

PREVENTING
VIOLENCE
TOGETHER

Western Region Action Plan to
Prevent Violence Against Women

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Preventing Violence Together has been a truly collaborative effort. Without the ongoing commitment and hard work from participating organisations, this action plan would simply not have been possible. Organisational partnerships to prevent violence against women are critical, and through the process of developing *Preventing Violence Together* it is clear that many strong partnerships in the western region have been further strengthened.

We would like to thank and acknowledge the members of the Western Region Preventing Violence Against Women Working Group and their respective organisations for undertaking the hard work of developing *Preventing Violence Together*.

Women's Health West

HealthWest Partnership

Inner North West Primary Care Partnership

Doutta Galla Community Health Service

Djerriwarrh Community Health Service

ISIS Primary Care

Western Integrated Family Violence Committee

Brimbank City Council

Hobsons Bay City Council

Maribyrnong City Council

Melbourne City Council

Melton Shire Council

Moonee Valley City Council

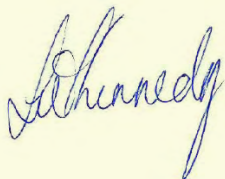
Wyndham City Council

We would also like to acknowledge Western Region Health Centre for their involvement in the Action Research Group which preceded the *Preventing Violence Together* Working Group.

We wish to thank the members of the Expert Advisory Group who so generously offered their time and expertise to comment on the final draft of *Preventing Violence Together* - Professor Ann Taket, Professor Bob Pease, Professor Helen Keleher, Associate Professor Kelsey Hegarty, and Professor Jill Astbury. Wei Leng Kwok also very generously contributed her time and expertise to advise us on the evaluation strategy.

We wish to thank Philip Martin and the Communications students from RMIT University for participating in the development of the communications strategy - the creativity and enthusiasm of the students was truly delightful. We would also like to thank Maribyrnong placement student Mary Scalzo for her communications support.

Preventing Violence Together is an ambitious but achievable plan of action for organisations in the western region to prevent violence against women. We commend this plan to you for endorsement and implementation, and look forward to working with you over the coming months and years as the western region continues to lead efforts to prevent violence against women in Victoria.



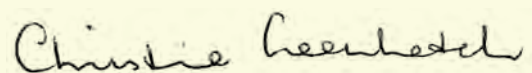
Lee Kennedy
Executive Officer

HealthWest Partnership



Robyn Gregory
Chief Executive Officer

Women's Health West




Christine Greenhatch
Interim Executive Officer

Inner North-West Primary Care Partnership

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence against women – prevalent, serious and preventable



It was only after attending the 'Becoming Free' Women's Group that I learnt about the cycle of violence and how it can influence our lives. Now I can stand outside the cycle. This is what my mandala signifies, a new beginning for myself and my family. The yellow is a positive sun radiating energy, light and life.

Jeanette

Violence against women is a human rights scandal of unparalleled dimension, and its impact on women, children, and families is deep and shattering. Violence against women takes many forms and affects all communities, irrespective of class, race or culture. Over one in three Australian women experience physical violence during their lifetime, and nearly one in five experience some form of sexual assault (ABS, 2006). According to Victoria Police reported crime data, women in the western region of Melbourne are particularly at risk of violence from their intimate partners, with a

rate of 6.23 reported incidents per 1,000 – higher than the state average.¹

Violence against women is preventable (VicHealth, 2007). By responding to the known determinants of violence against women – such as unequal power relations between women and men – it is possible to change the underlying factors that cause violence, and stop it from happening in the first place.

¹ For detailed statistics see http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?a=internetBridgingPage&Media_ID=33954

Why develop a western region action plan for the prevention of violence against women?

Organisations in the western region have long advocated for the development of a regional plan, recognising that it is not possible to end violence against women with disparate initiatives, short-term funding and one-off projects (Amnesty International, 2008). In particular, coordination, organisational capacity building and partnerships have been identified as key to maximising the impact of our efforts.

Preventing Violence Together will facilitate a coordinated, action-based approach across local government and community and women's health services, tailored to the particular characteristics of the western region. The action plan will support work currently underway and provide opportunities to engage in new practical and strategic prevention initiatives. *Preventing Violence Together* is closely aligned with *A Right To Respect: Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2010-2020*, which will ensure our regional action plan builds on the current momentum for preventing violence against women at the state level.

Summary of action plan content

The ultimate vision of *Preventing Violence Together* is communities, cultures and organisations in the western region that are non-violent, non-discriminatory, gender equitable and promote respectful relationships. To contribute to achieving this, the action plan proposes a series of mutually reinforcing actions to be implemented within and between signatory organisations. Many actions may be embedded within existing programs and policies, while others call for a renewed commitment or approach. The proposed actions draw on the VicHealth evidence-base and respond to the determinants of violence against women – that is, the factors that cause men to commit violence against women in the first place. Our ultimate goal is to foster cultures of gender equity, non-violence, and respect. Proposed actions for signatory councils and organisations include:

- Establishing a high level steering structure for the action plan, comprised of representatives from local government, community health services, and women's health services
- Prioritising preventing violence against women in integrated health promotion plans, municipal public health plans and council plans
- Strengthening community leadership to take action to prevent violence against women

What are signatory organisations being asked to commit to?

Preventing Violence Together has been designed as an enabling and coordinating action plan for organisations in the western region to prevent violence against women. It recognises work currently being undertaken and adds the value of coordinated efforts. We have proposed a number of actions over seven strategy areas, each designed to complement and reinforce one another. We encourage signatory organisations to commit to each of these actions; however, we recognise that organisations may be at different stages of readiness, and that implementing a selection of actions across different strategy areas may be more feasible in the initial stages of *Preventing Violence Together*.

At the sign-on event in early December, you will be invited to officially endorse *Preventing Violence Together* and outline how your organisation will begin the process of implementing your chosen actions in 2011 and beyond.

Why should we commit to this action plan?

Preventing violence against women is everyone's business, and local councils, community and women's health services each have a unique role to play. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 compels us to not only respond effectively and compassionately to victims/survivors of violence after it has occurred, but also to protect and actively promote human rights.

The momentum and political will to prevent violence against women in the western region is strong, and growing. At the recent Western Region White Ribbon Leaders' Lunch, 98 percent of attendees supported their organisation endorsing the region-wide action plan. The western region is recognised as a leader in preventing violence against women for our current and planned initiatives, and this action plan will ensure that our region continues to lead efforts in this area. *Preventing Violence Together* increases opportunities for us to work together, to share skills, resources and evidence of successful practices, and to avoid duplication.

All signatories to the action plan will be also be entitled to use the specially designed partner agency logo to add to their own organisational branding for prevention of violence against women initiatives.



Figure 1.1:
Partner Agency Logo

PREVENTING VIOLENCE TOGETHER:

**The Western Region Action
Plan to Prevent Violence
Against Women**

*Our family
Of me
Of the flower with my five children
being the petals of love united.*

Turquoise



‘Violence against women is a human rights scandal of unparalleled dimension; it is a cultural, social and political malignancy rooted in prejudice, bigotry and discrimination whose eradication must be sought without reservation, without equivocation, and without delay.’

Kate Gilmore, Executive Deputy Secretary General,
Amnesty International

What is violence against women?

Violence against women is prevalent, serious and preventable (VicHealth, 2007). It is an issue of social justice, social inclusion and human rights, and its impact on women, children and families is deep and shattering. Violence against women takes many forms, and affects all communities, irrespective of class, race, or culture.

The 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women as

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

Violence against women encompasses ‘physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family and in the general community, including battering, sexual abuse of children, dowry-related violence, rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, forced prostitution, and violence perpetrated or condoned by the state (World Health Organisation, 1996).

The term ‘violence against women’ is also sometimes used interchangeably with ‘family violence’, ‘intimate partner violence’ or ‘domestic violence’. *Preventing Violence Together* uses the term ‘violence against women’ in order to include other forms of violence – such as trafficking in women – that form part of the continuum of violence perpetrated against women. Importantly, ‘violence against women’ also highlights the fact that violence perpetrated against women is invariably gendered in nature – it is violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or violence that affects women disproportionately (End Violence Against Women, 2008: 27).

For instance:

- Women constitute the overwhelming majority of victims of family and sexual violence – 77 per cent of reported family violence victims are women and girls, while the overwhelming majority of perpetrators are men
- Women are five times more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than men – on average, more than one woman is killed every week by a male partner or ex-partner
- 92 per cent of all reported rape victim/survivors are women and girls
- Women are at least three times more likely than men to experience physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner than men

(State Government of Victoria, 2009: 9)

While women can sometimes be perpetrators of family violence, the evidence demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of abuse and violence is perpetrated by men against women (National Council, 2009: 25). As *A Time for Action: The National Council’s Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children* observes, the greatest risk factor for becoming a victim of sexual assault and/or domestic violence is, simply, being female (National Council, 2009: 26). *Preventing Violence Together* therefore uses the term ‘violence against women’ to reflect the gendered patterns of victimisation and perpetration, and to ensure that we can respond to women’s experiences of violence in a range of contexts. The term also reflects current usage in national, state and local good practice initiatives.



How prevalent is violence against women?

Violence against women is unacceptably prevalent in our community. While the known prevalence of under-reporting¹ means that the available data on violence against women cannot capture the true extent of violence perpetrated against women, the reported incidence alone constitutes significant cause for alarm. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006 Personal Safety Survey:

- Over one in three Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15
- Nearly one in five Australian women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15
- A significant proportion of Australian women – 16 per cent – have experienced violence at the hands of a current or previous partner

According to Victoria Police reported crime data, women in the western region of Melbourne are particularly at risk of violence. With a rate of 6.23 per 1,000, efforts to prevent violence in the region are urgent.²

While violence against women affects all communities, evidence shows that certain groups of women are particularly vulnerable to violence. Women with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women in communities affected by socio-economic disadvantage (including rural communities affected by economic downturn or drought), women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and women who are newly-arrived migrants or refugees are all at higher risk of being subject to violence (VicHealth, 2007: 16).³ As VicHealth observes, for some groups general prevention and intervention strategies may be less effective, and should be supplemented with tailored approaches that meet their particular needs. While *Preventing Violence Together* is not a comprehensive blueprint for universal and tailored interventions, we believe that the principles of diversity and inclusion require the provision of adequate and additional resources to prevent violence against women who are at particular risk. As we have outlined in the action plan, such efforts must be undertaken in partnership with organisations that are closest to women from these at risk groups, for example the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group.

¹ As noted in *A Time for Action*, fewer than one in five sexual assaults are reported to police, a reporting rate significantly lower than other serious crime categories (National Council, 2009: 19) Identified barriers to reporting sexual assault and domestic violence include 'a perception that it [the violence] is too minor to report to police; a lack of awareness that such action constitutes an offence; a desire to "keep it private" and deal with it themselves; shame; fear of the perpetrator; a sense of ongoing responsibility for the safety of other family members; a lack of awareness about, or lack of availability of, culturally responsive services; a fear of not being believed or that no one can help; and previous experience of asking for help but feeling re-victimised by parts of the service response (such as having to re-tell one's story to multiple services, or being cross-examined' (*A Time for Action*, 2009: 16)

² For detailed statistics see http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?a=internetBridgingPage&Media_ID=33954

³ For more detailed information please refer to the Background Paper, available at <http://www.whwest.org.au/famviolence/pvt.php>

How serious is violence against women?

The right to live free from violence is a fundamental human right. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 compels us to not only respond effectively and compassionately to victims/survivors of violence after it has occurred, but to protect and actively promote human rights (State Government of Victoria, 2009: 10). The human rights imperative means that not only must we act to provide adequate services and a just legal response to women after violence has occurred, but also that we must engage in the primary prevention of violence against women – before it occurs.⁴ Local governments in Victoria are also required to satisfy legislative requirements included in the Charter, which ensures that government and public authorities consider human rights when making decisions and providing services.

In addition to the fundamental human rights imperative to prevent violence against women, the economic, health, and social consequences of men's violence against women are significant. For instance:

- For women aged 15-44 in Victoria, violence is the leading cause of illness, death, and disability – greater than any other factor including tobacco, alcohol-related harm, and physical inactivity combined
- Violence against women cost Victoria \$3.4 billion in 2009. According to a KPMG report, if ignored, this figure will increase to \$3.9 billion by 2021
- Preventing the experience of violence for just one Australian woman would mean avoiding over \$20,766 in costs

(State Government of Victoria, 2009: 9)

⁴ As noted in *A Right To Respect*: 'An important aspect of the human rights-based approach is recognizing that claims to secure rights, including the right of women to live free from violence, do not represent "new demands" but are rightfully claimed. It is our collective role, as government, community and individuals, to do what we can to realise these rights' (*A Right To Respect*, 10)

How can we prevent violence against women, and what does 'primary prevention' mean?

Violence against women *is* preventable (VicHealth 2007). While there is no single cause of violence against women (WHO, 1996), a range of consistent determinants have been identified. Many of these relate to ongoing social inequalities between women and men. As the well established VicHealth evidence-base demonstrates, the key determinants of violence against women include:

- Unequal power relations between men and women
- Adherence to gender stereotypes
- Broader cultures of violence

'Primary prevention' initiatives are those that aim to stop violence from occurring in the first place. The policy and practice framework devised by VicHealth – *Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria* – recommends that the primary prevention of violence against women be guided by three intersecting components that concentrate on these key determinants.

They are:

- Promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women
- Promoting non-violent social norms and reducing the effects of prior exposure to violence
- Improving access to resources and systems of support

A Right To Respect endorses this approach and proposes a set of seven interconnected strategies to be implemented across five key 'settings'. The settings are:

- Education and Training
- Local Government, Health and Community Services
- Sports and Recreation
- Workplaces
- Media, Arts and Popular Culture

Coordinating existing regional prevention efforts with new initiatives at the state level is key. *Preventing Violence Together* has therefore been developed in close consultation with the Office of Women's Policy to ensure that our action plan is coordinated with *A Right To Respect*, and that state and regional efforts to prevent violence against women are mutually supportive. The seven strategy areas in *Preventing Violence Together* mirror those used in the state plan to maximise the opportunities for coordination.

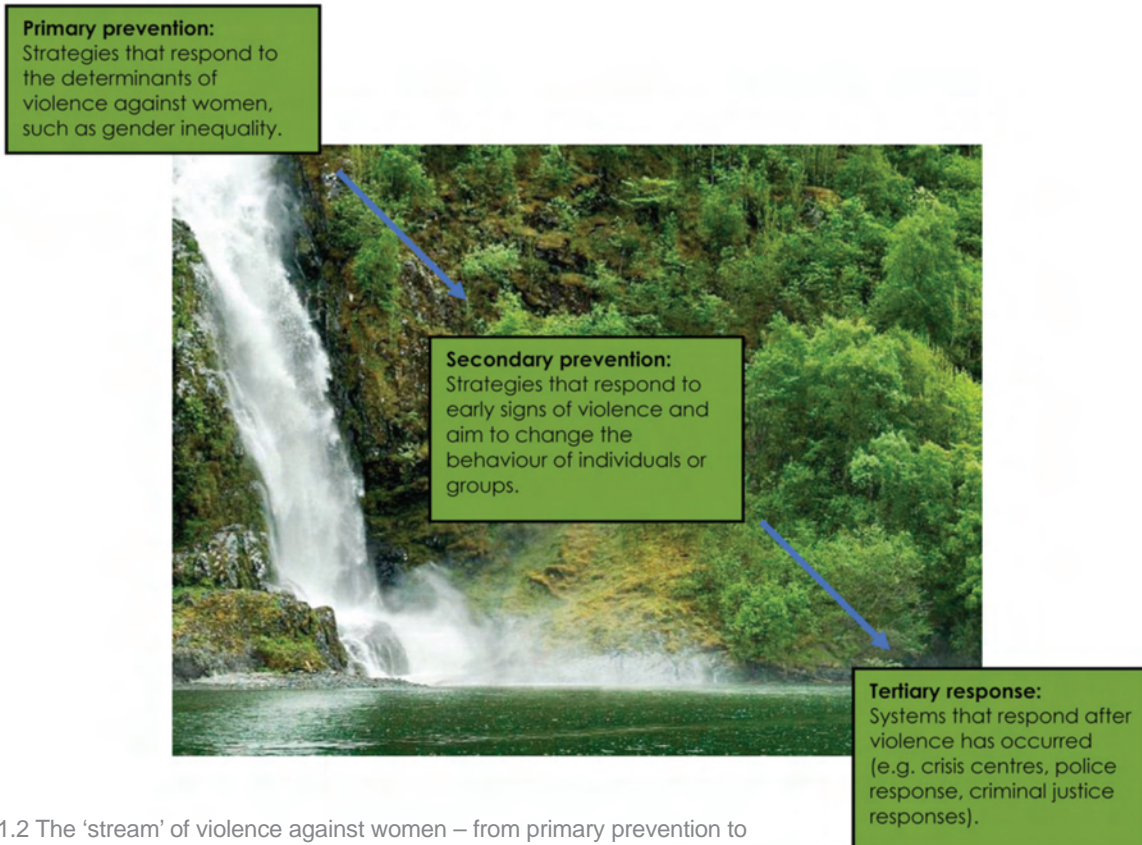


Figure 1.2 The 'stream' of violence against women – from primary prevention to tertiary response (adapted from Dr. Melanie Heenan's VicHealth presentation)

Why develop a western region action plan for the prevention of violence against women?

Organisations in the western region have long advocated for the development of a regional plan, recognising that it is not possible to end violence against women with disparate initiatives, short-term funding and one-off projects (Amnesty International, 2008). In particular, coordination, organisational capacity building and partnerships have been identified as key to maximising the impact of our efforts. Given the health consequences of violence and the prevalence across the region, prevention of violence against women has also been accepted as a health promotion priority area for the HealthWest Partnership⁵ as well as a focus for the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership.⁶

Preventing Violence Together aims to facilitate a coordinated, action-based approach across local government and community and women's health services tailored to the particular characteristics of the western region. The action plan will build on the range of work currently underway in the region, and provide opportunities for organisations to engage in practical and strategic prevention initiatives at a number of levels. *Preventing Violence Together* aims to increase the capacity and the political will of organisations to prevent violence against women; to promote the prioritisation of the prevention of violence against women as core business; to establish and strengthen effective partnerships and structures; and to formalise and strengthen links with the state and national plans to prevent violence against women. Ultimately, the action plan seeks to build the capacity and political will of organisations in the western region to prevent violence against women.

How will Preventing Violence Together build partnerships to prevent violence against women?

Working in partnership with other organisations is critical to an effective response to violence against women. Both the HealthWest Partnership and the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership have identified the prevention of violence against women for inclusion in integrated health promotion plans, and many local councils and community and women's health services are currently engaged in efforts to prevent violence against women. The Preventing Violence Against Women Working Group have worked hard over the past 12 months to draft an organisational action plan for the region that supports existing work, and builds on the momentum at the state and national levels.

⁵ Covering the local government areas of Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton and Wyndham.

⁶ Including parts of the former Moonee Valley Melbourne PCP.

We will develop new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships by establishing a new steering structure comprised of representatives from *Preventing Violence Together* signatory organisations, along with other key stakeholders in the region, such as the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee (WIFVC) and the Western Region Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group. We envisage an executive governance group to provide strategic guidance, and a working group to continue to develop prevention strategies and assist organisations with implementation. We also plan to formalise the link between the western region and *A Right To Respect* by inviting a representative from the state to join the steering structure. The recently announced state government partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria is also set to support prevention work undertaken by local governments in the western region.

What is the role of local government and community and women's health services in preventing violence against women?

Preventing Violence Together will be implemented in a series of phases, which will allow for flexibility and responsiveness to the changing prevention of violence against women sector. A staged approach also allows us to thoroughly evaluate our efforts and ensure that our goals are being achieved. The first phase of *Preventing Violence Together*—2011-2013—targets local government and community and women's health services. After this initial phase and evaluation, the *Preventing Violence Together* will be expanded to include other organisations, sectors, and settings.

Local government

Local government has a unique role to play in the primary prevention of violence against women. While traditionally this has not been part of 'core' council business, local governments in Australia and internationally are increasingly considering the coordination, facilitation and planning role they have in violence prevention (Hayes 2006).

An established infrastructure exists within local government comprising networks and numerous connections to local communities through partnerships with schools, local businesses, community groups, sporting clubs, direct service provision and grant provision. It is through these connections and the development of strategies and plans that local government can facilitate change. Local government also has the capacity to work strategically across regions and beyond its own municipal boundaries, and advocate to other levels of government.



Evidence gathered through an international literature review for the Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention project 2006-2009 has found that 'good practice' examples of primary prevention programs are community based, have a partnership approach, and enable local government to take a leadership role:

Local government can take a leading role in providing leadership in 'resourcing', 'mainstreaming' and 'coordinating' violence prevention strategies across the broad spectrum of government services, drawing upon the experience and wisdom of these existing services (Hayes 2006).

According to Hayes, good practices in relation to the role of local government in preventing violence against women include:

- Providing local leadership and coordination
- Promoting a positive example to the community that violence is unacceptable
- Fostering partnerships for a whole of community response to preventing violence against women
- Advocating to all levels of government and to relevant local services to address violence against women
- Promoting integration of planning and actions to address violence prevention into other relevant strategies and programs of council
- Facilitating ongoing discussion, debate and information sharing regarding primary prevention of violence against women
- Maintaining awareness and providing input into state and federal policy relating to violence against women

VicHealth observes that 'primary prevention efforts are most likely to be effective when a coordinated range of mutually reinforcing strategies is targeted across levels of influence' (VicHealth, 2007). Local government planning and service provision cuts across the social, economic, environmental and cultural domains of civic life and is well placed to integrate violence prevention using a whole-of-council approach, and coordinate violence prevention in partnership with members of the community.

Community and women's health services and Primary Care Partnerships

Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) are well established as a flexible and robust platform for partnership work in Victoria. HealthWest Partnership and the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership have provided local leadership and support through the Preventing Violence Against Women Working Group.

PCP member organisations include local governments, community and women's health services and other not-for-profit organisations within the community. PCPs are therefore well placed to foster partnerships for a whole-of-community response to preventing violence against women. PCPs recognise that all organisations involved in the partnership have an important role to play in:

- Promoting a positive example to the community that violence is unacceptable
- Promoting the integration of planning and actions to ensure violence prevention appears in other strategies and programs being coordinated by their agency
- Advocacy at all levels to respond to violence against women
- Policy input relating to violence against women

All organisations within the partnership have a role to play in responding to the determinants of violence against women as befits their organisational mandate. Community health, for instance, can play a role in responding to the determinants of violence against women by developing initiatives aimed at early intervention and primary prevention. Existing connections with communities and the expertise of community health services in engaging with target population groups provide many opportunities for effective violence prevention.

Women's health services such as Women's Health West work across the spectrum of violence against women, from initiatives to prevent violence against women to the provision of support services for victims/survivors. Women's health services have significant expertise and capacity to advise on the prevention of violence against women and build the capacity of other organisations. Ending violence against women is core business for women's health services, and so they are well placed to play a central role.

Through existing infrastructures and services, local councils and community and women's health services provide many opportunities to embed and lead primary prevention initiatives. These organisations have extensive reach, and work across areas that benefit people at various stages of life.

The Western Integrated Family Violence Committee

The Western Integrated Family Violence Committee (WIFVC) is also a key partner in western region efforts to prevent violence against women. The WIFVC is a representative, whole-of-sector reference group comprising service providers currently engaged in the Victorian Government's integrated family violence service system reforms. The WIFVC is guided by *A Right to Safety and Justice: Strategic Framework to Guide Continuing Family Violence Reform in Victoria 2010–2020*, and has developed a sub-regional work plan. One of the actions is to strengthen the relationship with local government to enhance family violence prevention initiatives.

While the primary prevention of violence against women is distinct from tertiary responses (such as crisis accommodation, case work, counselling, and outreach provided by organisations within the WIFVC), complementary roles along the 'stream' of violence against women exist (see Figure 1.2) and mutual efforts to build capacity and expertise are critical to an effective, holistic response to violence.

What's in the action plan?

Preventing Violence Together builds upon a strong evidence-base of sound research and best practice frameworks, including VicHealth's *Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*; *A Right To Respect: Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2010 – 2020*, and the HealthWest *Healthy Communities, Healthy Lives* health promotion model. *Preventing Violence Together* builds on these documents and is guided by our vision, and a corresponding set of concrete strategies and actions to help us reach it.

Vision

The ultimate vision of *Preventing Violence Together* is to contribute to communities, cultures and organisations in the western region that are non-violent, non-discriminatory, gender equitable and promote respectful relationships.

Strategies and actions

Preventing Violence Together proposes a series of mutually reinforcing strategies to build the capacity of organisations to prevent violence against women, reflecting the strategy areas used in *A Right To Respect*. Many actions may be embedded within existing programs and policies, while others call for a renewed commitment or approach. Drawing on the VicHealth evidence-base to respond to the determinants of violence against women – that is, the factors that cause men to commit violence against women in the first place – these actions are designed to foster cultures of gender equity, non-violence, and respect.

What is the timeline?

The first phase of *Preventing Violence Together*, including the developmental phase, is 2009-2013 with implementation commencing in 2011. This timeline complements the first implementation stage of *A Right To Respect*. Following a thorough evaluation, *Preventing Violence Together* will be rolled out to other organisations, sectors, and settings.

How was Preventing Violence Together developed, and who was consulted?

Preventing Violence Together was developed under the guidance of an Expert Advisory Group, consisting of academic experts on violence against women. The Preventing Violence Against Women Working Group that developed the action plan was comprised of representatives from community health services, women's health services, PCPs and local government. High-level guidance on *Preventing Violence Together* was provided by the Project Management Group, comprised of the Executive Officers of HealthWest Partnership and the Inner North West PCP, and the Chief Executive Officer of Women's Health West.

Consultation has been undertaken with key groups and networks throughout the development process, including the HealthWest Health Promotion Network, the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, the Moonee Valley Melbourne PCP Healthy Communities Advisory Group, the North West Metropolitan Region Community and Women's Health CEOs, the Local Government Community Services Director's Meeting, and the Western Region Local Government Preventing Violence Against Women and Family Violence Prevention Network. The Office of Women's Policy has also provided ongoing support and guidance throughout the development of *Preventing Violence Together*.



How will Preventing Violence Together be evaluated?

Preventing Violence Together will be subject to a full evaluation during and following the implementation of phase one. At various stages during implementation, organisations will be asked to provide information about activities related to *Preventing Violence Together*. The results of the evaluation will be made available to all signatory organisations.

What are signatory organisations being asked to commit to?

Preventing Violence Together has been designed as an enabling and coordinating action plan for organisations in the western region to prevent violence against women. Many individual councils and community and women's health organisations are currently engaged in prevention work, but often our work is limited in scope, or restricted by resources or time pressures. *Preventing Violence Together* responds to the evidence base that has found that to be successful, prevention work must be sustained. *Preventing Violence Together* proposes a range of mutually reinforcing actions across seven strategy areas to ensure that our regional approach is comprehensive, but allows flexibility for organisations to tailor actions to their own organisational mandate, recognising that different organisations have different roles to play in preventing violence against women.

Preventing Violence Together has been designed to help organisations coordinate prevention work, and to maximise the impact of our efforts. We have proposed a number of actions over seven strategy areas which are designed to complement and reinforce one another. We encourage signatory organisations to commit to each action; however, we recognise that organisations may be at different stages of readiness, and that implementing a selection of actions across different strategy areas may be more feasible for phase one of *Preventing Violence Together*.

As noted above, effective prevention consists of both 'all-of-population' strategies, as well as those that are tailored to meet the needs of particular groups. *Preventing Violence Together* is not intended to provide a comprehensive guide to developing these universal and tailored strategies, but rather, as a framework and an action plan to guide and inform this work.

At the sign-on event and official launch of *Preventing Violence Together* in early December, you will be invited to officially endorse the action plan, and outline how your organisation will begin the process of implementing your chosen actions to prevent violence against women in 2011 and beyond. The prevention work of all signatory organisations will be supported through the establishment of a new steering structure that will guide the implementation of prevention of violence against women initiatives in the western region.

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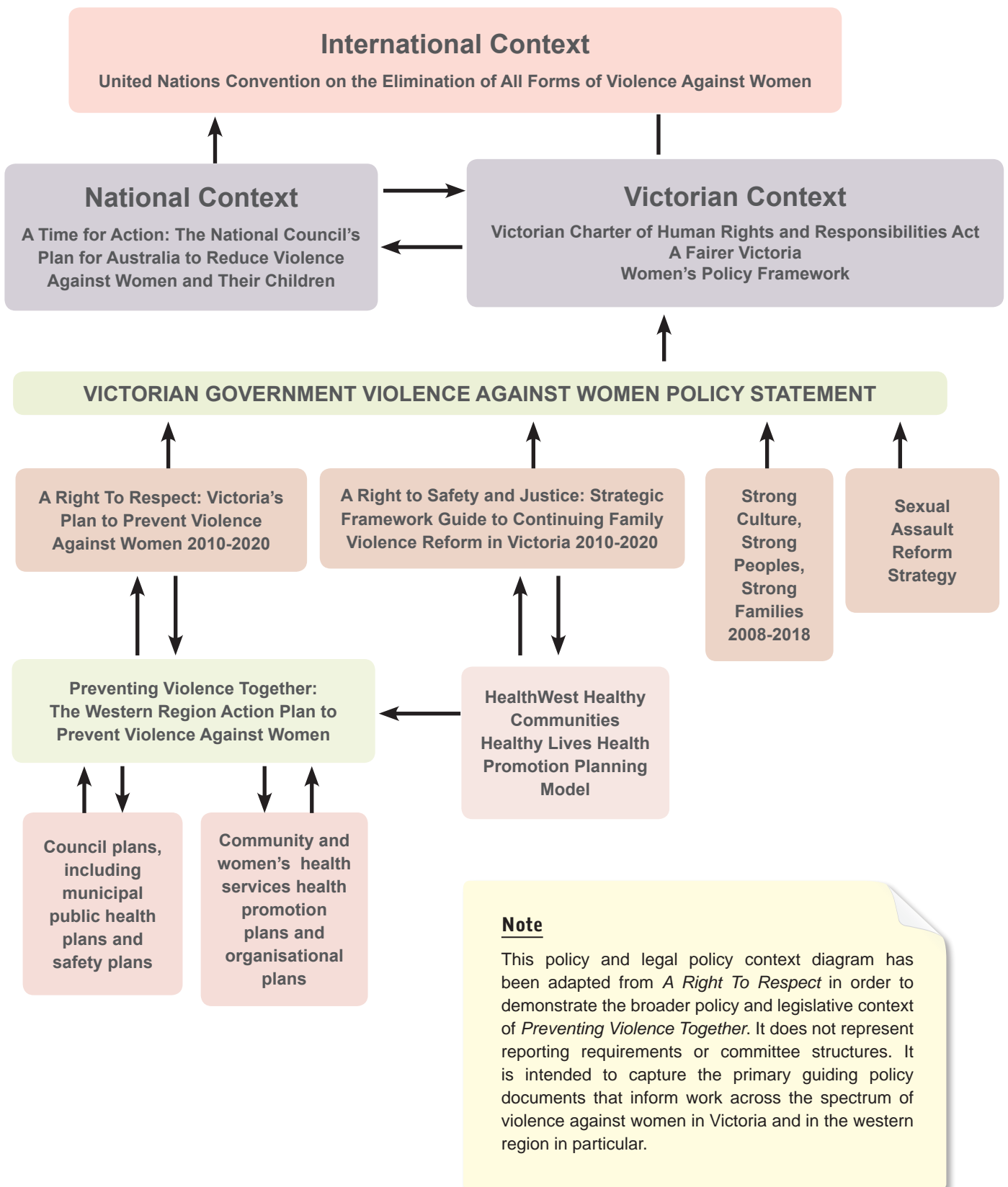
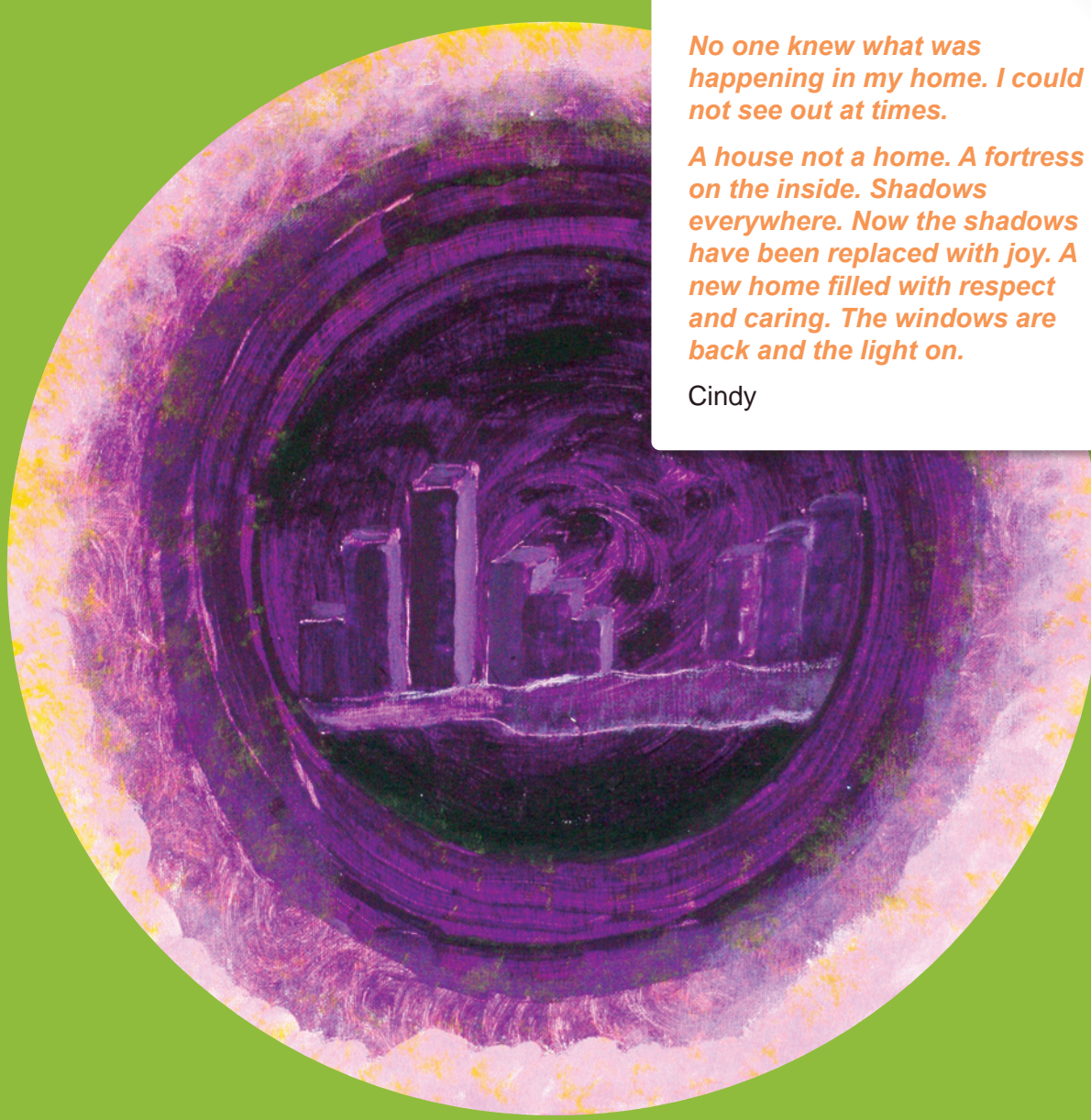


Figure 1.3: Policy and legal context (adapted from *A Right To Respect*)



STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

We believe that violence against women is a fundamental violation of women's human rights. We believe that all people have the right to live free from violence, irrespective of their gender, sexuality, marital status, ethnicity, religion, abilities, culture, or any other element that informs identity. In taking a human rights-based approach to preventing violence against women, we recognise that due-diligence involves not only responding appropriately to violence when it has occurred, but working to prevent it from happening in the first place.



No one knew what was happening in my home. I could not see out at times.

A house not a home. A fortress on the inside. Shadows everywhere. Now the shadows have been replaced with joy. A new home filled with respect and caring. The windows are back and the light on.

Cindy

Vision:

Communities, cultures and organisations in the western region that are non-violent, non-discriminatory, gender equitable and promote respectful relationships

Partnerships and Structures

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
<p>Establish effective partnerships across government and non-government organisations and accountable leadership structures for sustainable prevention</p>	<p>1.1 Support the establishment of, and the participation of staff in, a new Western Region Prevention of Violence Against Women Steering Structure. The steering structure will comprise representatives from <i>Preventing Violence Together</i> signatory organisations and other key stakeholders in the region, and will have responsibility for resourcing and monitoring the implementation of <i>Preventing Violence Together</i>.</p> <p>1.2 Strengthen partnerships with the state government by linking to the high-level steering structure for <i>A Right To Respect</i> through the <i>Preventing Violence Together</i> steering structure.</p>	<p>1.3 Use setting-based (e.g., Sports) tools, resources and implementation plans generated at the state level via the steering structure to strengthen and support regional prevention of violence against women initiatives.</p> <p>1.4 Support the implementation of work in other settings within the community where possible, for example in respectful relationships education in schools.</p> <p>1.5 Support the strengthening of links to the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group and PCPs through participation in the steering structure.</p>

Community Leadership

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
<p>Strengthen community leadership to drive change to prevent violence against women</p>	<p>2.1 Develop strategies to promote the full and active participation of a diverse range of women in community life.</p> <p>2.2 Provide opportunities for women from the groups that are particularly vulnerable to violence to take a leadership role in preventing violence against women.</p> <p>2.3 Link with and support Indigenous community leaders, the Indigenous community, and the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group to develop locally-based prevention strategies based on identified community priorities.</p>	<p>2.4 Support women in your community to build connections to social networks and support services, for example neighbourhood houses, support groups, recreational activities, community initiatives and mentoring programs.</p> <p>2.5 Support community groups to take a stand against violence, for example, providing media training, resources and other forms of support.</p>



Capacity and Tools

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
Build capacity and tools for organisational change and workforce development	<p>3.1 Provide opportunities and incentives for staff at all levels of the organisation to attend preventing violence against women and gender equity training, in particular the VicHealth short course on preventing violence against women.</p> <p>3.2 Take active measures to seek out funding to implement projects to prevent violence against women.</p> <p>3.3 Ensure efforts to prevent violence against women strive for best-practice and are guided by the VicHealth <i>Preventing Violence Before it Occurs</i> framework.</p>	<p>3.4 Participate in prevention of violence against women events that support and enhance work across the region, such as the Western Region Leaders' Lunch.</p> <p>3.5 Invite experts to staff meetings and other organisational events to increase staff understanding and capacity to prevent violence against women.</p> <p>3.6 Use gender equity and diversity tools in all policy and program work, such as the Department of Health <i>Gender and Diversity Toolkit</i>.</p>

Communications, Advocacy and Champions

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
Implement multiphase communications campaigns and programs, engage champions and undertake media advocacy to promote equity and non-violence	<p>4.1 Establish a White Ribbon Day Action Group to undertake White Ribbon Day activities. Engage and support men at all levels across the organisation to participate in prevention of violence against women activities and act as champions.</p> <p>4.2 Ensure that all internal and external organisational communication is respectful and gender equitable, for example, by ensuring that pronouns used in publications are gender neutral, and that representations of women and men in organisational materials are not based on gender stereotypes.</p> <p>4.3 Engage with external media (for example, local newspapers) to improve the portrayal of violence against women and the portrayal of gender roles and relations in the media.</p>	<p>4.4 Actively advocate for the progression of the preventing violence against women agenda within the organisation and with partner organisations.</p> <p>4.5 Identify and support high-profile people in communities to act as champions and ambassadors for non-violence, respect and equity.</p> <p>4.6 Identify and support champions and ambassadors within organisations, ensuring they are prioritised as recipients of training, and supported and valued organisationally in this role.</p> <p>4.7 Support women from groups that are particularly vulnerable to violence to actively participate in community decision-making and setting community priorities.</p>

Skills, Attitudes and Social Norms

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
Develop and strengthen systems and programs that build respectful relationships skills and influence social norms, attitudes and behaviours	<p>5.1 Demonstrate high-level leadership by integrating prevention of violence against women as core organisational business, and reflect this at all levels of the organisation.</p> <p>5.2 Implement prevention of violence against women programs and projects that respond to the identified determinants of violence against women.</p> <p>5.3 Provide opportunities for men within your organisation and community to engage in programs that explore and promote positive masculinities, for example, programs to promote responsible fatherhood.</p>	<p>5.4 Take opportunities to incorporate attitudinal indicators on topics concerning gender equity, non-violence and respectful relationships in community and client surveys, using established best practice indicators such as the VicHealth Community Attitudes Survey questions.</p> <p>5.5 Undertake an internal organisational survey on staff attitudes concerning gender equity, non-violence and respectful relationships, using established best practice indicators such as the VicHealth Community Attitudes Survey questions.</p>

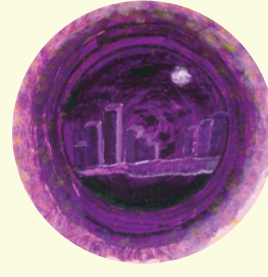
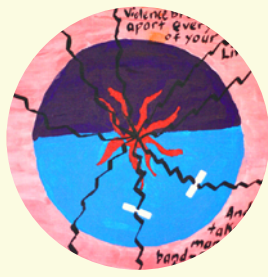
Research and Evaluation

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
Undertake research, evaluation and monitoring of policy and programs to ensure continuous improvement	<p>6.1 Provide support for the evaluation and ongoing improvement of <i>Preventing Violence Together</i>.</p> <p>6.2 Use the evidence concerning the determinants of violence against women as the basis for prevention of violence against women initiatives.</p> <p>6.3 Ensure that specific actions and plans in all organisational and regional efforts to prevent violence against women are aligned with relevant regional and state Indigenous-specific prevention strategies.</p>	<p>6.4 Recognise and reward organisations and individuals in the region who demonstrate commitment to preventing violence against women by participating in a regional primary prevention of violence against women awards event.</p> <p>6.5 Contribute to research partnerships that help build the evidence-base for prevention of violence against women initiatives.</p>

Embedding

OBJECTIVE	SUGGESTED ACTIONS	
Improve policy, regulation and legislation to embed prevention of violence and gender equity	<p>7.1 Integrate preventing violence against women as a human rights obligation into all relevant organisational guiding documents that redress discrimination, disadvantage and abuse within communities and organisations, including municipal public health plans and strategic plans.</p> <p>7.2 Embed principles of gender equity into all relevant organisational projects, plans, programs, policy, services, work plans, research, and partnerships.</p> <p>7.3 Ensure that gender equity and violence against women is explicitly considered in existing and new programs that address other health and social issues within the community.</p>	<p>7.4 Work with local, state and federal governments to ensure consistency in policy, planning and regulations pertaining to violence against women.</p> <p>7.5 Examine organisational culture, policies, and practices and ensure they promote the conditions required for gender equity</p> <p>7.6 Develop organisational strategies to promote gender equity within executive management, for example, by mandating the percentage of women in executives.</p>





The images throughout *Preventing Violence Together* are used with permission by women from the Women's Program Support Group (Family Violence Prevention Programme) Djerriwarrh Health Services. The art therapy project gave women who are survivors of violence an opportunity to use art to create a representation of their lives living with violence and abuse. The mandalas are a symbolic depiction of their resilience, and the long road they have walked with their children to lives that are safe and free from violence. We thank them for sharing their beautiful art work with us.