



Loddon  
Campaspe  
Integrated  
Family  
Violence  
Consortium  
submission  
for the  
Royal  
Commission  
into Family  
Violence

LODDON CAMPASPE INTEGRATED FAMILY VIOLENCE CONSORTIUM SUBMISSION FOR THE  
ROYAL COMMISSION INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE

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The Loddon Campaspe Integrated Family Violence Services Consortium was formed in 2005, to work together cohesively and in partnership to end all forms of violence against women. Membership comprises all directly funded providers of family violence services in the Loddon Campaspe sub-region (known as the Loddon Region), which is part of the Northern area and one of the largest geographical sub-regions in Victoria.

Loddon Campaspe Integrated Family Violence Services Consortium (LCIFVC) Member Organisations: Centre for Non-Violence Inc. (CNV - Lead Agency), Loddon Campaspe Centre Against Sexual Assault Inc. (LCCASA), Annie North Inc. - Women's Refuge and Domestic Violence Service, Women's Health Loddon Mallee Inc. and Cobaw Community Health

This submission is endorsed by the Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Advisory Committee (LCFVAC) with representatives from:

- CNV (Lead Agency)
- Annie North Inc. – Women's Refuge and Domestic Violence Service
- Bendigo District Aboriginal Cooperative (BDAC)
- Bendigo Health
- Castlemaine District Health
- Child FIRST - Family Services
- Corrections
- Courts
- DHHS - Child Protection
- Family Services Alliance
- LCCASA
- LOMA – Loddon Mallee Housing and Homelessness Network
- Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre
- Loddon Connect
- Primary Care Partnerships
- RAMP - Loddon
- St Luke's
- Vic Pol
- Victims Assistance Program

**This submission has been prepared by the Loddon Campaspe Integrated Family Violence Consortium, in collaboration with the Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Advisory Committee to represent the regional context, need, demand and key recommendations. We are able to provide supporting information for further discussion, or on any of the issues or recommendations within this submission. Please contact: CEO, Centre for Non-Violence Margaret Augerinos on phone:**

[REDACTED]

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## Section 1: Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

### 1.1 Executive Summary

Gender inequality is both a cause and consequence of family violence. If we are going to succeed in addressing family violence, we need to tackle all forms of gender based violence through strong government and sector leadership. There is momentum currently at national level, continuing the work with the Commonwealth and COAG to align and build on the developed national and state plans and strategies to address violence against women and their children. There needs to be ongoing investment to develop a full suite of national standards and service responses to family violence, including specialist women's services, men's behaviour change programs, DHHS - child protection, family services, courts, legal services and corrections to ensure that these standards are theoretically and philosophically rigorous. Victoria has demonstrated great leadership in integration and coordinating family violence system responses, but there needs to be continued work at a Commonwealth level and with COAG to ensure consistency of response at a national level.

Gender inequality exists at all levels and given this, there needs to be continued investment to address structural inequality at all levels through challenging patriarchal structures, cultures, values, attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate inequality throughout the whole of society and the community. We need to continue to explore and challenge gender inequality and how that creates conditions for all forms of violence against women, including family violence. A whole of government approach working across reforms have improved the identification of victims of family violence and increased police referrals and demand, particularly for women and children experiencing violence, but there are still gaps and barriers that exist in implementing integrated responses to improve safety and case coordination. We need ongoing support to provide local and regional responses to rural and regional women based on their particular needs and vulnerability, from first referral and intake to court support, social education, support groups, therapeutic counselling, advocacy and ongoing case management for recovery. There needs to be continued long term investment and resourcing to improve assessment, case coordination at every point of intake and service delivery capacity. Regional partnership within the Consortium and LCFVAC partners has enhanced services and support, communication, information sharing, referral and case management to enhance safety of women and children and accountability of perpetrators within the system response. We need capacity to ensure that men who use violence are accountable for their actions and we continue to work to prevent family violence from occurring in the first place by investing in creating gender equity, developing violence prevention strategies and community education.

Sustainable workforce development strategies need to be developed to ensure that the family violence service sector is sustained and further developed with appropriate funding models for specialist family violence services so that they are able to employ highly qualified, skilled and knowledgeable staff to address the needs of women and children experiencing family violence and men who use violence against family members. Specialist family violence training and allocation of targeted funding needs to support ongoing workforce development, particularly in responding to rural and regional women and communities. Specialist women's services play a key role in informing and guiding projects, so their advice needs to be integral within model development and implementation of projects such as Services Connect, RAMP, community violence prevention and family violence action plans to build on service and system integration and opportunities to influence best practice within the sector. There is need for increased focus and resourcing in these projects to

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ensure alignment and coordination between family violence and family law courts, legal services, specialist women and children's services, men's behaviour change and case management programs, corrections and criminal justice responses from point of intake to case closure and to ensure community accountability. Integrated court models such as the integrated court models in the United States (eg. Brooklyn -NY) provide opportunities for Victoria and Australia to explore and implement integrated legal and legislative models to address family violence, family law and other criminal and civil matters together in one context with specialist support, skills and knowledge to improve system responses and reduce risk of lethality.

Primary prevention initiatives and strategies must clearly identify that violence against women, including family violence, is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. Primary prevention is the responsibility of everyone in our community – at all levels, and efforts should be made to confirm and resource expectations from government and the community more broadly. Regional and local best practice initiatives have delivered excellent results, but funding for these valuable projects remains a problem. Violence prevention efforts need to engage community action and involvement over a long term approach to ensure capacity building.

In order to drive cultural change in our social systems and structures regarding gender equality and ending violence against women, the Victorian government, through its department and agencies procurement and other management and policies should:

- Ensure government agencies and the services it funds are required to work to and be assessed against gender equality standards and targets
- Ensure practices and service delivery are gender sensitive and are compliant with standards of practice and frameworks relating to the prevention of violence against women
- Ensure practices and service delivery work towards maximising the safety of women and children experiencing family violence and work to hold men who use violence against family members accountable for their use of violence.

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## 1.2 Key recommendations

### Building a whole of government approach to family violence

- Develop and ensure the service system (government, non-government, legal and community services) works to an agreed set of standards in providing the full suite of service responses to family violence including specialist women’s family violence services, men’s behaviour change programs, child protection, family services, courts, legal and corrections services
- Continue to work with the Commonwealth and COAG to ensure consistency of response at a national level
- Provide a whole of government approach to gender-based violence from a human rights perspective and ensure a human rights framework in family violence policy and practice system responses
- Build the capacity of specialist women’s family violence services to be able to respond to increasing demands across the continuum of crisis response, early intervention, therapeutic recovery, social education and violence prevention, through realistic unit cost pricing that enables a continuum of service response and reflects the level of demand placed on services
- Develop data management systems that can be used to collect and analyse compare data on family violence to inform approaches
- Ensure alignment of best practice frameworks (Strengthening Risk Management, CRAF, Assessing Children and Young Person’s Training, Best Interest Framework) to identify, assess and respond to family violence for key stakeholders (Specialist family violence services, DHHS – Child Protection, Child FIRST, Vic Pol, Courts and Children’s Contact Centres) within core training and invest in practice development across the sector
- Increase capacity of specialist family violence focus within regional consortiums and coordinate specialist women’s services and men’s programs to develop regional responses for young people experiencing and using violence towards family members
- Develop specialist family violence assessment and child contact centres to coordinate family action plans and system response (point of intake to case closure, supervised contact, children’s advocates, co-location of services) delivered by specialist family violence providers
- Increase capacity of community legal centre’s providing family violence support and services, including specialist women’s legal services and court support (specialist family violence legal workers, FVIO applicant and respondent workers) to all courts within the region
- Implement specialist family violence integrated court approaches to respond to family violence and family law and related criminal and civil integrated processes to respond to family violence

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- Build new courts and improve family violence court environments for women and children accessing them (privacy, safety, security and opportunity to use video link facilities)
- Develop a sustainable workforce development strategy that addresses needs of rural and regional communities in a range of disciplines and funding models for specialist family violence services that will enable services to employ workers with a higher skill range and qualifications rather than the entry level funding available currently

### Research and training

- Ensure core and ongoing training for specialist women's, children's and men's programs, police, court staff, legal, health and community services practitioners in family violence
- Fund and resource longitudinal research and evaluation of men's behaviour change programs and change through women's experiences of violence (partners, ex. partners) to analyse along with data on courts (Vic Crime Statistics, SAFER, Victorian 11 Year data), crime and lethality to inform best practice models
- Continue and build on the (ANROWS) research agenda and increase regional opportunities evaluate and research new innovations and programs, particularly rural and regional initiatives
- Increase regional funding to support workforce development for specialist and mainstream services to identify family violence, assessment, risk management and referral pathways, therapeutic responses to women and children (supported play groups, groups to build mother-child attachment, social education, gender equality) and referral pathways
- Reinstate regional funding to deliver Stage 1: Identifying and responding to Family Violence, AVERT – Family Violence and Family Law through Train the Trainer models to support workforce development at a local level
- Increase long term gender equity and violence prevention education within core training of all health, community services, police, early years, primary and secondary education and Teacher training
- Capture the experiences of children and focus on developing a whole school approach to violence prevention (use school data and wellbeing surveys to measure to inform whole school approaches to violence, bullying and abuse and violence prevention)

### Family violence responses and therapeutic recovery

- Provide appropriate levels of funding to specialist family violence services to ensure the full range of therapeutic responses, recovery programs, support, advocacy and social change groups for women and children
- Increase social education, support groups and therapeutic counselling for women and children
- Increase Women's Social Housing and Employment Models for women who have experienced family violence (including mentoring, education, scholarships, business initiatives, etc) to support economic independence

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- Increase investment in the creation of additional safe and affordable short and longer term housing options for women and children experiencing family violence and at risk of homelessness
- Create opportunities to capture children's voices and experiences and respond to their needs within the system, focusing on child centred practice and responding to the impact of family violence for recovery
- Strengthen relationships and communication between specialist response services and schools to build integrated and coordinated responses to children
- Increase funding allocations for crisis payments available to women experiencing family violence, such as the Housing Establishment Fund, Safe At Home Brokerage, emergency relief, etc

### Early intervention

- Fund the provision of opportunities for women to participate in social education and parallel programs as partners and ex. partners within the men's behaviour change (resource increased coordination and integration opportunities) with specialist family violence services to work collaboratively to the same standards (No To Violence standards, National Standards, Duluth model)
- Increase opportunities to develop gender equity and social education targeted to women, men and young people experiencing and using violence, based on the Duluth Equality Wheel in response and to prevent violence (Early Intervention)

### Primary prevention and capacity building

- Increase resourcing to support regional projects with integration, partnership and innovation and evaluate implementation of models to inform best practice eg. RAMP, Co-location of specialist family violence services with child protection, Child FIRST, police, hospitals (accident and emergency, antenatal and maternity, mental health, disability services, homelessness and housing services)
- Advocate for specialist women's family violence services to be used in consultations and resource them to play a key part in developing coordinated Family Violence Action Plans with local government, health services and communities (including gender equity and gender equality initiatives, education, school based programs, bystander and restorative justice approaches)
- Increase long term gender equity, violence prevention and bystander education in primary and secondary Schools and embedded in curriculum (eg. Solving the Jigsaw Program)
- Build on primary prevention programs and initiatives (Take a Stand, local government and regional Violence Prevention and Family Violence Action Plans)
- Fund and support further roll out of media campaigns for community and social education, including increased media advocacy and training of media advocates (create opportunities for regions to develop resources to support training and education) and targeted campaigns to meet their needs (eg. rural and regional models)

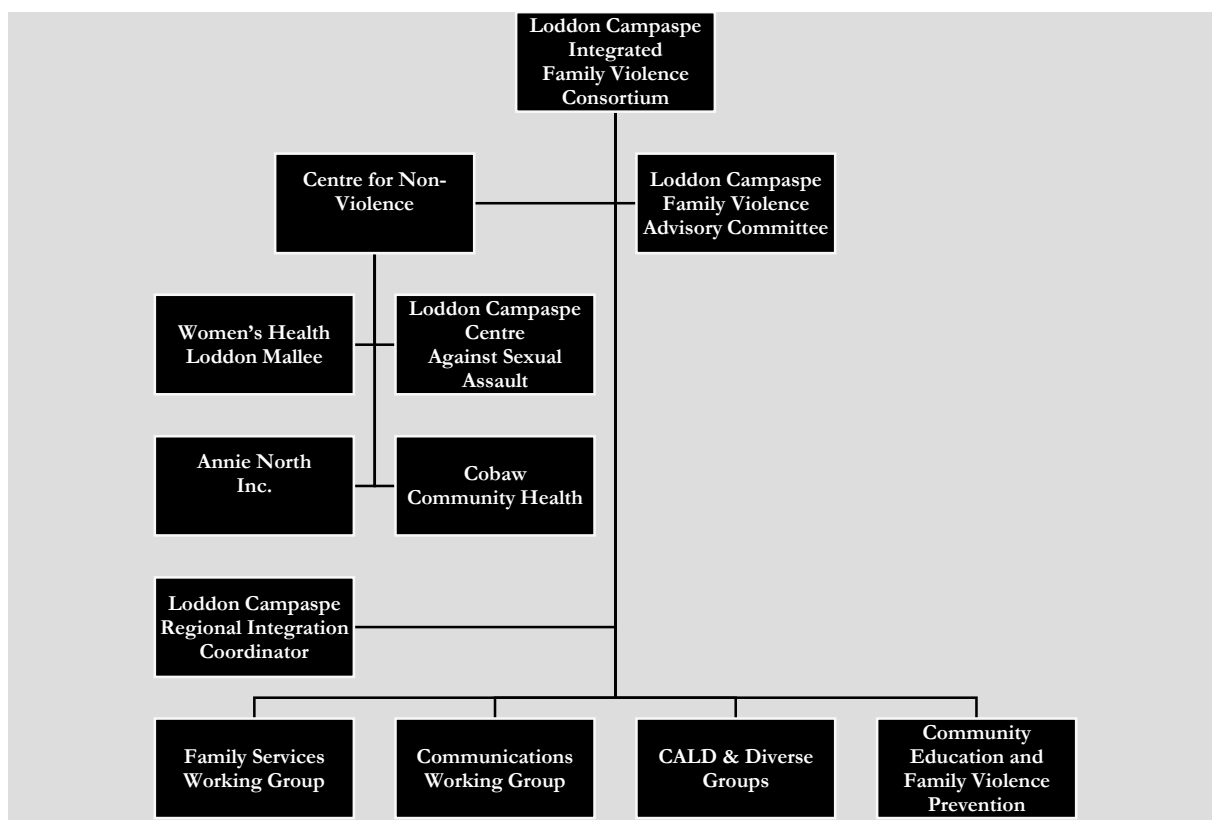


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### Section 2: Setting the regional context

#### 2.1 Consortium structure and approaches to integration

The Consortium structure and approaches to integration are unique and innovative, both in the way they have been designed and how they manage and deliver integrated family violence services and system responses in the region. The structure of the integration is outlined below, with CNV as the auspice for the Regional Integration Coordinator and coordination at all levels, including the Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Advisory Committee (LCFVAC) and operational working groups. CNV, as the lead agency of the Consortium, provides specialist integrated family violence services and a central intake point for all police, service and individual referrals within the Loddon area.



The LCFVAC has four working groups to help drive integration and coordination across a range of priority areas. The Family Services Working Group focuses on integration and coordination by bringing together specialist women and children's services, men's program, police, family services, child protection, health and hospital representatives, Aboriginal and CALD agencies and the Regional Integration Coordinator to inform practice development, training and case management approaches. The Communications Working Group produces a regional newsletter and distributes training information. The Culturally and Linguistically and Diverse working group works individually and collectively with Aboriginal, CALD and disability groups to support increased focus on education, vulnerability and impact from family violence. The Community Education and Family Violence Prevention Group works with community in advising and supporting violence prevention initiatives, community education and training.

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## Centre for Non-Violence (as the lead agency)

CNV, as the lead agency of the Consortium and the principal family violence response system, has been delivering quality services to women and children since its establishment in 1990. CNV delivers integrated family violence programs including programs for men who use violence against family members. CNV also works in partnership with key system and service stakeholders across the region at a strategic and operational level to inform and improve family violence response. CNV provides responses to women and children as victims of family violence and men who use violence towards family members through a key worker model and teams of staff to assess client and family needs, including after hours, crisis and court support, housing services, intake, assessment, case management and case coordination. All clients are allocated a key worker from point of intake who provide comprehensive assessment to measure safety and risk to ensure ongoing safety risk management, inform case coordination, communication and action with other key service and system stakeholders in responding to family violence and developing coordinated action plans.

CNV provides:

- A central intake point for family violence police referrals within the Loddon Campaspe region
- Specialised response, assessment, support, accommodation and case management for women and children experiencing family violence
- Targeted service response, intensive support and programs for identified disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as single young women (between the ages of 15 and 25) who have children or are pregnant; women with alcohol and other drug issues, women with disabilities and rural women
- Recovery and counselling programs for women and children who have experienced family violence
- Regional Integration Co-ordination (auspiced by CNV) of the Integrated Family Violence Services Strategy as lead agency of the Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Consortium
- Programs for men who use violence against family members which includes enhanced intake services, men's behaviour change programs, case management and transitional accommodation for men who are excluded from their home as a result of violence against family members
- Early intervention violence prevention through delivery of the multi award-winning Solving the Jigsaw classroom program, supported by the nationally-accredited Solving the Jigsaw training for teachers, welfare and other professionals
- Community education, community engagement and research and policy contributions
- Auspice of the Loddon Mallee Accommodation Homelessness Network (LOMA), the regional housing and homelessness network

## 2.2 Impacts of Family Violence System Policy and Legislative Reforms at a regional level

Family violence reforms have improved the identification of victims of family violence and increased police referrals and demand, particularly women and children, but there are still gaps and barriers that exist in implementing integrated responses to improve safety and case coordination. We need ongoing support to provide local and regional responses to rural and regional women based on their particular needs and vulnerability, from first referral and intake to court support, social education, support groups, therapeutic counselling, advocacy and ongoing case management for recovery. There needs to be continued long term investment and resourcing to improve assessment, case coordination at every point of intake and service delivery capacity. Regional partnership within the Consortium and LCFVAC partners has enhanced services and support, communication, information sharing, referral and case management to enhance safety of women and children and accountability of perpetrators within the system response. We need capacity to ensure that men who use violence are accountable for their actions and we continue to work to prevent family violence from occurring in the first place by investing in creating gender equity, developing violence prevention strategies and community education.

Recent reforms such as Services Connect and RAMP projects provide opportunities to build on system integration and improve service and system integration. There is need for increased focus and resourcing in these projects to ensure alignment and coordination between family violence and family law courts, legal services, specialist women and children's services, men's behaviour change and case management programs, corrections and criminal justice responses from point of intake to case closure and to ensure community accountability. Integrated models that are well researched in their implementation such as the integrated court models in the United States (eg. Brooklyn -NY) provide opportunities for Victoria and Australia to explore the relationship between family violence, family law and other criminal and civil matters together in one context with specialist support, skills and knowledge to improve system responses and potential lethality. Within our current system, lack of integration, coordination and matters of cross jurisdiction create confusion, risk and barriers to pursuing matters, financial disadvantage and further victimisation of women and children within system responses. Increased demand has placed increased pressure on the system and service providers to be able to work within an integrated way to meet demand and has created tension in managing increased unmet demand and vulnerability. For example, being able to increase coordinated after hours responses locally and regionally to women and children experiencing family violence and men using violence towards family members, provide early and streamlined responses for first referrals and target particularly vulnerable groups (Aboriginal women, young women, older women, rural and regional women through social education, support groups and enhanced intake and assessment, outreach referrals and court support). Having resources and capacity to build a local specialist services and supports within the broader integrated system response will help to develop knowledge, skills and referral pathways to better respond to family violence.

### Strengthening Risk Management

Strengthening risk management across the Integrated Family Violence (IFV) service system has been a key focus of the family violence reforms in Victoria, researching and mapping need and opportunities for alignment across the service system to develop a multi-agency and disciplinary practice framework. We have had the development of the RAMP model, Services Connect, Victorian

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Homelessness Action Plan and Innovation Action Projects, all with CNV and Consortium partners involved and The Vulnerable Children's Report, two demonstration projects, the Shergold Report all presenting key findings, documenting recommendations and strategies to influence improved responses to family violence at a statewide, regional and local level that align with our approaches.

Rather than redesigning and adapting other models to fit the needs regionally, we need to build on the evidenced good practice examples such as implementation of the Duluth Model and Integrated Client Services (where a system is already working well and can be extended and localised) to implement key recommendations in practice.

### Common frameworks and tools

Common assessment and risk management frameworks for family violence provide opportunities for early identification and assessment of family violence and manage risk and safety of victims of violence (predominantly women) and to inform risk management responses through professional judgement. There has been no ongoing investment or continued commitment to embed core frameworks and community services sector training and tertiary education to continue to develop a strong and skilled workforce. Framework alignment, implementation and data management systems that support common assessment inclusive of gendered vulnerability would benefit in improved understandings and identification of risk and safety for women and children and risk management of men who use violence across the sector. There is need to align and educate on common assessment tools such as CRAF, Assessing Children and Young Persons Experiencing Family Violence and Best Interests Frameworks in practice to bring together the system players and strengthen risk management. This can be achieved through a common framework platform and tools to assess individual clients and families and influence professional understandings, judgement and practice. There needs to be ongoing workforce capacity, training and system development to respond to families with increased risk and vulnerability and increased capacity for regions to deliver targeted training to develop workforce skills, particularly in rural and regional areas where gender is the predominant vulnerability for women. Often women experiencing family violence within the rural and regional context experience a range vulnerabilities and there is potential for further blaming and victimisation if we do not assess the impact of family violence and work to address vulnerability and need within the system response

### Regional Specialist Family Violence and Justice responses

Improving integrated and coordinated specialist family violence and justice responses to family violence relies heavily on the quality, availability, access to and scheduling of police and courts within the Loddon Campaspe region to provide strong civil and criminal responses, enhance safety and increase accountability for perpetrators of violence. There has been talk and research about modelling specialist family violence courts within current headquarter courts, but due to potential costs, this decision has not been enacted. Currently we have no specialist family violence court within the region and increasing ongoing demand and risk, leading to poorer long term outcomes that don't improve women and children's safety and trust in the system. Poor court and police responses send a negative message to perpetrators and can potentially blame the victim in their lack of analysis. There are major limitations with the court environments within the region, lack of resources, skills and knowledge to provide specialist support, access, court availability and hearing scheduling issues within Bendigo Court and at outreach court locations. This creates longer waiting times, more safety

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concerns, lack of privacy and confidentiality and tensions in responding to and managing need. An example of varying outcomes can be demonstrated by the improved use of Safety Notices in Victoria, but in our region there are limitations for the application of Family Violence Safety Notices due to court access and scheduling and police capacity to issue the notices and provide response within the required timeframe. The evaluation of police improved use of safety notices within the SAFER research demonstrated that outcomes are improved with increased police applications for family violence safety notices and family violence intervention orders (FVIO) that included exclusion of the perpetrator from the home in 84% of cases, preferred and priority court listings. The research showed that safety notices that were issued within a timely manner had less breaches and this strengthened court response, police practice and referral to improve safety for women and children. The timely and enhanced criminal justice response was also seen to provide a strong message to perpetrators that family violence is unacceptable and against the law.

### Family violence service responses to children and young people

The issues faced by the service system in responding to children affected by family violence are complex. There is overwhelming evidence that family violence has a significant impact on the developmental and psychological wellbeing of children; including a correlation with physical and sexual abuse. As a family violence service system we are aiming for integrated and flexible responses to children both within the specialist family violence sector, but there is no one pathway for children in response to family violence and early intervention. As a service system we need to ensure that the responses we provide to children in the specialist family violence sector deliver best outcomes for children that ensure safety and meet their ongoing developmental needs. Child protection and family services have a critical role in promoting outcomes for vulnerable children and families and need increased capacity to work with specialist family violence services to coordinate family responses across a continuum of individual and family interventions. Research clearly indicates that joint practice responses, including the sharing of information and the development of common assessment and case management platforms is a critical practice foundation to respond effectively to the safety of women, children and young people affected by family violence, as well as holding those who use violence, primarily men, accountable for their violence. The need for a common assessment and risk management platform for children and young people has been identified and discussed by all sectors; particularly in the implementation of a targeted children and young person's family violence partnership agreement.

### 2.3 Regional context demand and need

CNV has been delivering the women and children's programs and men's programs separately within the Consortium structure since 2005. CNV developed Integrated Client Services in 2013, to address and reduce barriers to integration between CNV programs and other parts of the system that respond to family violence. This commitment is consistent with state and national policy, informed by research and more than two decades of experience by our organisation.

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Key elements of the program are:

- Specialised teams called “pods” with staff who work across all client programs for women experiencing family violence, young women aged 15 – 25 years who are pregnant and/or parenting and at risk or experiencing homelessness, men who use violence against family members, and children accompanying women accessing the service
- A key worker model for every client at the earliest possible opportunity to reduce the number of times clients have to repeat their “story”. When that worker is unavailable to meet the needs of a particular client, another pod member responds. All workers undertake intake, risk assessment and safety management, case planning/management through to closure to women;
- A specialist key worker for men providing enhanced intake services and coordination of intake, assessment, participation in men’s behaviour change group program and case management (non-legal support, transitional housing and case coordination)
- Separate key workers for male clients are located in the same pod as the key workers for their female partners (when these women are receiving support from one of CNV’s women’s programs) enabling information to be shared when necessary to ensure the safety of women and children

### Housing and homelessness

Family violence is the leading driver of homelessness in Victoria impacting women and children in disproportionate numbers compared to the men who use violence toward them. Women in rural and regional areas are more likely to need to leave their homes in the short and longer term as a consequence of family violence. Research has shown that there is a clear link between young people entering out of home care and homelessness services as a result of experiencing violence in the home. The majority of those young people who go on to experience long term homelessness and multiple ongoing vulnerabilities such as mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse and unemployment have experienced violence in their homes and witnessed their mothers and step mothers being abused. Specialist homelessness services and family violence services face similar challenges of increasing demand and limited availability and there is increased need for the homelessness system to improve coordinated service responses to women and children experiencing family violence and risk of homelessness through crisis, transitional and social housing models. Targeted models such as the Annie North Cluster model will provide opportunity to improve crisis response to women and children who are at risk and need to leave their homes in the shorter term while criminal justice responses can be implemented for risk management. There is increased need for transitional and social housing models for women and children experiencing family violence to reduce their ongoing risk of homelessness, improve safety and recovery.

### 2.4 Philosophical and theoretical frameworks

The Consortium and our integrated system is informed by human rights principles, gender equality and social justice. The Consortium provides an integrated response to family violence in the region,

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with a strong focus on early intervention and the prevention of violence against women. The Consortium provides leadership in informing and influencing local and regional responses to family violence, as well as guiding best practice approaches to preventing all forms of violence against women. The overarching aim of our work is to ensure the safety of women and children.

Our vision is of a future where women and their children are not violated by violence or abuse, and where all women and their children are able to live to their full human potential free from poverty, ill-health, racism, discrimination and marginalisation. All social and economic indicators worldwide highlight how women, as a gender, have their human rights violated simply because they are women. Women in Australia are no different. Influential reports have recently highlighted the economic, social and health costs of violence against women<sup>1</sup>.

The Consortium sees the critical importance of providing specialist services to women and their children where structural inequities cause systemic disadvantage through values, ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and institutional and structural power relations, overt and covert, entrenched throughout our society. We believe that until these social, political and economic inequities are eliminated then no member of our society, male or female, can live to their full human potential.

The Consortium works within a human rights framework as defined by the United Nations; advocate for systemic social change for the status of women and children in society; and uphold feminist principles of social justice. The Consortium understands that disadvantage in our society is related to gender, class, race, ethnicity, geographical location, sexuality and ability.

The Consortium adheres and works with the following definition of family and domestic violence, as defined by the Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence:

*Family violence includes violent, threatening, patterned and repeated use of coercive or controlling behaviour that occurs in current or past family, domestic or intimate relationships. This can include not only physical assaults but an array of power and control tactics used along a continuum in concert with one another, direct or indirect threats, sexual assault, emotional and psychological torment, economic control, property damage, social isolation and behaviour which causes a person to live in fear.<sup>2</sup>*

Family violence can occur in any culture or relationship, including same sex, transgender, the elderly and people with disabilities. While it can be perpetrated by any member of a family against another, it is more likely to be perpetrated by men (predominantly by a woman's current or ex-partner) against women and children.

It is also important that the definition of family violence recognises and reflects the perspectives and realities of all communities within Victoria, including Indigenous communities. We adhere to the important principles of social inclusiveness, access and equity and the celebration of diversity, and collaboration and partnership.

<sup>1</sup> Access Economics (2004) *The Costs of Domestic Violence to the Australian Economy*, PADV, Office of the Status of Women, Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra; and Vic Health (2004) *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence*, Victorian Government: Melbourne.

<sup>2</sup> Statewide Steering Committee to Prevent Family Violence, "Reforming the Family Violence System in Victoria" (2005)

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Feminist philosophy guides the work that we do and the way we do it. Feminism has traditionally encouraged women's voices and celebrated their strengths and contributions to history and the community.

The Consortium aims to improve the health and wellbeing of women and children experiencing all forms of violence through affirming these strengths and qualities.

### Key Principles of the Consortium:

- The Consortium recognises gender as a key determinant of women's health and wellbeing and that gender intersects with other social inequities (race, class, sexual identity, etc) that compound the oppression and disadvantage experienced by women.
- The Consortium works within a social model of health and community well-being, recognising that women's and children's diversity and experiences affect their health and well-being.
- The Consortium has a commitment to working towards equitable distribution of power and resources to women and employs an ecological change strategy that improves the outcomes at an individual, community and societal level.
- The Consortium is committed to promoting women's leadership and agency in all aspects of social change and development. Women using services have the right to participate in planning and decision making.
- The Consortium is committed to leading best practice, being informed by a solid evidence base and best practice, and contributing its expertise and work to the broader evidence base in the sector.



## Section 3: What are the key issues relating to primary prevention, early intervention and capacity building, integration and crisis response?

### 3.1 Primary prevention and capacity building

Primary prevention activities in our region have been rolled out in a piecemeal way without a strong sense of regional co-ordination, both from a funded government perspective, and from the sector and community responses. Local efforts are sometimes confused, with awareness raising and community information sharing seen as primary prevention initiatives, and as a result there is often resistance from community partners in engaging with specialist women's family violence and health services in primary prevention work. It is imperative that specialist women's family violence and health services guide prevention work with the community and are actively consulted and their advice sought on projects. There can be resistance from community, as the position of the specialist sector and their gendered lens is often considered provocative and "unhelpful" in selling messages of gender equality and a violence free world. Therefore, key messages around gender equality and men taking responsibility for their use of violence is often watered down to "say no to family violence" or a focus on men being active one day of the year i.e. "White Ribbon Day", instead of primary prevention initiatives that work to influence social change.

Primary prevention must clearly identify that violence against women, including family violence, is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. Primary prevention is the responsibility of everyone in our community – at all levels, and efforts should be made to confirm and resource expectations from government and the community more broadly. Regional and local best practice initiatives have delivered excellent results, but funding for these valuable projects remains a problem. Violence prevention efforts need to engage community action and involvement over a long term approach to ensure capacity building.

Most of our regional community based violence prevention projects have been undertaken without any significant government funding or ongoing resourcing (eg. Solving The Jigsaw, Loddon Campaspe Media Advocacy Project) but have been realised through goodwill, partnership and commitment within the consortium. Where government funded projects have rolled out, they too, have been implemented without consultation, discussion or co-ordination with local organisations. For example, some of the recent initiatives are Our Watch – Respectful Relationships in Schools and the Family Violence Hospital Data Project with Bendigo Health and the Royal Women's Hospital). We are often consulted after implementation and expected to support initiatives with resources, time and specialist knowledge and skills through training without any funding or recognition of the key role of women's specialist family violence and health services in the success and implementations of these projects. There are a number of best practice primary prevention, capacity building and community awareness projects being delivered in our region outlined below.

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### 3.2 Regional best practice primary prevention, capacity building and community awareness programs

#### Solving the Jigsaw

Solving the Jigsaw (STJ) a school based violence prevention and early intervention education program was developed by the Centre for Non Violence (CNV) in Bendigo in 1997. This bystander program was developed as a response to the needs of children seen through women and children's services and as a way to work with school communities in violence prevention and early intervention. Schools are the main place 'where children learn, negotiate and potentially contest the norms and attitudes that encourage and maintain interpersonal violence' (Flood et al 2009:10). School-based programs provide the strongest evidence of effectiveness in relation to violence prevention programs (VicHealth, 2007:18). We support the National Plan approach and rationale for school based primary prevention, violence prevention and respectful relationships education. There is an evidenced need for earlier (early years and primary school) long-term school-based violence prevention programs supported with comprehensive training of educators and others that work with children and young people as an effective way to change a culture of violence in our communities to a culture of well-being. Through its work, STJ has engaged with over 100 schools and community organisations, 1700 training participants and over 50,000 children in primary and secondary schools. A National Accredited Facilitator Training course provides a benchmark for the delivery of classroom based violence prevention and wellbeing programs in schools, and to date, 85 facilitators across four states (Vic, WA, SA, QLD and NSW) have been trained.

STJ uses a whole school approach and is predominantly targeted at upper primary to lower secondary students. It has a significant emphasis on cultural change and is a holistic violence prevention program addressing bullying in the broader context of violence including family violence. Evidence indicates that there are powerful reasons to focus violence prevention efforts on children and young people through school-based education. The whole class group sessions are delivered by trained facilitators and teachers over twenty weeks with targeted age appropriate themes, content and interactive activities that cover bullying, abuse and violence respectful relationships, wellbeing and violence prevention. Our experience and evidence indicates that longer term work is the most effective way to achieve behavioural and attitudinal changes and has the most impact in creating a whole school approach to violence prevention.

*Overall, the review found the program to be a highly valuable and innovative approach to violence prevention in the school system. The content is extremely well thought through, based on solid empirical evidence, and presented in a forum that actively engages and sustains children in increasingly higher levels of reflection on the nature of violence, and their role in prevention (Milne 2006:4).*

*I like how Jigsaw lets kids realise that bullies can have problems of their own and release their problems (Katie, primary school student, NSW)*

*Since Jigsaw, we as teachers are focussing a lot more on the students and how they are feeling and coping with things. We now have the skills to respond. (Josie, Principal STJ School, independent research findings)*

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## Take A Stand

The Take A Stand program has been implemented across the Loddon Mallee Region (LMR) targeting male dominated workplaces. The project has delivered the bystander training program to approximately 1500 employees in a variety of local government, community and industry sectors. Women's Health Loddon Mallee has worked in partnership with specialist family violence services and community services to train and recruit facilitators from a range of regional multi-disciplinary agencies working within family violence and other services. Multiagency training teams facilitate training within the workplace with the aim of creating cultures and systems that foster nonviolent norms. Employees are trained to reduce acceptance of violence condoning attitudes and behaviours and workplace culture change is strengthened through relevant adaptation of human resources policy and quality Improvement.

### Why Is Bystander Training in the Workplace Important?

- It gives simple, clear messaging on what the problem is
- It provides an immediate action response – “this is what I can do”
- It provides tools which are non-threatening and easy to understand and to use
- It is empowering – people can replace a feeling of being powerless in an uncomfortable situation with , “I can safely act”
- It replaces assumptions and myths with facts and an understanding of the reality of the situation
- By working collectively in the training situation, it raises peoples' consciousness around issues of gender, power and control.

#### Key Learnings and participant Quotes:

*“The causes of domestic violence were different to what I initially thought”*

*“Domestic violence needs to be taken on as an issue by us all. We need to change attitudes and actions in our society”*

*“I liked the practicality of the tools.”*

*‘I really liked the scenario based discussions. It applied the tools to real life situations.’*

Participants were surprised and shocked at the extent of the problem.

*“I always felt uncomfortable about interfering and fear of making things worse”*

*“I can Take A Stand against family violence”*

Many women have come forward to seek support as a result of these sessions in workplaces

*“I realised that I needed help for family violence”*

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## Media Advocacy

The Loddon Campaspe Media Advocacy Project (LCMAP) was established in 2014, engaging a broad and diverse group of regional women as survivors of family violence. The project recruited a broad and diverse group of women as media advocates, providing training to advocate through media, public speaking and community education. We have developed rural and regional key prevention messages, and have a strong rural and regional focus in the experiences represented.

Fourteen advocates have been trained and supported in media advocacy to integrate their experiences of family violence with key messages to work with media in violence prevention. Advocates have participated in a range of media and public speaking opportunities, through radio interviews and print media, closed workshops within a violence prevention conference and have undertaken targeted social media and technology safety, radio and print media training workshops.

The program:

- Empowers and supports local women survivors of family violence and sexual abuse to become advocates for change
- Developed and implemented a rural/regional model of media advocacy from rural and regional women's experiences of family violence
- Developed partnerships and training to build skills, knowledge and capacity of women's specialist family violence services to effectively use the media to raise awareness of violence against women and its prevention (Media Support Workers)
- Supports media and community awareness raising by increased gendered representation and accurate reporting of family violence and sexual abuse. *Every media contact and advocacy request is taken as an opportunity to provide information, education and promote responsible reporting of violence against women guidelines*
- Contributes to the knowledge and evidence-base for the prevention of violence against women in the media

CNV was supported with funding from the Central Victorian Prevention of Violence Against Women in our Community Project Plan (CVPVAW) and implemented the project in partnership with Annie North Women's Refuge and Loddon Campaspe Centre Against Sexual Assault. Safe Steps (formerly Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service) provided guidance by sharing their tools and resources in implementation. A reference group with representatives from the Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Consortium, a representative from Safe Steps, media, communication and local government representatives, and an internal working group developed tools, resources and delivered training. This partnership approach has helped build relationships and the shared vision across all of the partner agencies, while increasing confidence, skills and knowledge in working with media.

The work of the LCMAP is consistent with best-practice frameworks and is informing the state and national vision for the most effective ways to work with the media to prevent violence against women. Fourteen advocates have been trained to speak or develop their stories about their own experiences and promote a broader focus in the media on the prevention of violence against women.

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Advocates participated in a three-day education and training program, focused on gender equity, working with the media and public speaking.

The key learnings from working with advocates are:

- The safety and wellbeing of the advocates is the most important consideration. Risk and safety assessment, establishing guidelines and boundaries for privacy, confidentiality and technology safety are important considerations, particularly for rural and regional women
- It is essential to have in place a comprehensive screening process, including ongoing assessment of advocates safety and wellbeing and trained support workers for media advocate support
- Through using the Duluth Power and Control Wheel to explore tactics of violence in the training, it was identified that some of the advocates were still experiencing risk through contact with the perpetrator of violence (through contact with children), even though the relationship had ended
- An identified gap in the training was the potential use of social media as an advocacy tool and the risk for rural and regional women in regard to technology safety and use of social media
- Working with key media and community stakeholders in training and education is a key part of the work to educate and ensure the advocates are treated respectfully
- Media and community need to understand there is a strong focus on violence prevention, rather than just women sharing their stories
- The advocates need opportunities for support to come together collectively to share their experiences in advocacy work and create a collective voice.

### Loddon Mallee Women's Health Regional Action Plan Project

The Prevention of Violence Against Women Regional Action Plan is being developed by Women's Health Loddon Mallee within the Loddon and Mallee sub-regions. The Loddon Mallee RAP is one of nine plans being developed across Victoria to create whole of community regional collaboration to prevent violence against women. Women's Health Loddon Mallee (WHLM) is coordinating the development of the RAP with funding from the Departments of Health and Human Services, and Justice and Regulation. Over the last six months consultations and forums have been held in the Mallee district and a major conference was run in Bendigo. Consultations and workshops will bring together leaders and change-makers from a broad range of services, government agencies, peak bodies and community and sporting groups.

The focus of this plan is on primary prevention: addressing the underlying determinants of violence against women. The project also considers how can we best coordinate and collaborate in this work across sectors and communities to develop regional action plans. This project builds on the work of WHLM through the Take A Stand Project and the Violence Prevention – It's Everybody's Business conference and masterclasses delivered in Bendigo in October 2014, that presented themes that

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included: what violence against women looks like in our communities; what primary prevention of violence is; and how violence prevention is everybody's business.

### 3.3 Crisis response and current gaps in the system

Regional need and demand through police referrals, court support and response to family violence has been continually increasing, as it has been at a statewide level. Regional police referrals increased over 60% since 2010 and court support demand has increased in outreach locations, particularly Echuca and Maryborough with two of the highest recidivist rates per capita in the state. We have experienced growing division in integrated responses and outcomes when comparing key data and research of the impact of legislative and policy reform within metro studies to the experiences of regional and rural women. While we are experiencing common increasing demands across the state, there are particular vulnerabilities, gaps and barriers emerging, and even in well-developed integrated and coordinated systems there can be difficulties in managing risk and need. This can be seen through varying and inconsistent police and court responses within the region, lack of information sharing and ongoing comprehensive risk and safety assessment, referral and management of family violence by individual services, inadequate training and resources to increase local specialist responses and poor court environments. We need further opportunities to train and work collaboratively, guided by strong frameworks, policy and legislation to further build integrated system responses within communities and outreach areas. We can evidence clear differences through comparing LGA data with local data and analysing police referrals, IVO applications and granted orders, magistrate decisions, court responses and outcomes. There are areas of significant variance from our metro partners in the use of safety notices, police initiated and granted intervention orders, police coding and breaches, numbers of recidivist offenders, high numbers of children present at family violence incidents and low numbers of children listed on granted IVO's within our region. We have low numbers of men who are referred to Men's Behaviour Change from areas outside of Bendigo by service providers and a high expectation that men will engage with the program as a result of a police referral. Barriers within the system create further disadvantage and vulnerability for women, particularly inadequate, unsafe court environments and lack of accountability in the system response. Integrated Client Services aims to strengthen the work within the Consortium, across the service sector and increase opportunity in working collaboratively with police, courts, legal services, child protection and family services to respond to family violence.

### Regional opportunities, strengths and partnership in action

CNV works in partnership and collaboratively with service providers and referrals into the program come from individuals as well as other parts of the system that respond to people experiencing family violence including Victoria Police, Safe Steps (formerly Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service), the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit, Courts, Community Corrections, Child First, Homelessness and Housing services, Family, Alcohol and Other Drug and Mental Health services and General Practitioners, LCCASA and after hours services. The largest proportion of referrals is received from Victoria Police with CNV as the central intake point for all family violence referrals in the Loddon Area. Separate police referrals are received for men who have used violence against family members (respondents) and for women assessed as "Affected Family Members". These referrals are matched

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when in relationship when possible, and triaged according to the level of risk to the women and children. All people referred to CNV by police are sent information about the service while those assessed at higher risk are contacted by telephone and offered support and information. Women engage with the service along a continuum of need from: social education and information provision; referral or safety planning by telephone; court support and full case management support that extends over months, including social education and therapeutic support groups and counselling.

The Integrated Client Service program provides outreach support in Echuca, Kyneton, Maryborough, and, as required, in Castlemaine and Kyabram. The outreach service provides direct service delivery and court support to women experiencing family violence.

- The outreach service provision is supported by Maryborough District Health Service, St Luke's Anglicare Echuca, Cobaw Community Health, Kyabram Learning Centre and CHIRP (Castlemaine). Court support is an important component of the work we undertake with women.
- By providing support for women involved in the legal system response to family violence, we can reduce the stress and confusion often experienced by women and work towards increased safety for them and their children. Court Support is provided to women attending court for family violence related matters at all courts in the Loddon Area.
- The court support program in Bendigo is provided in partnership with the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre (legal support) and Annie North Women's Refuge & Domestic Violence staff (non-legal support). The court support program in Echuca and Bendigo is provided in partnership with the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre in Echuca and Maryborough. Weekly court support is provided in Kyneton and in Castlemaine as requested.
- Identifying Family Violence training and community education has been delivered within outreach locations collaboratively by CNV, Community Legal Centre, Vic Pol and other service providers to enhance integration and responses to family violence and targeted to GP's, police, health, family services and mainstream services supported with regional targeted funding. There is ongoing need to further develop links with specialist services, strengthen local service provision and partnership opportunities to improve regional integrated responses.

### Safe At Home – providing an integrated regional system response

Over recent years, there has been considerable government investment in providing legislative, policy and brokerage for practical support to enable women and their children experiencing family violence to remain in their own homes safely.

These initiatives include:

- Legislation that enables police to issue on the spot Safety Notices requiring men using violence against their partners to leave the home, regardless whether the property is rented privately, public housing or owner occupied;
- The availability of Exclusion Orders as conditions of Intervention Orders that prevent the violent person from being at the home for the length of the order; and

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- Changes to legislation that enables women to apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal for a new tenancy agreement (lease) in their name even if the woman was not named on the original lease.
- CNV has been a leading player in this integrated system. Strongly underpinned by ongoing risk and safety assessment, a range of supports are provided to support this including:
- Support for women to develop safety plans, access legal services ,attend court hearings and report breaches to police;
- Funding to assist women to increase the security of the home by changing locks, installing alarms, improved lighting and security screens;
- Funding to support men unable to remain in the home to access crisis accommodation and supported accommodation allocated through the Office of Housing, with case management support from CNV; and provision of a Men’s Behaviour Change program that supports men to take responsibility to cease using violence.
- The Loddon Campaspe Centre Against Sexual Assault is subcontracted by CNV to provide an After Hours service that responds to urgent needs of women, outside business hours, as well as assessing and responding to situations where decisions to remove men using violence from the home is being considered by police and police have access to a 24 hour 1800 number for regional referrals.

### Aboriginal Women and Children’s Case Management

This program is provided by CNV partnership with the Bendigo District Aboriginal Corporation (BDAC) and the Loddon Campaspe Integrated Family Violence Consortium. CNV provides mentoring and support to BDAC and its staff in developing and providing a specialist family violence response to Aboriginal women and children experiencing family violence. BDAC is sub-contracted to employ a Women’s Case Manager who is co-located in the Integrated Client Services. CNV employs another Aboriginal Women’s Case Manager, providing two case managers for Aboriginal women and children. This means that Aboriginal women can access culturally appropriate supports at either organisational site. This program has achieved a number of positive outcomes since its establishment several years ago, including strengthened interagency relationships between CNV, the family violence consortium and BDAC. This has developed shared understandings of family violence: from the perspective and understanding of family violence as it impacts on the Aboriginal community, together with an increased knowledge of each other’s agencies, services provided and shared practice approaches.

### Children’s project: A partnership with Cobaw Community Health in Macedon Ranges

Through additional funding from DHS, the Consortium was able to pilot a support group for pre-school aged children and their mothers in Macedon Ranges, in partnership with Cobaw Community Health. The funding enabled Cobaw to employ a qualified play therapist who was supported by a specialist family violence worker employed by CNV in a collaboration that provided specialist support to pre-school aged children and their mothers who had experienced violence in the home. Initial evaluations are very positive and the pilot will continue based on funding and we aim to extend the program into other parts of the Loddon Area.



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### Programs for men who use violence against family members

Programs for men who use violence against family members receive referrals through the integrated Client Services program and is the central intake point for all police referrals. Client services workers triage all referrals from police and send invitations to contact the service to all men concerned via electronic media messaging. All men requesting service are given an initial intake assessment conducted by telephone by a key worker. Men entering the program are comprehensively assessed by two staff, a Level 3 Men's Behaviour Change program facilitator and the key worker to coordinate service delivery. Conditional to entering the program is agreement from the men that they will provide contact details of current and former female partners. Partner contact is available for current and past partners of men to receive support from the Client Services program along continuum that includes: information about the men's program, ongoing risk alerts and assessment, safety planning and access to the full range of supports available to women provided the CNV Client Services program including coordination between the men's key worker and the women's key worker. Men are offered a range of services and supports including: access to the 24 session Men's Behaviour Change program; supported accommodation, and case management support.

The Men's Program key workers work within the Integrated Client Services team where women and children are provided services in a coordinated manner that prioritises:

1. The safety and wellbeing of children and young people;
2. The safety and empowerment of women experiencing family violence; and
3. The safety and accountability of men using violence against family members.

### Annie North Inc. Bendigo secure women's refuge – cluster model

Annie North has been providing crisis and transitional support and refuge accommodation to women and children escaping domestic and family violence and/or who are homeless as a result of domestic and family violence since 1989. As a result of family violence, it can be unsafe for women and children, particularly rural women, to remain in their family home in the short or longer term following an incidence of family violence. The data shows that police in smaller communities are still removing women and children due to safety concerns and barriers within criminal justice responses due to geographical location. Women and children need accessible and integrated support services and access to safe and secure care facilities to increase their safety, reduce risk and coordinate effective system responses. Early intervention and coordinated support is key to preventing women and children's increased risk of homelessness and family violence in the future.

Annie North was funded in May, 2014 to develop a new purpose built community care facility in Bendigo. This facility will provide a holistic service response for women and children experiencing family violence regionally. The facility will enhance women's and children's safety through the provision of an integrated service model, to provide better system responses to family violence

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during business and after hours. The facility is a unique and innovative safety response to local and regional women and children escaping (experiencing) family violence.

This contemporary cluster service model will provide therapeutic support, case management and safety for women and children by providing accommodation for up to six months for at least six families in independent units, with on-site staffing thereby increasing the accommodation and support capacity in the region for women and children. The purpose built facility will enable women and children to access a broad range of services while onsite and bring a range of specialised supports in to help keep women and children safe and secure and provide therapeutic support to help their recovery. Providing an innovative community care facility that is safe and secure and a range of integrated services is paramount to women and children's ongoing safety and wellbeing and will prevent the need for them to go out when they are at risk and/or feeling really fragile and vulnerable.

A sense of community and belonging will be created through the use of communal gathering areas and the facility will be built to be therapeutic in its design. Communal and therapeutic spaces are designed to help women and children to heal, to know that others have had similar experiences, to know that the violence they experienced was not their fault, to feel that they are cared for and worthy and that they deserve every opportunity to create a new life for themselves and their children. The new facility will foster dignity and hope for the future, enhancing and extending the integrated system response already provided within the region.

Local police will be involved in the service delivery and will be best placed to respond to any security concerns if required. Furthermore the Cluster model refuge in Bendigo will complement other local programs for women and children who are victims of family violence and men who use violence, including, RAMP, case management support and men's behaviour change programs which will enhance the integrated system response already provided within the region.

### Communities for Children Family Violence Action Plan

Communities for Children Bendigo, in consultation with the broader community and relevant stakeholders within the early years, education, community services and health sectors, have identified family violence as a key factor affecting child development in the Bendigo region.

Family violence has the highest prevalence in the Bendigo community and reported incidence of family violence are on the increase. Victorian Police Crime Statistics data shows a significant increase in family violence incidents reported to police within the region, from 649 in 2011 to over 1800 in 2015. As research clearly evidences, family violence has significant long term impacts on a children's health, development, educational attainment and employment outcomes. Family violence also has significant socio-economic consequences for the broader community.

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In light of this, Communities for Children (C4C) believed it was critical that the Early Years (EY) sector play a role in helping address family violence to ensure children have the best possible start. It is within this context that C4C Bendigo initiated the development of a Family Violence (FV) Action Plan with CNV for the EY sector.

Many EY sector workers, particularly those providing universal services, are under-resourced to support children experiencing family violence. The C4C Early Years FV Action Plan was developed in response to these findings. It is designed to be implemented by the Early Years sector, in collaboration with the Early Years Governance Group and C4C, with support from specialist family violence services.

The C4C Early Years FV Action Plan is divided into three key areas along a spectrum – prevention, intervening earlier and response. The goals are underpinned by strategies aimed at capacity building, such as training and resource development. At a high level, the Action Plan goals can be summarised as:

- Hear the voices of children, so that they are represented in project or program design and development.
- Engage the EY sector in preventative actions that change community attitudes to violence, work towards gender equity and increase understandings of the causes of family violence.
- Children who have experienced family violence are supported through a range of intervention and therapeutic responses.
- The EY workforce have the knowledge, skills and confidence to respond when family violence is identified, understand the impact on children and the causes of family violence.

During the consultation process, C4C Bendigo identified the following barriers to addressing family violence in the EY sector locally:

- Specialist family violence services are funded to support adults, primarily women, experiencing family violence
- Strategies to prevent family violence are predominantly targeted at adults, not children
- Specialist family violence services and the early years sector are not effectively aligned

### Go Goldfields Family Violence Action Plan

The Go Goldfields Alliance and Family Violence Action Group are committed to the following key principles developed by CNV working in consultation in the implementation of the Go Goldfields Action Plan. Go Goldfields acknowledges that these principles must form the backbone of any response to family violence in our communities:

- Violence and abuse is a breach of an individual's human rights - we all have a right to live free from violence.
- Violence is unacceptable in any culture or community.
- Violence occurs within a power and control context
- Family violence is a gendered issue – that is, most victims are women and their children, and most perpetrators are men.

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- We work from an understanding of oppression in all its forms and the intersections between these multiple oppressions and disadvantage.
- Responsibility for ending violence rests not only with perpetrators who use violence, but also with the whole community.
- The choice to use violence is generally supported by social systems and structures.
- Violence is preventable.
- The prevention of violence must challenge the rigid gender norms and stereotypes that are supportive of violence enabling behaviours.

The Statewide Integrated Family Violence Strategy in 2005 has guided integration, co-ordination and collaboration efforts in responding to family violence in the region, but there has been difficulties in creating a developed system response at a local level. In the development of the Go Goldfields Project, there have been barriers to implementation due to insufficient resources and capacity to promote integration and co-ordination. We consider that there needs to be increased resources attached to the Regional Integration Co-ordinators and the newly established RAMPS to ensure increased system capacity and meaningful engagement at a local level. Partnership development requires time and effort and a commitment to engage collaboratively to ensure the best possible outcomes for our community and to ensure common understandings and shared vision.

Strong government leadership and policy around prevention is urgently required. This policy should define the role of government (at all levels), the specialist family violence sector including their co-ordinating (consortium) and advisory bodies (FVAC), and broader community in primary prevention responsibilities. The policy needs to acknowledge existing efforts (whether funded or unfunded) and ensure that a regional prevention plan provides capacity and a strong role for the specialist sector to provide leadership, and resources to engage with the broader community around primary prevention and fund existing best practice initiatives.