

Violence against women has profound impacts for the health and wellbeing of women and their children. Research by VicHealth reveals that violence against women (in particular, family violence) is the leading cause of premature death, disability and illness for women aged 15-44 years in Victoria (VicHealth, 2004).

In 2014, there were 68,988 reported incidents of family violence in Victoria. Women represent 75.4% of the people affected by family violence (Crime Statistics Agency, 2015).

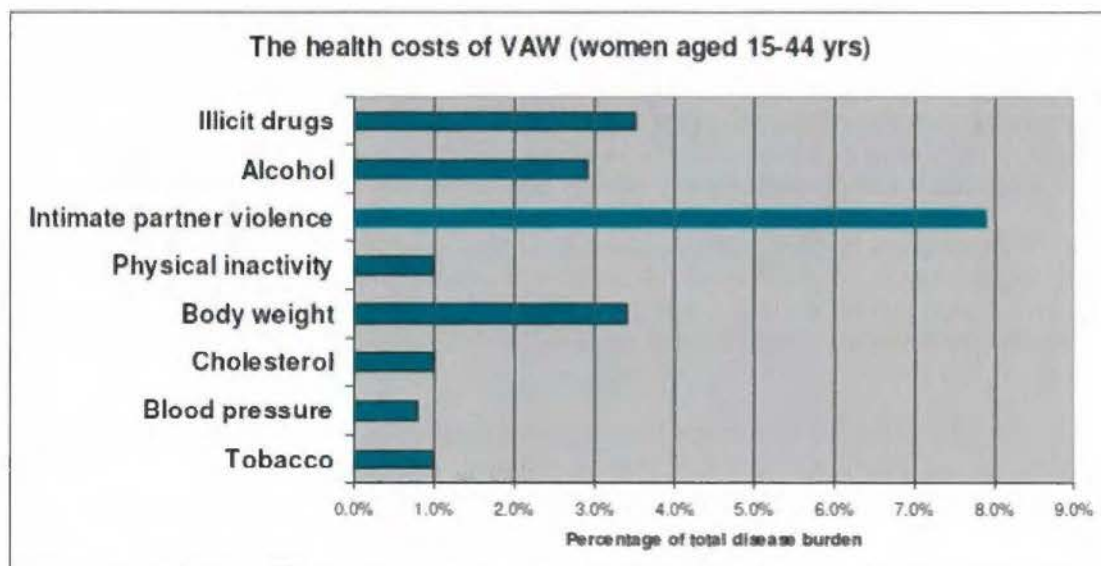


Figure 1 VicHealth (2004) Burden of disease for Victorian women attributed to intimate partner violence

Maribyrnong is located within the western metropolitan region of Melbourne. All seven local government areas in the west are within the top 17 most disadvantaged municipalities in metropolitan Melbourne.

The western region of Melbourne is a culturally diverse and vibrant community. The 2011 Census data indicates that 37 per cent of female residents in the western region of Melbourne were born overseas. This is notably higher than for Victoria (26.4 per cent of females).

Women of migrant and refugee background can face a variety of challenges. These may include difficulties negotiating the Australian health care system, language barriers, access to culturally appropriate services, food security, accessing education and employment opportunities and experiences of discrimination, racism and sexism. These experiences are all compounded when women also experience family violence.

In the City of Maribyrnong, the level of reported family violence has increased from 328 reported incidents in 2010 to 848 in 2014. This represents a 159% increase in reported family violence in the City (Crime Statistics Agency, 2015). These increases are likely to have been shaped by



improvements to reporting systems, confidence in reporting incidents to the police and work undertaken to increase community awareness and help-seeking for experiences of family violence. These increases also demonstrate that family violence remains a serious, pervasive and growing concern in the western region.

Since 2006, Maribyrnong City Council has taken a leadership role in contributing to evidence based practice to prevent violence against women and their children before it occurs through a range of strategies including promoting gender respect and equity. We have worked in partnership with and been guided by many others including UN Women, the World Health Organisation, Commonwealth and Victorian Governments, VicHealth, the Municipal Association of Victoria, Domestic Violence Victoria, the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, and Preventing Violence Together: the Western Region Committee to Prevent Violence Against Women.

Primary prevention efforts are most likely to be effective when a coordinated range of mutually reinforcing strategies are targeted across levels of influence (VicHealth, 2007). Local government is well placed to integrate gender based violence primary prevention. Given its planning, service provision and partnerships cutting across the social, economic, environmental and cultural domains of civic life we use a whole of council approach, in partnership with our local community.

Primary prevention initiatives within communities result in a spike in reported family violence. A corresponding demand for services also increases as women become more aware of their rights and of the support available (WHW, 2012). Current data on increasing service demand clearly demonstrates that governments must be prepared for the increase in demand for services that will initially accompany successfully implemented primary prevention and early intervention initiatives.

Victoria is internationally recognised for developing innovative policy and practice (A Right to Respect, 2010). This is demonstrated through mutually reinforcing strategies and partnerships between state and local government, local communities, VicHealth and the women's specialist family violence and community health sector.

This work and reputation has been achieved through an integrated family violence response system and primary prevention efforts which address the underlying causes of violence against women, internationally accepted as;

- Unequal power relations between women and men
- Adherence to rigid gender stereotypes
- Broader cultures of violence (VicHealth, 2007)

Primary prevention efforts to reduce inequalities and strengthen respect between men and women, and to support more fluid gender roles and identities, are essential to reduce violence against women. The consistent relationship found between various measures of gender equality and both the prevalence of violence and attitudes toward both equality and violence, (Australians' attitudes to violence against women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey) supports coordinated, long term, evidence based resourcing across the spectrum from primary prevention through to tertiary response.

The benefits of investing now cannot be underestimated. Violence has a profound and devastating impact on women, girls and boys, young people, families, entire communities and society as a whole. The social, economic, spiritual, physical and psychological impact can become entrenched across generations.



TERMINOLOGY

In line with current evidence and best practice approaches to preventing and responding to violence against women, our submission is informed by the following definitions:

Primary prevention: Initiatives that aim to prevent violence before it occurs by redressing the underlying causes such as gender inequity (VicHealth, 2007).

Early intervention (sometimes referred to as secondary prevention): Action targeting individuals or population sub-groups who are showing early signs of violent behaviour (VicHealth, 2007).

Tertiary response: Initiatives that aim to reduce the effects of violence once it has occurred and prevent its reoccurrence (VicHealth, 2007).

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

Family violence: Physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological, and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities (Department of Planning and Community Development, 2008).



FAMILY VIOLENCE TODAY

What is family violence, what we know today and what has been done so far

Are there other goals the Royal Commission should consider?

According to the goals of the Commission as mentioned in the Issues Paper, our recommendations are:

Foster a violence-free society

The Royal Commission goals need to extend to include recognition that we cannot foster a violence-free society without simultaneously fostering gender equity. The gendered nature and cause of violence must be explicitly recognised *in* the goal, in order to *achieve* the goal of eradicating violence.

An ecological approach to understanding violence recognises that predominant cultural values and beliefs in society shape our communities and individuals. The formal and informal social structures in organisations and communities impact upon a person and the developmental experiences and personality factors shape a person's responses to stressors in their environment. Similarly the intimate interactions a person has with others. Given that Australia's prevailing ideology is patriarchal, and that violence is predominantly perpetrated by men against women, our response must be informed by a critique and response to this.

Build respectful family relationships

The Royal Commission goals need to extend to recognise and respond to a range of interpersonal relationships other than just familial.

Unequal power relations between men and women is a key determinant of violence against women. These relations exist in the workplace, sports clubs, friendship circles, places of worship and so on. We need to create equity between men and women in all the settings and ways they relate with one another in order to redress this power imbalance and achieve respectful family relationships..

Increase awareness of the extent and effects of family violence

The cause of violence against women is a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon. The Royal Commission goals need to extend to increase awareness in the community of both the *causes* and *types* of violence against women, along with the extent and the effects.

Violence against women exists along a spectrum from sexist jokes, gender based discrimination, street harassment, sexual harassment and assault, family violence, rape and murder. Outlined in the Family Violence Protection Act 2008, it takes many forms including, physical, sexual, financial, spiritual, emotional and psychological. The relationship between high rates of violence against women and high levels of gender inequity between women and men is well established (VicHealth, 2007).



Violence against women in the public sphere directly influences and reinforces attitudes about the vulnerability and objectivity of women within society as a whole. These attitudes are taken into the home and enacted in personal relationships in the private context.

Simultaneously, violence against women in the private sphere (the home) creates a set of norms for male-female relations in public. Thus, women are more wary and afraid in public space due to their and other women's experiences of violence at home. Violence against women in public is also perceived by men and women and the community, as normal and deserved when it is a continuation of violence in the home.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Royal Submission Goals are enhanced to include:
 - Foster a **gender equitable** violence free society
 - Build respectful **interpersonal** relationships **between men and women**
 - Increase awareness of the **causes, various types of**, extent and effects of family violence.

IMPROVING OUR RESPONSE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

Reducing/preventing family violence

What circumstances, conditions, situations or events, within relationships, families, institutions and whole communities, are associated with the occurrence or persistence of family violence?

What circumstances and conditions are associated with the reduced occurrence of family violence?

A primary prevention approach seeks to prevent men's violence against women and children before it occurs by redressing the causes of violence. Violence against women occurs and is perpetuated across all levels of society:

- Institutional and systemic level
- Organisational and community level
- Individual, family and peer group level (VicHealth, 2007).

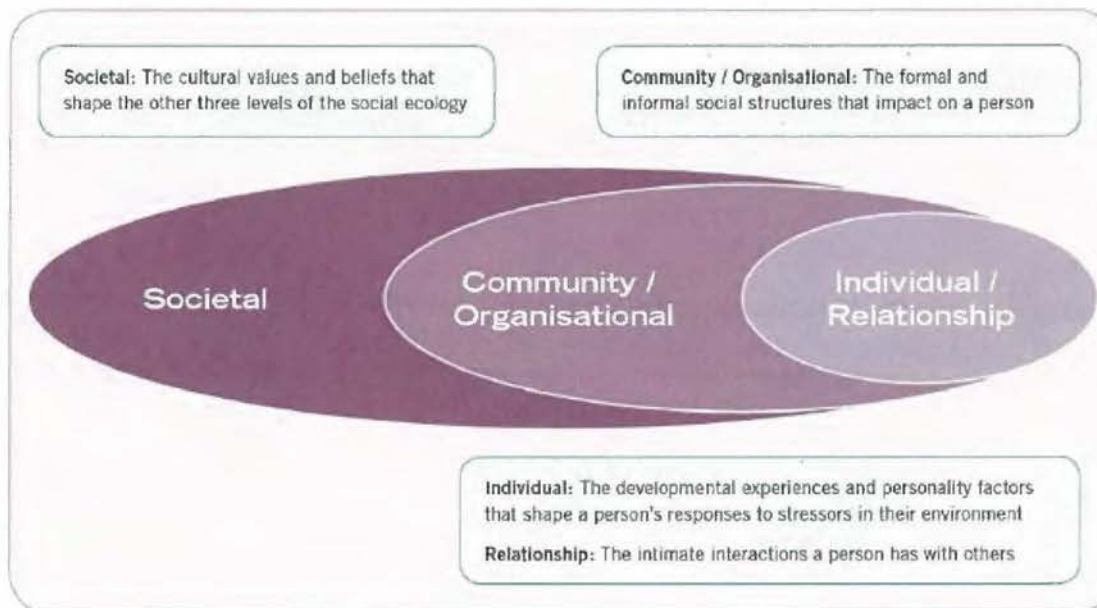


Figure 2 VicHealth (2007) An Ecological Approach to Understanding Violence

Evidence shows that in countries where a higher level of gender equity has been achieved, the level of violence against women is lower. For example, the Global Gender Gap Report identifies Iceland as the most gender equitable country in the world and its rate of violence against women is 19 percent over a lifetime. In comparison, Australia's estimated rate of violence against women is 33 per cent and ranks 25 of 135 countries listed (World Economic Forum, 2013).

Research conducted by UNIFEM on the link between national gender equality measures and the prevalence of violence found similar results. The graph below draws on four major international surveys which measure factors such as employment, education, income, health, leadership, political participation and representation.

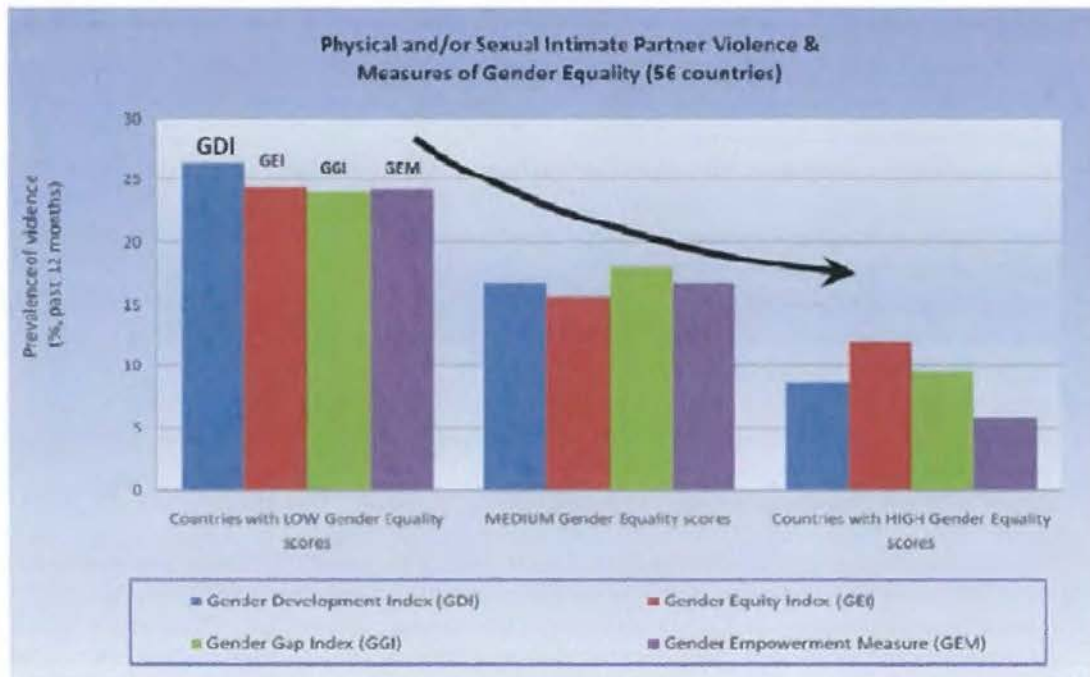


Figure 3 UNIFEM (2010) Investing in Gender Equality: Ending Violence against Women and Girls

In Australia, gender inequity is evident across a number of significant indicators. The visibility of women in leadership, in both government and non-government settings, is recognised as an important step toward gender equity.

Progressive action in this area also plays a role in challenging gendered stereotypes concerning appropriate roles for women in society. Hence, ensuring equal numbers of women and men in leadership roles is essential for the prevention of violence against women. Yet we continue to see disparity between women and men in senior leadership positions at all levels of government and the private sector. Data from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) Australian Census of Women in Leadership revealed:

- Women make up only 12 per cent of the boards for ASX 200 companies,
- Women make up only 9 per cent of executive key management personnel of the ASX 200 companies,
- Women held only 35 per cent of the 3,960 board positions on government boards and bodies (WGEA, 2012).

Equal access to education, employment and income is recognised in international literature as vital to the prevention of violence against women. Gender inequities in employment, pay and working conditions continue to disadvantage Australian women. For example:

- Women in Australia who work full-time earn on average 17 per cent less than their male peers (WGEA, 2013),
- Women are more likely to engage in part-time and casual work in roles characterised by high demands and little control over conditions. In Australia, women account for over half (55 per



cent) of all casual employees, and 43 per cent of women are employed part-time compared to 13 per cent of men (ABS, 2011),

- Women retire with less than half the average superannuation payouts received by men and 2.8 million women compared to 1.6 million men aged 15 years and over are not covered by superannuation (WGEA, 2013; AHRC, 2010),
- Female graduate salaries are only 90 per cent of male graduate salaries.

Women's access to equal employment is partly determined by the inequitable division of domestic labour and caring responsibilities. For example:

- Women undertake more unpaid domestic labour, 35 per cent of women do 15 or more hours per week, compared to 12 per cent of men,
- More women than men undertake unpaid care for a person with a disability,
- Women are more likely than men to undertake unpaid care work for children or relatives who are elderly or who have a disability,
- 82 per cent of Australian single parents are women.

Actions and communications from institutions such as local and state government, non government organisations, businesses, academic institutions and so on, set an important precedent for the promotion of gender equity. Actions to prevent violence against women are strengthened through closer attention to the structural factors that reinforce unequal power relations between women and men.

By influencing change at the structural level, such organisations will complement actions to drive cultural change at the community/organisational and individual, family and peer group levels. One clear avenue of government influence at a structural level is in policy and law reform and budgetary processes. For example this may take the form of engaging in gender sensitive planning across all ministerial portfolios in state government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. All levels of government undertake a gender audit of all existing and new laws, budgets, policies and regulations over which it has jurisdiction/control and implement changes that will lead to gender equality.
3. State government to develop a communication strategy to promote gender equality laws and policies to ensure they are understood and adhered to by governments, business, academic institutions and the non-government sector



If you or your organisation have been involved in observing or assessing programs, campaigns or initiatives of this kind, we are interested in your conclusions about their effectiveness in reducing and preventing family violence

Violence against women is an entrenched problem and a major public health crisis; it requires support for long-term, resourced and evidence-based primary prevention strategies at all levels to redress the root causes of the problem.

Public policy frameworks need to be evidence-based to have an effective impact on the practice environment. State and local government policy must be clear about the distinctions between primary, secondary and tertiary response and the associated areas of practice. The policy must take an intersectoral and intersectional approach with long term systemic investment. Public policy must reflect a whole of government approach and become a priority for all ministers and directorates.

Regional and state-wide action plans and partnerships also play an important role in driving social, cultural and behavioural shifts required to eliminate violence against women and their children. State government support for these initiatives is essential to ensuring long-term sustainability and consistency across Victoria.

Currently Maribyrnong City Council is a signatory to Preventing Violence Together: the Western Region Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women. The western region were the first to develop a regional strategy and partnership between local governments, community health and women's health, dedicated to preventing violence against women. Both the action plan and governance and partnership structure provide a promising model to replicate (Preventing Violence Together, 2010).

Currently there is an absence of a peak body for preventing violence against women at a state level. To maintain Victoria's role as a leader in this work, a funded peak body is required to coordinate primary prevention action and strategy. This coordination needs to bring together local, regional and state work across the sector. It needs to engage with and expand our partnerships and link up with national organisations such as Our Watch and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety.

State funded coordinator roles similar to the Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinators model (currently funded by the state government) ought to be implemented. These coordinators would act as an advocate and conduit between local work and the peak body. Maribyrnong City Council are a non voting member of Domestic Violence Victoria, the peak body for family violence services.



A greater focus on the underlying causes of violence against women including gender inequity is needed. This is consistent with the evidence documented in the local and international literature. Ensuring that gender is embedded within all federal, state and local policies is essential, particularly in policies related to social determinants such as education, employment, housing, health services, transport, infrastructure, and income.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Funding be provided by State government for primary prevention programs that have a strong and clear focus on redressing the determinants of violence against women and working towards long term outcomes.
5. State government to develop long term policy and an action plan to prevent men's violence against women and their children. The plan must be intersectoral, intersectional, evidence based and accompanied by an action research evaluation framework.
6. Regular updates be published on the progress of state and local government prevention of violence against women plans, as well as evaluation reports from programs funded under these plans to ensure knowledge exchange that informs practice.
7. Dedicated ongoing funding be provided by State government to:
 - a. resource state and regional partnerships and specialist organisations, including prevention and response agencies, to develop and implement programs designed to prevent violence against women.
 - b. the primary prevention sector, especially all local governments, to ensure activities can be developed across the community to continue and expand the work of preventing violence against women.



If you or your organisation have been involved in programs, campaigns or initiatives about family violence for the general community, tell us what these involved and how they have been evaluated.

Councils enjoy unrivalled reach and access across their local communities, with more than 180 council services connecting with at least some aspect of people's lives. Councils are on the frontline of whole-of-life service delivery and are responsible for a range of services and functions. These include roads, parks, waste, land use planning, local laws, urban planning, recreation, community development, health promotion, early years, services for young people, personal and home care, emergency management, building and maintaining assets and advocating for community needs.

Council staff work closely with individuals, families, community organisations, local businesses, sporting clubs, academic institutions and more. This means Council is ideally situated to promote whole-of-community efforts to address the key determinants of violence against women.

Community Indicators Victoria notes that perceptions of neighbourhoods as safe places serve to improve the social participation, community connectedness, and the health and wellbeing of local residents and visitors. Women and men experience safety and the use of public spaces, community facilities and infrastructure, very differently.

The way in which community spaces, services and infrastructure are designed present significant implications for women's community participation and experiences of safety. Poorly maintained infrastructure (such as poor lighting, low levels of natural surveillance, cracked footpaths and some forms of graffiti) can greatly influence how women both perceive and experience safety in their local area.

Women also experience transport infrastructure differently. Women are less likely to have access to a car and are more likely to walk and use public transport.

It is imperative that local governments design and maintain community infrastructure and public spaces that are inclusive, safe, and responsive to the needs of women. This includes taking into account the differing needs – particularly those women with dependent children, women with a disability, gender non-conforming and older women.

When considering community safety it is also important to note that women are most at risk of violence in the home. Evidence suggests that most violence against women is perpetrated by men known to them, including their partners, ex-partners or relatives. It is therefore imperative that we undertake strategic work to support community safety and accessibility as well as working specifically to redress violence against women (occurring in the home).



The leadership role and mandate of local governments within their communities provides an essential strength for undertaking a whole-of-community approach. This approach is demonstrated through Maribyrnong City Councils' journey so far:

2006-2008 The Gender, Local Governance and Violence Prevention Making the Links program GLOVE

(Kwok, 2008)

Linkage grant with Melbourne University, key outcomes include:

- Participated in the Margins to Mainstream: Women and Cities World Forum in China to present on 'Linking Gender, Local Governance & Violence Prevention'.

2007-2008 The Responsibility and Equality: Preventing Violence against Women program
(Maribyrnong City Council, 2007)

Funded by VicHealth, key outcomes include:

- Maribyrnong Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan
- Gendered facilities audit
- Organisational policy audit
- Family Violence Policy developed
- Council Annual Actions included in Council plan (incorporates the Municipal Public Health Plan)
*gendered actions and specific primary prevention of violence actions continue to be included
- Establishment of a male staff white ribbon working group.

2008-2011 The Maribyrnong Respect & Equity: Preventing Violence Against Women project
(Wilkinson, 2010)

Funded by VicHealth, key outcomes include:

2009

- Signatory to the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter *continues today
- Everybody Can booklet developed and distributed amongst partners and community
- Baby Makes 3 Council funded Initiative *has resulted in ongoing funding and commitment to the program
- Women and sports clubs Council funded initiative *work continues to occur in the sports and physical activity environment.

2010

- Western Region Football League & local government PVAW partnership
- Presentation to the Australian Women's Health Conference in Hobart (staff, young women from community and Councillors attended)
- Western Region Leaders Lunch – to build leadership and commitment
- Inaugural Local Government Preventing Violence Against Women Conference
- VicHealth 2 day short course on Preventing Violence Against Women delivered to Maribyrnong staff *refresher delivered to Youth Services staff in 2015.



- Mayoral Award to Oti Willoughby a young man involved with our Phoenix Youth Services. In Recognition for his work challenging unhealthy forms of masculinity and promoting gender equity through hip-hop (Raw Elements)
- Young citizen of the year Sanjana Preeti Kumar mentor to Raw Elements hip hop group
- Victorian Gender Equity in Local Government network established *continues today as a peer support, information sharing and strategic alliance network
- Development of the Western Region Family Violence Help Cards (for men and women), in partnership with the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee *currently still distributed to all community information points and council work sites throughout municipality
- Submission to the Australian Association of National Advertisers code of ethics review
- Preventing Violence Together: Western Region Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women launched. All local governments, community health and women's health remain signatories and active partners, today.

2011

- Presentation to the 3rd International Conference on Women's Safety: Building Inclusive Cities in India
- Preventing Violence Against Women in Local Government guide developed with funding from VicHealth (Maribyrnong City Council, 2012) *the principles outlined in the guide directly informed the Municipal Association of Victoria Prevention of Violence Against Women Leadership statement 2013
- Respect & Equity evaluation report published
- Male council staff member nominated for the National White Ribbon Ambassador Award.

2011-2014 The Gender Equitable, Safe & Inclusive Communities project

(Maribyrnong City Council, 2015)

Partnership - Maribyrnong City Council, Wyndham City and Brimbank City Council
Funded by Office of Women's Affairs

We developed a whole-of-community approach to preventing violence against women before it occurs. We did this by developing and testing initiatives, tools, resources and practice approaches within the 3 councils. Based on the logic that this will in turn affect change in our community settings across the western metropolitan region of Victoria. These settings include (but not exclusively) local government, community and women's health, local schools and other academic institutions, sporting clubs, workplaces, the media and arts.

The evaluation was conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology. The report has not yet been released. We encourage you to contact the Department of Human Services to obtain the report and consider the findings and recommendations. We believe that the findings would be valuable in assisting other Councils and organisations embarking on and implementing preventing violence against women initiatives.

The State Government made a significant investment in the program and there have been notable successes and learning that has occurred in each council. To further capitalise on the investment made, we believe it is important that the report be released publically to support continued effort to prevent violence against women.



Key outcomes include:

2011

- Have your Say project – development of the Gender Equity statements
- National Awards for Local Government – Young People, winner (Raw Elements hip hop program)
- Became a standing agenda item at the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee meeting
- VicHealth Preventing Violence Against Women Executive Short Course piloted with Maribyrnong management staff
- Family Violence Clause in the Enterprise Agreement.

2012

- Participation in the International Women's Conference: Connecting for Action in Asia-Pacific Region in Cairns
- Maribyrnong Gender Equity Strategy endorsed and as a first in Victoria we established the role of Gender Equity Ambassador to be held by a Councillor
- Local Government Leaders Lunch – to increase commitment, understanding and leadership
- The action 'Seek gender balance in membership' added to the Disability Advisory Committee Terms of Reference
- Ongoing membership and contribution to the Municipal Association of Victoria Prevention of Violence Against Women state-wide network.

2013

- Participated in the Women's Health Conference – Sydney (young women from community and Councillors attended)
- Installation of baby change tables at Phoenix Youth Centre and Town Hall for community to use
- Maternal Child Health Nurses undertook a refresher Family Violence Common Risk Assessment Training
- Ongoing membership and contribution to the Preventing Violence Against Women in the Media Committee (facilitated by Domestic Violence Victoria).

2014

- Gender Equity formal commitment statement printed on bronze plaques and erected at community centres, libraries, Maternal Child Health centres, Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre and Town Hall
- Joint western region submission to Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence
- Establishment of a breastfeeding room for staff and community members at Town Hall * we are currently developing a breastfeeding policy and undergoing accreditation to become a breastfeeding friendly workplace
- The gender audit tool was provided to the architects designing the Braybrook Community Hub and we worked with City Design department to identify practical uses of the tool
- Internal Inaugural Women's Leadership Program successfully run with commitment to continue it annually
- Review of the Family Violence organisational policy – with subsequent Engage to Change training across the staff body delivered by McAuley Community Services for Women
- Local train station activation with street performers, to raise awareness on White Ribbon Day
- Gender in Your Work – how to apply a gender lens training to all managers
- Gender Equity in Maribyrnong Action Plan 2014-2015 endorsed
- Staff survey conducted to measure Councils take up on gender equity issues



- Inclusion of the violence against women category in the annual community survey, asking respondents "on a scale of 0 to 10, please rate the importance of Council commitment and activities to prevent violence against women before it occurs?" *Respondents rated the importance of Councils commitment and activities at 8.75 out of a potential ten, suggesting the community places a very high level of importance on them.

2015 to date; Gender Equity in Maribyrnong

Funded by Maribyrnong City Council, key outcomes include:

2015

- Baby Makes 3 run as an opt in program through maternal child health services
- She's Game program – increasing the safe and welcoming participation of women and girls in all aspects of sporting club life
- Provided gender advice on the re-design of existing sporting facilities
- Partner Council in the Pacific FLOW Program, which aims to increase women's representation in civil and political leadership in Solomon Islands in order to drive gender equality. The Program is funded by the International Women's Development Agency and coordinated by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum Pacific. The program focuses on improving local governance and service delivery through a gender lens looking at topics such as internal policies, processes, financial management as well as improving service delivery, local economic development, and violence against women.
- Support for women in our community to 'Make it Happen' in 2015 and celebrate International Women's Day, including commissioning public street art, launching Westartnow Boundless exhibition, holding a ladies night dinner for 100 women and supporting the Pedalling Footscray's Food Icons bike tour.

Investment in local government, the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Victorian Local Government Association will enable consistency in sector development and capacity building. It will also foster greater awareness and understanding of evidence based impacts and innovation in local government. Maribyrnong City Council are members of the Municipal Association of Victoria.

Similarly investment in workforce development strategies will better enable local governments, which employ much of the Australian workforce to understand and engage in primary prevention of violence against women. Systematic ongoing participatory evaluation of these strategies is essential to contribute to the emerging evidence-base and improve systems and structures.

The Australian Human Rights Commission 2010 Gender Equality Blueprint's 15 recommendations provide an important framework for action to redress gender inequity.

Strategies include:

- Traineeships and recognition of prior learning as additional pathways for women
- Initiatives that support women to enter into traditionally male dominated sectors and industries
- Support and retention of women in leadership roles
- Improved parental leave opportunities
- Flexible work options for women and men as part of the workplace culture
- Increase of government benefits, affordable, accessible and quality child care, carer support and increase and maintenance of the disability insurance scheme (with a gender lens applied).



Achieving gender equality requires our elected political representatives (at all levels of government), our community and business leaders, our academics, celebrities and roles models in society to drive and champion the reforms that are needed to build a stronger, more productive and fairer Australia for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. The findings and recommendations made by the Australian Institute of Criminology in the Preventing Violence Against Women in our Community program evaluation be considered by the commission.
9. Investment by all employers, is made in workforce development strategies, such as those outlined in the Australian Human Rights Commission 2010 Gender Equality Blueprint's 15 recommendations.



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