

Submission by Eve Mahlab. AO,LL.B, Hon LL.D. (Monash) to Victorian Royal Commission into Family Abuse.

1. Re “shaping appropriate attitudes to women.”
Replicate s 18c of the Australian Racial Discrimination Act 1975 at a state level to apply to Gender. Over time this would lead to feelings of empowerment in women and girls.

S 18cmakes it unlawful to do an act that is reasonably likely to “offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate” someone because of their race or ethnicity.”

Replacing “race or ethnicity” with “Gender” would have the same effect as that intended by the Racial Discrimination Act. It would for instance discourage images showing violence against women and pervasive images of women which show us as sex objects or humiliatingly and inappropriately naked in public places, in media, in video games.
2. Initiate an long term intergenerational Australian or Victorian campaign targeting alcohol -----similar to the successful campaign targeting cigarette smoking .Such a campaign should not only target consumers but should target funds and institutions to deter them from investing in companies which manufacture, distribute or sell alcohol
3. Make it easier to remove abusive men from the home. “One bash and you’re out”. Set up 24 hour Domestic Abuse Courts and give preference to domestic abuse cases in local courts so that cases are heard speedily. Give abused women the confidence to bring action perhaps through trained volunteer advisers.

4. Adopt technology that manages abusers or enables a women or child to contact police and get help if she is in danger
5. Encouraged Local Councils to recognize Domestic Abuse as an issue for their Health and Wellbeing Plans and include funding for the establishment of local accommodation for men evicted from the home.(perhaps with the help of the Mens Shed Movement)
6. Encourage the supply of Affordable Accommodation for women and children.
7. Empower Women. Programs, which develop self esteem and negotiation skills but also how to spot good men, to stay away from bullies , to manage their reproductive and financial health as a means to being in control of their own lives and that of their dependent children. There are wonderful small-scale initiatives, such as the YWCA's Every Girl, which helps build resilience among girls aged 9-14 years old from disadvantaged communities. There is the Rosie Respect program, a project of The Victorian Women's Trust

Above all we must ensure that scarce government and other resources prioritize the safety and empowerment of women rather than a long term and much fuzzier goal of prevention through counseling men , which according to reports are ineffective.

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