

Submission to the *Royal Commission into Family Violence*



The Shire Project

Castlemaine, Victoria

May 2015

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The Shire Project is a not-for-profit organisation established to facilitate women's leadership in creating individual, organisational and cultural change around gender inequity and gender based violence in the community of the Mount Alexander Shire (central Victoria). The prevalence of violence against women our community is frequent with an incident of family violence being responded to by Victoria police every 44 hours. The need for The Shire Project originated from our work with families and from our experiences of violence in our personal lives. The Shire Project enables women to experience worthiness and value, and for men to see women as equals. The Shire Project acknowledges gender based violence across the gender spectrum, and the privileged position of groups within the broad categories of 'women' and 'men'. Our project aims to put the responsibility of equal inclusion, equal representation and equal participation for all genders into the hands of those in relationships and organisations characterised by privilege and power. We endeavour to include all minority groups of people within our project and community.

Please find below the Vision and Objectives for The Shire Project in Figure 1 below. A glossary of the terms we use in our Vision is included.

VISION (Our creative plan for the future)

To develop and sustain the world's first 100% gender inclusive, equal ,non violent community.

OBJECTIVE 1 (Our intention for achieving our vision)

100% participation and representation of people of all gender identities in the community of the Mount Alexander Shire.

AIMS (Our intention for meeting our objectives)

- i. Plan, deliver and collaborate community forums.
- ii. Develop a steering group of women to guide and inform how The Shire Project works equally with men at an individual, organisational and societal level.
- iii. Make equal and responsible relationships between all organisations in the Mount Alexander Shire: "strength together" not power over.

INDICATORS (How we know we are meeting our objectives)

- i. Forums will be planned, delivered and documented.
- ii. The steering group will be established and develop men's forums.
- iii. Purposeful (determined, resolute and intentional) and deliberate (considered, discussed and debated) recruitment and participation of people of all gender identities at an organisational level and societal level. For example, discussion would be included in minutes of meetings; policies for 100% equal inclusion, equal participation and equa representation, will be written and implemented.
- iv. Meetings, collaboration and cooperation between different community groups using inclusive and non violent language thinking and action.

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OBJECTIVE 2

The end of all gender based violence in the Mount Alexander Shire: for people of all genders to be safe, strong and supportive allies in the face of violence.

AIMS

- i. To educate the community on safe, active bystander action.
- ii. To educate the community on gender based violence and abuse.
- iii. To educate the community on the principles of non violence.
- iv. All participants of The Shire Project role model safe, respectful relationships on the principles of non violent relationships.
- v. To promote equal, respectful relationships based on the principles of non violence.
- vi. Apply non violent thinking, communication and action under every circumstance to address family violence, street harassment and gender inequality.
- vii. Forums will be planned, delivered and documented.

INDICATORS

- i. The personal struggle: maintaining non violence in the face of violence - being purposeful and deliberate and conscious of our thinking and behaviour.
- ii. Purposeful use of inclusive and non violent language and action
- iii. Development of media clips for education and promotion of the two objectives.
- iv. Development of a primary prevention program designed to support the community to develop safe, equal non violent, supportive allies for women to address violence and abuse perpetrated against them.
- v. Development of a medium for people to express their lived experience of inequality and violence.
- vi. For forum participants to develop the indicators for the aims and objectives.
- vii. Projects arising from the forums will be planned, delivered and documented.
- v. Launches will be planned, delivered and documented.
- viii. Fundraising for projects and launches.

GLOSSARY (Definitions of terms)

Bystander action

VicHealth (2007)

A person who is somehow present to the violence or abuse but is neither the perpetrator or victim. May be active (someone who identifies the problem and acts safely and appropriately to resolve the problem) or passive (choosing not to be involved).

Community

Mount Alexander Shire

Castlemaine and other towns

all levels: individual, homes, in the street, business, boards, organisations, schools, health clinics, other

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Deliberate

considered, discussed, debated

Gender

VicHealth (2007)

Gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being a male or female at a particular point in time.

Inclusive community

Miller and Katz (2002) inclusive value system

“Inclusion is a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work.”

For all people (eg. across gender spectrum, economically disadvantaged, any minority group) to be enabled to participate in all aspects of their community as an equal and valued member, and to have self determination.

For people with power and privilege to recognise their responsibility to include those with less power

Non violent

The practise of 'no harm' to self, others and property, under every condition.

equality, respect, safe, non judgment, compassion
needs focussed and strengths based
understanding
listening
integrity,
use mind, intellect and language

Purposeful

determined, resolute and intentional

Violence

UN Definition of Violence against women (1993):

Any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

UN Definition of Violence (WHO 2002)

Violence is any coercive act used by one person toward another that causes injury, arouses fear, or causes that person to talk, think or act in a way that they do not freely choose.

Figure 1. Vision, objectives, aims and indicators for The Shire Project, May 2015

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Our inaugural forum and workshop, 'Safe Place Safe Space', is being held on 30 May 2015. The Indicators (goals) listed above will be workshopped and developed further in our inaugural forum. Ownership of these will be given to the women working in The Shire Project. At all stages of the development of The Shire Project, we have endeavoured for women to direct what we do, based on their needs.

Leading up to the forum, we asked all attendees to complete an online survey. The survey questions and their responses (de identified) are listed in Table 1 below. The survey highlighted the prevalence of violence, women's uncertainty over law, rights, responsibilities and resources, and their commitment to The Shire Project and desire to make change in their community.

Table 1. Women's responses to pre forum survey, May 2015.

Q1: Women and self-identification	at home Castlemaine change Children Community development Councillor Disability Education empathetic female gender equality Health promotion Interests kind married mental ill health mother new mum Our Watch paid work passion public debate scared of failing my children scared of giving in separated single social justice Victorian Royal Commission violence woman work at home work education work in allied health work in consumer affairs
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	<p>work in health work in international relations work in law worthy</p>
Q2: Origin of interest in The Shire Project	<p>address domestic violence ambitious goals children collaborating connecting people expertise in family violence sector gender equality local activism make a difference meeting others Opportunity Positive change for women project raising awareness safer and fairer community</p>
Q3: Reason for attending the forum	<p>about women better serve women and children in the community communicate message existing services and programs gender in/equality How other women respond to common problems How to create a better future for myself and my children How to take control Information sharing life experiences not sure Planning activities platform for community engagement possibility of art project support available what is most needed in the community in order to make change where are there gaps in services and programs who is speaking</p>
Q4: Personal contribution to The Shire Project	<p>ability children who have experienced domestic violence now adults Collage for Community' create project experience knowledge Listen Provide practical and useful information for women separating Sharing experience Sharing expertise make sense not sure</p>

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	<p>social enterprise why domestic violence continues to impact those involved long after it is over</p>
<p>Q5: Commitment to The Shire Project</p>	<p>any project art project blogging domestic violence passion Photography Research skills social enterprise team leadership writing yes</p>
<p>Q6: Personal experience of gender inequality and/or family violence</p>	<p>anger labelled as irrational and hysterical Anger not acceptable behaviours labelled inappropriate and immature carry a weapon at all times for self-protection eg. car keys controlling jealous relationship devaluation in health/allied health settings Emotional violence feeling particularly unsafe in public places at night feeling unsafe in public places Financial violence gendered expectations Groped He earnt the money he spent the money Insecure future institutional and systemic gender equality intimidated isolation needs labelled unworthy no direct experience of family violence paid less than male colleagues physical threats Played the dutiful wife psychological threats Stalked shattered threatened verbal abuse verbal denigration verbal threats workplace sexual harassment</p>

Finally, we would like to thank the Royal Commission for this opportunity to submit our thoughts and experiences.

Sincerely,

Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, The Shire Project

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