City of Whittlesea

Royal Commission into Family Violence

Submission

Prepared by Directorate Community Services

Endorsed by Council 26 May 2015

City of Whittlesea

Submission to the Victorian Government Royal Commission into Family Violence

Executive Summary

The City of Whittlesea (the City) is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. It is located 20 kilometres north of the Melbourne CBD. The City commends the Victorian Government on the establishment of a Royal Commission into Family Violence and welcomes the opportunity to highlight the local community needs, issues and promising practice examples to inform the Royal Commission into Family Violence and its recommendations to the Victorian Government for developing effective responses.

The City has higher proportions of population groups that are at an increased risk of experiencing family violence as identified in the evidence,[i] including young women, pregnant women (pre and post pregnancy), children (0-4 years old), women with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse women. The City is a Growth Council; the high population growth coupled with the lack of access to early intervention community services exacerbates the experiences of family violence by women and children. On top of this, there are specific contributing factors[ii] in Growth Councils that further exacerbate the experiences of family violence that are explored in this submission such as economic factors (financial hardship), alcohol and illicit drug use, weak social connections and social cohesion and women's financial dependence.

One of the main concerns for the City regarding family violence is the differential access to specialist family violence services experienced by residents. Further to this, there is a disproportionate provision of community and health service infrastructure that is failing to keep up with the growing demand and population growth in the municipality. This is explored in this submission and is also outlined in the Interface Councils Human Services Directors Group submission.

Significant State and Federal Government investment in the primary prevention of violence against women programs and resources for the specialist services responding to the crisis of family violence at the coal face is required immediately. The City commends this submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence and encourages the RCFV to contact Russell Hopkins, Director Community Services, City of Whittlesea on 9217 2315 should any further information be required.

City of Whittlesea

List of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1. That the RCFV recommends that the Victorian Government recognises the specific Growth Council contextual factors that exacerbate experiences of family violence and invest in long-term gender equity and family violence prevention and early intervention programs to be delivered in Growth Councils with the support of local government to end family violence against women and their children.

RECOMMENDATION 2. That the RCFV recommends to the Victorian Government that it provide equitable and proportionate funding increases to regional specialist family violence services that receive Victoria Police Family Incident Reports (L-17s); specifically to reduce the differential access to specialist family violence support experienced by residents in Growth Council communities.

RECOMMENDATION 3. That the RCFV recommends to the Victorian Government that they expand the gazetted postcodes for court-mandated counselling orders and Men's Behaviour Change Programs to include the entire municipality of Whittlesea to remove the structural inequality in access to these programs, and to deliver equitable access for the residents of the City of Whittlesea.

RECOMMENDATION 4. That the RCFV recommend to the Victorian Government that it resource and establish a centralised intake system that is toll free and streamline the criteria to enable support to be accessed efficiently.

RECOMMENDATION 5. That the RCFV recommend to the Victorian Government that it resource a 24 hour police station presence in local government areas with high rates of family violence.

RECOMMENDATION 6. That the RCFV recommend to the Victorian Government that it resource and establish safe places for victims of family violence to be taken immediately while services are engaged.

RECOMMENDATION 7. That the RCFV recommends that the Victorian Government recognise the expertise of and prioritises investment in local agencies to deliver evidence-based, ethnically and culturally tailored prevention and early intervention programs to end family violence against women and children in CALD communities.

RECOMMENDATION 8. That the RCFV recommends that the Victorian Government invests in the Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project as a good practice, culturally competent, integrated early intervention and prevention service model to address family violence against women and children in CALD communities that can inform practice across the State.

RECOMMENDATION 9. That the RCFV recommends to the Victorian Government that it resource the delivery of whole-of-school, evidence-based respectful relationships programs in educational

institutions (Prep to Year 12) as universal settings to improve gender equity in the community and reduce sexist behaviour and attitudes to women and to prevent family violence against women and their children.

RECOMMENDATION 10. That the RCFV recommends to the Victorian Government investment in project worker and brokerage funding to the 'Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership' to coordinate stronger collaboration between local agencies to respond locally to address family violence against women and their children through evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs.

RECOMMENDATION 11. That the Victorian Government prioritises and invests in the universal service system platform of local government (Maternal and Child Health, Early Childhood Education and Care and Youth services) to deliver and facilitate locally-tailored initiatives to end family violence against women and their children through evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs.

City of Whittlesea

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Introduction

Family violence is a significant health and safety issue that requires a multi-faceted, integrated response and significant resourcing from all levels of government and community agencies to reduce the incidence and impacts on women and children in particular, and the community in general.

In this submission we seek to make recommendations to the Royal Commission that will assist in developing effective responses to "the needs and experiences of people affected by family violence" and present from a local perspective what is working to support a "culture of non-violence and gender equality". As such we have chosen to respond to questions that we feel provide an opportunity to demonstrate local promising practice and policy initiatives or where we believe we can add value to the Royal Commission's inquiry into "how Victoria's response to family violence can be improved by providing practical recommendations to stop family violence"[iii] and to improve access to support services from the perspective of an Interface and Growth Council. In respect to this we have answered the following questions:

Question Nine. Does insufficient integration and co-ordination between the various bodies who come into contact with people affected by family violence hinder the assessment of risk, or the effectiveness of (early intervention, crisis and ongoing) support provided, to people affected by family violence? If so, please provide examples.

Question Ten. What practical changes might improve integration and co-ordination? What barriers to integration and co-ordination exist?

Question Eleven. What are some of the most promising and successful ways of supporting the ongoing safety and wellbeing of people affected by violence? Are there gaps or deficiencies in our approach to supporting ongoing safety and wellbeing? How could measures to reduce the impact of family violence be improved?

Question Seventeen. Are there specific cultural, social, economic, geographical or other factors in particular groups and communities in Victoria which tend to make family violence more likely to occur, or to exacerbate its effects? If so, what are they?

Question Eighteen. What barriers prevent people in particular groups and communities in Victoria from engaging with or benefiting from family violence services? How can the family violence system be improved to reflect the diversity of people's experiences?

Question Nineteen. How can responses to family violence in these groups and communities be improved? What approaches have been shown to be most effective?

In addition to the information provided in this submission and the inclusion of the Family Violence Advocacy Fact Sheets developed with partners (Appendix 1), the City emphasises support for the following organisations submissions to the Royal Commission:

- Municipal Association of Victoria
- The Interface Councils of Metropolitan Melbourne
- The Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership
- Whittlesea Community Connections
- Whittlesea Early Years Partnership (Best Start) Early Years Family Violence Working Group
- Women's Health in the North
- Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

Further to this, the City also supports the recommendations outlined by the **Senate Committee in 'Domestic violence in Australia' Interim report March 2015**[iv].

City of Whittlesea

Demographic profile

The City of Whittlesea is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. In 2014, the City's population was approximately 186,368 (50.4% female) and is expected to grow substantially by 2036 to 333,696 (an increase of 79%).

The City is located 20km north of Melbourne's CBD. Covering 490 square kilometres, it is a large municipality containing established urban, growth and rural areas.

The Wurundjeri Wilam people are the original inhabitants of this area and the Traditional Owners of this land. The Aboriginal community is one of the fastest growing communities within the City, with an increase in residents of 24 per cent between 2001 and 2006, and 33 per cent between 2006 and 2011. The City currently has the fourth highest Aboriginal population in Metropolitan Melbourne with 1,125 people, and is the second highest in terms of the percentage of Aboriginal people compared to the total number of residents with 0.73 per cent of the total population being Aboriginal[v].

The City is a diverse community. With migrants from more than 140 countries, 30% of residents come from a country where English is not the first language (double the Victorian average) and 43% speak a language other than English at home. The most common languages used other than English are Italian, Macedonian, Greek, Arabic and Vietnamese[vi].

An estimated 13.6%[vii] of residents in the City of Whittlesea have a permanent or long term disability which equates to approximately 26,450 people. This number is expected to grow in line with the growing population and as the population ages[viii].

There are 62 births in the City each week[ix] and a high proportion of households with children (68.6%). Approximately 156 new residents move into the City each week and 60 residential building permits per week are issued. There is a high proportion of the population under 25 years of age (34.5%)[x] and 27.1% of residents are aged 50 years old and above[xi].

Family violence incident profile

Incidences of family violence in the City increased in 2013-2014 to 2,359 incidents, a rate of 1,316 per 100,000 people[xii]. The number of incidents of family violence is one of the highest in the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne and is the fifth highest in the state of Victoria.

Key facts about family violence in the City of Whittlesea[xiii xiv]

- The number of family violence incidents continues to increase year upon year.
- Over the past 16 years (since the introduction of the Code of Practice for Victoria Police) there has been an increase of 268% for the rate of family violence per 100,000 people in the City compared to 172% for Victoria.
- The rate of family violence incidents per 100,000 people has increased 35% in two years.
- In 2013-2014 the rate of children present in family violence incidents has increased 15% on the previous year; it is higher than the rate for the state of Victoria, and one of the highest in the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne.
- 60% of all assaults recorded by police arose from family violence.
- 85% of perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence were male and 85% of victims were female.
- Family violence was the context for 31% of all rapes, and 34% of all other sex offences; men accounted for 100% of the alleged offenders.
- 84% of attendances by police for family violence incidents were to recidivist addresses (where police have attended three or more times in the past 12 months)[xv].
- The current level of specialist family violence services available to residents is not sufficient to meet the current demand.
- The majority of agencies (family violence and others) which provide services for residents are struggling to keep up with demand and some residents are going without access to the services they need.[xvi]

The capacity of the services available in the City is inadequate, despite having one of the highest rates of family violence in the State. Women and children can only access the regional family violence service through outreach and a small amount of very limited out-posting. Residents in the City experience differential access to specialist family violence services when compared to residents in the inner northern metropolitan areas of Melbourne. Specialist services such as Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service (who receive the Victoria Police family violence incident reports or "L-17's") are under significant pressure to respond to demand in the large geographical area of the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne and an area that has vastly different cultural and contextual factors that vary from municipality to municipality.

City of Whittlesea

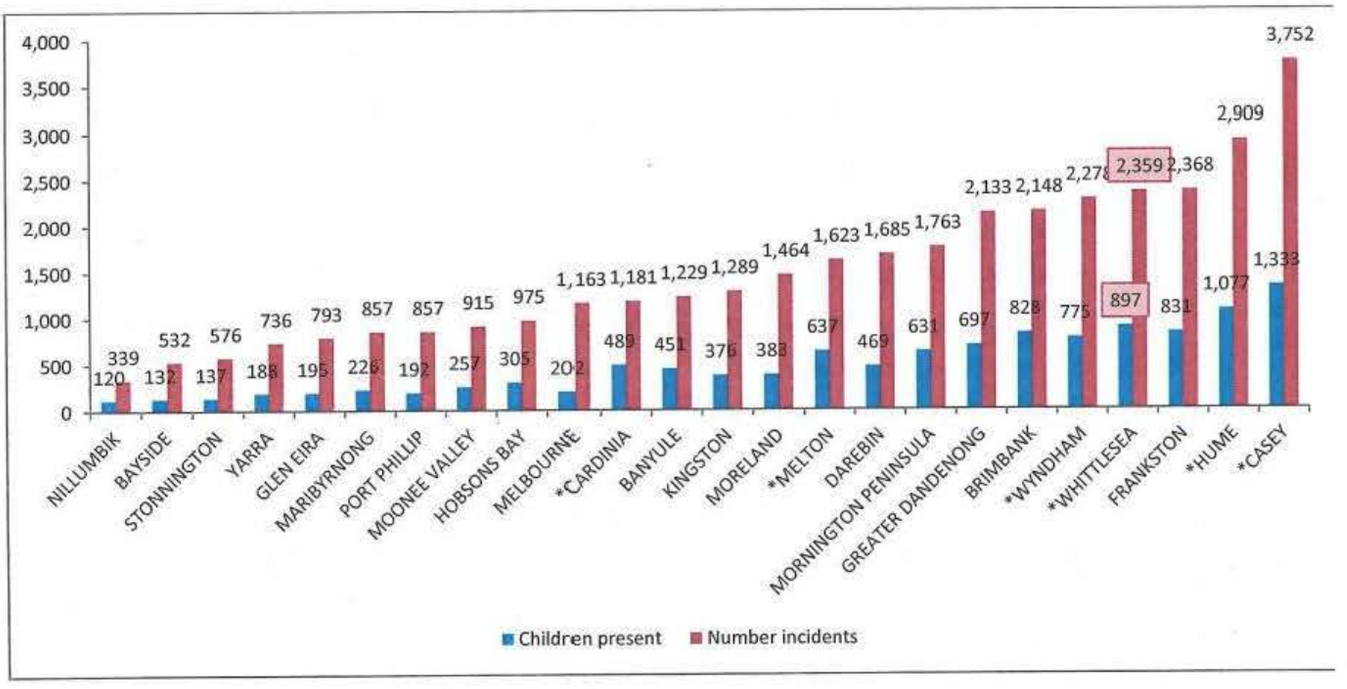
1. Growth Council contextual factors exacerbate the experiences of family violence

Question Seventeen. Are there specific cultural, social, economic, geographical or other factors in particular groups and communities in Victoria which tend to make family violence more likely to occur, or to exacerbate its effects? If so, what are they?

The City is an Interface and Growth Council. Interface Councils of Melbourne are comprised of the ten municipalities that form an arc around metropolitan Melbourne and incorporate both green wedge and urban growth boundary. They bridge the gap between metropolitan Melbourne and rural Victoria, sharing characteristics of both urban and rural communities[xvii].

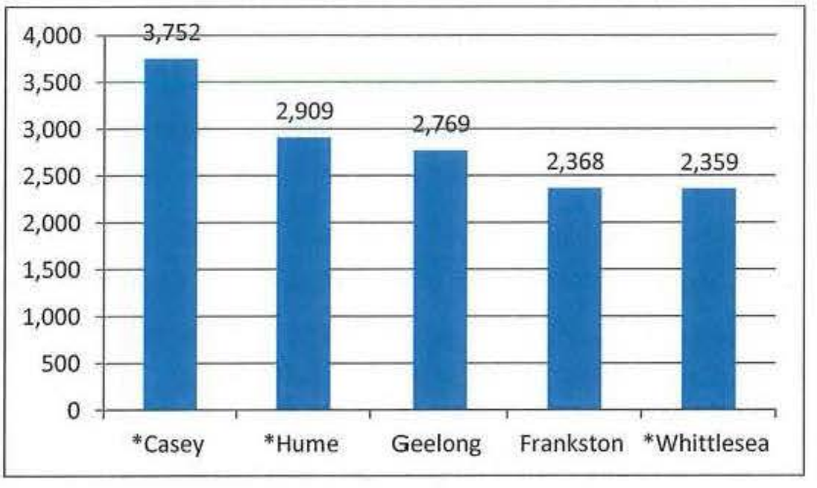
The Victoria Police reported incidents of family violence in 2013-14 reveals that Growth Councils have higher numbers of family violence incidents compared to the Victorian rate (1,129 incidents per 100, 000 people), non-growth Interface Councils and to other Metropolitan Melbourne LGAs (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Number of Family Violence Incidents Reported to Victoria Police, including with Children Present: Metropolitan Melbourne 2013-14[xviii] (*Growth Councils)



Residents in Growth Councils experience specific and complex contextual factors that contribute to experiences of family violence and significant barriers to accessing specialist family violence services, despite having some of the highest levels of family violence in the State (Chart 2).

Chart 2 Highest Number of Family Violence Incidents Reported to Victoria Police: by LGA 2013-14[xix] (*Growth Councils)



Key data facts for Growth Councils: Family Violence Incidents reported to police

Metropolitan Melbourne

- The total number of reported family violence incidents in Growth Councils makes up almost 40%[1] of the total number of family violence incidents for Metropolitan Melbourne LGAs; despite only being six LGAs out of 24.
- Four Growth Councils, Casey (3,752), Hume (2,909), Whittlesea (2,359), Wyndham (2,278), are included in the top five LGAs[2] for highest family violence incidents in Metropolitan Melbourne.

North West Metropolitan Region of Melbourne

- Growth Councils make up almost 45%[3] of the total number of reported family violence incidents for the North West Metropolitan Region of Melbourne; despite only being four LGAs out of 14.
- Three Growth Councils, Hume (2,909), Whittlesea (2,359), Wyndham (2,278), are included in the top five LGAs[4] for the highest family violence incidents in the North West Metropolitan Melbourne (Growth Council Melton comes in at 6th).

South Metropolitan Melbourne

- Growth Councils make up almost 33%[5] of the total number of reported family violence incidents for the South Metropolitan Region of Melbourne; despite only being two LGAs out of 10.

[1] 39.25%
[2] Casey (3,752), Hume (2,909), Frankston (2,368), Whittlesea (2,359), Wyndham (2,278)
[3] 44.33%
[4] Hume (2,909), Whittlesea (2,359), Wyndham (2,278), Brimbank (2,148), Darebin (1,685), Melton (1,623)

- Growth Council Casey (3,752) has the highest number of family violence incidents in the South Metropolitan Melbourne and Growth Council Cardinia (1,181) comes in at sixth highest[6].

Family Violence Incidents reported to police where Children were present

Metropolitan Melbourne

- Growth Councils make up 44.03% of the total family violence incidents with children present reported to police for the Melbourne Metropolitan Region; despite being six LGAs out of 24.
- Growth Councils of Casey (1,333), Hume (1,077) and Whittlesea (897) have the highest number of incidents of family violence with children present.

North West Metropolitan Region

- Growth Councils make up nearly 50%[7] of the total number of reported family violence incidents with children present for the North West Metropolitan Region; despite being four out of the 14;
- Growth Councils Hume (1,077), Whittlesea (897), Wyndham (775) and Melton (637) make up four out top five[8] for the North West Metropolitan Region.

South Metropolitan Region

- Growth Councils make up 36.34% of the total number of reported family violence incidents with children present for the South Metropolitan Region; despite being two LGAs out of the 10; Growth Council Casey (1,333) tops the list with Cardinia fifth (489).

Determinants of violence against women

The prevention of family violence against women and children requires acknowledging that this violence is gender-based, and that gender is essential to understanding the causes and consequences of men's violence and how to prevent it. This acknowledgment also recognises that men's violence against women is not the result of one single factor, but a complex interaction of personal, situational and socio-cultural factors; particularly in relation to gender inequality. Below is an excert from the City of Whittlesea Family Violence Strategy (p.16)[xx] (Appendix 2) which articulates the relationship between the determinants and contributing factors of violence against women based on a breadth of recognised evidence[xxi].

[5] 32.36%
[6] Casey (3,752), Frankston (2,368), Greater Dandenong (2,133), Mornington Peninsula (1,763), Kingston (1,289), (Cardinia (1,181)
[7] 49.68%
[8] Hume (1,077), Whittlesea (897), Brimbank (828), Wyndham (775) and Melton (637)

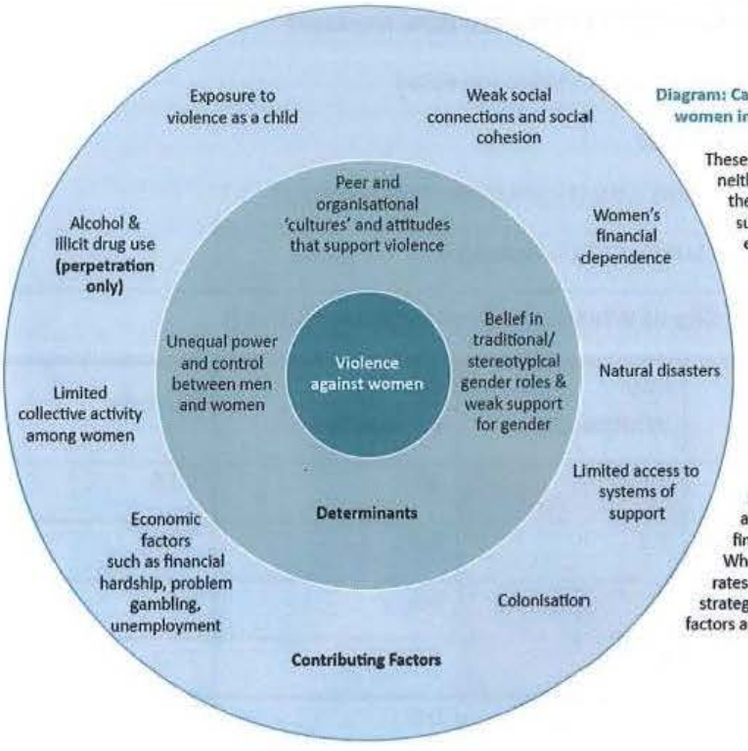


Diagram: Causes and contributing factors of violence against women in City of Whittlesea[57]

These factors may contribute to violence, but they are neither necessary nor sufficient to cause violence in themselves. They become relevant when coupled with support for gender inequality and rigid gender roles. For example, alcohol abuse only increases the likelihood of violence perpetration for men who already hold attitudes and beliefs that condone/support violence, gender inequality or rigid gender roles. In addition, such men are also more likely to see violence more frequently and with more severe impacts when they have also abused alcohol.

As seen in this diagram the contributing factors are wide in nature and the City of Whittlesea has a large range of contributing factors such as potentially weak social connections/social inclusion, limited access to systems of supports in our new growth and established areas, high pockets of financial vulnerability such as financial hardship, gambling and unemployment. Whilst we cannot blame contributing factors on our high rates of family violence nor can we ignore them. Multiple strategies are needed to overcome both the core determining factors and the contributing factors.

Although violence against women occurs across all cultural and socio-economic groups there are population groups which are typically more vulnerable to experiencing family violence including:

- Children
- Young people, particularly young women
- Pregnant women and new mothers
- Women with a disability
- Indigenous communities
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Rural communities
- Neighbourhoods affected by disadvantage

Whittlesea has higher proportions of these vulnerable population groups. The table below (chart 3) shows proportions of demographic groups in the City compared with Greater Melbourne and Victoria that are typically more vulnerable to experiencing poor health and well-bring outcomes. In the next 20 years[9] it is estimated that the City will have an additional 133,900 residents, including additions to the priority population groups identified:

- 10,809 infants and preschool children aged 0 to 4 years (69% increase)

[9] 2015 to 2035

- 25,293 school aged children (5 to 17 year olds) (80% increase)
- 14,621 residents aged over 70 years (105% increase)
- 26,415 families* (69% increase)
    - 19,167 couple families with dependents (69% increase)
    - 5,447 one parent families (71% increase)

Chart 3. Demographic Groups in the City of Whittlesea (% of total population)

Demographic group	City of Whittlesea	Greater Melbourne	Victoria
Single parents families	12.7	10.4	10.5
Older residents (70 +)	7.2	9.2	10.1
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	7.4	6.5	6.4
Young people (12 – 24)	17.7	17.4	17.1
Young women (15 - 24)	6.8	6.8	6.6
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders	0.7	0.5	0.7
Women	50.4	50.8	50.8
Residents born overseas	33.6	31.4	26.2
Non-English speaking background	42.7	29.1	23.1
Need for assistance with core activities	5.2	4.5	4.8

Notably higher proportion compared with Greater Melbourne and Victoria

Same or slightly higher proportion compared with Greater Melbourne and Victoria

Lower proportion compared with Greater Melbourne and Victoria

Contributing factors to violence against women

Below is a snapshot of how some of the contributing factors for family violence identified by VicHealth[xxii] are present in the City:

(i) Limited systems of support

The National Growth Area Alliance reports that "Growth areas are characterised by levels of disadvantage and unemployment higher than those of metropolitan Australia. There are lower levels of education, and higher incidences of risk behaviors. The combination of these risk factors (contributors) together with the lack of appropriate and accessible services (further detailed below); means that families and children in growth areas are more likely to experience negative outcomes.

Compounding this, outer metropolitan growth areas have significantly less community services than the metropolitan average, examples include:

- $9.8 billion lag in infrastructure provision
- $10 billion required to complete proposed rail and road works
- 40% of health care services are located in inner Melbourne where only 20% of Melbourne's population lives
- $36 billion will be needed over the next 30 years to provide all of the infrastructure needs of greenfield sites.[xxiii]

This means families do not have the same levels of support as families in inner metropolitan areas making them more vulnerable and less resilient than their inner metropolitan counterparts.[xxiv]

Growth Council LGAs such as the City of Whittlesea experience unique challenges that are emphasised by the significant lack of public investment which has seriously undermined the liveability of these areas and the health and wellbeing of the residents[xxv]. The NGAA recommends establishing a Suburban Community Infrastructure Program and to extend the Regional Development Australia Fund to prioritise outer metropolitan growth areas to ensure this growth is adequately catered for[xxvi].

The State government recognised the challenges faced by growth areas in the 2015-16 Victorian Budget by including $50 million in 2015-16 as an initial contribution towards a new Interface Infrastructure Fund to support councils in outer suburban areas to deliver local infrastructure. The budget stated that *"this [fund] will assist in supporting local areas that have experienced unique infrastructure challenges in recent years, including significant population growth."* The City acknowledges this commitment and emphasises that significant funding dedicated to service provision is required alongside investment in infrastructure. Without adequate resourcing, population growth will continue to put strain on service providers.

(ii) Economic factors such as financial hardship, problem gambling and unemployment

One of the attractors of living in growth areas is lower house prices. However, families living in growth areas are faced with high living costs, such as mortgages and petrol due largely to the lack of public transport services as well as fewer opportunities to access local jobs and community amenities.

The Vulnerability Assessment for Mortgage, Petrol and Inflation Risk and Expenditure (VAMPIRE) was developed using data from the 2006 Census provides a valid indication of communities level of vulnerability to poor health and wellbeing outcomes based on cost of living. Results show that growth areas in the City including Doreen, Mernda, and Epping North are vulnerable to increases in these living costs.

The demand for crisis financial assistance for residents in the City is also growing. Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC), a locally based NGO, conduct a survey of clients who access emergency relief (ER) in the form of a cash cheque for $71, to assist people in financial hardship or crisis. The report showed that there are a growing number of people requesting ER putting increasing pressure on the services. Results also showed that around 70% of those requesting ER were female. Over one third of respondents (39.4%) stated that their living arrangements were single with children (sole parents); the majority of whom were women (86.7%).[xxvii] A further 21.3% were living in a couple household with children; 68.5% of whom were female. Around one in six respondents (17%, n=43) in 2014 indicated that a member of their household had been affected by family violence in the preceding 12 months. Almost all respondent households experiencing family violence in 2014 indicated that it was affecting their capacity to meet their household's basic needs (93.1%), which is an increase of 28% compared to 2010.

Another factor that can contribute to the financial hardship experienced by some households in the municipality is problem gambling. There is evidence that problem gambling impacts on family relationships and can increase family conflict[xxviii]. The City of Whittlesea Annual Household Survey 2013 showed that 7.1% of respondents "play the pokies" at local venues within the municipality. Recent data released by the Victorian Gambling and Liquor Regulation reveals that the City has the sixth highest total expenditure on electronic gaming machines (EGM) in Metropolitan Melbourne at just over $96 million ($96,219,038). This equates to $263,614 per day.

The WCC Emergency Relief survey also showed that over 7% of survey respondents indicated that a member of their household has gambled regularly within the last 12 months, with losses more than they can afford. Of those that identified gambling losses in their household in the 2014 survey, 80% stated that more than $100 per fortnight is lost as a result of gambling. Between 2010 and 2014, more survey respondents are losing more money to gambling. Between this period, there has been an approximate 12% increase in those experiencing financial losses of $50 or more per fortnight as a result of gambling. In 2014, 90% reported losing more than $50 per fortnight, compared to 78% in 2010. Forty percent of respondents who indicated a household member had gambled also had a household member that was affected by family violence in the last 12 months. [xxvii]

(iii) Women's financial dependence

Recent research is showing that financial hardship experienced by some residents in the City is greater compared with the state average and may only be increasing over time. It also shows that on average women in the City have lower incomes, are less likely to be employed full-time and are more likely to seek crisis financial assistance than men[xxix].

The median weekly household income in the City is $716; $66 less than that for the Northern and Western Metro Region and $33 less the Victorian state average. The median weekly income of full-time and self-employed males was $1,069 per week, 31.6% higher than that of female respondents ($812 per week). Females were more likely to be employed part time (14.8% compared with 6.2%) and more likely to be undertaking home duties (14.1% compared with 0.5% for males). Findings from the 2011 Census showed that the income gap between men and women over the age of 15 in

the City was 81% compared with 67% for Victoria. Further, the median hourly income for employed men was 9% higher than that for employed women (8% for Victoria). [xxx]

(iv) Alcohol

There is growing evidence demonstrating the correlation between the misuse of alcohol and increased incidence of family violence. In 2012-13, alcohol was identified as a possible or confirmed factor in 43% of all family violence incidents attended by Police, and on a yearly basis, alcohol harm is estimated to cost the Victorian Government and community $4.3 billion[xxxi].

Australian research has found that packaged liquor outlets in neighbourhoods may contribute to increased assaults and family violence in the home.[xxxii]

- Nearly 80% of alcohol consumed in Australia is sold at packaged liquor outlets, and this proportion has been steadily increasing[xxxiii]
- Between 1993 and 2008 the number of pubs in Victoria increased by around 30% and bottle-shops (packaged liquor outlets) increased by more than 80%[xxxiv]

There is evidence of an association between the frequency of a perpetrator's drinking and the severity of the violence within intimate partner relationships[xxxv]. This association has been found on days of national celebration and holiday, such as Australian Football League Grand Final, Christmas and New Year periods, most school holidays and Easter, occasion when alcohol consumption is also highly present. Research in the United Kingdom has found strong links between alcohol, sport and domestic violence. Research in the north west of England for the FIFA World Cups (2002-2010) found that the risk of domestic violence increased by 26% when the English team won or drew and by 38% when the English team lost.[xxxvi]

RECOMMENDATION 1. That the RCFV recommends that the Victorian Government recognises the specific Growth Council contextual factors that exacerbate experiences of family violence and invest in long-term gender equity and family violence prevention and early intervention programs to be delivered in Growth Councils with the support of local government to end family violence against women and their children.

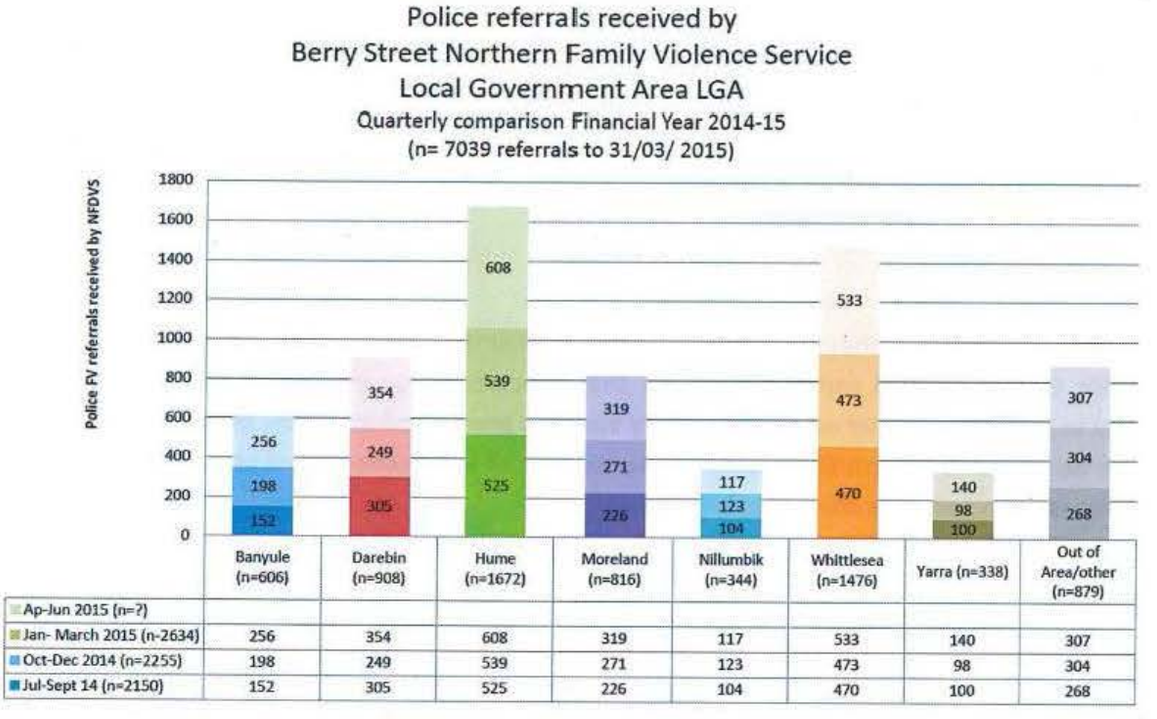
City of Whittlesea

2. Differential access to specialist family violence services

Question Eighteen. What barriers prevent people in particular groups and communities in Victoria from engaging with or benefiting from family violence services? How can the family violence system be improved to reflect the diversity of people's experiences?

Whilst the family violence referrals have more than tripled in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne since 2009-10 and increased 8.7% in 2013-14; the biggest increases in the past year have been seen in the Growth Council LGAs of Whittlesea (12%) and Hume (14%)[xxxvii]. However, despite the increasing demand for services there has not been a proportionate increase to the workforce, program funding or additional resources in the family violence sector. Already-stretched services supporting women and children and holding men accountable for their violence are under severe pressure. Chart 3 below outlines the increasing demand on the regional service responding to police reports of family violence incidents, Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service (NFDVS).

Chart 3. Victoria Police Referrals received by Berry Street NFDVS by LGA 2014-15



Northern Family & Domestic Violence Service (NFDVS) 2015

Berry Street
We never give up

Despite having one of the highest levels of family violence incidents in the region, family violence services are not adequately meeting the needs of the City's residents. Currently, services provide outreach from non-specialist agencies. Due to funding limitations these programs are only available for a limited period each week. The majority of family violence services are not located in the

municipality and many nearby services have poor public transport access.[xxxviii] Regional services such as Berry Street are encountering increasing numbers of clients from the municipality. Current funding levels place considerable constraints on services to maintain levels of support in an environment where reports of family violence continue to increase. Services require significantly more resources to improve their capacity to meet the crisis demand in the municipality.

A fact sheet developed by Women's Health in the North in partnership with the Northern Integrated Family Violence Services outlines the economic benefit of an ideal, best-practice intervention to support a women experiencing family violence. The 'Fund the Family Violence System: Save Money, Save Lives' fact sheet[xxxix] articulates the current, unstainable way women are dealt with when they enter the family violence system compared to the cheaper, more effective, long term support provided to women in the ideal response.

The best outcomes occur when women and children have their immediate needs met and where there is longer term support available. The ideal, best-practice response to a woman experiencing family violence would mean that she would enter the system once at a cost of $29,825.56 to deliver her to safe and affordable housing. However, the reality is that inadequate funding to respond appropriately results in a greater long-term cost – she enters at least seven times at a cost of $53,279.07 and in the absence of safe and affordable housing or support she returns to her violent partner (refer fact sheet – Appendix 3).

In addition, in some instances services targeting children impacted by family violence will not provide a service if the child remains living in a home with a perpetrator. Given the lack of existing support services as outlined in this submission, this sometimes results in women remaining in unsafe environments resulting in children not having access to vital support services.

In 2014 Council engaged RMIT Social Work Masters students to complete a service mapping project to gather information about resident access to family violence specialist services. The key findings from the 'Family Violence Service Pathways: Mapping and Consultation Project' Report (Appendix 4)[xl] include:

- The majority of services do not have offices within the municipality and many nearby services have poor public transport access.
    - Out-posting is one way in which agencies are responding to this challenge.
- Lower numbers of early intervention services, particularly among family violence specific services.
- Low numbers of group programs, particularly for women.

Maps developed as part of this project (Appendix 4) reveal the differential access to specialist family violence services experienced by Whittlesea residents. Specialist family violence services are clustered in the inner-northern suburbs. Only one specialist service is located in the municipality, compared to the inner-metropolitan municipalities which experience greater saturation of specialist services. The service located in the municipality provides limited men's behaviour change programs and limited group and counselling support for women and children (for the entire NMR). The key specialist service for women and children which receives the police reports for family violence incidents (L-17's) is located more than 10kms out of the municipality; limited outreach is offered locally. Only 2% of residents (approximately) live within walkable distance to train services[xlii] and many households have no car (18.7%) or only one (21.4%);[xliii] meaning that for many women experiencing violence they are left isolated without any access to transport.

RECOMMENDATION 2. That the RCFV recommends to the Victorian Government that it provide equitable and proportionate funding increases to regional specialist family violence services that receive Victoria Police Family Incident Reports (L-17s); specifically to reduce the differential access to specialist family violence support experienced by residents in Growth Council communities.

The City has very high number of family violence incidents that are perpetrated by recidivist offenders; 84%[xliii] of attendances by police were to recidivist addresses (where police have attended three or more times in the past 12 months). This is the highest number of recidivism for the Northern Division 5[10]. In 2013 the City welcomed the expansion of the Heidelberg Family Violence Court boundaries to include two City of Whittlesea postcodes[11] however; the boundaries do not include the entire municipality. As a result of this our residents are systematically excluded from court-mandated counselling orders such as mandated participation in behaviour change programs.

RECOMMENDATION 3. That the RCFV recommends to the Victorian Government that they expand the gazetted postcodes for court-mandated counselling orders and Men's Behaviour Change Programs to include the entire municipality of Whittlesea to remove the structural inequality in access to these programs, and to deliver equitable access for the residents of the City of Whittlesea.

Question Nine. Does insufficient integration and co-ordination between the various bodies who come into contact with people affected by family violence hinder the assessment of risk, or the effectiveness of (early intervention, crisis and ongoing) support provided, to people affected by family violence? If so, please provide examples.

[10] LGAs of Whittlesea, Darebin, Nillumbik, Banyule and Hume

[11] Whittlesea LGA postcodes include: Epping (3076) and South Morang (3752) in the postcodes for court-mandated counselling orders (November 2013)

Question Ten. What practical changes might improve integration and co-ordination? What barriers to integration and co-ordination exist?

There is duplication and gaps in services, lack of mechanism to share knowledge and collaborate across agencies. Below, **case study one** demonstrates service system inadequacies and **case study two** presents an example of local initiative working to build a more collaborative culture of information sharing and partnerships.

Case Study One - Sustained Home Visiting Program Antenatal – 2 years (SHVP)

The experience of a Sustained Home Visiting Program worker in supporting a client currently experiencing family violence is outlined in Appendix 5. This case study outlines the challenges in supporting the client to access appropriate services in a crisis situation.

In summary, the barriers and challenges experienced in navigating the service system and ensuring support to the client are outlined below:

- Police responsiveness limited due to 24 hour staff not being available at all police stations and a lack of response from the police officer when solo officer on site.
- Problems in meeting different program criteria that prevented practical support including the change of locks and access to a mobile phone.
- One service providers' requirement for a written assessment was not practical in a crisis situation.
- Lack of a single point of referral for support in crisis situation.
- Despite range of organisations involved (Victoria Police, City of Whittlesea, Berry Street, Northern Crisis Advocacy Response Service, Women' s Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Kildonan, Plenty Valley Community Health, a refuge and North East Housing Service), no one provider took the lead in providing support.
- Many support agencies offer programs funded through grants and are limited to a specific period of time, keeping track of what is available and when, is impossible when the services are not centralised.

RECOMMENDATION 4. That the RCFV recommend to the Victorian Government that it resource and establish a centralised intake system that is toll free and streamline the criteria to enable support to be accessed efficiently.

RECOMMENDATION 5. That the RCFV recommend to the Victorian Government that it resource a 24 hour police station presence in local government areas with high rates of family violence.

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RECOMMENDATION 6. That the RCFV recommend to the Victorian Government that it resource and establish safe places for victims of family violence to be taken immediately while services are engaged.

Case Study Two – the Whittlesea Early Years Family Violence Working Group

The Whittlesea Early Years Family Violence Working Group (the working group) is a subgroup of the Whittlesea Early Years Partnership (Best Start) and was established in 2011. It represents a unique local approach to integrating family violence services with early years' services. The working group has enabled practitioners from a range of services to share practice expertise, engage in group problem solving and access peer support with a particular focus on the needs of children (aged 0 to 9 years) who have experienced family violence.

The main objectives include:

- *Focus locally on the needs and rights of young children (aged 0 to 9 years) who have experienced family violence.*
- *Ensure appropriate linkages and communication with key projects/groups.*
- *Map services.*
- *Raise awareness of and advocate with other key agencies.*
- *Ensure mutual resourcing and shared learning between providers by identifying local education needs/gaps.*

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3. Specific barriers for a culturally diverse community

Question Eighteen. What barriers prevent people in particular groups and communities in Victoria from engaging with or benefiting from family violence services? How can the family violence system be improved to reflect the diversity of people's experiences?

Question Nineteen. How can responses to family violence in these groups and communities be improved? What approaches have been shown to be most effective?

Family violence occurs in all communities; it is critical to provide specialist family violence services with a CALD focus in the City of Whittlesea given the high CALD population (refer demographic profile). The current and projected growth rate as well as the geographic isolation of some areas due to the urban/rural interface further exacerbates family violence. The high rates of family violence incidents also require a comprehensive approach to not only address the critical issues arising currently but to position the City of Whittlesea into the future. More equitable access to behaviour change programs for all perpetrators of family violence has the potential to reduce the high rates of recidivism in this municipality. Family violence is an issue for all communities however behaviour change programs for CALD men will have a profound impact on the number of local men being held accountable for their violence in a culturally sensitive way, and who are currently unable to benefit from existing mainstream services **(refer Promising Practice and Policy Initiative 1 – the Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project)**. Research into programs trialled with Vietnamese and South Asian men in other locations found a majority of men would not have participated in mainstream programs.[xliv]

Promising Practice and Policy Initiative 1 - The Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project

The Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project (WCFVP) brings together a range of key local agencies to design, deliver and evaluate an integrated place-based model to reduce and prevent family violence in Whittlesea's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

The WCFVP was designed following a scoping exercise (refer full report[xlv]) that incorporated a review of international literature with extensive consultation with survivors of violence, community representatives and support agencies. It works across prevention, early intervention and response, aligning with VicHealth Framework for Primary Prevention of Violence against Women and the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

The project aims to support CALD communities, newly arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to break the cycle of family violence and empower communities to confront and respond to the challenges of preventing violence against women and children. The project is managed by a steering group consisting of representatives from:

- *Whittlesea Community Connections*
- *City of Whittlesea*
- *The Salvation Army Crossroads Family Violence Services*

- *Kildonan Uniting Care*
- *Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service*
- *Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership*[12]
- *Plenty Valley Community Health Service*
- *Victoria Police*
- *inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family violence*

In 2014 the WCFVP achieved some major successes in its first full year of implementation. Under the guidance and support of a proactive, action-orientated steering group, the project delivered $20,000 of brokerage grants to support local CALD women's groups and provided family violence community legal education and training to 74 women from these groups. One in five women later accessed family violence support from Whittlesea Community Connections and many reported feeling confident to support friends and family to access support services. Six women from these groups went on to form the basis of the project's Women's Advisory Group, a group established and supported to provide ongoing feedback and input to ensure the WCFVP remains responsive to the needs of the community.

Initial consultations were held with eight local community and/or religious leaders. This resulted in a family violence forum that attracted 110 participants from the local Chaldean community, and plans to deliver similar forums or activities with other local faith groups. The project explored options for providing early intervention support during the settlement process and received handover of Victoria Legal Aid's successful Settled and Safe program, with a pilot to be adapted and developed with the local Iranian community in 2015. Similar work was undertaken to explore potential models for developing a whole of school respectful and equitable relationship program to be piloted at a local primary school. Funding to further scope and develop this element continues to be sought.

With generous support from inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence (inTouch), project members came together to raise the funds to pilot an Arabic-speaking Men's Family Violence Group. The WCFVP joined with inTouch to recruit and support two bilingual Arabic-speaking facilitators who completed the Men's Behaviour Change (MBC) facilitator's course at the close of 2014. To our knowledge this is the first time this has occurred in Victoria. The successful implementation of this pilot in 2015 will provide valuable learnings for a fully accredited Arabic-speaking MBC in the future (refer below for more detail). 2015 brings many exciting opportunities to expand each element of the project. It will also see implementation by the WCFVP of an Our Watch funded project working

[12] A partnership of over 40 human services agencies, community-based organisations and state government departments. The WCF is a voluntary alliance of organisations including the City of Whittlesea, State and Federal Government Departments, and Human Service Organisations, working together with shared commitments and goals for the benefit of the City of Whittlesea's communities. http://www.whittleseacommunityfutures.org.au/default.asp

specifically with the local Iranian community to design and deliver violence against women and children prevention activities – 'Hamdel' project.

Hamdel: Whittlesea Iranian Community Preventing Violence Against Women and their Children

Hamdel is Persian for 'united partners sharing the same values'. The project aims to build partnerships between women, men, community leaders and agencies with the shared goal of preventing violence against women and children. It is funded by Our Watch for 12 months and is in early stages of implementation.

Lead agency: Whittlesea Community Connections (on behalf of the WCFVP)

Lead partner agencies: Salvation Army Crossroads Family Violence Service and Women's Health In the North

Goal: The Project aims to increase the capacity of the Whittlesea Iranian community to design and develop preventing violence against women and children activities. The Project will accomplish the following objectives:

- *Empower Iranian women and engage men by supporting and resourcing community groups.*
- *Build the capacity of community and religious leaders as PVAW advocates.*
- *Support newly arrived community members through early settlement legal education.*
- *Develop and design other community-led PVAW activities.*

This project is new and will be evaluated; findings and reports will be available late in 2015. The project model has been developed based on best-practice research and evidence and is being tailored to the localised needs of the Whittlesea Iranian community. This offers a promising model for engaging CALD communities in the City of Whittlesea in primary prevention of violence against women activities. This project is funded by Our Watch.

Arabic-language Men's Family Violence Program

The Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project (WCFVP) in partnership with inTouch Inc Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, supported two Arabic-speaking workers to complete the accredited training at Swinburne University required to deliver Men's Behaviour Change Programs to the best practice No To Violence standards. Subsequently project partners (including the City of Whittlesea) funded a pilot men's family violence program for Arabic-speaking men. This pilot is currently being implemented and will be evaluated by Monash University as part of the WCFVP model. To the knowledge of the WCFVP steering group this is the only program of its kind in Victoria, if not Australia. This pilot will improve Arabic-speaking men's access to family violence intervention programs and result in increased evidence base men's behaviour change programs focused on CALD Communities' needs.

Funding of $413,330 is sought to continue to deliver the Whittlesea CALD Communities Family

Violence Project (refer to advocacy fact sheet two - Appendix 1).

RECOMMENDATION 7. That the RCFV recommends that the Victorian Government recognise the expertise of and investment in local agencies to deliver evidence-based, ethnically and culturally tailored prevention and early intervention programs to end family violence against women and children in CALD communities.

RECOMMENDATION 8. That the RCFV recommends that the Victorian Government invests in the Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project as a good practice, culturally competent, integrated early intervention and prevention service model to address family violence against women and children in CALD communities that can inform practice across the State.

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4. Local government as a universal service: a platform for integrated programs to prevent violence against women and their children

Question Eleven. What are some of the most promising and successful ways of supporting the ongoing safety and wellbeing of people affected by violence? Are there gaps or deficiencies in our approach to supporting ongoing safety and wellbeing? How could measures to reduce the impact of family violence be improved?

Universal services

Local Government is well positioned to be a key facilitator in ending family violence against women and their children in our communities. It is well placed to understand the local issues and provides universal services that intersect across the lifespan. From Maternal and Child Health Services, Kindergartens, and Playgroup facilitation within family services (refer **Promising Practice and Policy Initiative Two - Connecting Children and Families in Epping North Project**) to generalist Youth Services as well as support services for older adults such as Home and Community Care and the general community through our Community Development Officers based out in the community (case study three) and further to the partnerships we facilitate.

Case Study Three – City of Whittlesea Community Development Worker (based in rapidly growing suburb in the municipality)

"Working in this suburb, I see many new families arriving each week. Many of who have no local family supports and have limited social and friendship networks. The rise in family violence is well documented, and is something that I hear about in the community, either directly from women themselves, or through community members who come to me concerned about people they know and care about.

On one occasion, myself and another Council staff member stopped to assist a young woman who was stranded on the median strip in the main road with two young children. Her car had broken down. While chatting with her on the roadside, she talked about the family violence that she had just fled. She was not aware of any support services. She gave me her phone number and I called her when I returned to work the next day to provide her with information about family violence support services. She had a lot of other issues going on and I connected her with various supports over time.

We have recently started a new program that operates out of the facility I work in. It's an open group for women from a variety of cultural backgrounds who come together, share information, meet new people and are making new friends. At the first session, two women disclosed current family violence. The facilitator of the session has been trained to respond to disclosures of family violence and is aware of support services and referral processes."

Maternal and Child Health Service

Maternal and Child Health is a universal service platform in local government that intersects with a priority population group for risk of family violence. Practice Guidelines 2009 (Department of Early Childhood Development Feb 2010) state that, at the Key Ages and Stage Consultation - four weeks,

MCH nurses can play an important role in identifying family violence and provide information and support to mothers and their children. Observations can be made in regard to women, their children, their interaction and the physical environment for signs of unsafe family life related to family violence. These signs include physical injury, emotional state, body language and developmental stages in babies, the ability of the mother to move freely around the home, to access all rooms and house content, whether the mother is free to meet with nurses on their own. Nurses will also use their knowledge of family violence risk assessment to assess safety. Nurses will ask in a conversational style, about family safety. Although these questions are asked at the babies four week consultation, these questions can be asked at any consultation if professional judgement warrants.

Promising Practice and Policy Initiative Two - Connecting Children and Families in Epping North Project

The Connecting Children and Families in Epping North Project targets families in the suburb of Epping North with a particular focus on vulnerable families. The program logic is included in Appendix 6 for further details. The project was developed in response to:

- *High levels of family violence*
- *Demand for new parent groups & for grandparents as carers for young children*
- *Social isolation*
- *Limited community supports*
- *Families from diverse cultural groups*

The project aims to build on the universal platform of Maternal and Child Health Services to provide a continuum of support to families that are at risk of disengaging from early childhood and family services, as well as families that are reluctant to engage in services at all due to a range of factors. Some participants in the project activities were referred to family violence services. Over the course of the project, the Family Engagement Facilitator Team has supported, referred or engaged in conversations with the families on the following services/topics:

- *Playgroup (494); Child Care (125); Kindergarten (115); Schools (23)*
- *Maternal and Child Health (134); Enhanced Maternal and Child Health (25)*
- *Agencies/ organisations (141); Program services (134); Family violence (44)*

Youth Services

The WAYUP Project involved the City of Whittlesea, City of Darebin, Bunji – Bunji, Whitelion and Wayup Project Initiative Support – Northland Secondary College and was funded through the Department of Human Services- Community Initiative Fund: Update 2009/2010 and the local councils.

The program was a series of cultural and surf camps with Aboriginal young people with the aim of linking them into their Indigenous culture. The project is linked to the State-wide Indigenous Family Violence Ten Year Plan, and included a key focus area of raising awareness of violence in the community. It also held a strong emphasis on bringing young people back to culture, to strengthen their Identities, raise self-esteem levels and build community.

RECOMMENDATION 9. That the RCFV recommends to the Victorian Government that it resource the delivery of whole-of-school, evidence-based respectful relationships programs in educational institutions (Prep to Year 12) as universal settings to improve gender equity in the community and reduce sexist behaviour and attitudes to women and to prevent family violence against women and their children.

Partnerships

The City facilitates a range of partnerships, predominately the Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership (WCF) which is made up of 45 not for profit agencies and government department representatives. Within the WCF there are a number of clusters including, Early Years (Best Start), Aged, Cultural Diversity, Disability and Youth. The broad partnership as well as the specific clusters focus on planning for services and programs, sharing knowledge and striving for a more integrated service system locally.

Local partnerships are critical in tackling family violence as they provide a platform for early intervention, working collectively to understand the role each partner plays in the delivery of services and/or programs to the local community. Previously the Victorian Government provided the funding for the project worker position to facilitate the WCF. The project worker facilitates the building of stronger collaboration between local service providers. When this State funding ceased the City continued to fund the project worker position with some support from other partners.

In a growth area such as the City of Whittlesea where there has been a real absence in local funding for family violence, the City and its agencies have relied on the agencies within the WCF to extend their service to our municipality from their established bases in the inner metropolitan areas. This has stretched their resources. Productivity is lost in travel and other associated complications when trying to provide services to a local government area that they are not based in.

RECOMMENDATION 10. That the RCFV recommends to the Victorian Government investment in project worker and brokerage funding to the 'Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership' to coordinate stronger collaboration between local agencies to respond locally to end family violence against women and their children through evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs.

Workplace support

One way in which the City is directly providing support to women experiencing family violence is through the City of Whittlesea Family Violence Workplace Support Policy (attached, refer **Promising Practice and Policy Initiative Three – workplace support**). Whittlesea was one of the first councils to introduce a family violence clause into the Enterprise Agreement in 2011. This clause is now rated as best practice for its support for employees and because it contains all seven of the principles endorsed by the ACTU Congress 2012 in the Work, Life Policy.[xlvi]

Promising Practice and Policy Initiative Three – Workplace support

The City is proud to be one of the first local governments to introduce a family violence clause in the Enterprise Agreement 2011. The clause incudes 20 days of paid leave and underpins council's policy to support staff experiencing family violence. Given that around 45 incidents of family violence are reported to the police each week in the municipality and that more than half of the Council's workforce lives in the municipality, the leadership team recognised that it is highly likely that there are people affected by family violence working at the council. Since the introduction of the clause in 2011, about 15 employees, out of a workforce of over 1,100, have accessed the paid leave to attend court appointments, seek counselling or attend other medical appointments.

The family violence policy seeks to increase the safety of women experiencing violence and support them in the workplace. Including paid leave there are other things that council can provide that will support someone in this situation. For example, providing support for employees to change work hours or location, practical initiatives such as diverting phone and email to providing information about services through mainstream channels such as the staff e-newsletter. The City have developed a set of implementation procedures and training to ensure a coordinated and consistent response to staff.

Family violence training has been provided to "people managers" (anyone who has staff reporting to them) and 16 specialised contact officers are in place as first point of contact to assist staff to access the supports. Promotion of the policy happens regularly through different mechanisms including face-to-face team meetings for offsite staff, intranet and staff events.

The workplace may be the only place a family violence victim can spend a significant proportion of time away from the perpetrator. The workplace is a place in which those experiencing family violence can seek support and find out about family violence support services. The City recognises the impacts that workplace policy has on increasing access to support services for women experiencing violence and how it could engage in the prevention of escalating violence by intervening early through support and paid leave entitlements for staff. The policy helps to develop an environment that promotes gender equity and models non-violent and respectful relationships to prevent family violence occurring; while creating a supportive environment to encourage victims of family violence to seek support.

Embedding gender equity into council business

International evidence[xlvii] shows countries with high levels of gender equity - which value women's participation and representation and where there are fewer economic, social or political differences in power between men and women - have significantly lower levels of intimate partner and sexual violence. The strongest predicator of high levels of violence against women at the population level is unequal power between men and women. Therefore it can be demonstrated that to reduce and to eliminate violence against women and children, governments and communities should focus on improving gender equality and reducing inequities between men and women.

As one of the largest employers in the municipality, a service provider and an advocate for the community, Council has a responsibility and is well placed to address gender inequities and to build an inclusive and fair community for women and men. Local governments play a pivotal role in creating safe and healthy environments for the communities they serve. Local governments provide a range of community services, safe public spaces and community facilities which can be used as platforms to influence change. Local governments can lead change across policy, planning, programming, service delivery, partnerships, political influence and advocacy, social marketing and integrating gender equity throughout all Council business and as a whole of community responsibility. The ***'Gender Equity in Local Government Fact Sheets'***[xlviii] point to the simple ways gender equity can be integrated in Council's core business through gender analysis; approaches to infrastructure; land use planning and design; promoting women in leadership; workplaces; sports and recreation; and access to services.

The City of Whittlesea has made significant progress in integrating gender equity initiatives in a number of areas including:

- City of Whittlesea Gender Equity Working Group
- City of Whittlesea Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan
- City of Whittlesea Family Violence Strategy

Key Gender Equity Strategy projects for the City of Whittlesea 2015 (refer **Promising Practice and Policy Initiative Four – Gender Equity Strategy and Gender Equity Working Group**):

- The development of gender-sensitive guidelines for facilities
- Gender lens applied to City of Whittlesea owned sporting facilities, being built and upgraded, to ensure equitable access for women and girls
- Partnering with Planning Institute Australia to host a forum "Women in Growth Areas" to explore the impact of Precinct Structure Plans on women and to unpack opportunities to improve the processes to enhance gender equity in growth area communities
- Gender lens applied in the development and implementation of recruitment strategy and integrated HR Strategy

- Pay equity audit scheduled every four years
- Developing indicators of gender equity within the organisation
- Scoping partnerships with schools around importance of respectful relationships and gender equity (Youth Services)
- Parenting programs extended to weekends and after hours increasing engagement with men/fathers
- Facilitate improved opportunities for women's local economic participation and financial capability and security
- Training in application of a gender lens to work and using gender analysis to identify gender-blind practices and opportunities for improvement
- Later in 2015 Councillors will participate in Gender Equity Information Session to build their capacity for gender equitable decision making and applying a gender lens to their work

Promising Practice and Policy Initiative Four - Gender Equity Strategy and Gender Equity Working Group

The City is committed to working to advance gender equity, as a major employer, service provider and advocate for the community. Local government plays an important role in creating and supporting environments that enable the community to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. Reducing gender inequality is a key strategy in achieving this goal, as it allows for a more just, inclusive and fair society for everyone. Addressing gender inequity is also one of the key strategies in the primary prevention of violence against women. The City of Whittlesea's ***Gender Equity Working Group*** *(GEWG) chaired by the CEO provides leadership and support to embed gender equity principles and practice in the core business of Council. The GEWG has scoped and developed the Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan through research, benchmarking and consultation with members, internal teams and external experts.*

Gender Equity Strategy 2014

The Gender Equity Strategy 2014 (Appendix 7) articulates Council's priorities for advancing gender equity across the organisation and achieving the vision for a community that is inclusive, respectful, fair and safe for people of all genders. The City recognises that addressing gender inequity is crucial to achieve better health and social wellbeing; improved organisational performance; and the prevention of violence against women. The City recognises that men and women have different access to resources, power, responsibilities and life experiences. Therefore different strategies are often necessary to address this disadvantage and achieve equal outcomes for women and men, boys and girls.[xlix] *The Gender Equity Strategy provides the framework for the* ***Gender Equity Action Plan*** *that the GEWG drives across departments, in order to achieve the vision for a gender equitable organisation, community services, facilities and settings. This strategy and working group is*

supported by the secretariat support of Community Services. Annual reports are provided to Council and regular progress updates are provided to the Executive Leadership Team and Council.

In addition to a cross-departmental approach to embed gender equitable strategies, the City of Whittlesea Family Violence Strategy 2014-2018 (refer **Promising Practice and Policy Initiative Five – Family Violence Strategy 2014-2018)** also engages across different council departments on the issue of family violence (prevention, early intervention and response).

Promising Practice Example Five – City of Whittlesea Family Violence Strategy 2014-2018

The Family Violence Strategy 2014-2018 has been developed to articulate Council's response/action across the continuum of prevention, early intervention and intervention responses to family violence. Strategies and actions have been developed as they relate to population groups at particular risk and priority settings for action. Primary prevention strategies in the Family Violence Strategy 2014-2018 (Appendix 2) seek to prevent violence before it occurs and focus on:

- *Changing attitudes, behaviour and/or building knowledge and skills across the community*
- *The structural, cultural and societal contexts in which violence occurs; and*
- *Addressing the underlying causes of violence against women.*

RECOMMENDATION 11. That the Victorian Government prioritises and invests in the universal service system platform of local government (Maternal and Child Health, Early Childhood Education and Care and Youth services) to deliver and facilitate locally-tailored initiatives to address family violence against women and their children through evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs.

Conclusion

Local government plays an important role in creating and supporting environments that enable the community to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. Reducing gender inequality and ending family violence against women and their children is a key strategy in achieving this goal, as it allows for a more just, inclusive and fair society for everyone.

Residents in the City of Whittlesea experience significant barriers to accessing specialist family violence services and the added complexity of growing population and infrastructure and services lag exacerbates these experiences.

The City of Whittlesea commends this submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence and encourages the Commissioners to support the recommendations outlined.

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Appendices

Please note, appendices are attached separately

Appendix 1 - City of Whittlesea Family Violence Advocacy Fact Sheets

- Fact Sheet 1 – Overview of Family Violence Projects
- Fact Sheet 2 – Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project
- Fact Sheet 3 – Arabic language Men's Behaviour Change Program
- Fact Sheet 4 – Specialist Family Violence Services for Women and their Children
- Fact Sheet 5 – Respectful Relationships Programs in Schools

Appendix 2 - City of Whittlesea Family Violence Strategy

Appendix 3 - Northern Integrated 'Family Violence Services Fund the Family Violence System: Save Money, Save Lives' Fact Sheet

Appendix 4 - Family Violence Service Pathways: Mapping and Consultation Project 'Findings and recommendations' and map

Appendix 5 - Case Study One - Sustained Home Visiting Program Antenatal – 2 years (SHVP)

Appendix 6 - Connecting Children and Families in Epping North Project – program logic

Appendix 7 - City of Whittlesea Gender Equity Strategy

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References

[i] VicHealth 2007, Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria.

[ii] ibid

[iii] Royal Commission into Family Violence, Terms of Reference, 2015, http://www.rcfv.com.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/UploadedDocs/Terms-of-Reference.pdf

[iv] http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Finance_and_Public_Administration/Domestic_Violence/Interim_Report

[v] Reconciliation Action Plan 2012-2015

[vi] Multicultural Action Plan 2014-2018

[vii] City of Whittlesea, Annual Household Survey 2014 Municipal Report, August 2014 https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-whittlesea/demographics-and-statistics/~/media/Files/About%20Whittlesea/2014%20Annual%20Household%20Survey%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf

[viii] Disability Action Plan 2013-2016

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[x] City of Whittlesea , forecast.id based on 2006 and 2011 Census http://forecast2.id.com.au/Default.aspx?id=131&pg=5210

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City of Whittlesea

Safe in our homes
Safe in our communities

City of Whittlesea Family Violence Strategy 2014-2018

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Mayor's message

I am pleased to present the *City of Whittlesea Safe in our homes, Safe in our communities Family Violence Strategy 2014-18*. This is a whole-of-Council strategy outlining the strategic actions that Council will take to address family violence from the perspective of prevention, early intervention and intervention.

A family violence response is an identified community need due to the high prevalence rates of family violence in the municipality, and through identified priorities in the Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan as well as in Council's *Connect: A municipal plan for children, young people and their families 2013 – 2018*.

Family violence is a focus for state and federal governments, who have worked with health and wellbeing and other peak non-government bodies to develop state/national frameworks for preventing and responding to family violence.

Council has a role as advocate, facilitator and provider of services and the actions in the plan reflect these various roles. The prevention of family violence and the provision of support services is a key advocacy issue for Council.

Many other local organisations including women's health organisations, not for profit agencies, state government departments and partnership groups are also working in various ways to prevent and address family violence. Progress will only be made with sustained partnership and collaborative efforts.

Cultural change is required in gender roles and relationships and in attitudes to violence. By role-modelling gender respect and equity, supportive work environments and a zero tolerance approach to violence against women, Council can take a lead role and send a strong message to community partners. In addition, Council provides a range of community services, safe public spaces and community facilities which can be used as platforms to influence change.

This strategy is the result of extensive consultation with community stakeholders and across all Council departments.

I commend this strategy and encourage everyone to play a role in tackling family violence.

Cr Ricky Kirkham
Mayor

Executive Summary

A family violence response has been identified as a community need due to the high prevalence rates of family violence in the municipality, and through identified priorities in the Council Plan and other endorsed strategies and plans.

The rate of reported family violence in the City of Whittlesea is 1,316 per 100,000 population, compared to 1,129 per 100,000 for Victoria. This is the highest rate of reported family violence in the Victoria Police Northern Division 5 (Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik and Whittlesea LGAs). In 2013/14 there were 2,359 family violence incidents reported to Victoria Police, and in 897 of these incidents children were present (rate of 500.4 per 100,000 population compared to 387.00 per 100,000 for Victoria). It is understood that less than 20 per cent of women who experience violence report it to authorities therefore it is likely that in reality these rates are actually significantly higher.

By role-modelling gender respect and equity, supportive work environments and a zero tolerance approach to violence against women, Council can take a lead role and send a strong message to the community and our community partners. In addition, Council provides a range of community services, safe public spaces and community facilities which can be used as platforms to influence change.

Development of the Strategy was overseen by a working group comprising internal Council representatives. The Strategy is structured such that work in prevention, early intervention and intervention is clearly identified as well as linking actions across target population areas. The Strategy also highlights key linkages to Council's Gender Equity Strategy.

This Strategy has been developed across the continuum of prevention, early intervention and intervention responses to family violence. Strategies and actions have been developed as they relate to population groups at particular risk, and priority settings for action.

Council has a key role as an advocate, facilitator and provider of services and these roles have been articulated in the strategy. Most actions are cost neutral and business as usual, however others require resourcing or external funds and this is highlighted in the Strategy.

Consultation

All Council Directorates have been involved in the development of the Strategy as demonstrated through manager and director representatives on the working group and direct consultation with managers from departments involved in implementing strategic actions in the strategy.

The following external groups and organisations have also been formally consulted in the development of the Strategy:

- Whittlesea Community Futures
- Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce
- Whittlesea Early Years Family Violence Working Group
- Whittlesea Youth Commitment
- Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project steering group
- Whittlesea Family Violence Network
- Whittlesea Early Years Partnership
- Women's Health in the North
- Victoria Police
- No To Violence

Policy and legislative context

Family violence is a focus for state and federal governments, who have worked with health and wellbeing and other peak bodies to develop state/national frameworks for preventing and responding to family violence.

The prevention of family violence and the provision of support services is a key advocacy issue for Council and the development of this Strategy is another step in Council advocating for this critical health and social issue.

Introduction and background

Family violence including sexual assault in the City of Whittlesea is a significant health and safety issue that requires a multi-faceted response and significant resourcing from all levels of government and local agencies to reduce the incidence and impacts on women and children in particular, and the community in general.

The City of Whittlesea is committed to preventing family violence through the:

- **Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017[3]:**

  Council Goal 5.2 Council will support action to prevent family violence and sexual assault by addressing the underlying causes of gender-based violence and promoting equal and respectful relationships in the community.

  Action 1.1: Improve Council and partners understanding of the causes of and contributing factors to family violence in the local context.

  Action 1.2: Adopt a strategic framework for whole of Council action to prevent family violence and sexual assault.

- **Connect: A municipal plan for children, young people and their families in the City of Whittlesea 2013–2018[4]**

  Strategic Direction 2: Family Strengthening – Addressing Family Violence:

  With partners, work to increase the capacity of the service system to respond to family violence.

  Improve understanding as to the causes, and contributing factors of family violence in the City of Whittlesea.

  Identify opportunities within Council's role to respond to the prevention and alleviation of family violence.

- Endorsement of the **Building a Respectful Community Preventing Violence against Women: A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011-2016[5]:**

  Vision: To build a community in the northern region in which violence against women is unacceptable; where communities, cultures and organisations are non-violent and gender equitable; and one in which all relationships are equal, respectful and non-discriminatory.

  Goals: To create a safe community for women through the promotion of non-violent and non-discriminatory social norms; to encourage gender-equitable, safe and inclusive communities and organisations; and to develop equal and respectful relationships between women and men.

The City of Whittlesea: who we are

The City of Whittlesea is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. The population is expected to exceed 250,000 by 2030, with growth concentrated in the developing areas of Mernda-Doreen, South Morang, Epping North, Wollert and Donnybrook. In 2013, the City's population was approximately 176,000 (50.4% female[6]) and is expected to increase by 19% over the next four years.

The City of Whittlesea is located 20km north of Melbourne's CBD. Covering 490 square kilometres, it is a large municipality containing established urban, growth and rural areas.

The City includes the major rural centre of Whittlesea, the rural localities of Beveridge, Donnybrook, Eden Park, Humevale, Kinglake West, Wollert, Woodstock and Yan Yean as well as the established and growing urban suburbs of Bundoora, Doreen, Epping, Lalor, Mernda, Mill Park, South Morang and Thomastown[7].

The Wurundjeri Wilam people are the original inhabitants of this area and the Traditional Owners of this land. The Aboriginal community is one of the fastest growing communities within the City, with an increase in residents of 24 per cent between 2001 and 2006, and 33 per cent between 2006 and 2011. The City currently has the fourth highest Aboriginal population in Metropolitan Melbourne with 1,125 people, and is the second highest in terms of the percentage of Aboriginal people compared to the total number of residents with 0.73 per cent of the total population being Aboriginal[8].

The City of Whittlesea is a diverse community. With migrants from more than 140 countries, 30% of residents come from a country where English is not the first language (double the Victorian average) and 43% speak a language other than English at home. The most common languages used other than English are Italian, Macedonian, Greek, Arabic and Vietnamese[9] .

It is estimated that 20% of Australians have a disability, which translates to 35,000 people in the municipality. This number is expected to grow in line with the growing population and as the population ages[10].

There are 60 births in the City each week[11] and a high proportion of households with children (68.6%). Approximately 146 new residents move into the City each week and 65 residential building permits per week are issued. There is a high proportion of the population under 25 years of age (34.5%)[12] and 27.1% of residents are aged 50 years old and above[13].

Household types

(ABS 2011 Census data)

Family Violence in the City of Whittlesea

Principles underpinning the Family Violence Strategy

Violence against women occurs across all cultural and socio-economic groups and can occur on a spectrum of economic, psychological and emotional abuse, through to physical and sexual violence. Although men are among the victims of family violence, evidence suggests that the vast majority of victims are women and that women are more vulnerable to its health impacts.

Compared with male victims of relationship violence, women are:

- Three times more *likely* to be injured as a result of violence;
- Five times more *likely* to require medical attention or hospitalisation;
- Five times more *likely* to report fearing for their lives[14].

Family violence is most commonly perpetrated by men against women who are their intimate partners however it also occurs against children, young people and older adults. The term family violence is used to describe violence in family-like relationships and includes intimate partners, children, young people and older adults.

Principles underpinning the development

Upstream: A focus on upstream prevention approaches which address the social determinants of health[15].

Early in life: Responding early in life to achieve better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Inclusion and equity: Acting to reduce health inequalities across age, gender, culture, language and disability, and ensuring equity of access for indigenous, refugee and economically and geographically disadvantaged communities.

Evidence: Evidence informed planning responsive to local needs.

Partnerships: Working in collaboration and integrating planning across Council, agencies and the community.

Safety and security: Safety for women and children is the primary objective.

Definitions

Family violence

Family violence is defined in accordance with section five of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008, as:

(a) Behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour:
  (i) is physically or sexually abusive or
  (ii) is emotionally or psychologically abusive or
  (iii) is economically abusive or
  (iv) is threatening or
  (v) is coercive; or
  (vi) in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or

(b) Behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to in paragraph (a).

Elder abuse

Elder abuse is defined in accordance with the Victorian Government as:

> Any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person[16]

This definition is consistent with Australian and international agreement about what constitutes abuse of older people and defines a relationship where trust is the sole connection. It excludes relationships that, for example, are based on the exchange of money for services.

Gender equity

Gender equity is an important social justice goal. The concept recognises that within all communities, women and men have different benefits, access to power, resources and responsibilities[17]. Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men by recognising diversity and disadvantage and directing resources and services towards those most in need to ensure equal outcomes for all. A gender equity approach therefore acknowledges it is often necessary to have different strategies for women and men.

Gender equality

Gender equality means equal participation of women and men in all spheres of public and private life. Gender equality is about society giving equal value to the similarities and differences between men and women, and the varying roles they play. The experience of inequality is by no means confined to women. Differences occur between both sexes on, questions of race, sexuality, class, age, disability and geography. But on key questions of economic security, health, wellbeing and participation – within and across cultures- women more commonly experience greater disadvantage and discrimination relative to men[18].

Family violence: key points

Family violence is prevalent, serious and preventable.

- One in three Australian women has experienced physical violence and one in five have experienced sexual violence.[19]
- Violence is the leading cause of preventable illness and premature death in Victorian women aged 15-45 years old.[20]
- Violence contributes 9 per cent to the total disease burden in Victorian women aged 15-44 years and 3 per cent to all Victorian women, more than tobacco, alcohol and obesity.[21]
- One in four children has witnessed violence against their mother or step-mother.[22]
- Women over the age of 65 years are two to three times more likely to experience violence than men of the same age, and their adult children are most likely to be responsible for the abuse.[23]

Violence has wide-ranging effects on women's and children's health. Women who have been exposed to violence have a greater risk of developing a range of health problems including mental health issues[24]. They report poorer physical health overall, are more likely to engage in practices that are harmful to their health and experience difficulties in accessing health services.

In regard to men who use violence, in order for men to become and remain non-violent, they need to change on a number of levels: in their thinking, feeling, attitudes and behaviour. They also need to learn new skills, and to practise and integrate these in their lives.

Men in this process need support to consolidate and maintain change. The change process is gradual and takes time. In the process, men need support and encouragement to explore their behaviour and learn unfamiliar, and sometimes confronting, new ways of knowing themselves and others. This is best provided in the context of an invitational approach to behaviour change which simultaneously:

- Reminds men that there are real and meaningful reasons for them to work towards change.
- Focuses on men's potential to be better men, partners and fathers, and
- Continually focuses on the need for men to take responsibility for their behaviour.[25]

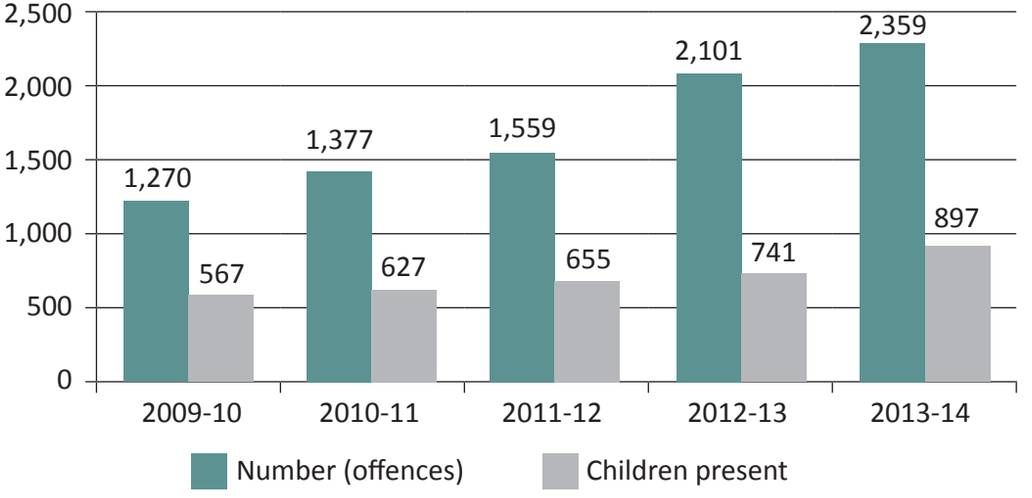
We also understand family violence to include family and family-like relationships. As well as violence between current and separated intimate partners, abuse and violence in our community also occurs among family members and those in family-like relationships. It can include violence by young people against their parents or other family members, abuse of elderly people by family members, abuse in same sex relationships and abuse of men[26].

A City of Whittlesea issue

The rate of reported family violence in the City of Whittlesea is 1,316 per 100,000 population, compared to 1,129 per 100,000 for Victoria. This is the highest rate of reported family violence in the Victoria Police Northern Division 5 (Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik and Whittlesea LGAs). In 2013/14 there were 2,359 family violence incidents reported to Victoria Police in 897 of these incidents children were present (rate of 500.4 per 100,000 population compared to 387.00 per 100,000 for Victoria[27]). It is understood that less than 20 per cent of women who experience violence report it to authorities[28] therefore it is likely that in reality these rates are actually significantly higher.

Over the past five years the number of incidents reported to police in the LGA has almost doubled (1,270 in 2009/10 to 2359 in 2013/14, Figure 1).

Figure 1: Victoria Police family violence incident reports (offences), City of Whittlesea 2009-2014



On average, 45 incidents of family violence from residents are reported to police every week, and 74 per cent of victims are aged between 15 and 44 years old. Consistent with Victoria, where Whittlesea victims reported they were ***fearful or very fearful***, 84 per cent were female[29].

On average 4 sexual assault offences are reported in the Whittlesea LGA every week. There were 49 reported rapes in the LGA in 2013/14; this is a rate of 27.3 per 100,000 population (compared to 35 per 100,000 for the NMR and 37 for Victoria). Males comprise 100 per cent of alleged offenders, females comprise 82 per cent of the victims and 87 per cent are aged less than 35 years old[30].

Research into family violence after the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009 by Women's Health in the North and Women's Health Goulburn North East identified an increase and escalation of family violence[31].

Priority population groups

There are population groups that are at an increased risk of violence. Through local evidence and the VicHealth Framework[32], priority populations for focus have been identified:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children

From an Aboriginal perspective, the experience of family violence must be understood in the historical context of white settlement and colonisation and their resulting (and continuing) impacts: cultural dispossession, breakdown of community kinship systems and Aboriginal law, systemic racism and vilification, social and economic exclusion, entrenched poverty, problematic substance use, inherited grief and trauma, and loss of traditional roles and status[33]. Victorian family violence statistics reveal that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are five times more likely to be assaulted by a family member than other women. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more than twice as likely to be a victim of family violence. The rate of sexual assault for Aboriginal women is 16 to 25 times higher compared with non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 35 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence than non-Aboriginal women. In Victoria, Aboriginal children are 12.9 times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be on care and protection orders[34].

Children aged 0-4 years

Children aged 0–4 years comprise approximately 40 per cent of the children recorded by police as 'present' at incidents of family violence[35]. Just below 30 per cent of all affected family members in finalised intervention order applications, are aged 0–4 years old. Intervening early in the life-cycle provides the opportunity to interrupt trajectories which might otherwise result in perpetration or victimisation[36].

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women

Women who are marginalized by age, culture, ethnicity and visa status are more vulnerable to violence and are less likely to have the resources to act to report it. Language and cultural barriers also limit access to support services for many immigrant and refugee women[37]. Women without Australian citizenship or permanent residency, who are dependent on their spouse or partner to remain in Australia, are particularly vulnerable. The fear of losing the right to remain in Australia and the fear of losing custody of their children is a powerful disincentive for women to seek support[38].

There is no conclusive evidence that CALD communities experience a greater level of family violence, however they are more vulnerable to the impacts of violence when it does occur. This is due to a range of barriers to disclosing violence, finding assistance and early intervention, and accessing and identifying supports.

Older adults

Older people are more at risk due to dependence, frailty and cognitive impairment. The abuse they suffer may be perpetrated because of ignorance, negligence or deliberate intent[39]. Abuse is typically carried out by someone close to an older person, with whom they have a relationship implying trust, including family members or friends. Often an older person is dependent on the perpetrator, for example, where an older person is frail or incompetent and the perpetrator is the principal carer. Mental impairment (for example, dementia), physical frailty or economic circumstances may force an older person to depend on another for housing. However, dependence is not a defining characteristic of abuse - the older person might not be dependent, and may actually be supporting or providing a caring role for the perpetrator[40].

Pregnant women (pre and post pregnancy)

The risk of violence is high in pregnant women and in the period following the birth of a child; 42 per cent of women who responded to the Australian Women's Safety Survey, who reported experiencing violence at some time in their lives, were pregnant at the time of the violence[41]. Pregnancy is a time of particular vulnerability to the impacts of violence. It is also a time where couples have increased contact with services providing opportunities for intervention[42].

Women in rural and remote areas

Some studies have identified that rates of intimate partner violence are highest in very remote regions of Australia[43]. Some rural communities have been recently affected by rapid economic and demographic change and natural disaster. These experiences are said to increase exposure to known contributing factors to violence against women such as poverty and unemployment[44].

Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities experience high levels of family violence and sexual violence. They can often experience the same kinds of violence experienced by other women but also 'disability-based violence'. Gender-based and disability-based discrimination intersect and increase the risk of violence for women with disabilities. Women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence from ***many*** perpetrators, usually male[45]. 90 per cent of women with an intellectual disability have been subjected to sexual abuse, with more than two-thirds of women (68%) having been sexually abused before they turned 18 years old[46].

Young women

Internationally, for young women the risk of violence by a male intimate partner can be three to four times higher than the risk for women across all age groups. In Australia 12 per cent of women aged 18 to 24 years had experienced at least one incident of physical and/or sexual violence. It is estimated that one in seven young women and girls in Australia aged 12 to 20 years have experienced sexual assault or rape. A survey in 2009 of Year 10 and 12 students found that 38 per cent of sexually active young women had experienced unwanted sex at least once[47].

One in four 12 to 20 year olds surveyed were aware of violence against their mothers or step-mothers by their fathers or step-fathers[48].

In family violence when the perpetrator is an adolescent against a parent or step-parent, males are more frequently perpetrators of violence and victims are more likely to be mothers or step-mothers. Female adolescent perpetrators are more likely to be violent to their mothers than their fathers[49].

Women with mental illness

Among women with an established mental illness, relationships between the illness and experience of violence/abuse can be complex. Women with mental illness are often vulnerable to abuse and violence, particularly when acutely unwell and if they are poor, homeless or living in unsafe housing. Women with mental illness often find it difficult to access support services and to exercise their legal rights, including ending abusive relationships[50].

Determinants and contributing factors

There is no single cause of family violence: rather it appears to arise from a complex interaction between individual attitudes towards women, and social and cultural practices and values across our society and communities. These attitudes and practices can foster unequal and abusive power relations between men and women, gender stereotypes and can often exist in broader cultures of violence[51]. Addressing gender inequity has been identified as one of the key strategies in the prevention of violence against women[52].

International evidence[53] shows countries with high levels of gender equity - which value women's participation and representation and where there are fewer economic, social or political differences in power between men and women - have significantly lower levels of intimate partner and sexual violence. The strongest predicator of high levels of violence against women at the population level is unequal power between men and women.

The City of Whittlesea has already made significant progress in integrating gender equity work in a number of areas. The City of Whittlesea is committed to working to advance gender equity, as a major employer, service provider and advocate for the community. Local government plays an important role in creating and supporting environments that enable the community to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. Reducing gender inequality is a key strategy in achieving this goal, as it allows for a more just, inclusive and fair society for everyone. Addressing gender inequity is also one of the key strategies in the primary prevention of violence against women. The City of Whittlesea's Gender Equity Working Group (GEWG) chaired by the CEO provides leadership and support to embed gender equity principles and practice in the core business of Council. The Gender Equity Strategy (Appendix 4) articulates the priorities for advancing gender equity across the organisation.

Determinants of violence against women and children include:

- Unequal power and control between men and women;
- Peer and organisational 'cultures' and attitudes that support violence;
- Belief in rigid 'stereotypical' gender roles and/or weak support for gender equality

Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)[54] results show:

- Most Australians recognise that violence against women includes a wide range of behaviours designed to intimidate and control women – not just physical assault.
- Although more Australians are now aware of the many different forms violence against women can take, there is still more work to do to emphasise that it can be more than physical violence. Of concern is that most people see violence against women as due to some men being unable to manage their anger.
- Young people's attitudes remain an area of concern. Young people have somewhat more violence-supportive attitudes than others but their attitudes are gradually improving over time, particularly among young men, with fewer young people in 2013 holding attitudes at the extreme end of the spectrum.
- People's understanding of violence against women and their attitudes to gender equality have significant impacts on their attitudes to violence against women.

The national survey highlights some concerning attitudes held by proportions of the community, who believe there are circumstances in which violence can be excused. Additionally compared with physical violence and forced sex, Australians are less inclined to see non-physical forms of control, intimidation and harassment as 'serious'.

Contributing factors which are known to be **correlated** with men perpetrating family violence include:

- A history of violent behaviour
- Threats of, and/or previous use of violence against current or former partners, children, pets, other family members
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Stalking and harassment
- Obsessive and controlling behaviour
- Separation
- Weak social connections and social cohesion
- Limited access to systems of support
- Women's financial dependence[55].

There is also evidence that problem gambling impacts on family relationships and can increase family conflict[56].

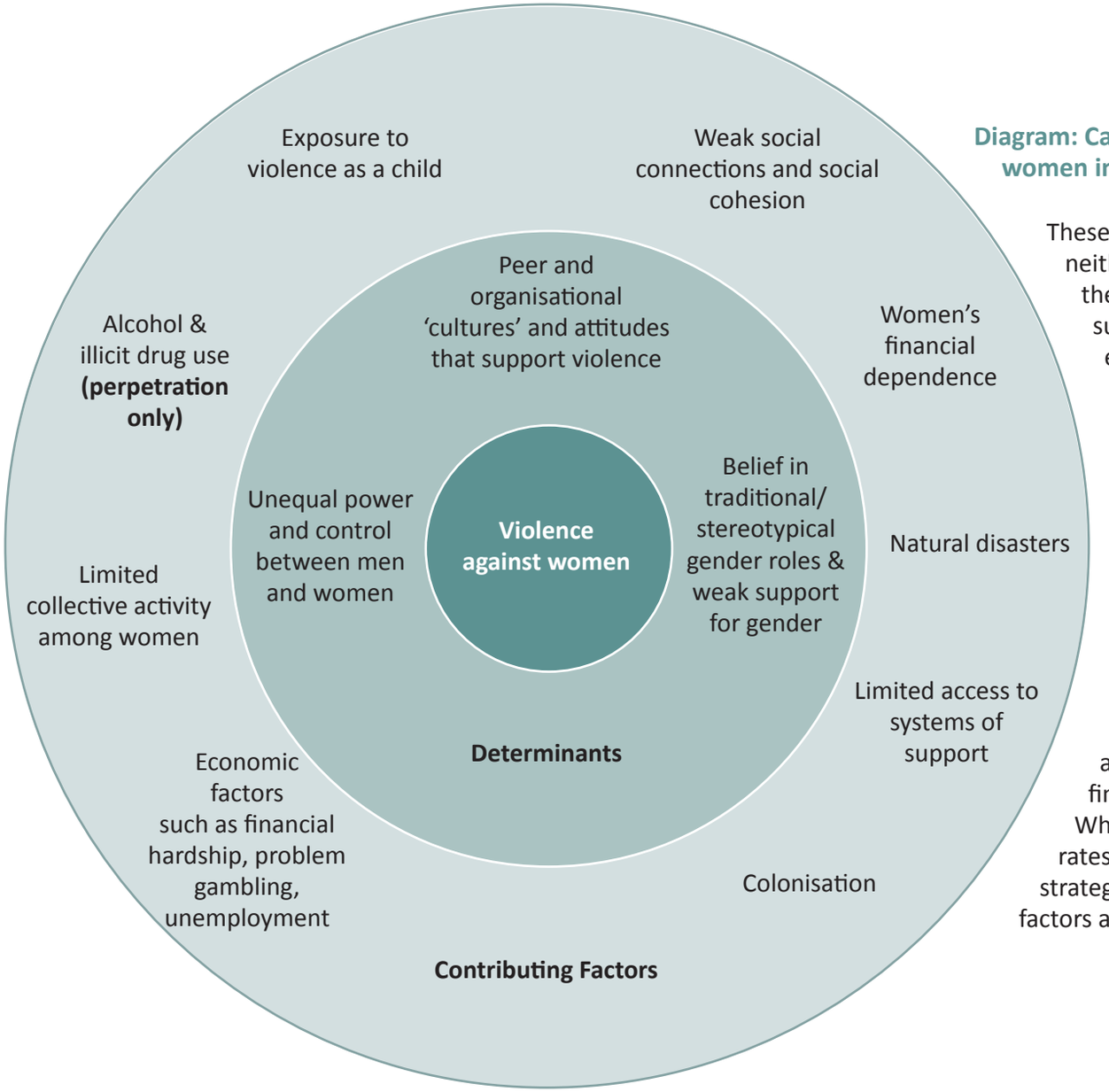


Diagram: Causes and contributing factors of violence against women in City of Whittlesea[57]

These factors may contribute to violence, but they are neither necessary nor sufficient to cause violence in themselves. They become relevant when coupled with support for gender inequality and rigid gender roles. For example, alcohol abuse only increases the likelihood of violence perpetration for men who already hold attitudes and beliefs that condone/support violence, gender inequality or rigid gender roles. In addition, such men are also more likely to see violence more frequently and with more severe impacts when they have also abused alcohol.

As seen in this diagram the contributing factors are wide in nature and the City of Whittlesea has a large range of contributing factors such as potentially weak social connections/social inclusion, limited access to systems of supports in our new growth and established areas, high pockets of financial vulnerability such as financial hardship, gambling and unemployment. Whilst we cannot blame contributing factors on our high rates of family violence nor can we ignore them. Multiple strategies are needed to overcome both the core determining factors and the contributing factors.

Policy context

There are a wide range of enablers in the policy context for this **Safe in our Homes, Safe in our Communities City of Whittlesea Family Violence Strategy**.

More detail is included in Appendix 4 and these are summarised in the following figure.

Figure 3: Policy context

Safe in our Homes, Safe in our Communities City of Whittlesea Family Violence Strategy

Supportive Partnerships

Whittlesea Community Futures
and cluster groups:

- Whittlesea Early Years Partnership (Best Start)
- Whittlesea Youth Commitment
- Positive Ageing
- Disability
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Communities
- Advocacy

Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce

Northern Integrated Family Violence Services

Whittlesea Early Years Family Violence Working Group

Northern Region Prevention of Violence Against Women Advisory Group

Local Supporting Strategies

Council

Shaping Our Future Whittlesea 2030 Strategic Community Plan

Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017

Disability Action Plan 2013-2016

Multicultural Action Plan 2014-2018

Connect: A municipal plan for children, young people and their families in the City of Whittlesea 2013–2018

Gender Equity Strategy

Family Violence Workplace Support Policy

White Ribbon Action Plan

Whittlesea Early Years Partnership (Best Start) Strategic Action Plan

Northern Region

Building a Respectful Community Preventing Violence against Women: A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011-2016

State, Federal Government Policy

Federal Government

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022

First Action Plan: Building a Strong Foundation 2010-2013

Second Action Plan: Moving Ahead 2013-2016

National

Our Watch Five Year Strategic Plan 2014-2019

Victorian Government

Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children 2012-2015: Everyone has a responsibility to act

Developing the Family Violence Strategy

The strategy sets out actions across prevention, early intervention and intervention as outlined in Figure 4.

Strategic actions have been shared across the continuum for the priority population groups:

- Children
- Young people
- Families
- Women
- Men
- Communities

Primary prevention initiatives can take a number of forms, separately or in combination, including:

- Research, monitoring and evaluation
- Direct participation programs
- Organisational and workforce development
- Community strengthening activities
- Communications and social marketing
- Advocacy, legislative and policy reform

The strategic actions in this strategy have been grouped in reference to these key areas to articulate the response across the continuum of prevention, early intervention and intervention. The key evidence based strategies, outlined in the following table have also been drawn upon, so that a holistic strategy can be developed that works toward addressing both the determinants and the contributing factors in Council's role as a provider, advocate and facilitator.

Figure 4 Continuum of responses to address family violence.

Primary prevention, early intervention and intervention

Intervening after violence has occured

- Support and treatment for women and children who are affected by violence or to men who use violence
- Strategies to deal with the violence and reduce harm (e.g. crisis accommodation and support for victims, criminal justice and therapeutic interventions for perpetrators)

Taking action on the early signs of violence

- Can be aimed at changing behaviours or increasing the skills of individuals and groups
- Individual level - address controlling behaviours before they become established patterns
- Environmental level - where strong signs that violence may occur (e.g. peer groups or sporting clubs in which there there is a strong culture of disrespect for women)

Preventing violence before it occurs

- Changing behaviour and/or building the knowledge/skills of individuals.
- Addresses structual, cultural and societal contexts.
- Addresses underlying causes (such as gender inequality)

Table 1: Preventing violence against women: A framework for action[58]

Key social and economic determinants of violence		
Theme for action: promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women		
Individual and relationship	Community and organisational	Societal
• Belief in rigid gender roles and identities and/or weak support for gender equality • Masculine orientation or sense of entitlement • Male dominance and control of wealth in relationships	• Culturally-specific norms regarding gender and sexuality • Masculine peer and organisational cultures	• Institutional and cultural support for, or weak sanctions against, gender inequality and rigid gender roles
Key contributing factors		
Theme for action: promoting non-violent norms and reducing the effects of prior exposure to violence		
Individual and relationship	Community and organisational	Societal
• Attitudinal support for violence against women • Witnessing or experiencing family violence as a child • Exposure to other forms of interpersonal or collective violence • Use and acceptance of violence as a means of resolving interpersonal disputes	• Neighborhood, peer and organisational cultures that are violence-supportive or have weak sanctions against violence • Community or peer violence	• Approval of, or weak sanctions against, violence and/or violence against women • Ethos condoning violence as a means of settling interpersonal, civic or political disputes • Colonisation
Theme for action: improving access to resources and systems of support		
Individual and relationship	Community and organisational	Societal
• Social isolation and limited access to systems of support • Income, education or employment • Relative labour force status • Alcohol and illicit drug use* • Poor parenting • Personality characteristics and poor mental health* • Relationship and marital conflict • Divorce or separation	• Weak social connections and social cohesion and limited collective activity among women • Strong support for the privacy of the family • Neighbourhood characteristics (e.g. service infrastructure, unemployment, poverty, collective efficacy)	• Support for the privacy and autonomy of the family • Unequal distribution of material resources (e.g. employment, education)

**Denotes increased risk of perpetration only.*

Strategy development and consultation

This strategy was developed by a Strategic Family Violence Working Group consisting of a wide range of representatives of senior management and subject matter experts employed by the City of Whittlesea.

Concurrent to the development of this ***Safe in our Homes, Safe in our Communities Family Violence Strategy*** the Gender Equity Working Group also identified many complementary actions through the development of its strategic objectives to address inequity between genders (Appendix 3). These objectives are:

1. The City of Whittlesea is an employer of choice, with a respectful organisational culture that values gender diversity, strives for gender balance and embeds gender equity in all workplace policies, practice and procedures.

2. The City of Whittlesea's services, programs and policies, are inclusive and gender equitable.

3. The City of Whittlesea's places and spaces facilitate community connection and are safe, welcoming, respectful and inclusive of all genders.
4. The City of Whittlesea is facilitating equitable opportunities for civic and economic participation and advancing gender equity in our community.

Relevant key stakeholders across government, non-government agencies and the community are an essential part of a whole of community approach to addressing family violence and sexual assault.

In the development of this strategy a broad range of Council and external stakeholders were involved or consulted. Appendix 2 outlines the groups involved in the development and below is a list of external stakeholders consulted:

- Internal City of Whittlesea departments responsible for implementing the actions
- Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership
- Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce
- Whittlesea Early Years Family Violence Working Group
- Whittlesea Youth Commitment
- Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project steering group
- Whittlesea Family Violence Network
- Whittlesea Early Years Partnership (Best Start)
- Women's Health In the North
- Victoria Police
- No To Violence

Strategy monitoring and review

Responsibility for monitoring of this strategy will be shared by the Family Children's and Young People and Health, Access and Bush Fire Recovery departments of Council. The Health Access and Bush Fire Recovery department will be responsible for monitoring the strategic actions relating to prevention and the Family, Children's and Young People department will monitor the early intervention and intervention focussed strategic actions.

Reporting on the progress of implementing this strategy and review of the strategy will be undertaken on an annual basis.

Family Violence Strategy Actions

Preventing Family Violence

What is prevention?

Primary prevention strategies seek to prevent violence before it occurs. Primary prevention strategies focus on:

- Changing attitudes, behaviour and/or building knowledge and skills across the community;
- The structural, cultural and societal contexts in which violence occurs; and
- Addressing the underlying causes of violence against women, such as gender inequality[59].

City of Whittlesea family violence prevention desired outcomes and objectives

The following table outlines the desired outcomes this strategy is working towards and the specific prevention objectives it will work on over the next four years.

Prevention Desired Outcome	Prevention Objectives
Children live in homes and communities that are respectful, equitable and free from violence; and these behaviours are modelled in all their environments	• Increase the opportunity for children to participate in activities that promote positive role modeling of equal and respectful relationships • Establish and build on mechanisms to give children a voice
Young people see positive respectful relationships modelled within their social context and have the confidence, and are supported, to respond to a range of behaviours that perpetuate gender inequalities	• Establish respectful relationships education programs in schools in the municipality • Build equal and respectful relationships and positive representation of gender in all environments • Provide youth friendly accessible services and supports for young people so they feel well-connected to their families, friends and communities
Families are safe places, free from violence and demonstrate equal and respectful relationships	• Increase the capacity of parents, services and key settings to model respectful attitudes and behaviours and integrate this into program delivery • Increase families' understanding of the impacts of gender inequality and stereotyping on children as they are forming their identity and behaviours

Family violence prevention strategic actions

Prevention Desired Outcome	Prevention Objectives
Women are leaders in the community, their rights are respected, they have no barriers to civic, economic or recreational/social participation and feel safe and supported in their homes and communities	• Decrease barriers to women's economic participation e. g transport, local employment, childcare • Increase women's economic security through improved financial literacy skills • Increase opportunities for women to build and participate in supportive social networks and group activities • Build the capacity of women to become leaders in their communities and advocates across a range of settings
Men have positive, respectful relationships and these are modelled within their social context; they have the confidence, and are supported, to respond to sexist and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours	• Increase opportunities for social connection among men including peer modeling of respectful and equitable relationships • Encourage workplace cultures that support family friendly arrangements and work environments for men and women • Increase understanding among men in the community that the use of violence is not acceptable
Community members and groups have knowledge about the local prevalence and impacts of family violence, and are empowered to speak out against family violence and support others	• Increase awareness of the needs of the City of Whittlesea in relation to family violence for national, state-wide and Local reforms • Plan and implement timely resources and services across the municipality • Increase the understanding of the local context and trends to inform actions • Plan for the built environment to promote community connections and safety and link priorities to infrastructure planning • Increase awareness about the prevalence and impact of family violence on women and children and work towards decreasing community attitudes that contribute to gender inequality • Develop gender equity and inclusion in Council and community settings to decrease gendered barriers to participation • Establish mechanisms and reporting on gender participation (civic, economic, recreational/social)

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Research, monitoring and evaluation												
1	Regularly monitor and report on the prevalence and trends of family violence through the life span in the City of Whittlesea	Health Access & Bushfire Recovery	C										
2	*Regularly monitor participation and involvement in sporting, recreation clubs and community groups and ensure a gender analysis is applied	Leisure & Community Inclusion Organisation Improvement	N $										
3	Regularly monitor "father inclusive" practice in Council and non-Council service provision and develop ongoing review mechanisms	Community Services Planning Family, Children & Young People	N										
4	*Identify barriers and opportunities for women's local economic participation	Economic Development Organisation Improvement	N										
5	*Regularly audit gender equity and respectful relationships and behaviour among staff, by council as a major employer	People and Culture Organisation Improvement	N										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Research, monitoring and evaluation												
6	*Investigate opportunities to monitor local community attitudes to violence against women and gender equity with data disaggregated by priority populations (e.g. National Survey on Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women)	Organisation Improvement Community Services Planning	**N**										
7	Develop place profiles identifying gaps in service and support data for children, young people and their families, seniors and people with a disability	Family, Children & Young People Aged and Disability Organisation Improvement LCI	**C**										
8	*Develop indicators of gender equity within the organisation and inclusion of projects within departments business plans	Organisation Planning	**N**										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Council service provision and planning												
9	*Ensure Council's work with young people encompasses respectful relationships and gender equity principles	Family, Children & Young People	**C**										
10	*Conduct a youth accessibility audit of Council facilities and ensure a gender lens is applied	Family, Children & Young People Major Projects	**C (BAU)**										
11	*Apply a gender lens to City of Whittlesea owned facilities, being built and upgraded, to ensure equitable access for women and girls	Major Projects Leisure and Community Inclusion	**C (BAU)**										
12	*Utilise gender analysis and sex disaggregated data in planning and advising on the public realm, land use, facilities planning, parks and open space. (refer Gender Equity Strategy)	Community Services Planning	**N (BAU)**										
13	*Council's Urban Design Framework (to be developed) includes consideration of urban design principles that promote gender equity.	Strategic Planning and Design Health Access and Bushfire Recovery Leisure and Community Inclusion	**N**										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Council service provision and planning												
14	Implement the processes of the Growth Area Social Planning Tool to identify programs and facilities, ensuring a safety lens is applied to their development and design	All planning areas	**C (BAU)**										
15	Provide training for Council services and partner agencies/services in "father/male inclusive practice" and fostered throughout council and partner agencies and embed in service delivery	Family, Children & Young People Aged and Disability	**N (BAU)**										
16	Facilitate the development of playgroups for fathers and young parents	Family, Children & Young People	**C**										
17	*Ensure Economic Development Strategy is informed by a gender analysis	Economic Development	**N**										
	Council organisational and workforce development												
18	*Support the Gender Equity Working Group to embed gender equity in Council policy and practices	Community Services Planning	**C (BAU)**										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
19	*Apply gender equity and flexible and family friendly practices to Council HR and staff management processes	Human Resources People and Culture	**C (BAU)**										
20	Implement gender equity training and support the rollout and embedding of the Gender Analysis Tool	Community Services Planning People and Culture	**N (BAU)**										
21	*Implement workplace awareness raising activities that promote equal and respectful relationships and build on current initiatives through the Wellbeing@Work program	Health Access & Bushfire Recovery People and Culture	**C**										
22	*Scope opportunities to support and implement 'bystander' intervention programs both in the City of Whittlesea workplace and in the community	Health Access and Bushfire Recovery Leisure Community Inclusion	**N $**										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
23	*City of Whittlesea's Consultation and Engagement Framework has a gender equity lens applied to ensure priority population groups needs are considered in planning and policy development	Organisation Planning	**N (BAU)**										
24	Include children and young people's voices as key stakeholders in the Consultation and Engagement Framework in line with Child Friendly Cities and Communities framework	Organisation Planning Family, Children & Young People	**N$**										
25	Provide training for Council staff in consulting with children	Family, Children & Young People	**C**										
26	Include young people's voices in the development of settings and community buildings including implementation of the Spaces 8 to 12+ Creating Engaging Spaces for Young People into planning, delivery and advocacy	Family, Children & Young People Planning	**C**										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions *Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Community strengthening												
27	Identify opportunities to support and promote women's peer networks, lifelong learning, recreation and sport	Leisure & Community Inclusion Community Services Planning Community Cultural Development	N Refer action 2										
28	Increase participation of families in Council events and promote services at these events	Community Cultural Development, Family, Children & Young People	**C (BAU)**										
29	*Consider gender equity in the City of Whittlesea Community Development Grants program processes and allocation of funds	Leisure and Community Inclusion	**N (BAU)**										
30	*Develop a Community Building Strategy which applies a gender lens, targets at risk groups and focuses on social connection for community members	Community Services Planning	**N**										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Communications and social marketing												
31	*Develop an external and internal Communications Strategy across the continuum of prevention, early intervention and intervention to: • Promote key gender equity messages • Raise awareness of the prevalence and impact of family violence • Early warning signs (the types and impacts) • Promote respectful relationships and behaviors • Support services available • Promote key messages about how to respond when an adult or child discloses family violence • Highlight value of the importance of fathers in children's lives • Explain what to expect in accessing services	Communications and Marketing Community Services Planning Family, Children & Young People	**N$**										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Advocacy												
32	*Advocate for funding for whole of school, best practice respectful relationships education and sexual assault prevention programs in schools	Health Access & Bushfire Recovery Family, Children & Young People	**C**										
33	Keep Councillors, Local, State and Federal members of parliament abreast of local issues in relation to Family Violence	Health & Bushfire Recovery Family, Children & Young People	**C (BAU)**										
34	Conduct regular updates to the Family Violence Advocacy Fact Sheets to ensure City of Whittlesea's advocacy strategies are in line with relevant local issues and key stakeholders are engaged	Health, Access & Bushfire Recovery Family, Children & Young People	**C (BAU)**										
35	Advocate for early provision of community development and service provision in growth areas to prevent vulnerability and retrospective provision in established communities	Advocacy Community Services Leisure and Community Inclusion	**C**										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Service Sector Facilitation and Partnerships												
36	Work with early childhood education and care providers, networks supported by Council to promote positive role modelling of equal and respectful relationships	Family, Children & Young People	**N (BAU)**										
37	Work in partnership with schools around the importance of respectful relationships and gender equity	Family, Children & Young People	**N$ (BAU)**										
38	Support policy and professional development opportunities for schools and teachers, to build school capacity and readiness to implement whole of school respectful relationships education and sexual assault prevention programs	Health, Access and Bushfire Recovery Family, Children & Young People	**N**										
39	*Scope opportunities to pilot a program with peak sporting bodies and sporting clubs, to build gender equity and promote equal and respectful relationships	Leisure & Community Inclusion Health Access and Bushfire Recovery	**N**										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
40	*Facilitate implementation of evidence-based equity and inclusion programs in sporting and recreation clubs such as 'Everyone Wins' and 'Healthy Sporting Environments' to embed in usual business	Leisure & Community Inclusion Health Access & Bushfire Recovery	**N Refer Action 2**										
41	*Facilitate improved opportunities for women's local economic participate and financial capability	Economic Development	**N**										
42	Identify financial literacy skills training for women, currently being delivered in the municipality and identify opportunities to support the delivery for priority population groups	Community Cultural Development Community Services Planning	**N**										
43	Engage service providers and NGOs with major precinct development so they can plan for service delivery (e.g. Mernda Town Centre, Wollert, Donnybrook/Woodstock)	Community Services Directorate	**C (BAU)**										

Family violence prevention strategic actions

	Prevention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
44	Resource and support Whittlesea Community Futures (including Advocacy Group) and associated cluster groups to advocate and promote family violence prevention strategies across all cluster group focus areas	Community Services Directorate Advocacy	**C (BAU)**										
45	Investigate opportunities and leverage points to increase women-only programs (social, recreational, sporting, cultural etc.) to reduce the barriers and improve access to participation for women	Community Service Planning	**C (BAU)**										

Family violence strategy actions

Responding to the early warning signs

What is Early Intervention?

Early Intervention is targeted at individuals and groups who exhibit early signs of perpetrating violent behaviour or of being at risk of experiencing violence:

- At the individual level, early intervention can seek to address behaviours before they escalate or become established patterns
- Early intervention strategies can also be targeted where there are strong signs that violence may occur, for example, peer groups[60].

The Family Violence Working Group also identified and expanded this definition to include *"Early intervention is to use local knowledge to identify risk factors and target early responses."*

City of Whittlesea family violence early intervention desired outcomes and objectives

The following table outlines the desired outcomes this strategy is working towards and the specific early intervention objectives it will work on over the next four years.

Early Intervention Desired Outcome	Early Intervention Objectives
Children live in safe and supportive settings without fear, are equipped with skills and knowledge for healthy relationships and are surrounded by advocates	• Build the capacity of early childhood professionals and schools to have knowledge of and identify the early warning signs of family violence • Increase the knowledge of parents and the community about the impacts of family violence on children and their development
Young people live in safe and supportive environments, are equipped with skills and knowledge about how to respond to the early warning signs of family violence and are surrounded by advocates	• Increase skills, knowledge and capacity of teachers and other professionals to identify and respond to the early signs of family violence, including young peoples' violence against a family member and in young people's peer relationships • Increase young peoples' awareness of early warning signs of violence and the supports available for family violence and violence within their own peer relationships • Increase young people's ability to seek help when the family violence first occurs

Family violence early intervention strategic actions

Prevention Desired Outcome	Prevention Objectives
Families have the skills and resources they need to be resilient with access to services and support networks in times of stress	• Increase accessibility and awareness of support services for times of vulnerability • Improve access and the utilisation of data about the early warning signs of family violence to enhance service provision
Women have the skills and knowledge to identify early warning signs of violence and have access to support	• Increase awareness of the types of family violence, potential early warning signs and their ability to take action • Increase access to safe, local housing options with a focus on improved choices for women and children • Increase the level of supports available for women in vulnerable life stages
Men have positive, respectful relationships and these are modelled within their social context; they have the confidence and are supported to respond to sexist and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours	• Increase opportunities for the detection of early warning signs and for appropriate responses • Increase the availability and accessibility of culturally appropriate services and education for men
Community members and groups have local knowledge about the prevalence and impact of family violence, and are empowered to speak out about family violence	• Increase the capacity of community members to speak out about the early warning signs of family violence

Family violence early intervention strategic actions

	Early Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Research, monitoring and evaluation												
46	Synthesise the evidence of existing programs in recognition of early warning signs and how professionals can respond	Organisation Improvement	**N**										
47	Review evaluation findings from the *Connecting Children and Families in Epping North Early Intervention* project and the *Streamlining Antenatal to 4 Services for Vulnerable Children* and Families Project	Family, Children & Young People	**C**										
48	Monitor and advocate for social and affordable housing in the municipality through the Social and Affordable Housing Strategy as a key priority of Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS)	Established Planning, Community Services	**N C (BAU)**										
49	Advocate for children and young people's needs in consultation processes, planning and policy development. This may involve but is not limited to community consultation, survey development, research, data collection etc.	Family, Children & Young People	**C (BAU)**										

Family violence early intervention strategic actions

	Early Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Council service provision and planning												
50	Provide accessible information for parents and the community about the impacts of family violence on children and young people and their development	Family, Children & Young People	**N**										
51	*Implement a pilot program to roll out a father inclusive project after the birth of a child through our MCH service	Family, Children & Young People	**N $**										
52	Embed identification of family violence warning signs and foster positive role modelling and respectful relationships content into existing programs, activities and services e.g. new parent groups/Family Day Care /seniors' clubs/PAG/Home and Community Care etc.	Family, Children & Young People Aged and Disability	**N**										

Family violence early intervention strategic actions

	Early Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
53	Create opportunities for families to meet other families at vulnerable life stages through: • Supported Playgroup and Parent Groups Initiative funding targeting vulnerable families, community playgroups, MCH, New Parent Groups • Connecting Children and Families in Epping North Early Intervention Project	Family, Children & Young People	**C (BAU)**										
54	MCH has a focus on early intervention and conducts projects targeting vulnerable families and children through the Right@Home Sustained Home Visiting program and the Streamlining Antenatal-4 Services for Vulnerable Children and Families Project	Family, Children & Young People	**C (BAU)**										

Family violence early intervention strategic actions

	Early Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Council organisational and workforce development												
55	Provide training, education and reflective practice to City of Whittlesea staff interfacing with community members, in particular priority population groups, to provide the skills to respond to the early warning signs of family violence and make appropriate referrals	Human Resources Family Children & Young People	**N $**										
56	Develop training and awareness raising for Council staff in the importance of male inclusive practice e.g. being inclusive of fathers/males in the language used	People and Culture	**N $**										
	Community strengthening												
57	Work with partners/community leaders to increase awareness within existing groups and programs of the early warning signs of family violence	Community Cultural Development Leisure & Community Inclusion Family, Children & Young People	**N (BAU)**										

Family violence early intervention strategic actions

	Early Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
58	Build the capacity of Council staff to raise awareness and build links between men and services and/or local community groups to improve social connections	Community Cultural Development Leisure & Community Inclusion Family, Children & Young People Health & Bushfire Recovery	**N**										
59	Implement leadership training for community leaders in family violence early intervention	Community Cultural Development	**N $**										
	Communications and social marketing												
60	Promote resources for young people to increase their awareness of early warning signs in their own peer relationships	Family Children & Young People	**N (BAU)**										

Family violence early intervention strategic actions

	Early Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Advocacy												
61	Advocate for increased service provision to support young peoples' wellbeing and mental health	Advocacy, Family Children & Young People	**C**										
62	Advocate for safe and affordable housing options for community members and vulnerable groups including young people, in particular a Youth Foyer model of housing	Advocacy Family Children & Young People	**C (BAU)**										
63	Advocate for more services for men in the municipality	Advocacy Health,Access & Bushfire Recovery	**N**										
	Service Sector Facilitation and Partnerships												
64	Support the development of a resource kit for Early Childhood Education and Care services, schools and other professionals working with children and young people on how to identify and respond to early warning signs of family violence and violence in peer relationships	Family Children & Young People Health, Access & Bushfire Recovery Communications & Marketing	**N $**										

Family violence early intervention strategic actions

	Early Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
65	Include *identifying family violence sessions* in training offered by Council's Family, Children and Young People Department for professionals including those working with children and educators and promote widely	Family Children & Young People	C										
66	Support the implementation of the Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project	Health, Access & Bushfire Recovery	C (BAU)										
67	Continue to promote the use of the Northern Region Family Violence Help Cards and identify initial contact points for women experiencing family violence and other local supports	Family, Children & Young People	N $										
68	Work with agencies and networks interfacing with community members (with a focus on the priority at risk populations and community members at risk of contributing to violence in the home) to develop training and supports about the early warning signs and appropriate responses and build the capacity of the service system to facilitate access to services	Family, Children & Young People Leisure and Community Inclusion Health Access & Bushfire Recovery	N $										

Family violence strategy actions

Responding to Family Violence

What is Intervention?

Intervention involves providing support and treatment to women and children who are affected by violence or to men who use violence. Intervention strategies are implemented after violence occurs.

They aim to create safety for victims and deal with the consequences of their experiences, and to ensure that it does not occur again or escalate. Intervention strategies can include:

- Crisis accommodation and support for victims;
- Health and mental health services;
- Therapeutic interventions for perpetrators; and
- Criminal justice responses[61]

City of Whittlesea family violence intervention desired outcomes and objectives

The following table outlines the desired outcomes this strategy is working towards and the specific intervention objectives it will work on over the next four years.

Intervention Desired Outcome	Intervention Objectives
Services in the family violence and related sectors meet the unique needs of **children** experiencing family violence in the home	• Increase knowledge of early years professionals about referral pathways and entry points of family violence related services • Increase the City of Whittlesea's knowledge base about the needs of children experiencing family violence • Facilitate collaborative relationships among family violence related services and other professionals across the community with a focus on children
Services in the family violence and related sector meet the unique needs of **young people** experiencing family violence	• Build the capacity of services to support young people experiencing family violence • Increase City of Whittlesea and service staff knowledge about the needs of young people experiencing family violence • Facilitate collaborative relationships among family violence related services and other professionals across the community with a focus on young people

Family violence intervention strategic actions

Intervention Desired Outcome	Intervention Objectives
Families experiencing family violence are identified and receive relevant and responsive support services	• Increase the reporting of family violence • Increase the knowledge of family services staff and other professionals across the community of the referral pathways and entry points of family violence related services • Increase the City of Whittlesea and services staff knowledge base about the needs of families experiencing family violence • Facilitate collaborative relationships among family violence related services and other professionals across the community with a focus on families
Women experiencing family violence are safe in their homes and safe in their communities and can get the support they need	• Advocate for relevant and responsive support services in the City of Whittlesea • Increase the knowledge of services and other professionals across the community of the referral pathways and entry points of family violence related services • Increase Council's staff knowledge base about the needs of women experiencing family violence • Facilitate collaborative relationships among family violence related services and other professionals across the community with a focus on women
Men perpetrating family violence have access to effective programs and do not continue to perpetrate violence	• Increase the knowledge base about successful perpetrator intervention programs • Men have access to effective programs e.g. behavior change, development, anger management and recidivist • Increase the range of relevant and responsive support services in the City of Whittlesea for male perpetrators
Community members know where to go to when family violence occurs	• Increase awareness across the community of family violence related services • Increase local professional's awareness of identification of risk of violence and encourage policies and procedures to respond to disclosure that reflect current best practice • Facilitate collaborative relationships with Victoria Police

Family violence intervention strategic actions

	Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Research, monitoring and evaluation												
69	Regularly document the available specialist and non-specialist family violence services in the municipality and promote these to early years professionals such as Maternal and Child Health and Early Childhood Education and Care Services	**Family, Children & Young People**	**N (BAU)**										
70	Improve City of Whittlesea and partners' understanding of the local experiences of family violence and sexual assault to facilitate identification of the needs tailored for priority population groups	**Community Services Planning Family, Children & Young People**	**N (BAU)**										
71	Conduct regular mapping exercise of family violence services in the City of Whittlesea to explore differential access when compared with the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne and promote evidence base for advocacy	**Family, Children & Young People Health Access & Bushfire Recovery**	**N**										

Family violence intervention strategic actions

	Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
72	Promote the collation of information between networks about family violence incidences and support provided, to better understand the local environment	Community Services Directorate	**C (BAU)**										
	Council service provision and planning												
73	Develop and disseminate information for the community about how to respond to family violence and support people experiencing family violence	Family, Children & Young People	**N $**										
74	Explore and implement data collection mechanisms for Elder Abuse with partner agencies to inform service provision (e.g. Home and Community Care etc.)	Aged & Disability	**N**										

Family violence intervention strategic actions

	Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Council organisational and workforce development												
75	Facilitate training for all City of Whittlesea staff about identifying family violence and tailoring training for staff interfacing with community members in the identification of Family Violence and appropriate responses and referral pathways for (not limited to): • Maternal and Child Health • Immunisation staff • Local Laws Staff • Environmental Health Staff • Home and Community Care Workers • Volunteers • Customer Service Staff • Partner agencies and staff	Learning and Development/ People and Culture	**N $**										

Family violence intervention strategic actions

	Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
76	Provide support for employees experiencing family violence through the continued implementation of the City of Whittlesea Family Violence and Workplace Support Policy and associated procedures including, safety planning and employee entitlements	Human Resources Health Access & Bushfire Recovery	**C**										
	Community strengthening												
77	Raise community members' and services' awareness of family violence supports available	Community strengthening Community Services Directorate Communications and Marketing,	**C**										
78	Conduct local forums to highlight key advocacy issues as relevant	Community Services Directorate	**C**										

Family violence intervention strategic actions

	Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
	Advocacy												
79	Develop and implement advocacy strategies for justice services such as a family violence specific court to be located in the City of Whittlesea	Advocacy	C										
80	Develop and implement advocacy strategies for equitable access to local specialist family violence services for men, women and children	Advocacy Health Access & Bushfire Recovery	C										
	Service Sector Facilitation and Partnerships												
81	Promote through existing networks appropriate supports for children and young people experiencing family violence	Family, Children & Young People	C (BAU)										
82	Work with local agencies, the police and relevant partners to collect evidence about the prevalence of and response to children and young people experiencing family violence.	Family, Children & Young People	N$										

Family violence intervention strategic actions

	Intervention Strategic Actions **Denotes Gender Equity Strategy*	Council Responsible Departments	New (N) Current (C) Needs funding ($) Business as Usual (BAU)	Target Group						Implementation Year			
				Children	Young People	Families	Men	Women	Communities	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018
83	Participate in and support existing relevant intervention networks such as the Whittlesea Family Violence Network, North East Family Violence Network and the Northern Integrated Family Violence Services	Community Services Directorate	**C (BAU)**										
84	Facilitate Whittlesea Community Futures and associated cluster groups, the Early Years Family Violence Working Group and the Family Violence Taskforce	Community Services Directorate	**C (BAU)**										
85	Support the implementation of a targeted Men's family violence program as part of Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project	Health Access & Bushfire Recovery	**C**										
86	Advocate for funding for a locally based family violence support worker to work with Victoria Police	Advocacy	**N**										

Appendix 1: An ecological approach to understanding violence against women

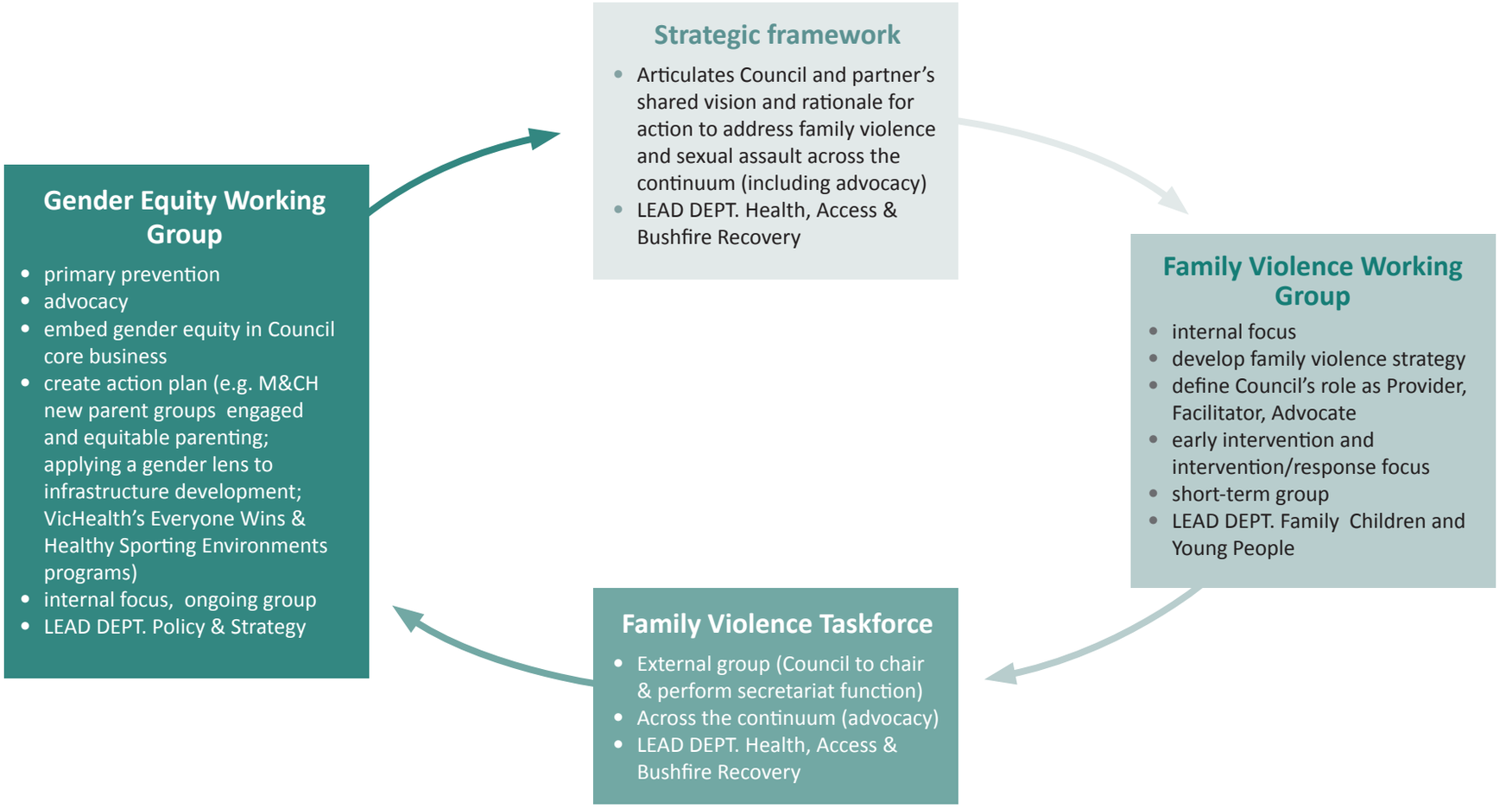
(VicHealth 2007)

Societal: the cultural values and beliefs that shape the other two levels of the social ecology

Community/ organisational: the formal and informal social structures that impact on a person

Individual: the developmental experiences and personality factors that shape a person's responses to stressors in the environment
relationship: the intimate interactions a person has with others

Appendix 2: Intersection of Council's work to address family violence and sexual assault



Appendix 3: City of Whittlesea Gender Equity Strategy

Desired Outcome: The City of Whittlesea is inclusive, respectful, fair and safe for all genders	
Objectives	**Strategies**
1. The City of Whittlesea is an employer of choice, with a respectful organisational culture that values gender diversity, strives for gender balance and embeds gender equity in all workplace policies, practice and procedures.	a. Apply gender lens and embed gender equity within human resource management and organisational culture projects.
	b. Define, promote and equitably apply flexible/family friendly workplace strategies
	c. Address the gender equity of the leadership groups and strategic decision making processes
	d. Achieve and maintain pay & entitlement equity
	e. Review and ensure equity of opportunities for professional development and further study
	f. Ensure our workplace is safe, inclusive and culture promotes gender equity
2. The City of Whittlesea's services, programs and policies, are inclusive and gender equitable.	a. Policies and strategic documents conduct and respond to Gender Equity Analysis
	b. Increase use, collection & reporting of sex disaggregated data in services, programs and policy.
	c. Address gender equity of community consultations across the organisation
	d. Apply gender lens to the allocation of the City of Whittlesea's resources (including community funding, facilities use)
	e. Utilise gender analysis to decrease gendered barriers to participation and increase inclusiveness of City of Whittlesea's services, groups and programs
3. The City of Whittlesea's **places and spaces** facilitate community connection and are safe, welcoming, respectful & inclusive of all genders.	a. Incorporate gender equity principles in design & function of public spaces, community facilities, parks and recreation
	b. Increase use of gender analysis and sex disaggregated data in planning and advising on the public realm, land use, facilities planning and parks and open space.
	c. Facilitate increased gender equitable inclusiveness of community settings
4. The City of Whittlesea is facilitating equitable opportunities for civic and economic participation and advancing gender equity in our community.	a. Utilise media and communication opportunities to promote non-stereotype gender roles and raise awareness of gender equity
	b. Provide leadership and advocacy for improved gender equity within local government sector, local community, state and federal government settings
	c. Support and facilitate increased representation of women in community & civic leadership positions
	d. Facilitate improved opportunities for women's local economic participation and financial security

Appendix 4: Supporting Policies

Commonwealth government

The Commonwealth, state and territory governments worked with the community to develop a 12-year *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the National Plan).

Released in 2011, the National Plan explains what is being done to reduce violence against women and their children. The plan's vision is that:

> **Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities.**

Over 12 years the National Plan aims to achieve:

> **A significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children[62].**

First Action Plan: Building a Strong Foundation 2010-2013

http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children/first-action-plan-2010-2013

Second Action Plan: Moving Ahead 2013-2016

http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children/the-second-action-plan

Our Watch

Our Watch, previously known as the Foundation to Prevention Violence Against Women and Their Children, is an independent national organisation established in 2013 by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments. Now in their second year, Our Watch is joined by the Northern Territory and South Australian Governments and has just released their five year Strategic Plan. Over the five years their strategic program will focus on four mutually reinforcing areas of work:

1. Lead a sustained and constructive public conversation
2. Design and deliver innovative programs that engage and educate individuals and the community
3. Enable organisations, networks and communities to effect changes
4. Influence public policy, systems and institutions[63].

Five Year Strategic Plan 2014-2019

http://www.ourwatch.org.au/ourwatch_5yrstrategic-plan.pdf

Appendix 4: Supporting Policies cont.

Victorian government

The Victorian Government's plan reflects a commitment to preventing violence happening, holding perpetrators to account for their actions and providing support to women and children who experience violence. The Victorian Government's initiatives to address violence against women and children fall within three streams:

Preventing violence against women and children by educating to change attitudes and behaviours and to promote respectful non-violent relationships and engaging organisations and communities to promote gender equity and stop violence

Intervening earlier by identifying and targeting individuals and groups who exhibit early signs of violent behaviour or of being subjected to violence

Responding through an integrated system which provides consistent, coordinated and timely responses to women and children who experience family violence to protect and empower them to rebuild their lives and to get tougher on perpetrators and prevent re-offending.

Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children 2012-2015: Everyone has a responsibility to act

http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/women-in-the-community/preventing-violence-against-women/action-plan-to-address-violence-against-women-and_children

Local government

Local government planning, service provision and partnerships cut across the social, economic, environmental and cultural domains of civic life. Council is well placed to lead action to address family violence using a whole of council approach, in partnership with the local community and agencies.

Local governments play a pivotal role in creating safe and healthy environments for the communities they serve. Local governments provide a range of community services, safe public spaces and community facilities which can be used as platforms to influence change. Local governments are also workplaces and in some instances can be the largest employer within a municipality. Local governments can lead change across policy, planning, programming, service delivery, partnerships, political influence and advocacy, social marketing and integrating gender respect and equity throughout all council business and as a whole of community responsibility[64].

Strategic links to other City of Whittlesea plans

- Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017
- Disability Action Plan 2013-2016
- Multicultural Action Plan 2014-2018
- Connect: A municipal plan for children, young people and their families in the City of Whittlesea 2013–2018
- Gender Equity Strategy
- Family Violence Workplace Support Policy
- White Ribbon Action Plan
- Whittlesea Early Years Partnership (Best Start) Strategic Action Plan

Appendix 4: Supporting Policies cont.

Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership

The Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership (the Partnership) is a unique example of a mechanism for collaborative partnerships with Council on community issues. It has five cluster groups: Whittlesea Early Years Partnership, Whittlesea Youth Commitment, Positive Ageing, Disability, CALD Communities and in addition to the clusters an Advocacy working group. The Partnership and cluster groups have identified family violence as a high-priority and are working towards actions across a range of areas. Further information on the Partnership is available http://www.whittleseacommunityfutures.org.au/

Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce

Council hosted a family violence round table forum in 2013 with key agencies and government representatives to discuss the crucial action required from all levels of government and key agencies to address the high prevalence of family violence in the municipality. A key decision from this round table forum was to establish a time-limited, high-level taskforce to address the issue of family violence as a public health priority for the community and to coordinate collaboration between key agencies, including local, state and federal governments. The partners agreed Council would lead the taskforce.

The Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce was established in 2014 to:

- Coordinate Council and partners' advocacy to address family violence;
- Secure funding for appropriate place-based programs;
- Ensure current policy is effectively implemented at the local level;
- Improve Council and partners' understanding of the causes and contributing factors of family violence in the local context.

The Taskforce strengthened the local advocacy campaign Families on the Edge to profile family violence in the City of Whittlesea as key priority issue leading up to the Victorian Government election November 2014.

Northern Metropolitan Region

Strategic links:

- Building a Respectful Community Preventing Violence against Women: A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011-2016
- Northern Integrated Family Violence Service Strategic Network.

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[63]Our Watch End violence against Women And Their Children http://www.ourwatch.org.au/

[64]Adapted and reproduced with permission, Gender Equitable, Safe and Inclusive Communities Partnership between Brimbank City Council, Maribyrnong City Council, Wyndham City 2012-2014

If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault or family violence, call **1800RESPECT** on **1800 737 732** or visit **www.1800RESPECT.org.au**. In an emergency, call **000**. Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service provides support services locally for women and children, contact **9450 4700**. Men can contact the Men's Referral Service on **1300 766 491** for services and support.

Council Contacts

Civic Centre: 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang
Office Hours: Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm
Mail: Locked Bag 1, Bundoora MDC 3083
Telephone: 9217 2170 (24 hours)
TTY: 9217 2420 **Fax:** 9217 2111 **Email:** info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au
Web: www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au

City of Whittlesea

FSC www.fsc.org MIX Paper from responsible sources FSC® C102126

FUND THE FAMILY VIOLENCE SYSTEM: SAVE MONEY, SAVE LIVES

Family violence referrals have more than **tripled** in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne since 2009/10.

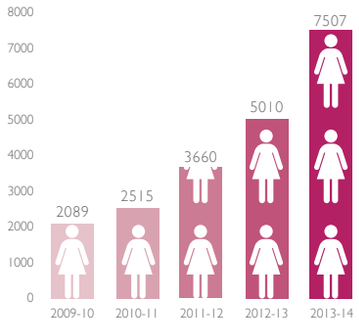
The dramatic rise in referrals of women who have experienced family violence is not being met with a sufficient funding increase for the family violence service system.

Lack of funding for family violence agencies to provide support beyond crisis response means that the long-term issues women face cannot be addressed.

This is extremely costly as women re-enter the system multiple times.

The best outcomes occur when women and children have their immediate needs met and where there is longer term support available.

NUMBER OF POLICE REFERRALS TO WOMEN'S INTAKE SERVICE 2009-2014



259% increase over **5 years** from 2009-10

In order to BREAK THE CYCLE of re-entering a violent relationship, a woman in this situation needs access to:

- Immediate refuge accommodation
- Secure long-term housing
- Ongoing outreach support

URGENTLY FUND specialist and targeted services so they can meet demand including processing and responding to police referrals, case management, counselling and therapeutic programs for both women and children. (No More Deaths Campaign, 2014)

ENTERING THE SYSTEM

Ideal

Best practice response to a woman experiencing family violence

Enters the system **once**

OUTCOME enters safe and affordable housing

= $29,825.56

Reality

Inadequate funding to respond appropriately results in a greater long-term cost

OUTCOME in the absence of affordable housing or support, returns to violent partner

Enters the system **7** times

= $53,279.07

IDEAL JOURNEY

Police called to family violence incident

Police and court support **$3,399.27** per incident

Material aid and direct referral to refuge **$634.77**

Refuge Accommodation (14 days room and board) **$6,109.02**

Health and advocacy support over 12 months **$3,698.10**

Housing and Social Work outreach support over 12 months **$15,984.40**

Safely housed

Woman begins rebuilding life

REALITY JOURNEY

Emergency Accommodation (2 weeks) **$2,009.60**

Refuge Accommodation (intake, orientation and 3 months room and board) **$12,970.39**

Health and advocacy support **$977.01**

Woman is unable to access affordable housing and non-crisis support.

Returns to violent partner

Cycle begins again, costing at least **$5,653.80** per system re-entry.

FUND THE FAMILY VIOLENCE SYSTEM: SAVE MONEY, SAVE LIVES

COST OF ACTUAL SERVICE PROVISION

SUPPORT RECEIVED	SUBTOTALS
Police and court support	$3,399.27
Emergency Accommodation (2 weeks)	$2,009.60
Refuge Accommodation (intake, orientation and 3 months room and board)	$12,970.39
Health and advocacy support	$977.01
Risk assessment, material aid and case management for subsequent system re-entries (6 X $5,653.80)	$33,922.80.
TOTAL	$53,279.07

Most women have no choice but to return to their violent partners at least once.[1]

...with many women who access refuge seeking help 6 other times.[2]

Without considering recurrent accommodation, 6 re-entries to the system is estimated to cost:

$53,279.07

Family violence is the NUMBER ONE CAUSE of women's homelessness in Victoria. Over half of women who access homelessness services cite family violence as the reason for their homelessness.[3]

On an average day, nearly 60% of all new requests for immediate accommodation are unable to be met by Australian homelessness services funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.[4]

COST OF OPTIMAL SERVICE PROVISION

SUPPORT RECEIVED	SUBTOTALS
Police and court support (as above)	$3,399.27
Material aid and direct referral to refuge	$634.77
Refuge Accommodation (14 days room and board)	$6,109.02
Health and advocacy support over 12 months	$3,698.10
Housing and Social Work outreach support over 12 months	$15,984.40
TOTAL	$29,825.56

Providing immediate refuge space, SECURE LONG-TERM HOUSING and outreach support over 12 MONTHS will provide a better chance of a positive long-term outcome, with reduced risk and less re-occurence of family violence.

NOTES

Costings were developed by Kristin Diemer (PhD) Senior Research Fellow (Family Violence Research Program - University of Melbourne). Costing analysis is based on information supplied by members of the integrated family violence service system in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne.

These costings are based on the services provided to a woman who accessed family violence services in 2014. This woman had a seven-month-old child and initially accessed refuge for three months, before returning to her partner. Her case is taken to be representative.

Costs do not include: case related operating overheads and infrastructure expenses, worker salary on-costs, overall staff management and supervision, non-client direct costs (administration), professional support such as accountants, HR or professional development costs.

If the system were adequately funded, it is less likely that women would return to violent partners and more likely that they would be able to build lives away from family violence.

SOURCES

1: Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (2012). Personal Safety Survey Australia. (Cat. No. 4906.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

2: Gondolf, E., & Fisher, E. (1988). Battered Women as Survivors An Alternative to Treating Learned Helplessness. Lexington MA: Lexington Books.

3 and 4: AIHW. (2011). People turned away from government funded specialist homelessness accommodation 2010-11 (Vol. Cat. no. Hou 260). Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

WOMEN'S HEALTH IN THE NORTH
voice • choice • power

City of Whittlesea

FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICE PATHWAYS:

MAPPING AND CONSULTATION PROJECT

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Executive Summary

The findings and recommendations included in this report contribute to a local evidence-base of how women, children and young people experiencing family violence are currently supported in the City of Whittlesea (Cow). The service maps and accompanying analysis were developed using information gathered through a combination of web searches and a collaborative consultation with a number of agencies.

Key findings include:

- Web-based resources are not being effectively utilised for the local environment:
    - Web-based searches using standard search engines are not producing relevant local results.
    - In some cases, agency websites are difficult to navigate and information about types of services and their eligibility criteria is unclear.
- Non-specific family violence services are not necessarily capturing data about the prevalence of family violence encountered in their service provision.
- For many local agencies, family violence is not their core focus which can create challenges and limitations for service provision.
- The majority of services do not have offices within the municipality and many nearby services have poor public transport access.
    - Out-posting is one way in which agencies are responding to this challenge.
- Lower numbers of early intervention services, particularly among family violence specific services.
- Low numbers of group programs, particularly for women.

Key recommendations include:

- Further consultation with agencies is needed to leverage local services expertise and inform Council planning and advocacy.

- Further mapping to capture service provision for specific groups such as children and youth is required.
- The service summaries generated by this project should be distributed to network partners to increase awareness and knowledge of local service provision.
- Additional research could be completed in future through Council facilitated student placements in partnership with RMIT and other network partners as a means of effectively leveraging service expertise.

2. Findings

2.1. General Mapping Outcomes

2.1.1. Website Accessibility and Functionality

Accessibility

The initial research (a review of service website material using standard search engines) produced results which were often not located in useful geographical areas. Location information for services was often not listed in search results summaries, on home pages or within initial links. It was often challenging to differentiate state specific services in a reasonable period of time. In one instance, the first crisis phone line that appeared was an international number which can mislead and misdirect vulnerable women. When searches are localised, e.g. including "Whittlesea" in the search request, results still include services from across the NMR and even the state. If search criteria were further narrowed to specific suburbs, often no search results were found. In addition, when search terms like 'violence support service' or 'violence help' were used, crisis support resources would not appear until the fifth or sixth result. The national helpline 1800RESPECT was the seventh result and the *Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service Victoria* (WDVCS) was ninth.

Functionality and Clarity

The initial research showed that the type of services available, how they could be accessed, and what eligibility criteria applied was often unclear from website material. This report acknowledges that there are a number of valid reasons why service providers may choose to provide only a brief overview of their services and only broadly refer to who may be eligible. For example, not doing so may inadvertently cause someone to exclude themselves from support which they are in fact entitled to or may create an impression of service provision which is in fact

subject to assessment. Large amounts of information may also simply appear overwhelming to someone attempting to access support in vulnerable circumstances.

However, some websites were challenging to navigate due to out of date information, use of headings which were not clear, or links that were not functioning correctly. Websites also often appeared to be attempting to provide information which catered to multiple audiences (women, other service providers, media and academics) at once with the result that information was not necessarily provided in ways that most effectively addressed the needs of those accessing services.

As said, when service descriptions on websites are vague or non-specific, those accessing the website may develop an unrealistic impression of what an agency does or what they should expect from a service. For example, the description 'family violence support' frequently appeared to be listed as an umbrella service without further explanation of what it included. Those with service knowledge would be familiar with what this may include but members of the general public may not. Even among services, descriptions and understanding of what services involve can vary significantly. Furthermore, achieving transparent service descriptions is difficult when service responses tend to be structured on a case by case basis (to best assist the needs of their clients). This becomes challenging for agencies to effectively advertise their services in the broadest possible way whilst working within their funding limitations.

The challenges and limitations regarding agency websites discussed above are of particular concern as people are increasingly using the internet as a source of information and as a 'first step'. Ideally, websites should be viewed in terms of their potential benefits for providing support and conveying service information to the

communities which access them – available to a great number of people anytime and anywhere but not currently utilised as effectively as they could be.

2.1.2. Non-Specific Family Violence Services

During consultation, a small number of both specific and non-specific services were contacted via email, phone and in person to discuss their service provision and were asked about the numbers of clients they were encountering who are experiencing family violence. A non-specific family violence service is one which does not define family violence as their primary focus or core business but confirm encountering people experiencing family violence among those accessing their services. It was found that these agencies did not necessarily record the number of their clients who were experiencing family violence in their data. For these agencies, family violence is a secondary or co-presenting issue which may, or may not, be directly addressed by the agency or involve referral to a family violence specific service. However, in all cases, these agencies also acknowledged that anecdotally they were encountering increasing numbers of clients from the CoW experiencing family violence and were, in some cases, providing additional training to their staff to ensure they were better equipped to respond to this issue. It should be noted only a small sample of agencies were consulted and these observations should be treated accordingly.

2.1.3. Availability of Services

Community Organisations

Within the *Service Map (Initial Version)*, the section comprising community organisations includes the highest number of service providers (a total of 13 services) but this number does not necessarily indicate a prevalence of available services attending to the issue of family violence. As discussed in the previous section (*2.1.2. Non-Specific Family Violence Services*), community organisations do not have a family

violence focus and may or may not address family violence when working with a client. This may be due to a lack of formal assessment processes for family violence, a lack of funding to respond beyond referral, a lack of training or certain eligibility criteria which limits access to their services.

During consultation, services demonstrated awareness of the issue of family violence in the CoW and showed willingness to provide support where family violence was a significant factor for their clients or where the safety of their client was at risk. However, agencies also provided feedback consistent with the recent CoW *Human Needs Analysis* 2014 that more staff, greater outreach capacity or an opportunity for co-location in the municipality would increase their ability to provide support for family violence within their client group.

Family Services

Family services are provided to the residents of the CoW by six community organisations. A family service is one of the most common types of services available for families. It is an entry point for a number of different services, with organisations able to provide a variety of support options through a generalist structure which can include case management, parenting support, counselling, legal and financial advice, outreach and court support.

However, family services were originally designed to provide early intervention support with a focus on parenting skills for at risk families. In practice family services resources are increasingly directed toward intervention responses. The challenge of limited funding means agencies are often unable to direct sufficient resources to towards building effective early intervention responses as well. In addition, family services agencies often end up working with mothers individually in cases where

family violence is present which can place the responsibility for ensuring their child's safety on women alone with limited support. The authors acknowledge that these services are providing significant and important supports for family violence. However, their practice frameworks were not originally developed for a family violence response rather for family parenting support and while agencies have adapted, their service models and assessment criteria are not best practice models for family violence.

Location Challenges

There are a number of agencies who can provide support to CoW residents experiencing family violence. However, the overwhelming majority of these services are not located within the municipality and many are under pressure to provide outreach services to such a large geographical area. Furthermore, services which are located within a reasonable distance, such as Bundoora, are not easily accessible via public transport. It was clear from the consultation that some services are attempting to fill this gap by providing co-located services either by conducting or hosting out-posting services. For more detail about out-posting service provision in the CoW, see *2.2 Initial versus Consultation Mapping Outcomes*. However, geographic location remains a significant challenge for service provision generally for the municipality.

Early Intervention

Anecdotally, early intervention strategies appear to be the focus of much discussion in the area of family violence service provision for a range of stakeholders in the CoW. However, the initial research did not produce many examples of local early intervention strategies, particularly among family violence specific services. Agencies did not tend to label their services as early intervention and only a small number of services appeared available for high risk groups that were not already experiencing

violence. This is not to say that these agencies are not providing early intervention responses. Rather, the authors suggest that significant early intervention work and innovation in the municipality is not necessarily being fully captured, reported or recognised. It also does not appear that there is consensus regarding what early intervention support constitutes across different agencies and service models.

In addition, it may also be the case that the current funding environment has placed considerable constraints on services even to maintain levels of support at the intervention end. Anecdotally, such pressure tends to erode the capacity of services to shift beyond a crisis intervention response only to early intervention support targeted at high risk groups.

Groups

The initial research only identified a small number of groups operating within the CoW or which accommodated residents from the municipality. Those identified tended to be for specific communities (CALD, indigenous and youth) but these were also not prevalent. The most common group type identified was parenting and family groups. However, during consultation more groups were identified, particularly for women. It appeared services chose not to advertise group work on their websites when they were often only funded for short periods or on a term by term basis or were only available to a small number of people at a time. It was also indicated that agencies found group work challenging to evaluate and advocate for, though anecdotally group work is considered very effective, particularly within CALD and indigenous communities, and is also generally well received by members as an alternative to more individualised models such as case management.

2.2. Initial versus Consultation Mapping Outcomes

2.2.1. Early Intervention

As said in *2.1.3. Availability of Services*, the initial research indicated that early intervention activities are significantly under-represented in the CoW, particularly for family violence specific services. The consultation did help to identify a number of initiatives but this area is still comparably under-represented. In addition, some of the initiatives identified were short term pilot projects or were not considered part of the agency's core business. Short term pilot projects tended to be funding driven and reliant and would not necessarily be developed in the longer term or incorporated into the general service provision.

2.2.2. Out-Posting

As stated in *2.1.3. Availability of Services*, some services are are attempting to fill gaps in service provision for residents in the CoW by providing co-located services either by conducting or hosting out-posting services. Services with offices in the municipality provide space for other agencies to maintain a local presence. For example, Whittlesea Community Connections provides office space for specialist family violence and legal services on a regular basis. Berry Street conducts out-posting at the Northern Courts in Heidelberg. Out-posting is a practical, cost-effective step that services are taking to improve service accessibility. Further consultation could help to map the prevalence of out-posting initiatives in the municipality across the range of services referred to in this mapping project.

2.2.3. Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project

After consultation with Whittlesea Community Connections, the Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project was included in the *Service Map* (First Consultation Version). This project highlights the potential benefits of cross agency collaboration for innovation in family violence response and prevention. It is a strong

example of the potential for community focused and driven initiatives to provide tailored programs which maximise local resources.

2.2.4. Extent of Service Provision

The consultation revealed that agencies tend to offer services in addition to what is explicitly stated on their websites. Additional services identified during consultation were added to the *Service Map* (First Consultation Version) (Appendix 2) but no information gained from the initial research needed to be removed i.e., services that were listed on websites were generally found to be accurate. After consultation, on average five additional services were added to the map for each agency. The most number of changes made for an agency was sixteen. Only Anglicare, Northern Centre against Sexual Assault (NCASA) and the Children's Protection Society (CPS) did not require any amendments to the *Service Map* after consultation,

Furthermore, only small changes were made regarding participation in alliances, partnerships and other initiatives to the *Service Map* (First Consultation Version). Information regarding group work services also changed significantly after consultation. As stated in section *3.1.3. Availability of Services*, agencies who offered groups did not tend to advertise group work on their websites.

2.3. Limitations of Mapping

Service mapping is useful for understanding work occurring in an area and for identifying any gaps where work is not occurring. It assists in the sharing of project ideas, learning and resources and aids in project planning. However, the authors suggest that following limitations of the mapping process be kept in mind when reviewing the findings from this project and considered for any future mapping projects.

2.3.1. Categorisation and Definitional Challenges

This mapping project utilised fixed definitions when categorising the types of services included but in reality, services may need to be more fluid and flexible in how they deliver their services. For example, it is important that they are responsive to their client's needs and are able to tailor their services accordingly. Using a fixed set of definitions to categorise services can be useful for clarity and consistency in mapping but this may not reflect responsiveness nor capture information that does not easily fit discrete categories. For example, case management can be made up of a number of support activities that may vary from client to client depending on their support needs. In other words, not every agency will provide case management in the same way. Categories can also refer to a number of different types of activities which nonetheless share a common objective, such as social inclusion.

In addition, services, strategies and initiatives do not necessarily fit discretely into prevention, early intervention or intervention categories but may have flavours from more than one or all of three of these categories. This was particularly the case for services, strategies and initiatives which involved activities which fit both the early intervention and intervention categories. For the purposes of this mapping project, the authors took the view that it was important to strike a balance between the breath and detail of information displayed and maintaining the map's accessibility and ease of use.

2.3.2. Subjectivity in Mapping

Mapping projects which involve consultation are unavoidably affected by participant subjectivity. Participants may interpret services and categories differently with the result that services may be attributed varying definitions which can impact and skew

the overall picture presented. To offset this risk, a set of service definitions for each service category was created and incorporated into the consultation to improve consistency and understanding.

2.3.3. Mapping Validity over Time

Service mapping is only able to provide a temporal visual of service provision. It is a snap shot in time of service provision and is likely to become out of date in a short period of time given unpredictable funding environments constantly impacting capacity for services, strategies, initiatives and pilots.

2.3.4. Capturing Different Population Groups

Given that this mapping project focused on family violence service provision generally, further detail of the services available to some groups such as children and young people have not been fully explored. Furthermore, as services are often focused on the presenting woman or family broadly, the authors suggest that further mapping of service provision for certain groups, particularly children, would be beneficial for exploring their service needs and identifying relevant gaps and innovation.

2.3.5. Service Types Excluded from Mapping

This service map does not represent an exhaustive list of all the support services available to residents of the CoW experiencing family violence. It lists family violence specific services, community organisations and other service groups anecdotally known to be encountering family violence in the work they do. Many other services such as general practitioners, schools and play groups also provide support to people experiencing family violence as part of their service provision. The authors suggest that these groups, due to their prevalence, could be mapped separately.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Need for Further Consultation

The above findings represent interim results in what the authors suggest could be a broader consultation project. The initial focus has been primarily on detailing the current service landscape in the municipality. Further consultation would facilitate accessing and leveraging local service expertise to gather information about current and potential innovations in service provision as well as an increased understanding of the role that Council could play in intervention response to family violence. Completion of the full project scope as outlined in the *Project Brief* would significantly contribute to Council's future planning and advocacy in the area of family violence response and prevention.

3.2. Mapping for Specific Groups

3.2.1. Presence of Children and Youth in Family Violence Service Provision

The provision of child or youth specific services was not strongly represented in either the initial research or consultation. A number of factors appeared to contribute to this. For example, this mapping project focused on family violence service provision in the CoW generally because this data is not currently available in a single, accessible format. Secondly, while child and youth specific services play a tremendous role in supporting young people experiencing family violence in the region, the majority of family violence agencies and other community organisations primarily support women and their accompanying children together. It is a recommendation of this project that a similar approach to mapping child and youth specific services for the municipality be conducted to provide meaningful information with an early years focus.

3.2.2. Other Key Support Services

There are a range of services that provide support for family violence or which are a first point of contact for those needing support. However, to attempt to include all possible agencies encountering family violence in the work they do in one mapping project was not considered realistic. Rather, the scope of the project was to provide an overview of those agencies primarily supporting residents in the CoW. Further consultation could explore other groups encountering and/or responding to family violence such as schools, child care facilities, other early years services, GP's, foster care services and other forms of out of home care support. It is recommended that additional consultation with these service groups be conducted to add to the knowledge base of strategies and initiatives across the spectrum of family violence prevention and inform future Council planning and advocacy.

3.3. Service Summaries

It is suggested that the service summaries generated as part of this research be distributed as a valuable resource for Council's network partners. Agencies could be invited to contribute to the summaries on a regular basis as part of a broader project for capturing and show-casing local and regional innovation in family violence prevention and service provision. They would also be a useful resource for increasing awareness and knowledge of local service provision.

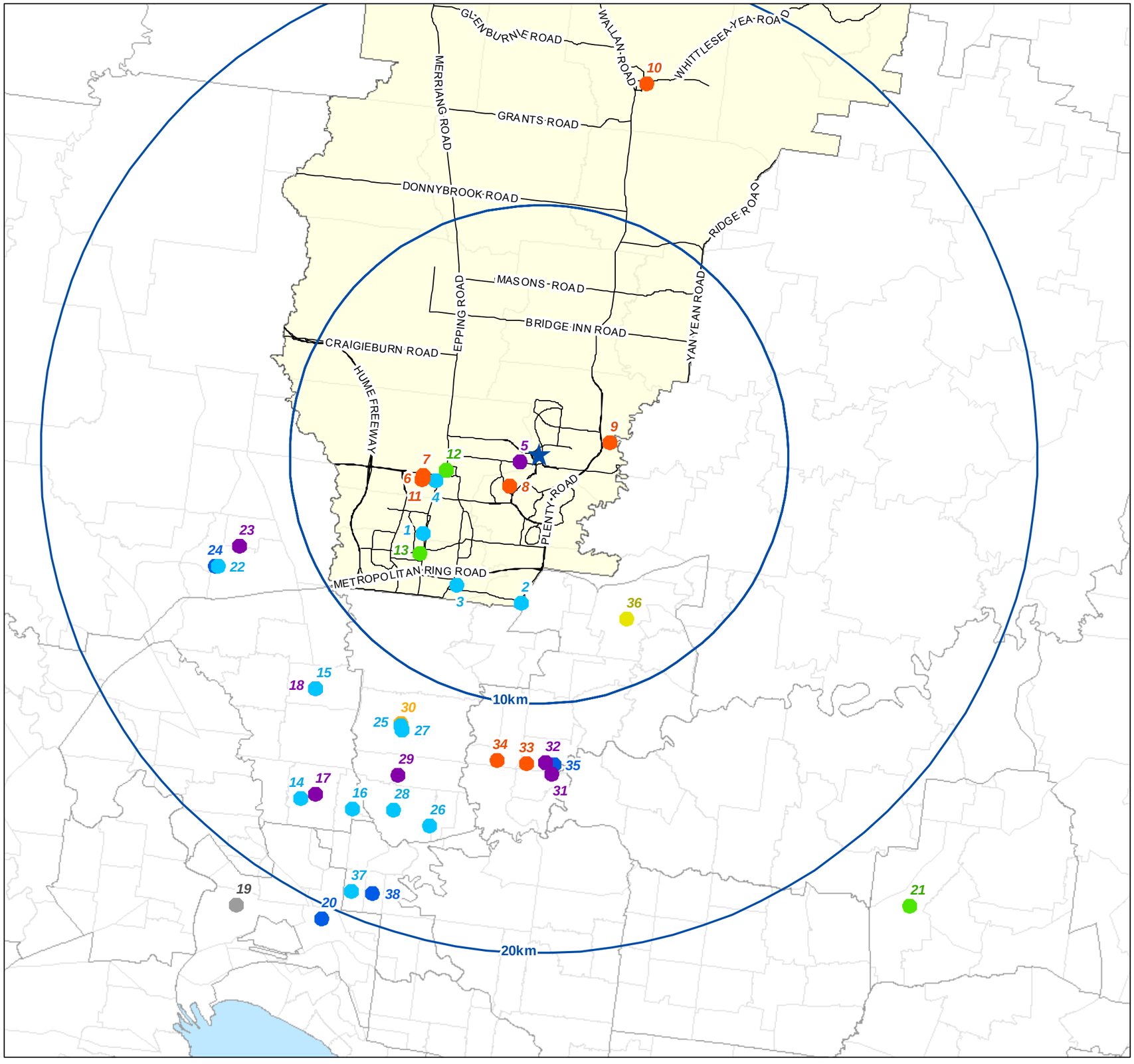
3.4. Council Facilitated Student Placements in the MNR

This research was produced as part of a Social Work student placement in partnership with RMIT University. Student placements can facilitate and provide resources for similar research projects as part of Council's broader agenda. The author's recommend that this program continue but should make use of existing networks and

partnerships to effectively manage these placements. Resourcing clinical social work supervision from local partnership organisations is vital both as an education requirement of the placement for students and for Council to effectively access local service expertise.

Family Violence Specific and General Support Services

July 2014



Community Organisation

1 Anglicare Victoria - Lalor
2 CatholicCare Victoria
3 Children's Protection Society (CPS)
4 Whittlesea Community Connections
14 Foundation House (The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture)
15 Salvation Army/Crossroads Youth & Family Services
16 Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)
22 Anglicare Victoria - Broadmeadows
25 Anglicare Victoria - Preston
26 Elizabeth Hoffman House Aboriginal women's Services (EHH)
27 Merri Outreach Support Services
28 Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)
37 Brotherhood of St Laurence

Family Violence Specific

5 Kildonan Uniting Care – Epping
17 Kildonan Uniting Care – Coburg
18 The Salvation Army Crossroads Mary Anderson Family Violence Program
23 Kildonan Uniting Care – Broadmeadows
29 Kildonan Uniting Care – Reservoir
31 Berry Street
32 Kildonan Uniting Care – Heidelberg

Health Service

6 North West Mental Health (NWMH)
7 Plenty Valley Community Health (PVCH) - Epping
8 Plenty Valley Community Health (PVCH) - Mill Park
9 Plenty Valley Community Health (PVCH) - South Morang
10 Plenty Valley Community Health (PVCH) - Whittlesea
11 The Northern Hospital
33 Austin Hospital
34 Northern Centre against Sexual Assault (NCASA)

Housing Service

30 North East Housing Service (NEHS)

Information Service

19 Women's Information Referral Exchange (WIRE)

Legal Service

20 Women's Legal Service Victoria
24 Legal Aid
35 Northern Courts
38 Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (FVPLS)

Mental Health Service

12 MIND Australia
13 NEAMI National
21 Spectrum

Relationship Service

36 Relationships Australia

Some support services have not been included in this map for confidentiality reasons, including InTouch the Multicultural Centre against Family Violence, Hope Street in Whittlesea and women's refuges.

Community Organisation
Family Violence Specific
Health Service
Housing Service
Information Service
Legal Service
Mental Health Service
Relationship Service

City of Whittlesea

Vicmap

N

0 0.5 1 2KM

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Case Presentation: Sustained Home Visiting Program Antenatal – 2 years (SHVP)

Names have been changed

Emma, [redacted] years old.

Has been in a relationship with Steve ([redacted] y.o.) for [redacted] years. Steve has a history of drug use, currently using marijuana and possibly Ice. Steve has previously served a prison sentence for serious assault of former girlfriend.

Emma has a history of childhood sexual assault, suicidal ideation, anxiety, drug and alcohol use. Possible current alcohol use, no current drug use.

History of family disruption, lived with maternal grandmother during adolescence as her mother was 'unable to manage' her behaviour. Very limited family support- grandmother is now deceased and grandfather and father live in rural area approximately three hours away. Mother and siblings close by but not supportive/available.

Limited friendship/social support network.

Previous intervention order against Steve for threat to kill, believed to be current.

Emma's strengths: *Very focussed on the needs of her children and prioritising these, wants a better (different) environment for Sienna and James than what she had, has insight about the impacts of violence in the home on her children, she is linked into consistent management of her anxiety and depression and has insight about her illness, and is incredibly resilient.*

The Event……

Monday 11am

Home visit to Emma as arranged.

Emma advised that there had been an "incident" the previous night (between 2am and 3am), with Steve threatening her and her sister (who was staying overnight), trying to smash both Emma's television and her phone, threatening to slash the tyres on her car, and saying that he was going to take the children and that she would "never see them again". He left around 3am. The previous day, when woken by the baby, Steve had yelled to James, "Shut the f** up, I f***g hate you!!" Emma said that Steve had seemed "angry" all weekend, that he had changed, and that she had 'seen in his eyes that he could kill her'.

Emma's mother and sister left to do errands when SHVP arrived, and were not contactable for the rest of the day.

Emma stated that she wanted to contact the police to breach the intervention order, saying that she did not want Steve to return to the home. She was clear that his behaviour was inappropriate to be around her children.

Emma was left with:

NO phone (no method of contacting anyone)

NO money

NO licence to drive her car (and suspicion that Steve had tampered with it)

NO support from family or ability to access alternative sources of support without the SHVP worker's phone

1

- Phone call to [redacted] police, worker asked to speak to the Family Violence Liaison officer. (Emma had told worker that often [redacted] police station was not staffed?)
- Worker was put through to an officer, and then advised to phone [redacted] police station.

2

- Phone call to [redacted] Police, worker spoke with an officer. He asked why Emma had not contacted the previous night for assistance, 'not that he was blaming her'.
- The officer advised that he was the only officer on duty, and Emma could attend there but he couldn't guarantee that he would be able to see her.

3

- The officer phoned back to inform us that [redacted] police would attend Emma's home.
- He phoned again to state that there was no current Intervention Order against Steve, or any record of charges being laid previously (the worker had seen both the Intervention Order, which had expired but Emma believed was renewed by police, and also the charge sheet/summons relating to threats made by Steve).

4

- Emma phoned her friend, Melissa, in her hometown to see whether she would be prepared to come and collect Emma and the children to stay with her for a short time. Melissa advised that she did not want to get involved.

5

- Worker phoned Families@Home to ask whether it would be possible to obtain material aid/assistance to get a mobile phone so that Emma would have a means of contact if/when SHVP left. Also seeking assistance to have locks changed at Emma's rental property. As Emma was not an existing client of the program, this support was not available.

6

- On team leader's suggestion, worker phoned Berry Street Victoria, who provided advice about having locks changed at property, Berry Street able to provide funding for this to occur and tradesman to carry out works. As no current intervention order, this could not occur until IVO in place... Discussion re client's lack of money/mode of contact/transport etc, Berry St Worker to try to arrange a NCARS visit to Emma's home re material aid and support.

7

- Emma feeling anxious about what she needs to do, wanting to contact her mother but did not have her number as Steve had destroyed her phone.
- Emma contacted her grandfather (whose number she knew), and got her brother's phone number.
- Emma contacted her brother (who was very sympathetic to Steve rather than Emma), and obtained her mother's mobile number.

8

- Emma considered going to stay with her grandfather who lives three hours away, but then realised that she would not be able to return to Melbourne in two days time for Sienna's paediatric appointment that she has waited months for.
- Emma continued to try to phone her mother, with no success. Emma was evidently anxious and distressed, and felt that her mother had prioritized her errands over Emma's wellbeing/needs.

9

- Emma had declined the worker's suggestion of referral to Families@Home for support, or the possibility of entering a refuge to give her a safe environment for a period to plan her next steps. However, as time went on, she began to be concerned about Steve returning from work and what his response to her could be. It was at this time that she expressed fear that he could kill her, and agreed to be referred to a refuge.

10

- The worker's phone battery was running low, and as this was the only method of communication, worker was concerned about limiting use to retain enough battery for an emergency call if necessary.....
- Worker phoned and left a message at Berry Street Victoria to update the NCARS referral to include refuge access, not only material aid. (Worker later found that Berry St Worker had returned the call, but did not discover this until the end of the day).

11

- Writer phoned the number for [redacted] Community Health, to ask about using their space and facilities to continue trying to access support for Emma. After waiting on hold for five minutes, the receptionist advised that I had been put through to the Epping office. As mobile battery was low, worker did not pursue trying to phone Whittlesea office again.

12

- As worker had previously worked at [redacted] refuge, a refuge for young women and their accompanying children, and believed that this would be an ideal environment for Emma and her children, worker phoned the refuge directly to ask whether they had any family vacancies. They advised that they did.
- Worker phoned [redacted] Housing Services ([redacted]), as the requirement is that any refuge referrals go via NEHS as the access point for the homelessness service sector in this area.

13

- Worker asked whether, given the circumstances, an initial assessment/referral could be done over the phone to allow Emma to access [redacted] refuge today.
- After again being placed on hold for around five minutes, SHVP was advised that due to staff shortages this was not possible and the SHVP worker agreed to return to the SHVP office, complete an Initial Assessment & Planning form, and email this directly to the NEHS worker.

14

- At 3pm, police had not attended or contacted, and NCARS had not attended or contacted.
- SHVP worker arranged for a taxi to collect Emma and her children, to be taken to SHVP office, while waiting for the assessment/referral to be completed so that access to [redacted] could occur today.

15

- SHVP received a phone call from the NCARS worker at [redacted] at around 3.20pm. SHVP advised that Emma had identified she needed refuge - NCARS stated that a worker from WDVCS would contact to discuss this.

16

- SHVP worker returned to our office and began completing the IAP form for NEHS. Emma and her children arrived around 4.15pm. Emma was highly anxious about the steps she was taking, fortunately other SHVP staff were able to provide her with support (and care for Sienna and James) while the initial SHVP worker liaised with NEHS and [redacted].

17

- Worker received a phone call from WDVCS at around 4.45pm, and advised that we were currently trying to access a vacancy at [redacted] refuge. Worker to phone WDVCS back if this placement did not eventuate.

18

- Emma, Sienna and James are taken by taxi to [redacted], with the refuge agreeing to pay the fare at their end.

19

- Where to from here? How could the service system response be improved?

20

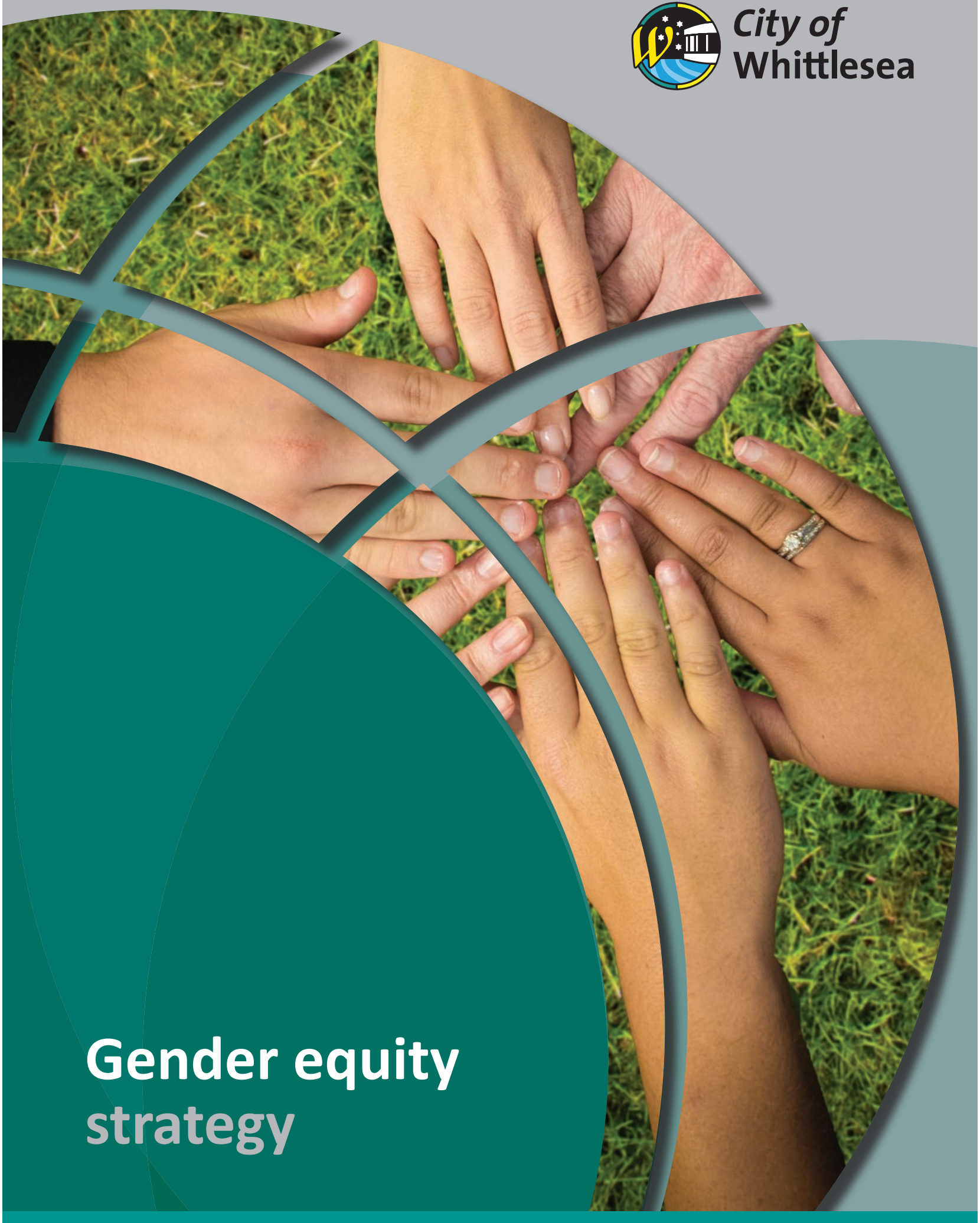
- Given the difficulty that SHVP had accessing appropriate services, with knowledge of the sector etc., how likely is it that clients could do this independently?

Monday 5.30pm

PROGRAM LOGIC FOR CONNECTING FAMILIES IN EPPING NORTH PILOT

FOCUS / TARGET	INPUTS	OUTPUTS	DIRECT IMPACTS	MEDIUM-TERM IMPACTS	BROAD OUTCOMES
All families with children aged 0-3 in Epping North, especially vulnerable families. A focus on: Parents having 2nd, 3rd, etc child CALD families Single parent families Fathers Grandparents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families Families of low socio-economic status And those experiencing significant challenges: Social isolation Postnatal depression Time poor and travelling distances for work Mortgage and financial stress	MCH Key Ages and Stages Framework Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Family Engagement Facilitators (0-3) x2 Community Inclusion Officer Playgroup Resource and Support Officers Universal Access to Kindergarten 0-4 Streamlining services Antenatal to 4 for vulnerable children Community Agencies Existing Playgroups and Community Activities Epping Views Family and Community Centre and other Community facilities Local Primary Schools Empowering Parents Empowering Communities EPEC “Being a Parent” Training Community development approaches to family engagement Evaluation framework developed Funding for evaluation TBC Spreading the message of Safety and Respect Project (WHIN) Data Dashboard method & experiences	Delivering drop in sessions at Epping Views Family and Community Centre (FACC) Active outreach to non-attenders at MCH First Time Parent Groups and service for 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc time parents. Also call these families to participate in other non-threatening activities. Facilitated Group work following on from First Time Parent Groups and for 2nd, 3rd etc time parents. Families learning from each other and facilitators. Content for group work will be informed by desired pilot outcomes, based on family needs and delivered in partnership with other agencies such as postnatal depression, attachment, family functioning, volunteer training, women in work, etc. Transitioning families from First Time Parent Groups into community and supported playgroups and relevant support services. Outreach by local services will help achieve this. Connecting MCH non-attendees to facilitated groups and playgroups including 1st, 2nd, 3rd time parents Outreach services from FACC such as legal services, Centrelink, etc Parents (with children aged 2+ years are trained and running “Being a Parent” sessions – EPEC Parent co-design of pilot activities and strategies A Data Dashboard is used to collect data from community and services for planning, monitoring and evaluating – evaluation data	Families know where to go to access information and what services can help them for their differing needs. Parents interact with service providers and community development/support staff who provide information about local services and groups	Increased knowledge of available support services for children and parents/carers	Families access services that meet their children’s development needs and their own needs in a timely manner.
			Families recognise their parenting strengths and areas they need support Families have knowledge of fun, age appropriate interactions, games and activities they can do with their children Families have access to information and supports that can help build their parenting capacity and child-parent attachment	Increased parenting confidence and enjoyment for mothers, fathers and other carers Increased attachment between parents and their infants and children	Families are strong, confident and well functioning. and meeting their children’s developmental needs Strong parent-child attachments are the foundation for child health, learning and development
			Families connect with other families through participation in social activities, groups and events	Increased social connections between families	Families have supportive social networks that they call on when needed.
			Families understand that raising children can change the family relationship dynamics Families can identify the impact and risks to family relationships in times of stress.	Increased awareness of respectful relationships Increased disclosure of family violence	Children and families are safe in their home and free from violence
			Families have access to positive messages and practical tips and things they can do to promote healthy development Families participate in groups /activities that reinforce their knowledge and provide new ideas	Increased knowledge of early childhood development, including ages and stages of development, the importance/value of play and other home learning experiences	Children have optimal physical, cognitive social and emotional development in their first five years of life
			Local data is collected about service and community participation from services, activity programs and families	Improved monitoring of families’ service and community activity participation	An integrated data collection methodology informs place-based planning

City of Whittlesea



Gender equity strategy

Creating vibrant self-sustaining communities together

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Introduction

The Gender Equity Strategy articulates Council's priorities for advancing gender equity across the organisation and achieving the vision for a community that is inclusive, respectful, fair and safe for people of all genders. The City of Whittlesea recognises that addressing gender inequity is crucial to achieve better health and social wellbeing; improved organisational performance; and the prevention of violence against women.

The case for gender equity

> '(A)n organisation's performance is determined by the human capital that it possesses and its ability to use this resource efficiently. Ensuring the healthy development and appropriate use of half of the world's available talent pool thus has a vast bearing on how competitive a country may become or how efficient a company may be. There is clearly also a values-based case for gender equality: women are one half of the world's population and deserve equal access to health, education, economic participation and earning potential and political decision-making power[1]

The City of Whittlesea recognises that men and women have different access to resources, power responsibilities and life experiences. Therefore different strategies are often necessary to address this disadvantage and achieve equal outcomes for women and men, boys and girls.

Local government's role in gender equity

As the largest employer in the municipality, a service provider and an advocate for the community, Council has a responsibility and is well placed to address gender equity and to build an inclusive and fair community for women and men. Local governments play a pivotal role in creating safe and healthy environments for the communities they serve. Local governments provide a range of community services, safe public spaces and community facilities which can be used as platforms to influence change.[2]

Local governments can lead change across policy, planning, programming, service delivery, partnerships, political influence and advocacy, social marketing and integrating gender equity throughout all Council business and as a whole of community responsibility[3]. The ***'Gender Equity in Local Government Fact Sheets'*** point to the simple ways Gender equity can be integrated in Council's core business through gender analysis; approaches to infrastructure; land use planning and design; promoting women in leadership; workplaces; sports and recreation; and access to services.

Council Plan

The City of Whittlesea's commitment to embed gender equity in Council policy and practice is articulated in the City of Whittlesea Council Plan 2013-17. Future Direction 5: Health and Wellbeing 2. ***'Council will support action to prevent violence against women and children by addressing the underlying causes of family violence and promoting equal and respectful relationships in the community.'***[4]

Key terms and definitions

Gender

Refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

*While this document refers to men and women (boys and girls) the City of Whittlesea recognises that gender is not binary and exists on a continuum. Gender changes over time and between cultures, is fluid, constructed and not the biologically determined attributes of sex.

Equity

Is a term which describes fairness and justice in outcomes. It is not about the equal delivery of services, or distribution of resources, it is about recognising diversity and disadvantage, and directing resources and services towards those most in need, to ensure equal outcomes for all.

Gender Equality

Is the outcome reached through gender equity. It is the equal valuing by the society of the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play.

Gender analysis / lens

Is a method of assessing the difference in the lives of women and men and the impacts that policies, decisions and services have on particular groups of men and women.

Sex

Refers to biological and physiological differences between women and men. Intersex refers to those whose biological sex cannot be classified as clearly male or female

Gender Equity

Is the process of being fair to men and women. Gender Equity acknowledges that men and women have different access to resources, power responsibilities and life experiences and different strategies are often necessary to address disadvantages and achieve equal outcomes for women and men, boys and girls.

Gender Blind

Is the assumption (a myth) that females and males will automatically benefit and participate equally in social, economic and political activities and organisations.

Diversity

Men and women are not homogenous groups. Age, ability, ethnicity, culture and reigious background, literacy, socio economic status, sexuality, family structure can all impact peoples' access to services, resources, power and influences opportunities, responsibilities and life experience.

Gender equity: An overview

Federal and State legislation links		
• *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*	• *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*	
• *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*	• *Local Government Act 1989 Act 2010*	• *Victorian Equal Opportunity*
City of Whittlesea strategic links		
• City of Whittlesea Community Plan 2013 - 2017	• City of Whittlesea Council Plan 2013 - 2017	• Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013 -2017
• Multicultural Action Plan 2014 - 2018	• One Whittlesea	• Family Violence Strategy 2014 - 2018
• Disability Action Plan 2013 - 2016	• Connect: A Municipal Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2013 - 2018	• Reconciliation Action Plan 2012 - 2015
Key policy areas - Rationale		
Health and social wellbeing[5] Gender equity addresses the unequal status of diverse groups of men and women, boys and girls and aims to: • Reduce disadvantage • Improve physical, mental and social health and wellbeing • Improve access to safe, respectful and inclusive public facilities, programs and services • Reduce health inequalities across diverse communities • Reduce barriers to economic participation and access to financial resources	Improved organisational performance[6] In the workplace, gender equity seeks to address barriers to equal workforce participation and eliminate bias based on gender. Higher levels of gender equity at work is proven to: • Improve organisational performance • Attract the top talent from the whole talent pool • Reduce expenses through increased retention • Manage risk and anticipate community need more effectively. Diverse teams, ensures diverse ideas.	Preventing violence against women[7] Gender equity is key to ending violence against women. The strongest predicator of high levels of violence against women is unequal power between men and women. International evidence[8] shows where there are high levels of gender equity: • Valuing women's participation and representation and • Few economic, social or political differences in power between men and women • There are significantly lower levels of intimate partner and sexual violence.
Desired Outcome The City of Whittlesea is inclusive, respectful, fair and safe for people of all genders		

Gender equity strategy

Desired outcome: The City of Whittlesea is inclusive, respectful, fair and safe for people of all genders

Objective	Strategies
1. The City of Whittlesea is an employer of choice with a respectful organisational culture that: • values gender diversity, • strives for gender balance and • embeds gender equity in all workplace policies, practice and procedures	a. Apply gender lens and embed gender equity within human resource management and organisational culture projects
	b. Define, promote and equitably apply flexible/family friendly workplace strategies
	c. Address the gender equity of the leadership groups and strategic decision making processes
	d. Achieve and maintain pay & entitlement equity
	e. Review and ensure equity of opportunities for professional development and further study
	f. Ensure our workplace is safe, inclusive and culture promotes gender equity
Objective	**Strategies**
2. The City of Whittlesea's services, programs and policies, are inclusive and gender equitable.	a. Policies and strategic documents will conduct and respond to Gender Equity Analysis
	b. Increase use, collection and reporting of sex disaggregated data in services, programs and policy
	c. Address gender equity of community consultations across the organisation
	d. Apply gender lens to the allocation of the City of Whittlesea's resources (including community funding, facilities use)
	e. Utilise gender analysis to decrease gendered barriers to participation and increase inclusiveness of City of Whittlesea's services, groups and programs
Objective	**Strategies**
3. The City of Whittlesea's places and spaces facilitate community connection and are safe, welcoming, respectful and inclusive of all genders	a. Incorporate gender equity principles in design & function of public spaces, community facilities, park and recreation
	b. Increase use of gender analysis and sex disaggregated data in planning and advising on the public realm, land use, facilities planning and parks and open space.
	c. Facilitate increased gender equitable inclusiveness of community settings

Objective	Strategies
4. The City of Whittlesea is facilitating equitable opportunities for civic and economic participation and advancing gender equity in our community	a. Utilise media and communication opportunities to promote non-stereotype gender roles and raise awareness of gender equity
	b. Provide leadership and advocacy for improved gender equity within local government sector, local community, state and federal government settings
	c. Support and facilitate increased representation of women in community and civic leadership positions
	d. Facilitate improved opportunities for women's local economic participation and financial security

Implementation

Established in November 2013 and chaired by the CEO, the City of Whittlesea ***Gender Equity Working Group (GEWG)*** meets bi -monthly and provides leadership and support to embed gender equity principles and practice in the core business of Council. The Gender Equity Working Group has scoped and developed the Gender Equity Strategy through research, benchmarking and consultation with members, internal teams and external experts.

This Gender Equity Strategy provides the framework for the ***Gender Equity Action Plan*** that the working group will drive across departments, in order to achieve the vision for a gender equitable organisation, community services, facilities and settings. This strategy and working group is supported by the secretariat support of Community Services. Annual reports are provided to Council and regular progress updates are provided to the Executive Leadership Team and Council as appropriate.

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[1] World Economic Forum Gender Equity http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/part-1/the-case-forgender-equality/ accessed November 2014
[2] *Gender Equity in Local Government Fact Sheets* Gender Equity in Local Government Working Group 2012
[3] Gender Equitable, Safe and Inclusive Communities Partnership between Brimbank City Council, Maribyrnong City Council, Wyndham City 2012-2014
[4] City Of Whittlesea Council Plan 2013-17
[5] Closing the gap in a generation: Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health. WHO 2008
[6] Workplace Gender Equity Agency, The business case for gender equality ,March 2013 Accessed Nov 2014 https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-0429%20BRANDED%20FINAL%20businesscase%20for%20web.pdf
[7] Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria Vic Health 2007 VicHealth 2007, WHO 2002, World Report on Violence and Health, World Health Organization, Geneva. WHIN, 2011, Building a Respectful Community: A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011-2016

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City of Whittlesea

FSC MIX Paper from responsible sources FSC® C102126