

# Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence

By Inspiro and Eastern Health  
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# Primary prevention efforts are the key to preventing Family Violence

Inspiro and Eastern Health are pleased to have the opportunity to provide comment for the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence.

**A note on the use of language:** In line with the language specified by the Royal Commission, the term ‘family violence’ is used most often throughout this document. It should be noted however that family violence sits along a broader continuum of violence perpetrated against women. In recognising the various forms of violence, this submission draws on evidence around good practice for preventing men’s violence against women, since women constitute the vast majority of all family and sexual violence.

Inspiro and Eastern Health have been working collaboratively in the Yarra Ranges since 2011, utilising health promotion principles and actions to address the issue of family violence and to prevent it before it occurs. This document highlights points specifically relating to primary prevention and uses the *YOU&I* initiative as an example. The *YOU&I* initiative has been discussed in greater detail on page 4 of this document.

## 1. Addressing the underlying determinants\*

The key to preventing family violence is for policies, programs and strategies to focus on the underlying causes (also known as determinants) of family violence. That is, gender inequalities, cultural norms and societal structures that perpetuate unequal relations between men and women. Therefore, long-term approaches must focus on the key root causes if we ultimately aim to end family violence.

*\*While prevention is crucial to impacting family violence, this work needs to complement response services and should not come at the expense of service delivery.*

## 2. Intersectoral partnerships and collaboration

The Jakarta Declaration on Health Promotion emphasises the need for an intersectoral approach to health promotion. “There is a need to break through traditional boundaries within government sectors, between government and non-government organisations, between public and private sectors” (WHO 1997, p3). Effective action for primary prevention entails developing

partnerships across the sectors, as many of the root causes of health issues lie outside the realm of the health sector, and sit within social and economic domains.

The *YOU&I* initiative is a partnership project involving key stakeholders from different sectors, including health, local council, education and sport. This process has ensured that the prevention of violence against women is a key priority on the agenda of all organisations. It also allows for strong collaboration and sustainable implementation, as all partners provide an individual skill base, level of expertise, resources and a different avenue for implementation to occur.

### 3. An increase in funding for prevention

Effective health promotion initiatives involve a variety of complementary strategies implemented over time to address the determinants of health issues. Research indicates that health promotion programs require long term, on-going funding in order to create sustainable change in attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, on-going funding is integral to the sustainability of health promotion programs focusing on the primary prevention of family violence (Victorian Auditor General 2007). While current funding allocations are more heavily directed towards response of family violence, an increased commitment and financial investment to primary prevention is required if we want to see the reduction and prevention of family violence rates.

### 4. Leadership and regional efforts

Inspiro and Eastern Health's *YOU&I* initiative sits under the *Together for Equality and Respect* regional strategy to prevent violence against women. Led by Women's Health East, this approach means that collectively all women's health services, community health services, local governments and Medicare locals in the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne are working strategically towards preventing violence against women. The strategy highlights a positive, regional commitment to addressing this issue and acknowledges that individual policies and programs are working towards a "bigger picture". It also provides a regional support network for all family violence prevention practitioners in the area.

### 5. Focus on young people

The Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse (2003) highlights the importance of targeting primary prevention family violence programs to young people. Adolescence is an integral developmental stage whereby attitudes, beliefs and values are being formed and therefore, there is an opportunity for prevention efforts to have a positive influence on these beliefs, and instil positive messages about gender equity and respect.

In order to uphold health promotion principles of equity and social justice, youth-focused primary prevention projects should be designed to target young people in multiple settings. This includes projects outside the education setting. Whilst health promotion efforts within schools are integral to prevention efforts and should not cease, an additional focus on young people who are disengaged with the education system is also essential. Inspiro and Eastern Health's primary prevention project *YOU&I* has targeted multiple settings for young people including: sporting clubs and leagues, schools, community houses and community centres.

### ***Case Study- YOU&I***

The *YOU&I* initiative aims to prevent violence against women by raising awareness of gender equality and respectful relationships among young people in the Yarra Ranges. The initiative is led by Inspiro and Eastern Health and has been supported by a number of local community and health organisations, and key stakeholders.



*YOU&I* has been implemented in three separate phases over 4 years (from 2013 – present).

- *YOU&I phase one*: a direct participation program where young people were involved in photomedia workshops to express their understanding of equal and respectful relationships through photography. Artwork produced by participants then toured the Yarra Ranges as a gallery to share participant's expressions and learnings with the wider community.
- *YOU&I phase two*: utilised the photomedia created in phase one and worked with young people to develop a social marketing campaign. This campaign, included stencilling, hand sculptures, stickers, temporary tattoos, roadside banners, posters and a website ([www.youandirespect.com.au](http://www.youandirespect.com.au)), and was installed in different schools and community venues across the Yarra Ranges.
- *YOU&I phase three*: is currently being implemented in local football clubs and leagues. This phase involves education sessions and social marketing approaches targeting junior players, parents, club committees, coaches and football leagues and focuses on how football clubs can play a role in preventing violence against women.

The *YOU&I* initiative has utilised a multi strategy and multi-level approach, working strategically with a range of key stakeholders to effect the greatest and most sustainable change. This primary prevention initiative has taken a number of years to consult with the community, form partnerships, engage key stakeholders and develop, implement and evaluate key programs.

**Primary prevention work involves long term approaches working towards creating long term, sustainable change.**

## Summary of statements

- Primary prevention efforts are essential to 'preventing' family violence.
- Primary prevention is an integral part of the continuum in addressing family violence. All services should continue to work together to prioritise the safety of women and children.
- Primary prevention work needs to be seen as a long term effort to effect long term, sustainable societal change.

## References

Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse 2003, *Australian Prevention Programmes for Young People*, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, <[http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/prevention\\_progs\\_young.pdf](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/prevention_progs_young.pdf)>.

Victorian Auditor General 2007, *Promoting Better Health Through Healthy Eating and Physical Activity*, Victorian Auditor-General's Office, Victoria.

World Health Organisation 1997, *Jakarta declaration on leading health promotion into the 21st century*, World Health Organisation, Geneva.

## Contact details for submission

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