



# Progress on Preventing Family Violence and Violence Against Women in Victoria

## First Three-Yearly Report to Parliament

September 2022



### **Victim survivor acknowledgement**

Respect Victoria acknowledges the significant impact of family violence and violence against women on individuals, families and communities, and the strength and resilience of the children, young people and adults who have, and are still, experiencing this violence. We pay our respects to those who did not survive and to their family members and friends.

### **Aboriginal acknowledgement**

Respect Victoria acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We proudly acknowledge Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the significant and ongoing impacts of colonisation and commit to working alongside Aboriginal communities in change.

We recognise the ongoing leadership role of Aboriginal communities in addressing and preventing family violence and violence against women, and will continue to work in collaboration with First Peoples to eliminate these forms of violence from all communities.

### **Acknowledgement of those involved in consultations**

We thank the many individuals and organisations who have contributed to this report through interviews, response to surveys and other requests for information and advice. Further detail of these contributions is contained within the report.

### **Expert Review Panel**

Respect Victoria thanks the following members of the Expert Review Panel for their invaluable contributions and insights during the drafting of the Report:

- > Rosie Batty AO
- > Dr Kyllie Cripps
- > Dr Lara Fergus
- > Dr Leigh Gassner
- > Dr Anastasia Powell

# Foreword from Respect Victoria Chair and CEO

Dear Minister,

We are pleased to present to you and to all Members of the Victorian Parliament the first three-yearly report on progress in preventing family violence across Victoria.

The concept of this report was formed in the creation of the *Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018*, itself an outcome of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Respect Victoria—Victoria’s statutory authority dedicated to primary prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women—was charged with its delivery.

This first report comes as Respect Victoria has completed three years of operation. It is a timely opportunity for us to cast our eye over the wide range of organised efforts being made in this state to prevent this insidious violence.

Our overall message is simple. Eliminating this violence is an enormous challenge and a long-term mission. Building on the hard work of dedicated community leaders, advocates, researchers and workers across diverse sectors over many years, we can confidently say that primary prevention is crucial to lasting, widescale change.

The evidence gathered in this report paints a promising picture of good progress and offers a clear pathway for future priorities. The last few years have seen important advances in the capacity for prevention effort across the state and some signs of positive change in communities. This has occurred in parallel with powerful high-profile community advocacy on these issues across Australia.

Further progress is vulnerable to social and economic disruptions and continuing resistance from various sources. As this report highlights, investment in this work needs to remain a priority. We need this investment to be aligned with emerging evidence of what works, matched to the scale of the problem and reinforced through policy reforms and strong leadership.

Responsibility for this rests with us all—governments, organisations, business, communities and individuals. Respect Victoria is proud to be playing a key role in this effort. We are presenting this report to celebrate progress and also to identify the challenges ahead.

We commend this report to the Victorian Parliament and ask all members to lend their support to the much needed work to progress the prevention of family violence and violence against women over the next three years and beyond.

**Professor Kate  
Fitz-Gibbon**  
Chair

**Emily  
Maguire**  
CEO



# Summary of key points

## Overview

- > This report is the first to provide a detailed account of progress in Victoria on action to reduce family violence and violence against women through primary prevention, focusing chiefly on the period from late 2018 to end 2021.
- > Respect Victoria has compiled the report as part of its statutory responsibility to monitor, report and advise on this issue. The report captures work by all levels of government, specialist agencies and contributors in the community and public sectors.
- > There have been definite advances in capacity to tackle prevention and promising signs of community change, building on the work of dedicated individuals and organisations over many years.
- > Change is underway but we are still at the early stages of a long-term process—shifts in norms and behaviours are uneven and progress is vulnerable to disruption and ongoing resistance from multiple directions.
- > Significant investment in the early stages of the prevention journey has been widely welcomed and has resulted in more Victorians than ever before engaging in prevention efforts. To achieve change across the whole of Victoria, further investment—commensurate with the size and scale of the task of prevention that lies ahead—will be required.

## Key information Section 1

- > Research shows that Victorians consistently rank family violence as a high priority issue. There is a good level of awareness of problematic behaviours in relationships, but a concerning proportion of people still show low support for gender equality in relationships.
- > Victorians generally support women's independence and equality, but there is a sizeable minority, particularly of men, who hold violence supportive attitudes, are unlikely to challenge inequality, sexist behaviours to women and aggressive forms of masculinity.
- > Of 76 organisational and community leaders surveyed for this review, over two-thirds saw a definite increase in community rejection of this violence and improved understanding of the impact of gender inequality on violence.
- > Almost two-thirds agreed Victorians are more actively challenging attitudes and behaviours that enable or condone this violence, and 30% saw increased confidence among men and boys to do this in their peer group.
- > Encouragingly, almost nine in ten respondents said their organisation or sector was more prepared to support prevention than three years ago.

## Prevention initiatives Section 2

- > The review period saw over 130 discrete primary prevention initiatives funded under Victoria's *Free from Violence strategy* and many more generated through other sources at state, regional or local level.
- > Promising models for prevention have been tested and rolled-out across education, public sector workplaces, local government and sport settings. This work is underway, but as yet incomplete and at this stage has engaged a limited range of organisations and settings. Respectful Relationships Education in Victorian schools exemplifies a program that has moved from pilot to scaled-up implementation.
- > Social marketing campaigns have been a major feature of prevention effort in Victoria. They have generally been effective in raising community awareness and openness to change but have not yet been delivered at the intensity and duration required—nor linked enough to other prevention activity—to shift behaviour sustainably.
- > Good work has commenced with particular groups, most notably Aboriginal communities, migrant and faith communities, women with disability, older people and LGBTIQ+ people. This has built on a growing understanding of the way gender and other aspects of inequality and discrimination combine to fuel family violence and violence against women.
- > Reflecting the initial phase of seeding and testing new initiatives, funding primarily has been focused around increasing the number of Victorians—and the organisations and institutions they engage with in their daily lives—to make a start on their prevention journey. It is promising to see longer-term and larger-scale funding recently as the next phase of implementation commences, and a commitment to further addressing issues of coordination, scale-up and sustainability of prevention efforts.

## Enabling system Section 3

- > The past three years have seen active discussion about what an effective primary prevention system in Victoria should look like. Key advances include establishment of Respect Victoria and investments in workforce capability, research, evaluation and data sharing. Guidance and standards for quality program design are still evolving.
- > The prevention infrastructure has been supported by the strengthened capacity in lead non-government agencies, continuing work of regional and settings-based partnerships, and enhancements in governance for the Victorian government's *Free from Violence strategy*.
- > The report highlights the importance of stronger coordination and clarity on roles and responsibilities across the field to ensure cohesive overall effort which links local and state-wide activity in specialist, mainstream and universal agencies across the state.

# Summary

## of key points

### Future focus Section 4

> The report does not make detailed recommendations for action but outlines an agenda for prioritisation over the next 3-5 years. The key elements of this area:

#### 1. Strengthening state-wide prevention systems and capacity

- 1.1 Consolidating a cohesive violence prevention system in Victoria with enhanced coordination, leadership and comprehensive supporting infrastructure.
- 1.2 Promoting primary prevention as a valuable social investment and expand resourcing to match the scale of the problem and potential gains to be made.
- 1.3 Supporting continued growth and capability of all workforces engaged in primary prevention of family violence and violence against women, delivered through both specialist organisations and all sectors in which this work needs to occur.
- 1.4 Building on the vital work of local and regional partnerships and activity being led across settings in order to achieve collective impact in creating a violence-free Victoria.
- 1.5 Investing in new data collection and sharing, research and evaluation to provide more confident advice on what makes for effective prevention action and facilitate better monitoring of progress.

#### 2. Driving real and sustained change in the community, organisations and institutions

- 2.1 Strengthening gains in the Victorian community's rejection of family violence and violence against women and intensify efforts to shift social norms relating to the underpinning drivers of this violence.

- 2.2 Strengthening the focus on efforts to remove structural barriers to positive change and embed supportive policies and systems to undermine the exercise of power and control that underpins violence.

- 2.3 Building approaches to address family violence and violence against women and consider the balance between integrated and more targeted approaches.

- 2.4 Increasing focus on changing men's and boys' perspectives, challenge unhealthy models of masculinity and shift outdated ideas about men's power and control in relationships.

#### 3. Expanding the scope, scale and effectiveness of targeted prevention action

- 3.1 Driving more strategic long-term, coordinated and comprehensive whole-of-government efforts to advance prevention.

- 3.2 Focusing more of Victoria's prevention effort on whole-of-setting program scale-up.

- 3.3 Designing and evaluating efforts at a whole-of-community level through trialling a saturation or scale-up approach in a ready area or setting.

- 3.4 Ensuring that prevention initiatives are responsive to the needs of diverse Victorians and put into practice the growing understanding of the way intersectional factors drive this violence.

- 3.5 Assessing prevention activities against consistent measures to support good design and implementation planning, allow comparisons of effectiveness and value-for-money, and understand the complementary roles of different efforts.



# Contents

<b>Foreword from Respect Victoria Chair and CEO</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Summary of key points</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>About this report</b>	<b>2</b>
Purpose and scope	2
Structure of this report	3
<b>Respect Victoria</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>01 Background—the task of prevention</b>	<b>5</b>
Understanding primary prevention	7
<b>1.1 Pathways to change</b>	<b>11</b>
Building on success	11
The importance of investing in prevention	11
Current investment	15
Issues for future investment	16
<b>1.2 Measuring progress towards outcomes</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1.3 Summary of available data</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>1.4 Stakeholder assessment of progress</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>02 Prevention initiatives</b>	<b>33</b>
State-wide campaign activity	37
Resistance and backlash efforts	42
<b>2.1 Setting-specific initiatives</b>	<b>45</b>
Local and regional place-based activities	46
Local government	47
Workplace settings	49
Education settings	52
Tertiary education settings	54
Media, advertising and online settings	55
Sports settings	56



<b>2.2</b>	<b>Population group-specific initiatives</b>	<b>60</b>
	Aboriginal communities	60
	LGBTIQ+ communities	64
	Women with disabilities	67
	Migrant, multicultural and faith communities	68
	Older people	70
	Children and young people	73
	Engaging men and boys	74
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Program implementation concerns</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>03</b>	<b>Strengthening the prevention system</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Policy, regulatory and legislative reform</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Leadership for prevention</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Mechanisms for coordination, collaboration and quality</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Mechanisms for workforce and sector development</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Strong evidence base informed by ongoing research, practice and evaluation</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Monitoring and reporting mechanisms</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>04</b>	<b>Conclusions and future outlook</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Overarching commentary on progress</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Key Areas for Future Progress</b>	<b>108</b>
	<b>Reference List</b>	<b>117</b>
	<b>Appendices</b>	<b>122</b>
	Appendix 1: Stakeholders involved in key informant interviews	123
	Appendix 2: Respect Victoria key milestones	124
	Appendix 3: Regional primary prevention projects	126
	Appendix 4: Summary of recent research	129

# About this report

One of Respect Victoria's key responsibilities under the *Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018* is to conduct a review every three years and report on trends, progress and outcomes of prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women in Victoria.

## Purpose and scope

The purpose of this report is to provide a broad-ranging and objective account of prevention progress in Victoria, including but not limited to the Victorian Government's investments. It also serves as an opportunity to ensure prevention remains a core focus for government and community action as a necessary part of the broader efforts to address family violence and violence against women. This report chiefly relates to the period between late 2018 and end 2021, although in places it made sense to comment on a wider timeframe, particularly given this is the first three-year report since the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

To develop this report, we undertook a broad-ranging review and consultation process, which included:

- > a review of published and unpublished documents, including policies, plans, regional strategies, project evaluation reports, research reports, evidence frameworks and practice guides
- > analysis of data measures incorporated on the Prevention of Family Violence Data Platform and other data sources
- > an online key informant survey with responses from 76 government and non-government stakeholders
- > key informant interviews with over 30 stakeholders including Commissioners, government departments, family violence and violence against women prevention agencies, peak bodies and community sector organisations (**Appendix 1**)
- > a group interview with members of the Victim-Survivors Advisory Council

- > consultation with the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor (FVRIM) on the findings of the recent FVRIM Review
- > independent review by an Expert Review Panel, including strategic advice and guidance on the development of the Report.

This report also draws on analysis and review of activities under the *Free from Violence* strategy, Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor reviews, *Free from Violence* program evaluations and several other recent or concurrent reviews. We have sought to be as comprehensive as possible in our identification, analysis and synthesis of prevention activity. However, we acknowledge it is not exhaustive and that there are likely to be many relevant prevention initiatives happening across Victoria that we are not yet aware of, or for which we have not been able to source evidence at this time.

These inputs, together with Respect Victoria's own observations, have informed conclusions about prevention progress, key achievements to date, current strengths and challenges of the prevention effort and the opportunities to strengthen the prevention system and practice going forward.

In presenting this first three-year report, we acknowledge that information gathering processes and data sources against which to assess progress are somewhat limited and imperfect. A crucial part of the work reported here seeks to address this situation. With this in mind we are confident that the second report in a further three years' time will be able to draw on significantly enhanced data and evidence.

It is important to note that this report is not a formal evaluation of particular programs or government strategies, although it draws on evaluations where available. While casting its scope broadly across the Victorian community and activities across a diverse range of sectors, it gives more prominence to initiatives supported by the Victorian Government due to the availability of information and evidence for this work. These include initiatives resourced and accounted for specifically under the *Free from Violence Strategy* and those undertaken outside that framework.

### Structure of this report

The report commences with an overview of the prevention challenge we are facing and the broad pathways for change. **Section One** then provides a picture of the current status and trends where possible of key indicators relating to primary prevention effort. This is complemented by the results of an online survey of stakeholders who are well placed to observe and provide specialist insights on progress and anecdotal evidence on impacts and outcomes across their communities.

The following section (**Section Two**) provides detail on targeted prevention initiatives undertaken over recent years and in specific settings and sectors in Victoria. Effort is made in each case to assess the collective impact of actions taken and the gaps identified. A selection of brief case studies is also provided to illustrate how work has been undertaken.

**Section Three** then details work undertaken to strengthen the system in Victoria for advancing this primary prevention work including mechanisms for legislative and policy reform, coordination, workforce development, research and evaluation.

The final section of the report (**Section Four**) provides an opportunity for Respect Victoria to comment on the progress we have seen through our role to date and set out key areas we believe will require greater attention and effort over coming years to consolidate and accelerate these achievements.

Stakeholder perspectives gathered through the various processes summarised above are embedded throughout the report. With the exception of specific quotes and citations, views are not ascribed to individual interviewees or survey respondents.

### A note on terminology

We have sought to be as inclusive as possible with the terminology used in this report—subject to relevant policy frameworks—but acknowledge that it can be difficult to fully capture the complexity of people’s experiences and preferred language.

Family violence as defined in Victorian law and policy covers a wide range of contexts and manifestations of violence, including intimate partner violence and violence between other family members. We are sensitive to the fact that individuals and communities may understand family violence in various other ways and prefer to use other terminology.

To ensure consistency and alignment with the *Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018*, the Report generally adopts the language of family violence and all forms of violence against women. This is also consistent with the official remit of Respect Victoria and of the Victorian Government’s *Free from Violence Strategy*.

However, there are places through the Report where family violence or all forms of violence against women are referred to independently where it is appropriate to make a distinction. This is specifically relevant to discussions about historic efforts to prevent violence against women as a distinct issue, and existing frameworks that have a discrete focus on the prevention of violence against women and the gendered drivers of this violence.

Furthermore, there are specific instances where the term gender-based violence has been used to reflect the terminology adopted within specific policies, projects or programs. Additional comments are made at various points in the report where there may be some doubt as to intended scope of coverage.

# Respect Victoria

Respect Victoria was established in 2018 in response to Recommendation 188 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence<sup>(1)</sup>, becoming the first agency dedicated to the primary prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women in Victoria. The organisation's mission is to challenge the harmful social norms, practices and structures that lead to violence, and create a state where everyone is safe, equal and respected, and which is free from family violence and all forms of violence against women.

As a Statutory Authority, legislated under the Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018 (the Act), Respect Victoria serves as an independent voice with functions, powers and duties protected by law, which include:

- > developing a framework for monitoring trends and outcomes in family violence and violence against women
- > providing advice to organisations and government to ensure the prevention of family violence and violence against women is implemented across government and the community
- > promoting the development of programs by other organisations by providing advice, information and support, and monitoring programs carried out by organisations to ensure they are promoting and implementing the guiding principles
- > undertaking and disseminating research in relation to: (i) the suitability of programs; (ii) the provision of advice to the government on program funding; (iii) the provision of guidance to organisations
- > providing advice to the Minister to assist in policy development and decision-making in relation to the prevention of family violence and violence against women, including advice on the funding of prevention programs
- > promoting awareness in the community about prevention programs, activities and campaigns.

Guided by an independent Board of Directors, Respect Victoria operates as both an active participant in the primary prevention sector and as a body that provides objective oversight and advice on the growth and development of this sector and the broader system required to implement effective, evidence-informed prevention work. Most importantly, the organisation is focused on achieving outcomes towards a violence-free Victoria through collective effort at all levels of society.

Respect Victoria's unique position as a dedicated statutory authority means that it can speak with government, community and business about what is needed to bring about the outcomes sought. This review is an important demonstration of Respect Victoria's capacity to provide an evidence informed and objective perspective on progress of the collective effort of a large number of agencies and communities across Victoria, including the direct contribution of Respect Victoria itself.

A range of important initiatives undertaken by Respect Victoria are described throughout the report and put in the context of the work of many other organisations, and a summary of Respect Victoria's milestones over this period is provided at **Appendix 1**.

**01**

**Background—  
the task of prevention**

# Continuum of activity required to end violence against women and family violence

## Awareness Raising

- Efforts to raise public awareness of a topic or issue to inform a community's knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs.
- Information provision and educative work that supports all elements in the continuum depending how it is targeted.
- Often an important foundation for primary prevention but cannot replace it.



## Primary Prevention

- **Aims to prevent the violence from emerging in the first place across the community.**
- **Works on actions to address the gendered drivers of violence against women and the drivers of other forms of family violence.**
- **Uses a range of mutually reinforcing strategies across the socio-ecological model and a wide range of settings/areas.**
- **Takes a whole of population focus complemented by targeted efforts for sections of the population where universal approaches do not reach.**



## Early Intervention (Secondary Prevention)

- Interventions to change the trajectory for individuals who are at higher-than-average risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence (as both children and adults).
- Targets individuals at greater risk of victimisation and those with behaviours or attitudes that mean they are 'on the trajectory' towards perpetration.



## Response (Tertiary Prevention)

- Actions taken after violence has occurred to support adult and child victim/survivors.
- Action is also undertaken to hold perpetrators to account and work with them on behaviour change.
- Response agencies often refer to their work as 'preventative' as their ultimate focus is to prevent any future occurrences of violence.



## Recovery

- Supports survivors through and the journey of recovery and healing from the trauma and longer-term effects of violence on a range of areas in their lives including (but not limited to) impacts on education, employment, financial stability and security and long term housing.



Figure 1: Continuum of activity required to end violence against women and family violence

Family violence and all forms of violence against women are serious and prevalent issues that continue to have a significant impact on communities. We know much of this violence can be prevented by taking action to address the underlying social norms and structures that create cultures where violence is allowed to occur. The Royal Commission into Family Violence established a roadmap for reforming the response to family violence in Victoria and has driven an ambitious agenda to build an accessible and sustainable family violence response system and create a strong, coordinated and well-resourced prevention system.

As part of an integrated approach, efforts to address family violence and violence against women are required across a continuum, from primary prevention through to early intervention and response (**Figure 1**). Each part of the system involves specialised approaches, but which are interdependent and reinforce each other.

### Understanding primary prevention

In order to prevent violence, the behaviours of individuals who use violence must be seen in the context of complex social, cultural, political and economic factors that entrench gender inequality, inappropriate use of power and control and violent social norms. Primary prevention adopts a socioecological model (**Figure 2**) to change the underlying social conditions that produce and drive violence against women, and that excuse, justify and promote it. This includes addressing violence supportive attitudes, norms, practices, structures and power imbalances\*.

Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia<sup>2</sup> has been a cornerstone of the prevention effort nationally and a significant driver of change in Victoria. The framework provides policy makers and prevention practitioners with comprehensive guidance on a whole-of-population prevention approach that addresses the drivers of violence against women and the gendered norms, practices and structures that maintain gender inequality.

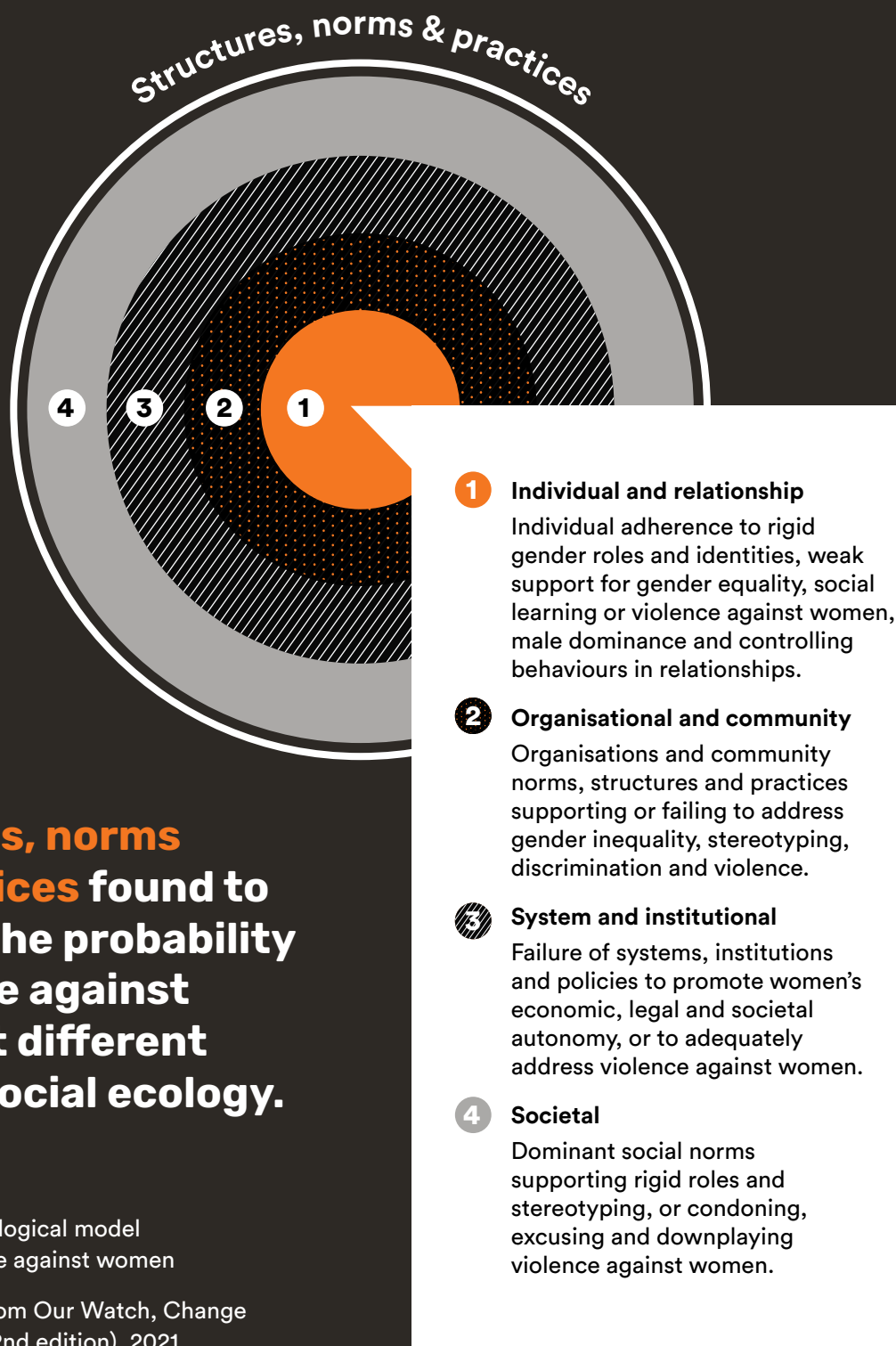
There are four gendered drivers that are most strongly associated with the perpetration of violence against women:

1. Condoning of violence against women.
2. Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life.
3. Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.
4. Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.

In addition to *Change the Story*, prevention efforts within Victoria are also informed by a number of other complementary frameworks such as *Pride in Prevention*<sup>3</sup>, *Changing the Picture*<sup>4</sup> and *Changing the Landscape*<sup>5</sup>.

\* The majority of evidence and conceptual framing here has been generated around violence against women. Given the very significant overlap with family violence (namely the heavily gendered nature of this violence), work across the broader spectrum currently rests appropriately on these frameworks. It will be important that future work is undertaken to test and refine frameworks for addressing all forms of family violence.

# Socio-ecological model of violence against women



**Structures, norms and practices found to increase the probability of violence against women, at different levels of social ecology.**

**Figure 2:** Socio-ecological model of violence against women

**Source:** Adapted from Our Watch, Change the Story (2nd edition), 2021



## Intersectionality

Prevention approaches must address the intersections between gender inequality and the various structural forms of oppression and discrimination, such as racism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, ableism and classism (amongst many others).

The term intersectionality is used to describe the way structural and systemic forms of discrimination and marginalisation can intersect and compound disadvantage and marginalisation<sup>(2)</sup>. These intersections not only compound the risk of family violence and violence against women, they also create new and different risks.

The use of an intersectional lens in the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence Report catalysed its inclusion in various state policies and guiding documents. Viewing experiences of family violence and violence against women through an intersectional lens is critical to understanding how diverse communities experience violence and how this violence may be less visible and understood than the population at large.

## Social and political context

Momentum for change has been building over many decades in Victoria, which in large part has been driven by strong advocacy and leadership from feminist and other social movements, as well as global agencies such as the United Nations, and some high-profile individuals who have given their voice to the importance of addressing violence, abuse and harm. Further information about the importance of such movements and their proven effectiveness in bringing about lasting change is provided in **Section 3**.

Over recent years, family violence and violence against women has attracted considerable media attention and raised the public profile of the seriousness of these issues nationally. This has had a significant influence on public discourse about the violence and abuse that women and girls experience in particular, harnessing and 'authorising' greater levels of community support for social and political change.

These public discussions where both the mainstream media and communities across the country have engaged include:

- > debate around the criminalisation of coercive control
- > public discussions relating to sexual consent
- > increasingly violent and misogynistic online abuse
- > increasing rates of sexual violence and harm
- > university responses to sexual violence on campus
- > gendered violence within the workplace, including within political institutions.

There have also been several reviews and enquiries into experiences of sexual harassment, discrimination, victimisation and gender inequality across public organisations and institutions, including:

- > Victorian response to the National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment (Respect at Work) by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner
- > Victorian Law Reform Commission report on response to sexual violence and harm in the justice system
- > review of sexual harassment in Victorian Courts<sup>6</sup>
- > independent review into workplace equality at Ambulance Victoria<sup>7</sup>
- > independent review into sex discrimination and sexual harassment, including predatory behaviour, in Victoria Police<sup>8</sup>.

The elevated public profile of violence and gender equality issues, together with growing public support for change, have put pressure on governments and public institutions to act with more urgency and provided an opportunity for those working in primary prevention to highlight the essential nature of this work for large-scale long-term change. The commonality of many underlying drivers across these specific issues demonstrates the need for primary prevention to be a core part of systemic and structural change.

## Family violence in times of disaster

Evidence shows that violence against women increases in disaster contexts, and that in times of crisis, political and organisational attention is diverted to responding to critical response issues and away from prevention approaches. In addition, disaster situations often exacerbate the drivers of violence against women, for example by reinforcing and entrenching rigid gender roles or limiting women's independence in ways that impact over the very long term<sup>9</sup>.

The COVID-19 pandemic and a series of other significant disasters, including bushfires and storms, have clearly shown the many ways in which family violence experiences are exacerbated during disasters. Since the beginning of the pandemic, there has been a sustained increase in reported incidences of family violence, and in response to this, organisations have had to shift their focus and resources to providing response and support services. In addition, stakeholders have reported that COVID-19 reinforced the systemic and structural discrimination that already disproportionately impacts those most likely to experience family violence. Experiences of social and gender-based inequalities and discrimination have been exacerbated during the pandemic.

Stakeholders have also reported that the pandemic caused major disruptions to the prevention system and program implementation. In the early stages of the pandemic, prevention work was deprioritised across every sector, as resources and workforces were diverted to pandemic responses and service delivery. In addition, lockdowns and other restrictions impacted the delivery of prevention projects, as well as the ability for organisations to engage stakeholders and communities in prevention activities. Many felt this resulted in a loss of momentum for prevention work, however it is important to recognise that the COVID-19 recovery period does provide the opportunity to renew Victoria's commitment to prevention efforts across the state.

The lesson from this is that primary prevention activity should be planned and undertaken as an integral part of a whole-system approach to family violence and violence against women through times of disaster. This includes the need to incorporate primary prevention as a critical element of disaster planning, response and recovery. As Victoria continues to implement a phased approach to pandemic recovery, there is an opportunity to elevate the role of primary prevention to address gender inequalities and transform traditional gendered power dynamics.

*COVID has shown that our [family violence] systems are fragile, and the gains are still really vulnerable, and that goes for all of the gender equality drivers. So, we are not in a place where our efforts are embedded and sustainable and robust enough to cope with what's happened during COVID. I think they're the things we really need to be thinking about and it requires uplifting investment."*

**NGO Informant**

# 1.1 Pathways to change

## Building on success

While the scope of this report is predominantly the past three years, it is important to acknowledge the exceptional legacy of the many organisations in Victoria (and nationally) who have led gender equality and primary prevention of violence against women for several decades.

This legacy and dedication have been taken forward by the Victorian Government and specialist prevention sector in the years following the Royal Commission into Family Violence, which has seen unprecedented investment across the family violence and associated systems.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence was a monumental step towards a comprehensive family violence system in Victoria. This significant milestone arose out of the advocacy and success of family violence, prevention and gender equality sectors across Victoria, leading to significant legislation and policy reform that now underpins a robust approach to long-term social and behavioural change<sup>1</sup>.

With the launch of the *Free from Violence Strategy*, *Safe and Strong Gender Equality Strategy*, and more recently the introduction of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, there is now a strong policy platform, clear vision and leadership in Victoria, which complements the national framework—*The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. Further work should be undertaken to ensure primary prevention operates as an integrated part of the broader family violence system, but is also a strong, coherent system in its own right.

## The importance of investing in prevention

Historically, prevention work has lacked a secure and sustainable resourcing base, often relying on short-term funding for one-off programs. Research and public health evidence demonstrates that for prevention to be effective over the long term, it needs sustained and coordinated funding for specific, mutually reinforcing initiatives (over a sustained period of time), as well as support for the development of a broader prevention system.

Making a case for social investment in prevention of family violence and violence against women is not difficult, given the enormous amount of human misery, harm and social disruption we stand to avoid by doing so. As the work of prevention continues, it is important to be able to demonstrate in more specific ways what makes this effort a sound economic proposition that will lead to a strong return on investment.

Over the period covered by this review, we have advanced an understanding of how investment in prevention can work by drawing on health economics approaches taken with other major public health problems such as road trauma, smoking and skin cancer. As with successful efforts to tackle these problems in Victoria, the evidence here points to a clear link between investment in a balanced portfolio of primary prevention initiatives and enabling infrastructure, and a set of significant social and economic benefits.

*The investment in primary prevention of gendered violence should not be less than the investment we have made in changing attitudes about seat belt usage, road safety and traffic accidents. Or staying safe at work. The investment actually needs to be more than we give to those things because it is a much tougher thing to do."*

CEO, GEN VIC

There are three main parts to this rationale:

- > The huge and widespread costs of family violence and violence against women mean that reducing this violence offers very substantial benefits when achieved at a population wide level.
- > Primary prevention is the only realistic and efficient way to stop violence from ever occurring in the first place, and can be very cost-effective.
- > Sound investment approaches should target resourcing to a sustained, well-sequenced series of primary prevention-based actions that can achieve the types of outcomes we seek.

**Figure 4** illustrates the dimensions of the cost that family violence and violence against women imposes on Victorian society—more than \$5.4 billion each year. This falls across many different sectors and is borne by individuals, families and organisations as well as by all taxpayers through a heavy burden on government services. These figures do not include the long-term costs of violence related to the enduring and intergenerational impacts on families and children associated with homelessness, mental health and disrupted education.

The burden of family violence and violence against women is spread widely across society. One half of all women over the age of 15 report experiencing violence, partner abuse or stalking, including one-fifth experiencing sexual violence, and over a quarter report violence or emotional abuse by a current or previous partner—that's 525,000 Victorian women<sup>(10)</sup>. The scale of these costs mean that it only takes a small percentage reduction in the incidence and prevalence of family violence and violence against women to produce very significant savings—with every 1% reduction promising to deliver a \$54m saving each year<sup>11</sup>.

Primary prevention is the only way to achieve large-scale population change. A problem of this scale cannot be solved through crisis response, or even through early intervention approaches, as vital as these services are for the people affected by violence.

**Figure 5** sets out an investment pathway, illustrating how investment in planned, focused prevention can lead to change that is expected to reduce the incidence and prevalence of violence which in turn leads to a wide range of avoided social costs and long-term benefits. These benefits flow to individuals, society and the economy, including reduced pressure on health, justice and community services that respond to this violence.

The total investment required is not enormous, particularly in relation to the cost of immediate responses to the problem. By way of illustration, \$27.5m was allocated by the Victorian Government to the Primary Prevention of Family Violence and Violence against Women budget output in 2021–22. On the analysis presented above, prevention efforts would only need to reduce the incidence of family violence and violence against women by 0.5% to fully return this particular investment\*.

\* Victorian Government Budget 2022-23, Budget Paper 3, p197.

# Costs of family violence and violence against women in Victoria



**Figure 4:** The costs of Family violence and violence against women in Victoria

**Data sources:** Investing in primary of family violence, PWC 2016; Victorian Budget 2021-22, Budget Paper 3; Playing Our Part: a Framework for Workplace Action on Domestic and Family Violence, Champions of Change Coalition (2021)

# Reducing social and economic burden through prevention

## Interventions and outputs

### Interventions

- Community mobilisation
- Direct participation programs and strengthening
- Communications and social marketing
- Organisational development
- Civil society and social movement activism

### Outputs

- Reach of prevention programs
- Level of community engagement
- Knowledge transfer
- Education and training delivered



## Primary prevention outcomes

- Victorians hold attitudes and beliefs that reject gender inequality and family violence
- Victorians actively challenge attitudes and behaviours that enable violence
- Victorian homes, organisations and communities are safe and inclusive
- All Victorians live and practice confident and respectful relationships



**Reduce incidence and prevalence of family violence and violence against women**



## Short-and medium-term costs avoided

- Reduced police call outs
- Reduced demand on family violence crisis services
- Reduced emergency department visits
- Reduced homelessness
- Reduced demand on women's mental and physical healthcare
- Reduced absenteeism / presenteeism
- Reduced need for out-of-home care



## Long-term benefits

- Improved community wellbeing
- Improved women's and children's wellbeing
- Improved family relationships
- Secure economic outcomes for families
- Greater economic productivity in all sectors

Figure 5: Reducing social and economic burden through prevention

## Current investment

The Victorian Government's total funding commitment to primary prevention of family violence and violence against women since the Royal Commission in 2016 is estimated at \$345m. This figure includes direct investment in prevention initiatives as well as a range of broader contributing gender equality and early intervention programs, and incorporates forward commitments through to 2025-26\*.

Reporting on actual government expenditure on primary prevention over the review period for this report is complicated by the varying scope of individual initiatives (with some incorporating early intervention as well as primary prevention) and different periods of funding allocation (amongst other factors). Bearing this complexity in mind, the following broad elements of funding provide a useful snapshot of relevant investment. Further detail on these and other contributing investments are provided in later sections of the report.

- > Core funding for the ten-year *Free from Violence* strategy for the four years from 2018-19 to 2021-22 totalled \$32.4m. This supported a mixture of short- and medium-term initiatives and support functions. A further \$36.4m has been committed to *Free from Violence* for the four years from 2022-23 to 2025-26.
- > Allocations for the establishment and operations of Respect Victoria, including campaigns and research activity, has totalled around \$36m over the four years from 2018-19 to 2021-22. A further \$31m for the agency's work has been committed for the next four years.
- > Additional cross-portfolio investments in grants targeted to family violence prevention and early intervention in multicultural and Aboriginal communities (totalling around \$15m from 2018-19 to 2021-22).

- > Respectful Relationships Education in schools and early childhood services, which plays an important role in primary prevention, received \$44.7m from 2018-2019 to 2021-22. A further \$15.7m has been committed for the following two years.
- > A range of initiatives to support gender equality more broadly, while not directly targeted to prevention of violence, has been a valuable complementary investment that will provide a strong foundation for violence prevention efforts (totalling some \$17m from 2018-19 to 2021-22).
- > In addition, the Family Violence Industry Plan has included support specifically for primary prevention workforce initiatives, and the Health portfolio has contributed through supporting infrastructure for women's health services, local public health and health promotion.

Over the period covered by this report, there has also been continuing investment in prevention by the Commonwealth Government, chiefly in the form of support to key national organisations Our Watch and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)—who each also receive funding from the Victorian Government—as well as funding of national campaigns and a range of associated community grants programs.

This investment was extended in 2022 through an injection of a further \$104 million over five years in funding for Our Watch to continue to drive prevention across Australia\*\*. This is in addition to new funding for more national campaigns, a survey of secondary school- age students on issues related to consent and the establishment of a National Commissioner for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence, whose role will include oversight of prevention.

\* Figures relating to the Victorian Government's investment are sourced from the published budget papers and where further breakdowns were required, these were advised by Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

\*\* Joint media release 6 March 2022, Senator the Hon Marise Payne Minister for Foreign Affairs Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston Minister for Families and Social Services Minister for Women's Safety, The Hon Stuart Robert MP Acting Minister for Education and Youth.

Whilst government expenditure has been critical in supporting prevention activity, contributions made by the corporate sector, philanthropic organisations and communities across Victoria are also important to better understand as part of the broader state-wide approach to prevention. As indicated in the National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS) findings, there is overwhelming community support for government investment in this arena, however it is also clear that others are stepping up to the plate. However, data collection methods to identify the size of this investment will be important to build in order to build a stronger picture of the breadth of the commitment to prevention and the investments made in these efforts.

### Issues for future investment

Prevention is most efficient when it is delivered at optimal scale and depth to produce population-level outcomes. The good news is that there are indications of promising primary prevention programs and change initiatives that have worked in particular settings and with particular population groups. For example, the Safe Dates school-based program in the US found that compared with control groups, adolescents exposed to the program reported 56% to 92% less dating violence victimisation and perpetration at four-year follow-up. Recent evaluations<sup>(12, 13)</sup> of school and community mobilisation primary prevention programs in a number of African countries including Uganda, Ghana and Ethiopia have achieved reductions of more than half the level of intimate partner violence at very low cost relative to the harm avoided\*.

While there is still a need to improve an understanding of what makes prevention interventions effective and efficient, there is emerging evidence that points towards outcomes for different types of activity. Evidence suggests that community mobilisation and strengthening and direct participation programs in this area can have strong impact. The paucity of evidence on some other types of activity should not be read as evidence that these activities are necessarily less

effective, merely that interventions to test these types of activities have not been adequately evaluated.

There is strong expert consensus that primary prevention investment will provide the best return when made in a balanced set of mutually reinforcing programs and activities, not merely as a series of individual programs delivered without an overarching coordinating intent or strategy. In order to have significant and sustained impact in changing social norms, behaviours and structures, this investment needs to be planned and delivered as part of a holistic, coordinated plan that tackles change at all levels (as set out in the socio-ecological model described above).

While the recent investment in prevention by governments is significant and welcomed, stakeholders suggest there are further gains to be made through both an increase in prevention investment (from a range of sources) and a focus on investment targeting initiatives and approaches that will achieve meaningful, long-term change. Notwithstanding positive recent efforts to scale up certain programs and fund core support functions (including Respect Victoria and workforce development), funding has predominantly been for relatively short-term activity targeting fairly small cohorts and for campaigns that need to be connected with on-the-ground activity to help translate them into action. (Further commentary on funding is provided in Section Two on prevention initiatives below.)

Making the shift to longer-term funding requires the development and promotion of stronger evidence on effective approaches that will provide confidence to invest in appropriately scaled-up and joined-up effort across a broader range of settings. It will also require a change to funding models so that key state-wide agencies have stable long-term resourcing at a level consistent with the scope of their remits to drive reform and whole of community change. Funding should also support local innovation where this is based on good practice or theoretical evidence and has potential for scaling up.

\* See summary of recent evidence at *New cause area: Violence against women and girls - EA Forum* ([effectivealtruism.org](http://effectivealtruism.org))



## 1.2 Measuring progress towards outcomes

Measuring progress of efforts to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women is complex and will require a comprehensive, long-term approach that enables monitoring of systemic, institutional, organisational and structural change, shifts in social norms and practices and improvements in the underlying attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that drive violence over time. Doing this well is critical to enable sound investment.

Whilst arguably the most advanced state in the country in this area, Victoria is still in the early stages of its prevention reform agenda (**Figure 7**). In the short-term, we expect to see evidence of strengthened prevention ‘infrastructure’ which will then support quality, evidence-based initiatives so that every Victorian—regardless of who they are or where they live, work or go to school—can benefit from prevention activity.

Over time, resourcing of prevention infrastructure and initiatives should lead to improvements in the gendered drivers of violence, including greater gender equality, a reduced acceptance of violence and more positive, equal and respectful relationships. Whilst we know that that there is strong evidence that change is possible within programmatic timeframes (see Section 1.1 above), what is critical in terms of funding and strategy is to translate these individual program learnings across communities, settings and sectors.

We know that population-level change will take time, but with a strong prevention system in place, as well as sustained effort to reduce the gendered drivers of violence, we expect to start seeing definite reductions in the number of individuals who have experienced recent violence family violence and all forms of violence against women within a decade<sup>(14)</sup>. Further work is needed to determine more precisely the pace of this change and the steps we can measure along the way to better capture the efficacy of prevention in ultimately driving down the level of violence in our society.

# Tracking Victoria's Prevention Journey

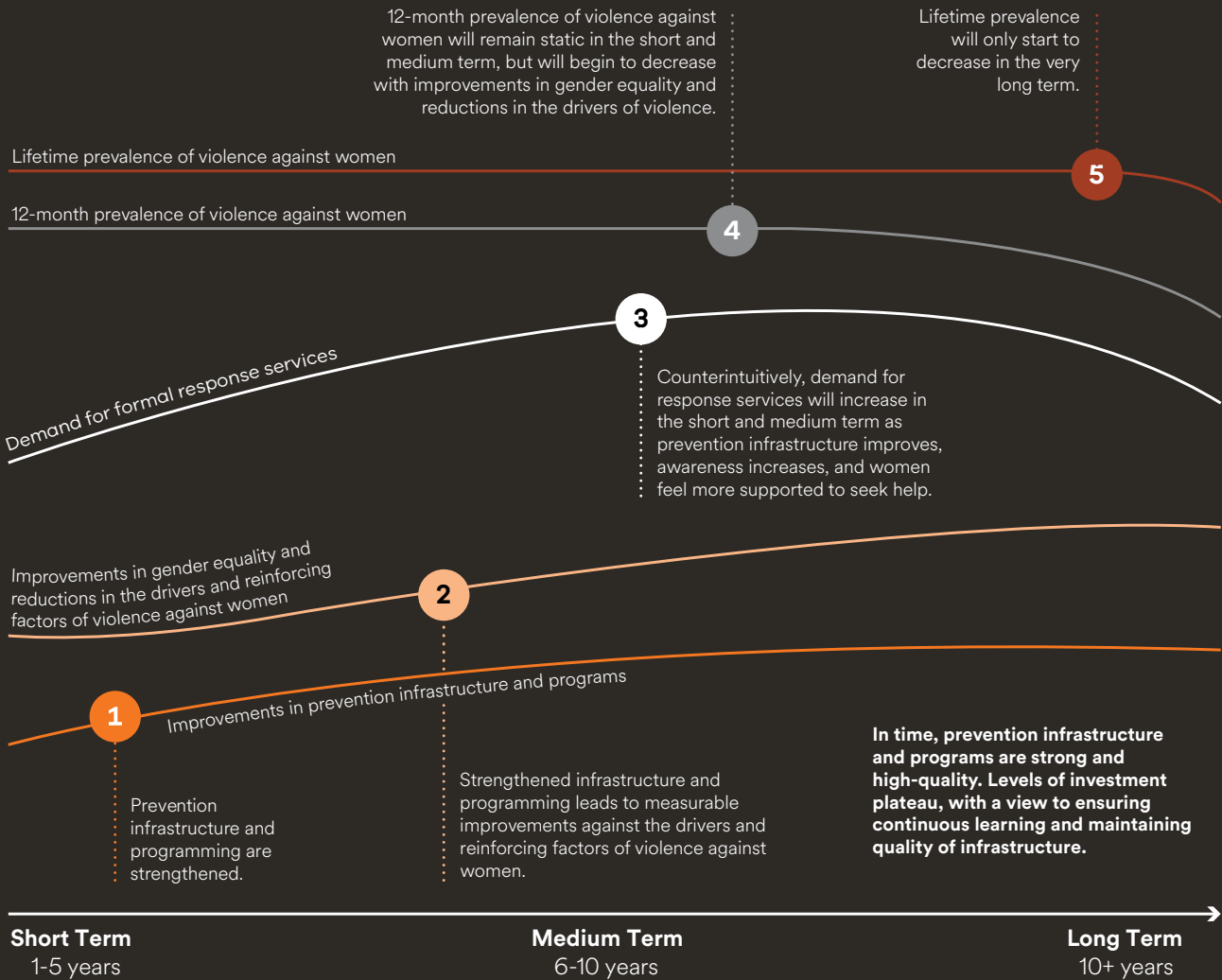


Figure 7: Tracking Victoria's Prevention Journey

Source: Adapted from, Our Watch and ANROWS, Counting on Change: A Guide to Prevention Monitoring (2017).

We recognise that family violence and violence against women are complex social issues, and that changes in attitudes, behaviours and social norms will not be a linear process<sup>(15)</sup>. We need monitoring and measurement systems that can track change across the full spectrum of relevant outcomes and indicators towards progress (in the short-, medium- and longer-term), as well as detect non-linear or unanticipated changes. Regular data collection through these systems is critical to refining and revising strategies to maintain progress.

There has been significant progress in the development of monitoring frameworks, indicators and approaches in Australia over recent years. In 2017, Our Watch (in partnership with ANROWS) developed *Counting on Change: A Guide to Prevention Monitoring*<sup>(14)</sup>, which provides guidance to policy makers and researchers on how to comprehensively track short-, medium- and long-term progress towards population-level change. Counting on Change sets out a total of five long-term indicators, 33 medium-term indicators and 43 suggested measures for measuring short-term changes in prevention infrastructure and programs.

In 2020, Our Watch released *Tracking Progress in Prevention*—the first national report on progress in prevention in Australia<sup>(16)</sup>. The project utilised the *Counting on Change* framework to establish a baseline of national prevention progress, and where possible report on change that had occurred over the previous decade. The project also enabled further development and refinement of the monitoring methods and provides a strong foundation on which to build future data collection and monitoring approaches.

There has also been a number of key initiatives to build monitoring and measurement capability in Victoria, including the development of the Victorian Family Violence Outcomes Framework and the launch of Respect Victoria's Prevention of Family Violence Data Platform.

# Family Violence Outcomes Framework Domains



Figure 8: Family Violence Outcomes Framework Domains

## Victorian Family Violence Outcomes Framework

The Victorian Family Violence Outcomes Framework (**Figure 8**) was developed by the Victorian Government in recognition of the need to establish clear outcomes and indicators to track the impact of the family violence reforms<sup>(17)</sup>. The Framework consists of four domains, which reflect the long-term outcomes the Victorian Government is seeking to achieve through the reforms.

The first domain of the framework sets out the outcomes and indicators the Victorian Government is using to monitor progress in prevention in Victoria. The four outcomes are:

1. Victorians hold attitudes and beliefs that reject gender inequality and family violence.
2. Victorians actively challenge attitudes and behaviours that enable violence.
3. Victorian homes, organisations and communities are safe and inclusive.
4. All Victorians live and practice confident and respectful relationships.

These outcomes intend to track long-term change and are currently measured using population surveys that are routinely collected at a national or state level. Twenty-six initial indicators have been used by the Victorian Government to date to explore the four outcomes in the Prevention domain.

To support measurement of the outcomes framework and broader progress in prevention, in June 2021, Respect Victoria launched the *Prevention of Family Violence Data Platform*, a tool developed in partnership with Victoria's Crime Statistics Agency. The Data Platform is the first of its kind in Australia and is designed to bring together data that will allow the Victorian Government, family violence, sexual assault and violence against women sectors, researchers and the public to track the state's progress on preventing family violence and violence against women.

The Victorian Government have commenced further work to update the outcomes framework for *Free from Violence*—including short-, medium- and long-term indicators of progress which will enable more effective measurement of the changes that have occurred as a result of Victorian government investment through *Free from Violence*. Alongside this, Respect Victoria will develop a wider framework that can support measurement of progress and impact across all prevention activities, including but not limited to those that sit within *Free from Violence*. This will enable monitoring and measurement of the incremental impact of the prevention effort and ensure a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to measuring process across the entire state (see also **section 1.3** below).

## The current picture in Victoria

As with any developing field of practice and reform, there are some limitations in the data currently available to track progress in prevention and to directly measure prevalence. For example, we do not have a population-level survey in Victoria or nationally that measures perpetration of violence, and there are gaps in data for specific population groups.\* As a result, it is not possible to simply and numerically report on the overall impact of the prevention effort in Victoria over the past three years.

There are nonetheless significant expertise and learnings indicating what has been impactful on the drivers and reinforcing factors of this violence and where the gaps remain; this intelligence has been gathered in developing this report through surveys, program evaluations and reports and stakeholder interviews (see below). This data should be seen in tandem with information from the police, justice, health and response service systems that is reported elsewhere<sup>(18)</sup> (Note: Data relating to prevention systems and capacity are presented in **Section 3**).

We can also look at various data measures that provide a picture of what is happening in the community in regard to knowledge and understanding of family violence and gender equality, the underlying attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that support violence and gender inequality and the gendered social norms and practices that drive family violence and all forms of violence against women. Drawing on a range of large population surveys such as National Community Attitudes Survey, the ABS Personal Safety Survey and the Victorian Population Health Survey, together with research and tracking surveys commissioned by Respect Victoria, these data sources provide useful information to guide prevention design and investment and will help assess change at the population level over the longer-term.

In partnership with the Victorian Crime Statistics Agency, Respect Victoria has constructed an online collection of these types of data in the Prevention

of Family Violence Data Platform (described in more detail in section 1.3 below). We note that most of the data sources are only available at this stage at a state-wide level (sometimes as extractions from national collections) and in many cases only for one time point (although more recent data for a number of the most significant surveys are due to be available soon and will provide an opportunity to examine population level change over the past few years).

The following section summarises available data on key aspects of the population experience, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours relevant to the prevention effort. We emphasise that these types of data do not directly measure the success of prevention activity in Victoria. However, when combined, they do provide us with the knowledge required to strengthen our monitoring and evaluation efforts, and ensure that our interventions are designed to secure tangible change. For example, we now have a richer understanding of:

- > the size of the problem
- > the impact of the problem at the individual, family, community and societal levels
- > the seriousness in which this problem is viewed across the community
- > attitudes to the problem which are amenable to change over time
- > the willingness of community members to act
- > the factors which must be addressed to drive down prevalence rates
- > evidence-based interventions that are effective and which should be considered for expansion
- > gaps in our population-level monitoring systems and how these can be strengthened over time.

The types of data below are an important part of the overall story surrounding the work covered by this report. While available data does not yet allow for many primary prevention trends to be confidently identified, there are some signs of positive progress as well as some measures for which results have gone backwards—a salutary reminder that progress can be reversed or impeded by wider social factors.

\* A useful analysis of data gaps in relation to the prevalence and impacts of violence against women can be found in *Our Watch's Change the Story (2021)*.

## 1.3 Summary of available data

### Patterns of family violence and violence against women

A good understanding of the patterns of family violence and of violence against women is crucial to targeting prevention activity. One in four women and one in ten men in Victoria have experienced intimate partner violence or family violence since the age of 15<sup>(19)</sup>. Women are more than twice as likely than men to have experienced physical violence and nearly eight times more likely to have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime<sup>(19)</sup>.

Based on data collected in 2017, 6.6% of Victorian women had experienced family violence in the previous two years<sup>(20)</sup>, with emotional abuse being the most prevalent form of abuse experienced by women (6%), followed by physical abuse (2.9%) and financial abuse (2.6%).

Evidence shows that certain communities in Victoria are more likely to have had a recent or lifetime experience of family or intimate partner violence, including women with disabilities<sup>(19)</sup>, Aboriginal women<sup>(20)</sup> and members of the LGBTIQ+ community, particularly trans, non-binary and gender diverse people<sup>(21)</sup>. Over 17% of Aboriginal women in Victoria report experiencing family violence in the last two years<sup>(20)</sup>.

Recent research showed that family violence and relationship abuse is commonly witnessed by Victorians, with one in four people (24%) indicating they had witnessed someone being physically abused by their partner at least occasionally (22%). Almost half (48%) of people surveyed had witnessed someone being humiliated or criticised by their partner, and almost seven in ten (67%) had heard someone make sexually suggestive comments or jokes towards another person<sup>(22)</sup>.

Women are  
**more than  
twice as likely**

than men to experience physical violence and nearly eight times more likely to experience sexual violence.

In 2017

**almost 7%**

of Victorian women

**and 17%**

of Aboriginal women report experiencing family violence in the last two years.

## Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a key form of gendered violence in its own right as well as a behaviour often associated with other forms of violence against women. The results of the 2018 National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces<sup>(23)</sup> showed that the large majority of Australians (71%) have experienced sexual harassment at least once in their lifetime. Women are significantly more likely than men to have experienced sexual harassment, with more than four in five (85%) Australian women and over half (56%) of Australian men experiencing it at some point in their lifetimes<sup>(23)</sup>.

It is also clear that particular communities are more likely to experience sexual harassment. Nine in ten (89%) women with disability, 83% of gay and lesbian people, 90% of bisexual people and 89% of non-binary and gender diverse people have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetimes<sup>(23)</sup>.

The workplace survey<sup>(23)</sup> also found that one in three people (33%) had experienced sexual harassment at work in the previous five years, with women (39%) more likely than men to experience sexual harassment in the workplace than men (26%). Again, specific communities are more likely to experience sexual harassment in the workplace, with the findings showing<sup>(23)</sup>:

- > LBGTIQ+ people were more likely than people who identify as straight or heterosexual to have experienced workplace sexual harassment in the past five years (52% and 31% respectively).
- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were more likely to have experienced workplace sexual harassment than non-Indigenous people (53% and 32% respectively).
- > People with disability were also more likely than those without disability to have been sexually harassed in the workplace (44% and 32% respectively).

**4 in 5**

Australian women have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime, rising to 89% of women with disability, 83% of gay and lesbian people, and 89% of non-binary and gender diverse people.

**7.5%**

of Australians believe that people experiencing sexual harassment should sort it out themselves rather than report it.

The Victorian People Matter Survey<sup>(24)</sup> conducted in 2018 found that 10.1% of employees across the Victorian public sector said they had experienced sexual harassment in the past 12 months, with the figure for women being 1.4 times more than for men. This dropped to 5.6% in 2021 but with women now nearly twice as likely report harassment (noting that the impact of COVID-19 may explain part of this drop).

There were 122 formal complaints of workplace sexual harassment made to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission in 2018–19, rising to 132 in 2019–20 and falling to 102 in 2020–21 (with COVID-19 again requiring caution in interpretation).<sup>(25)</sup>



The willingness of people to respond to these types of surveys and complaints mechanisms is important as it can indicate a growing awareness and trust of people in systems, which is an important element of the prevention effort. However, it is not clear these reported experiences of sexual harassment by women are yet fully translating into formal reporting and prompting adequate action by organisations; the 2017 NCAS survey<sup>(15)</sup> found that 7.5% of Australians believed that people experiencing sexual harassment should sort it out themselves rather than report it.

### Knowledge and understanding of gendered violence

Community understanding of violence against women is often a starting point for prevention activity. Evidence suggests that knowledge has increased in Victoria in recent years, but that women consistently demonstrate a better understanding of what constitutes violence than men, including a recognition of non-physical forms of violence<sup>(15)</sup>. This includes an increased understanding of financial abuse, with more than 80% of people agreeing that it is a serious problem when a man tries to control his partner by refusing her access to their money. Again, women were more likely to recognise this as a form of abuse than men (87% compared to 75.2%).

Recent research shows that 38% of surveyed Victorians believe family violence is a priority social issue (ranked the highest social issue overall) and 30% believe that violence against women is

Family violence is ranked by Victorians as a high priority social issue.

**9 in 10**

people perceive someone physically abusing their partner as a serious issue.

**1 in 6**

men and

**1 in 10**

women believe that domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family.

More than

**80%**

of people agree that it is a serious problem when a man tries to control his partner by refusing her access to their money.

a priority social issue<sup>(22)</sup>. Nine in ten (87%) people surveyed perceive someone physically abusing their partner as a serious issue, while 84% perceive someone threatening to hit their partner as a serious issue, and in both cases, women were more likely than men to perceive these as serious issues<sup>(22)</sup>.

A significant proportion of Victorians also perceived other forms of relationship abuse and control to be serious, including controlling who a partner is allowed to talk to or be friends with (78%), monitoring a partner's social communications (76%) and monitoring and limiting a partner's spending (68%)<sup>(22)</sup>.

These figures suggest a reasonably solid basis for prevention work but also show that there is a significant minority of the community who are yet to be convinced of the seriousness of the issue. They also suggest that individuals do not always translate their understanding to specific manifestations of family violence.

## Attitudes and beliefs that support violence

Attitudes and beliefs that support violence include minimising violence against women, excusing, justifying or condoning the perpetrator's use of violence, mistrusting women's reports of violence and denying that gender inequality is a problem<sup>(14)</sup>.

The National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS) showed that approximately one in six Victorians do not believe it is as hard as people say for women to leave a violent relationship, with significantly more men (19.3%) reporting this than women (12.4%)<sup>(15)</sup>. At the same time, 13.3% believed that domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family, a view supported by one in six men compared to one in ten women<sup>(15)</sup>. Victorian figures were generally similar to the national picture.

Recent research conducted by EY Sweeney<sup>(22)</sup> also examined attitudes about violence and showed that one in five (23%) of Victorians agree that sometimes people are provoked into family violence situations, and that couples and/or families that have issues should be left to deal with them in private. In addition, 27% of Victorians believe that it is up to the individual to seek help if they feel they are being abused, and 15% believe that if someone stays in an abusive relationship that it's their choice. Men are more likely to place responsibility on victims to seek help (31%) than women (22%) and believe that staying in an abusive relationship is a choice (19% compared to 11%)<sup>(22)</sup>.

Evidence suggests that there is a good level of awareness of problematic behaviours within relationships, and some of the factors that constitute a healthy and respectful relationship. However, there is a concerning proportion of people who show low support for gender equality in relationships, which is significantly more common among men<sup>(15)</sup>.

Importantly, findings of the NCAS<sup>(15)</sup> also show a correlation between attitudes supportive of violence against women and other forms of

prejudice, with Victorians who demonstrate racist, homophobic and ableist attitudes more likely to endorse violence supportive attitudes, and those with high levels of attitudinal support for gender equality less likely to support violence against women<sup>(15)</sup>.

## Bystander action

Data from the NCAS<sup>(15)</sup> show that there is a high degree of willingness to take bystander action and to support women experiencing abuse. Almost all people (98%) reported they would feel bothered if they witnessed a male friend verbally abusing a woman he was in a relationship with, 71% saying they would act if they did witness it. Far fewer (76%) reported they would feel bothered if they witnessed a male friend telling a sexist joke, and less than half (46%) said they would be prepared to act in this instance<sup>(15)</sup>.

# 2 in 5

Victorians say they would call out a friend's inappropriate behaviour among a group of male friends, while 45% say they would talk to the friend privately.

In terms of social or peer support for bystander action, two in three Victorians thought they would have the support of all of their friends, and one in four thought they would have the support of some of their friends if they took action when witnessing verbal abuse towards a woman by a friend<sup>(15)</sup>. Only 52% of people thought all of their friends would support them to act in response to a sexist joke, and a further third (32%) thought they would have the support of some friends<sup>(15)</sup>.

Recent research conducted by EY Sweeney<sup>(22)</sup> found that the majority of Victorians said they would speak up if they saw a situation in which violence against women (63%) or family violence (57%) was occurring. Two in five (43%) people say they would call out their friend's behaviour among a group of male friends, while 45% say they would talk to their friend privately about the situation. Women are more likely to engage in these interventions than men<sup>(22)</sup>.

Although confrontational interventions remain the most common type of intervention people are willing to take, there has been a decreasing trend in people's willingness to call out a friend's inappropriate behaviour (48%) or talk privately to their friend (41%); both of which are at their lowest rates since tracking began in 2017<sup>(22)</sup>. As with many other indicators, women are more likely to be willing to confront a friend publicly or privately than men.

**71%**  
say they would act  
if they witnessed a male  
friend verbally abusing a  
woman in a relationship.

Whilst these data are focused on *intent* to act (rather than actual intervention action), they still suggest that there is a good basis for prevention efforts that incorporate bystander approaches. However, there is clearly significant work required to support individuals to move from intention to action, especially in regard to men's willingness to engage and the confidence people have in their peers to call out problematic behaviours.

## Gender stereotyping and women's independence

While these issues go beyond the concerns of prevention of violence, they are an important aspect of the social context for prevention effort and are linked to recognised drivers of violence against women - especially rigid gender stereotyping, men's control of women's decision making, and limits to women's independence.

There is a reasonable level of recognition that gender inequality is a societal problem, however men are more likely than women to hold sexist attitudes and negative views about gender equality than women. Around 40% of Victorian men believe that women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia, compared to 32.2% of Victorian women, and 49% of men believe that women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist, compared to 43% of women<sup>(15)</sup>. There is also a strong recognition by all Victorians that workplace gender inequality continues to be a problem in Australia. However, a small proportion of people (9.3%) believe it is no longer a problem, with men significantly more likely to deny that workplace discrimination against women still exists<sup>(15)</sup>.

There is quite high support for women's independence and decision-making in public life in Victoria. Yet women are more likely than men to hold attitudes supportive of gender equality and less likely than men to support cultures that reinforce aggressive forms of masculinity and hostility towards women. There is also a large minority of people who are unlikely to challenge sexist behaviours<sup>(15)</sup>.

**1 in 4**

Victorians believe that men should take control in relationships and be head of the household, with more men (29%) holding this view than women (18%).

In terms of women’s independence and decision-making in private life, nearly one in four Victorians believe that men should take control in relationships and be head of the household (23.6%), with more men (29.3%) holding this view than women (17.7%). One in six people also believe that women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship (14.3%), with men more likely to hold this view than women<sup>(15)</sup>.

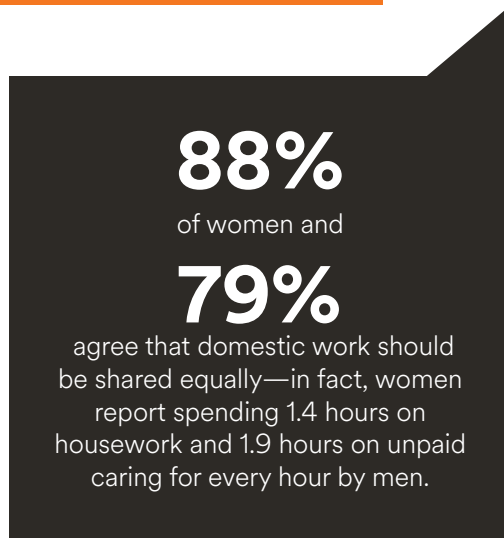
Research undertaken in 2015 showed that the large majority of Victorians (83.5%) agreed that unpaid work such as housework and caring for children should be shared equally in a relationship, which was a view more likely to be held by women (88.3%) than men (78.5%)<sup>(26)</sup>. However, according to the HILDA survey conducted in 2018, Victorian women spent more than double the amount of time doing unpaid care work compared to men (11.2 hours per week compared to 5.3 hours), as well as an extra 7.8 hours per week on housework<sup>(26)</sup>. The 2020 survey showed a slight improvement with women reporting 1.4 times the hours spent by men on housework and 1.9 times the hours spent on unpaid caring<sup>(27)</sup>.

Data collected in 2017 showed that approximately two in three Victorian women (83.8%) with a child under two years old had taken either paid or unpaid leave from their job for the birth of their child, and a further one in five women (19.5%) permanently left their jobs prior to the birth of their child<sup>(28)</sup>. A high proportion of partners (80%) also took either paid or unpaid leave for the birth of their child, however the median duration of this leave was only two weeks.

While the average weekly pay of women has increased over the past decade, women continue to earn considerably less than men for a full-time working week. The average pay gap in 2019 was \$224 per week, with men earning an average of \$1,783 per week and women earning \$1,559<sup>(26)</sup>. Similarly, while the average amount of accumulated

superannuation has increased over time, there continues to be a significant gender gap in superannuation, with men retiring with nearly twice the amount of superannuation<sup>(26)</sup>.

All this indicates that in spite of growing awareness of gender equality and its association with violence against women, and at times high support for gender equality, this is long-term work that requires structural reform to affect real and lasting social change. We need stronger data to better measure how these factors impact on prevention of violence over time.



## 1.4 Stakeholder assessment of progress

Given the limitations of the data available to measure and report on progress in prevention at this point in time, Respect Victoria undertook an online stakeholder survey and key informant interviews to gather quantitative and qualitative data on prevention progress and impact in Victoria, with a focus on change that has occurred within the community, as well as across the prevention system.

A total of 76 participants—including leading prevention agencies, other experts, government officials and leaders in different sectors and settings, and across diverse community groups — completed the stakeholder survey\*, which included questions on their perceptions of the community impact of prevention work in regard to:

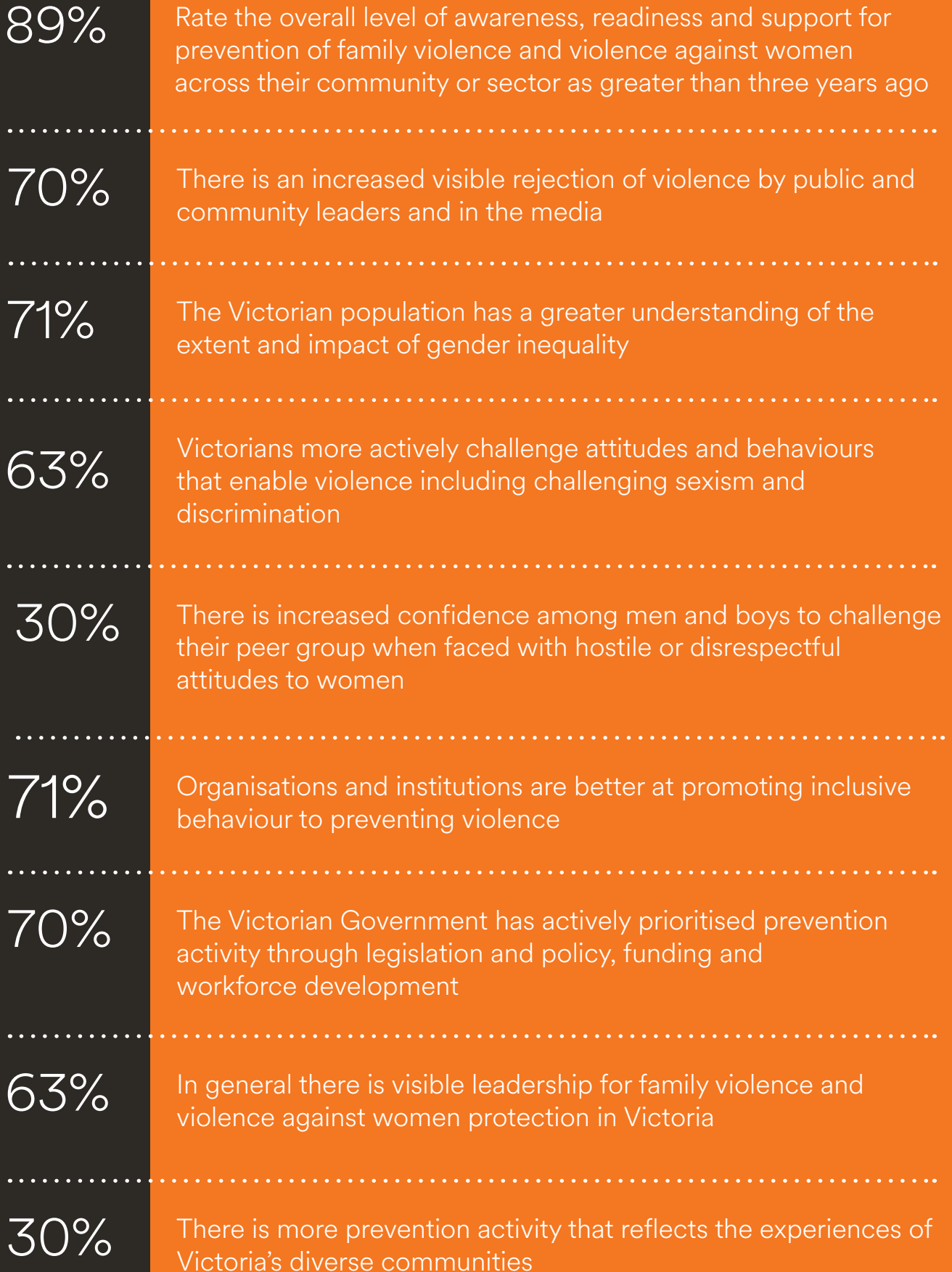
- > understanding gender inequality
- > rejection of violence by public and community leaders
- > actively challenging attitudes and behaviours that enable violence, including sexism and discrimination
- > confidence of men and boys to challenge their peer group about disrespecting women
- > overall level of awareness, readiness and support for prevention of family violence and violence against women across the community and relevant sectors
- > organisational and institutional leadership for prevention
- > increased prevention activity that reflects the experiences of diverse communities.

In addition, more than 30 stakeholders participated in key informant interviews, which included a focus on perceptions about the impact and/or change resulting from prevention work. Findings from the survey and interviews are presented here to provide a snapshot of stakeholder perspectives on prevention progress and its impact in Victoria over the past three years.

Through these processes we have gathered input from a wide range of people from different sectors and settings. Many of these are recognised and respected experts specifically in this field; others are leaders in associated fields. Together, these stakeholders offer invaluable information, assessments and insights upon which we can confidently draw as evidence for this report.

\* Respect Victoria Stakeholder Survey, conducted by EY Sweeney between February and March 2022. Stakeholders included a mix of sector organisations, practitioners and government officials.

## Stakeholder Assessment of Progress



**Source:** Respect Victoria Stakeholder Research, March 2022  
*Based on total of 76 responses to survey*

### Community impacts of prevention work

Findings of the stakeholder survey suggest that the prevention effort in Victoria has had positive impact at the community level. The majority of survey participants (71%) agreed that there is an increased, visible rejection of violence by public and community leaders and the media, while 70% agreed that the Victorian population has a greater understanding of the extent and impact of gender inequality.

The findings suggest that the prevention efforts to date have had less of an impact on people's willingness to act, with only 63% of participants agreeing that Victorians more actively challenge attitudes and behaviours that enable violence, including sexism and discrimination. In addition, only 30% of participants agreed that there is an increased confidence among men and boys to challenge their peer group when faced with hostile or disrespectful attitudes towards women.

This level of improvement in community understanding and attitudes is encouraging while the slightly lower level of willingness to act is not surprising given the need for a certain amount of skill development and modelling in everyday situations that people need to be confident to act and take prosocial bystander action.

### Awareness, readiness and support for prevention

The majority of survey participants (89%) agreed that overall awareness, readiness and support for prevention across their community or sector is greater than it was three years ago, with 87% of participants agreeing that their organisation understands its role in preventing family violence and violence against women. This is exceptionally positive because it reflects an emerging 'authorising environment' for prevention work in community settings, which is crucial to making preventing violence truly everyone's business.

Encouragingly, there was wide consensus that the past three years has seen an increased focus on prevention in Victoria, and that this has led to increased awareness and understanding of the issue across government, service sectors and the community. Interviewees noted that the conversation has shifted with a much greater recognition of the fact that prevention is equally as critical as response in efforts to address family violence and violence against women. There is also a reported increase in awareness and understanding of the various forms of family violence experienced by diverse communities, as well as a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the gendered drivers of violence against women.

## Organisational and institutional leadership and commitment

The majority of survey participants (74%) agreed that the Victorian Government has actively prioritised prevention activity through legislation, policy, funding and workforce development, while 71% agreed that there is visible leadership for prevention of family violence and violence against women in Victoria. In addition, 77% of participants agreed that organisations and institutions are better demonstrating and promoting inclusive behaviour to preventing violence.

Interview participants consistently reported that there is now a stronger commitment to prevention generally in Victoria, as evidenced by the increased level of investment in the prevention system and some longer-term funding for programs, the development of several policies and plans to drive the prevention effort and the establishment of specific statutory agencies (such as Respect Victoria, who have a sole focus on violence prevention and the Victorian Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner, who have a dedicated focus on gender equality). There has also been significant growth in the number and type of organisations involved in implementing prevention activities across a broader range of sectors and settings.

These findings are very positive given the critical importance of political leadership in creating a strong authorising environment for change in this area. At the same time, there is further scope to build on this leadership and bring more organisations and institutions on board.

## Understanding and responding to the diverse experiences of Victorians

Only 56% of survey participants agreed that more prevention activity had been undertaken over the past three years that reflects the true diversity of the needs and experiences of the Victorian population, indicating that more work needs to be done in this area.

A key theme of the interviews was the increase in theoretical understanding of intersectionality and greater recognition of the need for intersectional approaches in policies, frameworks and practices. Stakeholders also acknowledged that several resources and evidence-based frameworks have been developed over the past few years that have contributed significantly to a deeper understanding of the needs and experiences of specific communities\*, as well as effective approaches to prevention with these communities.

However, participants also highlighted that an intersectional approach is not always being applied in practice and that organisations and practitioners often lack an understanding of how to do this effectively. Similarly, stakeholders highlighted the need to improve the evidence base and guidance on the drivers of violence within and across diverse communities, noting that work on this has started to emerge.

Importantly, a number of stakeholders reported that despite the increased focus on and understanding of intersectionality, there is still further work required to address the varying ways in which other structures and systems of oppression, marginalisation and discrimination intersect with gender to influence and drive violence for particular population groups. They noted that for there to be meaningful progress towards long-term goals of prevention, greater attention must be paid to addressing the way all forms of discrimination and exclusion impact on this issue.

This issue requires further focused effort, the practicalities of which are addressed elsewhere in this report. The challenge for those engaged in work to prevent family violence and violence against women is to be cognisant of the systemic forms of marginalisation, oppression and discrimination, while maintaining a core focus on the gendered drivers of violence against women.

\* Including, but not limited to, *Pride in Prevention and Changing the Landscape*.



**02**

**Prevention  
initiatives**

There has been a significant focus on the development and implementation of primary prevention initiatives across Victoria over the review period, many of which have been funded through grant programs or discrete projects under *Free from Violence*<sup>(10)</sup> or generated at a regional or local level. State-wide initiatives have included a small number of scale-up activities as well as pilot projects, together with campaign-focused activity. There has been an attempt to fund and support activities across settings that are known to be effective sites for prevention work, as well as work with specific communities and population groups. A key aim in much of this work has also been to build evidence on what works.

Initiatives have been implemented across the public sector, local government and tertiary education settings, which have involved developing and implementing whole-of-setting approaches, expanding partnership projects and further testing promising approaches, such as bystander interventions. However, an important area of future effort will be to focus more strongly on how to scale up and embed successful prevention initiatives as part of a joined-up, state-wide approach.

The growth and consolidation of Respectful Relationships Education in Victorian schools is one example of a program that has moved from pilot to scaled-up implementation (over approximately a ten-year period). The reach of this work and the infrastructure to support it has been significant, and the process has taught valuable lessons in the practice of what to do—and what not to do—when scaling up and systematising activities as part of mainstream systems such as education (see more information on this below).

Pilot projects have been implemented across various settings, which have included initiatives aimed at addressing sexism, challenging gender stereotypes, encouraging bystander action, promoting equality and respect, increasing women's social, economic and political participation and modelling healthy masculinities. There has been significant investment through grants programs with a specific focus on Aboriginal

and multicultural communities, as well as in projects led by local government and community-based organisations (see **Figure 8**). Other grants programs have included:

- > Creative Victoria projects working with the arts sector to explore and challenge the social norms that drive family violence and all forms of violence against women.
- > Elder abuse prevention projects across 15 local government areas.
- > Seven prevention projects led by local government and women's health services in bushfire affected communities to deliver prevention activities and establish an evidence base on what works in disaster situations to inform future initiatives.

Two major grants programs were launched in early 2022. The first was the *Free from Violence Local Government Program* which is supporting 15 Councils to embed gender equality and family violence prevention practices within their workplace, programs and services by applying the Local Government Guide for Preventing Family Violence and All Forms of Violence Against Women. The second was the Preventing Violence through Sport Program, which is supporting innovative partnerships to address the drivers of family violence and violence against women in their communities.

Further information and commentary on the impact of this effort is provided below in sections dealing with initiatives undertaken in particular settings or communities. Overall, we can say that this body of work has brought a wide range of new people and organisations into the primary prevention effort, often in partnerships with other community organisations and with agencies with prevention expertise. It has raised awareness and generated enthusiasm and momentum for addressing the issue within certain communities.

Where initiatives have been evaluated, they have added to the knowledge base about effective approaches to prevention. However, there has been a missed opportunity for deep learning to support future effort where initiatives have not been able to be adequately evaluated. Significantly deeper impact and more nuanced learnings will be able to be garnered where community based programs are conceptualised and delivered as part of a joined-up, intentional effort which aims to align a range of programs to a set of discrete aims. Finding a stronger balance between short-term, pilot funding to test approaches and longer-term sustainable funding to scale up and embed prevention practice is an ongoing challenge for funding bodies of all sorts.

It is important to note that some initiatives delivered through grants programs have taken a wider scope and embraced early intervention as well as primary prevention activity. This has occurred for various reasons including a preference of some communities to deal with issues in a more integrated way. As such, it has not always been possible to tease out exactly the split in effort and may mean that primary prevention effort is at times overstated and potentially diluted.

# Victorian Government Grants Programs 2018-2021

**\$2.7m**



## Local Government Grants Program

Thirty-five Councils were funded in 2018 under the Free from Violence Local Government Grants Program to deliver projects in their workplace and communities. Some Councils implemented Our Watch's Workplace Equality and Respect Program, and others implemented community-based projects, including bystander interventions, respectful relationships education and gender equality programs. An evaluation of this grants program was conducted by ANROWS in 2020.

**\$3.5m**



## Free from Violence Innovation Fund

Twenty-one community organisations were funded in 2018 under the Free from Violence Innovation Fund to design and pilot prevention projects in their local communities. Projects were implemented in a range of settings and included a focus on sexism, bystander action, challenging gender stereotypes, modelling respect and equality. This included projects with a focus on multicultural communities, LGBTQIQ+ communities and elder abuse.

**\$3.2m**



## Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund

Thirteen Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations across Victoria were funded in 2018 to deliver projects under this program. The aim of program was to design, test and evaluate the effectiveness of various innovative primary prevention initiatives within Aboriginal communities across a range of settings and contexts.

**\$1.1m**



## Victorian Aboriginal Community Initiatives Fund

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Initiatives Fund (CIF) aims to support community led projects that educate, prevent, reduce and respond to family violence in Victorian Aboriginal communities. In 2021-22, 25 culturally appropriate, place-based community-led projects dedicated to preventing and responding to family violence in Victorian Aboriginal communities were funded and are being delivered by Aboriginal organisations and community groups.

**\$18.2m**



## Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund

The Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund was established to create a flexible pool of funding for eligible Aboriginal organisations and community groups to support Aboriginal-led responses to family violence and violence prevention. In the 2021-22 funding round, 33 Aboriginal-led initiatives and services were funded under this program including 16 through the Preventing the Cycle of Violence funding—strengthening Aboriginal families prevention stream.

**\$7m**



## Supporting Multicultural and Faith Communities to Prevent Family Violence: 2021 Grant Program

Thirty-three organisations received funding under this program in 2021 to deliver prevention programs and activities within multicultural and faith-based settings, with a focus on addressing the gendered drivers of violence, challenging stereotypes and strengthening positive, equal and respectful relationships. These projects are due for completion in 2024.

**\$0.7m**



## Gender Equality in Victorian Sport Grants

In 2019, nine pilot projects were funded across Victorian sports associations, local government, Regional Sports Assemblies and non-for-profit organisations. Each project piloted guidelines to promote gender equality and the primary prevention of violence against women, and ultimately drive culture change within the sport sector.

Figure 8: Victorian Government Grants Programs 2018-2021

## State-wide campaign activity

Communications and social marketing are critical elements of a whole-of-population approach to preventing family violence and violence against women, as they enable prevention messages to reach a wide audience and are effective methods for raising awareness, challenging the attitudes, behaviours and social norms that drive violence and engaging people in actions to address and prevent violence. As with other public health and social change campaigns, research tells us that they are most impactful when sustained and combined with other levers at a system and structural level, and with on-the-ground action at a community level in a variety of settings<sup>(29)</sup>.

Social marketing campaigns using a variety of media (from television through to social and digital media) have been a key feature of primary prevention programming in Victoria over the past three years. These campaigns have been largely led and managed by state-wide or national agencies, with a diversity of regional and local partnerships being employed to extend their reach and connection with other activities, including response services. Some of these campaigns focus on raising awareness about family violence, violence against women and gender equality, while others model appropriate, equitable and respectful behaviour and make specific calls-to-action to key target audiences, including bystanders.

Since 2018, Respect Victoria has developed campaigns that engage with the Victorian community on various forms of family violence and violence against women, as well as promoting the role of active bystanders in ‘calling out’ harmful attitudes and behaviours. In 2021, the organisation developed a three-year campaigns strategy designed to build on past government-led campaign activities and identify potential areas of focus for the prevention of family violence and violence against women campaigns going forward.

Respect Victoria has delivered several campaigns including: *Respect Women: ‘Call It Out’* focused on various settings including public transport; *Sexism and Sport*; *Respect Older People: ‘Call It Out’*; and *Pride, Respect, Equality* (LGBTIQ+) (see **Figure 9**). A total of \$7.7 million was invested in media advertising from December 2018 until 30 June 2022. These campaigns have engaged with a diverse range of communities, including people with lived experience, to represent authentic voices and connect with the Victoria’s diverse population.

Each campaign has been independently evaluated to determine their reach and impact on knowledge and attitudes (see **Figure 9**). The evaluation findings highlight the importance of sustaining investment in campaigns, and they also identify new ways to communicate the complexity and nuances of family violence and violence against women to different audiences. Evaluation findings across the range of campaigns undertaken by Respect Victoria also suggest that campaign messaging has—when connected to activity on the ground—helped people make the link between what they see on a television advertisement, for example, and what they see being practised in their daily lives. The evaluation findings also showed that:

- > Those who had seen one or more of Respect Victoria’s advertisements are more likely to challenge the acceptance of family violence and to reinforce that family violence is unacceptable.
- > Those who had seen more than one advertisement thought more about family violence and were more likely to open a dialogue within the community.
- > People who had seen one or more advertisement have displayed an increased knowledge of the importance of bystander intervention.
- > For younger Victorians (18–24 years old), seeing one or more advertisement encouraged them to seek help and open a dialogue, demonstrating a greater level of comfort to discuss this issue in public.

- > Those who had seen Respect Victoria's elder abuse campaign displayed a significant increase in knowledge and awareness of elder abuse.
- > Young men (18–24 years old) who had seen more than one advertisement displayed significantly increased levels of awareness of what constituted family violence and violence against women.
- > The campaigns inspired males who had seen the advertisement at least once to speak up against family violence and change their attitude.
- > Young men who had seen one or more advertisements indicated their perception and understanding of what constitutes harassment has shifted.
- > For men who had seen an advertisement more than once, they were significantly less likely to agree that having one person in charge of all aspects of a relationship is okay.

Consultations with stakeholders highlighted that Respect Victoria's campaigns have played an important role in increasing awareness and understanding of family violence and violence against women within the community.

# Respect Victoria Campaign Impact



**82%**  
recognise elder  
abuse

## Respect Older People: 'Call It Out'

October 2019

Victorians continue to connect with this campaign on a realistic level since it debuted in 2019, with four in five people (82%) saying the campaign is a clear example of elder abuse. More people than ever before (11%) were prompted to seek professional help as a result of seeing the campaign.



**200,000**  
views

## Respect Each Other: 'Connection Keeps Us Strong'

September - October 2020

This social media campaign was positively received by the Victorian public and reached nearly 1 million people, with campaign videos viewed nearly 200,000 times.



more than  
**83%**  
have taken action

## Respect Women: 'Call It Out' (Respect Is)

November 2020

More than eight in ten Victorians (83%) took some form of action after seeing this campaign—one of the highest direct action results we've seen from any campaign so far.



**75%**  
recognised respectful  
behaviour

## Respect Each Other: Pride, Respect, Equality

April 2021

One in three Victorians (32%) who viewed the campaign saw respecting others as the campaign's main message, with three in four respondents (75%) recognising the action of the father in the main campaign as exemplifying respectful behaviour.



**49%**  
understood  
importance of respect

## Respect Women: 'Call It Out' (Respect Is)

June 2021

Almost half (49%) felt the advertisement helped them better understand the importance of respecting women, and 51% felt it made them more comfortable to talk about what respect means with others.

Figure 9: Respect Victoria Campaigns

Source: Respect Victoria campaign evaluation reports

Stakeholders also noted that Respect Victoria's campaigns have been well received by viewers and have been useful levers for championing prevention of violence within communities and engaging communities in prevention activities. Whilst the broad scope of Respect Victoria's campaigns to include a range of different forms of family violence and violence against women has been important at starting community conversations, it has meant that funds have been spread across multiple campaigns focused on a range of forms of violence. This has diluted the population-wide impact that could be garnered with a strategy that enables a more concentrated and targeted focus.

In addition to the work of Respect Victoria, there have been several national campaigns with reach across Victoria, which have complemented and reinforced key prevention messages, most notably the campaigns developed by the Australian Government and Our Watch.

The Australian Government launched the *Stop it at the Start Campaign*, which is a Council of Australian Governments initiative, jointly funded by the Australian, state and territory governments and implemented in several phases between 2018 and 2022. The campaign is targeted at parents and family members of children aged 10–17, as well as the teachers, coaches, community leaders and employers of young people. It aims to break the cycle of violence by encouraging adults to reflect on their own attitudes and start a conversation about respect with the young people in their lives. An evaluation of the campaign showed<sup>(30)</sup>:

- > 68% of all people recalled an element of the campaign activity, with 73% of those people taking action as a result.
- > 49% of people took an action as a result of the campaign.
- > 82% of people who saw the campaign understood and accepted their role in showing young people how to act respectfully.

- > People who had seen the campaign were more likely to feel they had the ability to discuss respect with young people, with 58% agreeing they have the knowledge needed to have a conversation with them about respect.
- > Those who had seen the campaign were more likely to have had a recent discussion about violence against women with friends or family and had spoken to young people about respectful relationships.

Our Watch has also developed a number of significant campaigns that have contributed to raising awareness and challenging attitudes and behaviours in Victoria, including:

- > The Doing Nothing Does Harm Campaign, which aims to motivate and support bystanders to do something when they see or hear disrespect towards women.
- > The No Excuse for Abuse Campaign, which aims to raise awareness of non-physical abuse against women, including financial abuse, social abuse, emotional and/or psychological abuse, spiritual abuse, technological abuse and stalking.
- > The Because Why Campaign, which encourages and supports parents and families to limit gender expectations and stereotypes in the way they support the development of their children.



These campaigns have been effective in meeting audience objectives, with impacts including:

- > 93% of males surveyed thought the Doing Nothing Does Harm message was important, 76% had very positive perceptions of the clarity, relatability, and fairness of the adverts, and 65% felt more responsible to take bystander action in future.
- > 94% of those surveyed thought the No Excuse for Abuse campaign messaging was important for the Australian community to hear, with almost two-thirds having a better understanding that non-physical abuse is harmful, serious and inexcusable after seeing the adverts.
- > Parents surveyed found the #BecauseWhy campaign successfully encouraged critical reflection of their understanding and attitudes towards the impacts of rigid stereotypes, and that it provided reassurance to those parents who already modelled non-traditional gender stereotypes.

While these various campaigns have to date not been coordinated or specifically aligned, efforts have been made to ensure they are broadly complementary, consistent and avoid duplication of effort. Together, these campaigns have jointly contributed to a bigger community conversation and creation of a supportive environment for change across communities. Opportunities for closer planning and linkages between campaigns, and capacity to evaluate their collective impact, should be explored in future.

Social marketing techniques have also been used to good effect in more localised campaigns implemented by community organisations on issues related to the prevention of family violence and violence against women. Increasingly there has been a deliberate effort to connect these local initiatives to broader mass media campaigns to ensure messages are being reinforced within local communities. A notable example is the *Respect Women: 'Call It Out'* campaign run across

the UN Women's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence ('16 Days of Activism') each year. 16 Days of Activism is a global initiative designed to galvanise individuals, communities and organisations to address gender inequalities, gender-based violence and take action to prevent violence before it starts.

There are three elements to the 16 Days of Activism initiative. These include:

1. The Respect Women: 'Call It Out' (Respect Is) state-wide paid media campaign
2. The Respect Women: 'Call It Out' grassroots initiative
3. The Walk Against Family Violence, held annually on 25 November

Since the establishment of Respect Victoria in 2018, a paid campaign has aired to coincide with the 16 Days of Activism. Typically consisting of television, print, radio and digital advertising throughout metropolitan and regional Victoria, the campaign aims to reach Victorian audiences across all 79 local government areas (LGAs) to complement localised activities and events being undertaken as part of the 16 Days of Activism.

Due to the impacts of the pandemic effectively shrinking channel availability, the paid advertising campaign implemented in parallel to the grants initiative and Walk Against Family Violence in 2020 had less recall than in previous 16 Days of Activism periods, with one in five (20%) Victorians recalling the campaign unprompted (compared to 58% in 2019 and 77% in 2018). This reinforces the need to continue to invest in a diverse range of media channels to ensure message recall and resonance amongst the Victorian population.

The 16 Days of Activism Grassroots Initiative was implemented in 2019 and 2020 in partnership between Respect Victoria the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), and subsequently with Safe and Equal in 2021 and 2022.

In parallel with the mass media campaign Respect Women: ‘Call It Out’, MAV and Safe and Equal supported the distribution of small grants to all 79 Victorian Councils, member agencies and a number of non-government organisations (NGOs) to support broad community engagement in the initiative and tailor the key messages of the campaign to facilitate local community conversations (see case study below).

An evaluation of the 2020 initiative showed that implementing the campaign through a coordinated, state-wide approach had several benefits<sup>(31)</sup>, including:

- > a unified approach and consistency of messaging and branding achieved through the development of a comprehensive toolkit
- > increased regional collaboration and partnerships
- > increased legitimacy and buy-in (due to evidence base)
- > increased reach and engagement within the community

Since 2018, Respect Victoria has also supported Safe Steps to deliver the annual Walk Against Family Violence as part of its campaign across 16 Days of Activism. The Walk Against Family Violence aims to raise community awareness of family violence and its impact within the community and to ‘break the silence’ on family violence.

In 2021, the estimated social media reach for this event was 2.6 million, up from 1.2 million in 2020. A total of 345 groups registered to participate in the event in 2021, with 57 individual news articles published on the event itself, further disseminating the overarching key messages of the 16 Days of Activism and the prevention-focused messaging featured in Respect Victoria’s campaign.

## Resistance and backlash efforts

Resistance and backlash are common and ongoing challenges to progress in prevention of family violence and violence against women. This has been documented and addressed over many years in the context of gender equality work and has been observed in relation to the implementation of Victorian prevention initiatives over recent years—whether in the form of negative online comments on from individuals on campaigns, or in response to policy change activities within organisations.

The presence of this resistance can be a sign that prevention efforts are cutting through and that people are seeing changes to societal or community norms (to which they are reacting due to discomfort or disagreement). Backlash to progressive change may also be the result of deliberate and coordinated action and/or public discourse that enables or actively encourages resistance. However, it is also critical to acknowledge that women and other victim survivors currently in violent relationships may experience more direct and violent forms of this backlash, either in the form of retaliation to pushing back on abusive behaviours, or in response to broader efforts for social change. It is therefore important that backlash and resistance are monitored closely—at individual, organisational, institutional and society-wide levels—and proactively managed as part of longer-term efforts to shift the structures, norms and practices that drive violence against women and other forms of family violence.

*Change the Story* identifies resistance and backlash as a reinforcing factor that influences the patterns and prevalence of violence against women specifically. In 2018, VicHealth commissioned an evidence review to further strengthen the evidence base and generate a shared understanding of active and passive forms of resistance that frequently

emerge in response to gender equality initiatives<sup>(32)</sup>. This work identified eight types of resistance and backlash and outlined strategies to help people minimise and respond to resistance and backlash from individuals. Following the review, VicHealth released *(En)countering Resistance Strategies to Respond to Resistance to Gender Equality Initiatives*<sup>(33)</sup>.

While focused on resistance and backlash to gender equality more broadly, the *(En)countering Resistance* resource significantly progressed understanding of this critical issue, prompting organisations to reflect on how prevention efforts may lead to hostile, aggressive and even violent forms of backlash and collaborate on approaches for addressing this in their prevention work. Within Victoria, it has provided the foundation for the development of practitioner focused training, messaging guides and resources to build the capability of the prevention workforce, including:

- > Safe and Equal *Unpacking Resistance* training
- > Eastern Health's *Engaging Men: Reducing Resistance and Building Support* resource<sup>(34)</sup>.

To date there has been a necessary focus on how to engage with individuals who exhibit resistance or backlash. More recently, there has been an appetite across sectors for a proactive and coordinated approach to identifying and responding to resistance and backlash that occurs within organisations and sectors implementing

prevention of family violence and violence against women activities.

In mid-2022, Respect Victoria, with Our Watch, released the *Understanding, monitoring and responding to resistance and backlash report*, which consolidated an understanding of this issue and defined practical approaches to monitoring, assessing and responding to backlash and resistance that emerges in organisational settings. Further work has commenced on the development of practice resources that support prevention practitioners and organisations to address this type of resistance and backlash.

Supporting wide application of this enhanced understanding of backlash and resistance to prevention work in different organisational contexts will be an important part of ensuring effective implementation of change over coming years.



## 2.1 Setting-specific initiatives

Settings are an essential basis for undertaking prevention work. Settings-based approaches enable prevention efforts to engage large cross-sections of the community and can directly impact on social norms, organisational practices and institutional structures\*.

Furthermore, settings are important sites for prevention work as they are central to the way community attitudes and behaviours are shaped and reshaped, and there are certain forms of violence that are intrinsically associated with the settings in which they occur (such as sexual harassment in the workplace)<sup>(2)</sup>.

Evidence on effective initiatives, models and approaches for primary prevention in specific settings has been established over many years, particularly through the leadership and expertise of VicHealth, Our Watch and other organisations across Victoria. This has included a substantial body of work to develop and test approaches tailored to particular settings, as well as practice guidance and resources needed to support their implementation.

A number of settings have been prioritised by the Victorian Government as part of its commitment to gender equality and the prevention of family violence and violence against women, including local government, workplaces, education, maternal and child health services, media, advertising, TAFEs and sports settings amongst others. A similar range of settings has been engaged in work, led and resourced by non-government bodies and at a local place-based level through regional partnerships (the full extent of which cannot be adequately captured here).

A significant amount of work is still required to test approaches that work in settings where prevention efforts are still new or not yet commenced. Whilst a number of initiatives have tailored prevention activities to particular settings to ensure they are relevant to the day-to-day business and target audiences in those settings, effort is also required to develop models for whole-of-settings approaches that use the most effective levers for change across all levels of the ecological model. This might involve, for example, looking at regulatory or legislative changes that may be needed to support all sports codes to adopt measures that help prevent violence against women.

\* In the context of the prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women, settings are the places or social contexts where personal, organisational and environmental factors come together to shape social and cultural norms. Settings-based approaches involve a series of mutually reinforcing activities that directly address the gendered drivers of family violence and all forms of violence against women. Settings-based approaches seek to enact change to specific policies and practices by engaging those people both directly and indirectly involved with that setting, while simultaneously attending to external legislative, regulatory or structural levers and mechanisms that can support and enable this effort<sup>(2)</sup>.

### Local and regional place-based activities

Place-based, community-led approaches to primary prevention initiatives can identify and address unique issues in local communities and tailor initiatives to their specific needs. These initiatives involve a diversity of local people and groups, engage and develop local leadership and respond to local contexts. Local efforts also work to complement broader state-wide and national efforts, including reinforcement of the messaging of large-scale communication campaigns.

In Victoria there are nine Regional Primary Prevention Partnerships, coordinated by the regional women's health services and supported Gender Equity Victoria, that provide a cohesive infrastructure for local community activity across Victoria. The partnerships are located in metropolitan, rural and remote areas of Victoria and together consist approximately 500 public, community and private organisations (see further detail on the Regional Primary Prevention Partnership structure under *Partnerships*).

Priorities of the partnerships are determined by their unique geography and demography, recognising the importance of localised, place-based activities. Activities and actions over recent years have typically included:

- > regional strategies and action plans
- > participation in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence
- > community programs and activities
- > research and evaluation
- > training packages on gender equity and prevention of violence against women
- > support programs for organisational change
- > print, audio, video and online resources
- > community of Practice networks.

The partnerships have also delivered a number of projects, including bystander action, primary prevention in schools, workplace policies on primary prevention, gender equality in local sporting organisations and positive parenting programs. Through such programs they have been able to engage many population groups in prevention including children and young people, Aboriginal communities, women and girls, people from culturally diverse communities, men and boys and women with disability.

The partnerships have provided numerous examples of effective initiatives and programs to engage the community in primary prevention over recent years. Evaluations have highlighted their success as world-leading approaches<sup>(35, 36)</sup>. The recent extensions of funding provided by the Victorian Government for these regional partnerships will have a significant benefit on the sustainability of this critical infrastructure, without which the impact of local prevention efforts would be significantly diluted.

A more comprehensive list of the partnerships projects undertaken over the review period is provided in **Appendix 3**.

## Local government

As the level of government closest to people's everyday lives, local governments have a critical role to play in the prevention of violence. They are well placed to do this by providing political and cultural leadership, using their statutory planning role and other legislative mandates, delivering primary prevention activities and community-connected campaigns through their core operations as service and program providers, a broker of partnerships and as workplaces who employ large numbers of people. They also work with people across the life course, spanning from maternal and child health services and early childhood education through to supports for older people—and with a mandate to fund activities and work with stakeholders across many settings and sectors<sup>(2)</sup>.

The local government sector has had a long-running involvement in primary prevention work in Victoria, which has been driven and strongly supported by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), who play a coordination and leadership role in driving a coordinated, settings based approach to local government prevention efforts.

A recent Gender Equality and Preventing Violence Against Women Survey of Victorian Councils conducted by MAV showed that the majority of Councils now formally acknowledge their role in promoting gender equality and preventing family violence through at least one strategic document<sup>(37)</sup>. At the time of the survey, there were 25 Councils with a gender equality strategy or plan and 30 Councils with a prevention of family violence/violence against women plan or strategy. In addition, 58 Councils had established a formal mechanism for coordinating and overseeing progress of their gender equality and violence prevention work.

The Victorian Government has recognised the important role of local governments in prevention and expanded their capacity to undertake prevention work through specific funding opportunities. A total of 35 Councils were funded under the *Free from Violence* Local Government Grants Program in 2018, which supported projects within the workplace and communities to prevent family violence. Through these projects, more than 100 local organisations were provided with training and support, and more than 9,000 people directly participated in project activities, including training sessions, forums and events.

Through the leadership of MAV, Councils have also contributed to the development of the *Local Government guide for preventing family violence and all forms of violence against women*<sup>(38)</sup>, which was released in April 2022 and will guide the implementation of projects under the next round of local government grants. The Guide sets out a whole of Council model that guides action across Council's four domains of influence: as a workplace, service provider, connector and leaders/decision-makers<sup>(38)</sup>.

The work of local governments has also been accelerated through legislative changes. The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* now requires Councils to include actions to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence in the local community as part of their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans (MPHWP)<sup>(39)</sup>. Councils developed their latest four-year plans in late 2021, with 75 of 79 Councils including preventing all forms of violence (including family violence and violence against women) as a priority<sup>(40)</sup>.

## **16 Days of Activism Grassroots Initiative (2020) —Respect Victoria**

The UN Women’s ‘16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence’ is an annual global campaign that runs from 25th November to 10th December.

The campaign is used as an organising strategy by individuals and organisations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

In 2020, as part of this initiative, Respect Victoria awarded the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) with funding of \$300,000 to support community-based activities across the state. Each council in Victoria participated, and grant recipients comprised of 18 non-government organisations (NGOs) including Djirra, Women with Disabilities Victoria, inTouch and Women’s Health Services.

Approximately 12,000 people participated in 694 events, activities, workshops and training across Victoria. The majority of events took place online, such as virtual story time sessions and panel discussions. In-person events such as Walks Against Family Violence, took place in areas where

restrictions allowed. Other activities included art projects, reading challenges and the ‘Growing Respectful Relationships’ seed campaign.

90% of grantees worked in partnership with other organisations, and 26% worked with six to 10 organisations in their municipality or region. By working together, sharing expertise, networks and resources, the grantees were able to deliver more events for their communities, provide clear and consistent messages, achieve better value for money and use their time and resources more efficiently.

These statistics showcase the incredible effort of the involved communities across the state. The events and activities held by local government and NGOs during the campaign increased community understanding of the importance to promote equality for all and end all forms of violence against women. The 2020 campaign reached more Victorians than ever before, raising further awareness about preventing family violence.



Councils are also undertaking programs of work related to the *Gender Equality Act 2020* that requires them to develop gender equality action plans and conduct gender impact assessments across their services, programs and policies. All 79 Councils submitted Gender Equality Action Plans to the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner in March, which will consolidate their ongoing commitment and progress towards embedding gender equality and whole-of-council models for preventing family violence and all forms of violence against women.

Council managed Maternal and Child Health Services across Victoria have continued to deliver Baby Makes Three, a well-established family violence primary prevention program targeting new families, particularly couples who have recently experienced the transition to parenthood. The program promotes gender equitable, safe and respectful relationships including tailored approaches for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse parents. In 2020–21 the program reached almost 6,000 families. The Victorian Government has recently extended funding to healthAbility to support Baby Makes Three in public antenatal services as well as council services. Complementary work has also been undertaken to develop resources for new LGBTIQ+ parents.

## Workplace settings

Workplaces are now widely recognised as a key setting for primary prevention. There is a long history of developing and implementing workplace initiatives in Victoria and there has been an increased investment in workplace focused initiatives through *Free from Violence*<sup>(10)</sup> and the *Safe and Strong Gender Equality Strategy*<sup>(41)</sup>.

In 2018, Our Watch developed the *Workplace Equality and Respect (WER) Standards*, which set out key areas for action across five organisational standards and were supported by tools and resources to enable workplaces to achieve the standards<sup>(42)</sup>. There is evidence to suggest that these standards and resources have been widely adopted and have driven substantial organisational development and change efforts across Victoria.

To facilitate the rollout of the WER Standards across major settings, the Victorian Government also funded two workplace initiatives under *Free from Violence*. The first initiative targeted Victorian Councils as part of projects funded under the *Free from Violence Local Government Grants* program, where 26 Councils implemented projects that focused on workplace change, 19 of which completed the full Workplace Equality and Respect process and some used the WER materials to inform their activities<sup>(43)</sup>.

The second initiative was the Workplace Equality and Respect (WER) in the Public Service Program, which was implemented by Our Watch to departments across the Victorian Public Service (VPS) from late 2019 to early 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related factors, the program faced several implementation challenges, which limited its reach and impact across the public service.

An evaluation of this initiative identified a number of successes, and articulated opportunities to improve implementation of the WER across the public service, including the need to establish a senior governance structure to oversee implementation, authorise use of policy levers and provide more visible leadership.

*The Gender Equality Act 2020* is expected to drive systemic, long-term change in approximately 300 organisations across Victoria. In the first year of the Act, defined entities have undertaken workplace gender audits and baseline data collection activities, gender impact assessments, comprehensive consultation processes and developed Gender Equality Action Plans.

*I think the Gender Equality Act in Victoria has been huge in terms of the scale of it and what is required for public entities. We will only start to see the impact moving forward, but the fact that it's focused on long-term systemic change within organisations, and they are having to think about these issues in a way that they haven't before, it has really pushed organisations to go deep into their own cultures and workplaces and systems. I feel like change is happening and that it will hopefully have a large impact."*

**Director, The Equality Institute**

Anecdotally, it appears that the requirements of the Act have provided necessary support for a stronger focus on targeted prevention of family violence and violence against women, as well as promising longer-term impact on the prevalence of violence by achieving greater gender equality.

There has also been an increasing focus on sexual harassment in the workplace at both national and state level, particularly on the gendered nature of sexual harassment, and on strengthening workplace cultures, policies and procedures that support reporting of sexual harassment in the workplace and enable adequate responses to it. In 2021, the Victorian Government established the Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment to drive reforms that will prevent and better respond to sexual harassment in workplaces. The Taskforce recently handed down its recommendations, with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and WorkSafe to play a critical role in the implementation of these recommendations and reforms, together with other key stakeholders across various sectors.

This focus on workplace sexual harassment has been valuable in engaging statutory bodies, businesses, unions and other stakeholders in addressing a key issue of major community concern. In doing so, it has also brought the broader issue of gendered violence in the workplace into higher profile. WorkSafe Victoria has also addressed this through the development of guidance resources for employers about work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment. The explicit incorporation of primary prevention into this agenda will contribute to the growing awareness and prevention of sexual harassment and associated harm going forward.

### **Equality @ Work Project**

Equality at Work is a partnership project between the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health and Mercy Health. It is the first workplace prevention program in Australia to address gender inequality and other intersecting forms of inequality that impact migrant and refugee women and their experiences of family violence and other forms of violence against women. The project used a sector-specific and intersectional approach to workplace change, guided by the WER Standards and Implementation Guide.

Migrant women staff across four Mercy Health locations were engaged in the project, including through participatory staff forums, gender equality advocates training, and a postcard campaign featuring aged care employees.

The project resulted in the development of a resource and model to support workplace prevention activities that effectively engage migrant and refugee communities, and address the intersectional drivers of violence against women<sup>(36)</sup>.

## Education settings

### *Early childhood, primary school and secondary school settings*

School settings provide an ideal setting for implementing whole-of-setting prevention approaches. They have a significant reach into communities and are important community hubs that connect families, carers, children and the broader school community.

The Victorian Government has made a significant investment in school-based prevention initiatives. They introduced respectful relationships education into the school curriculum in 2016, and since the 2016–17 State Budget has provided funding to scale-up the rollout of the Respectful Relationships initiative across Victorian schools<sup>(44)</sup>. The Respectful Relationships initiative is designed as a whole-of-school approach that aims to embed a culture of respect and gender equality via the curriculum, staff professional learning policies, practices and changes to the school culture and environment.

The initiative is supported by 34 dedicated regional staff across the state (17 project leads and 17 liaison officers) and implemented through a lead-partner school model, in which lead schools mentor partner schools across area-based clusters. Key components of the initiative were established in 2017, including recruitment of the workforce, the development of professional learning opportunities and dissemination of key resources. The first tranche of lead schools (151 schools) commenced in 2017, with 864 partner schools commencing between July 2017 and May 2018. A second tranche of schools commenced in early 2020 and there are now over 1,950 Victorian Government, Catholic and Independent schools signed on to the Respectful Relationships Initiative (see **Figure 10**).

A recent evaluation of the Respectful Relationships initiative showed there has been positive progress over the 2017–21 period, with school communities acknowledging they have an important role in preventing family violence, and parent/carer feedback indicating that there is broad support for the objectives of the initiative<sup>(45)</sup>. Stakeholders also acknowledge that the whole-school approach is essential to driving the social change required, and that the teaching and learning materials are well regarded and widely utilised by teaching staff. The

evaluation findings also suggest that the Respectful Relationships initiative has increased the capability of school staff to deliver Respectful Relationships education, implement the whole-school approach and respond to disclosures of family violence. It has also had some positive impacts on student engagement and their ability to recognise and address disrespect, though this was observed more in primary school students than secondary school students<sup>(45)</sup>.

It is unclear to what extent the initiative has had an impact on parents, carers and the broader community. While there is strong support for the program, there appears to be a lack of awareness of the initiative and curriculum content and limited opportunities for involvement in activities.

The Respectful Relationships Initiative also includes a professional development program for early childhood educators, involving a one-day training co-presented by facilitators from Monash University and Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS). The aim of the training is to support educators to promote respectful relationships, positive attitudes and behaviours within an integrated teaching approach to enable children to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence. An evaluation of the professional development program showed that it has had a significant impact on understanding and awareness of educators regarding family violence, gender equality and social and emotional learning, as well as their ability to implement their learnings from the training into their early childhood service's practice<sup>(45)</sup>.

*Community is probably always going to be our hardest space to shift. It's our role to educate, but it gets back to whether schools have the resources, the capacities and the abilities to do that, and how comfortable staff feel running a community session. We need to look at bringing in greater supports to do that sort of work—not to take the role away from the schools, but to put schools more in a support role, rather than the expert role. I think there should be more experts coming in and supporting that work."*

Principal, Tarneit P-9 College

## Impact of Respectful Relationships Education in Victoria

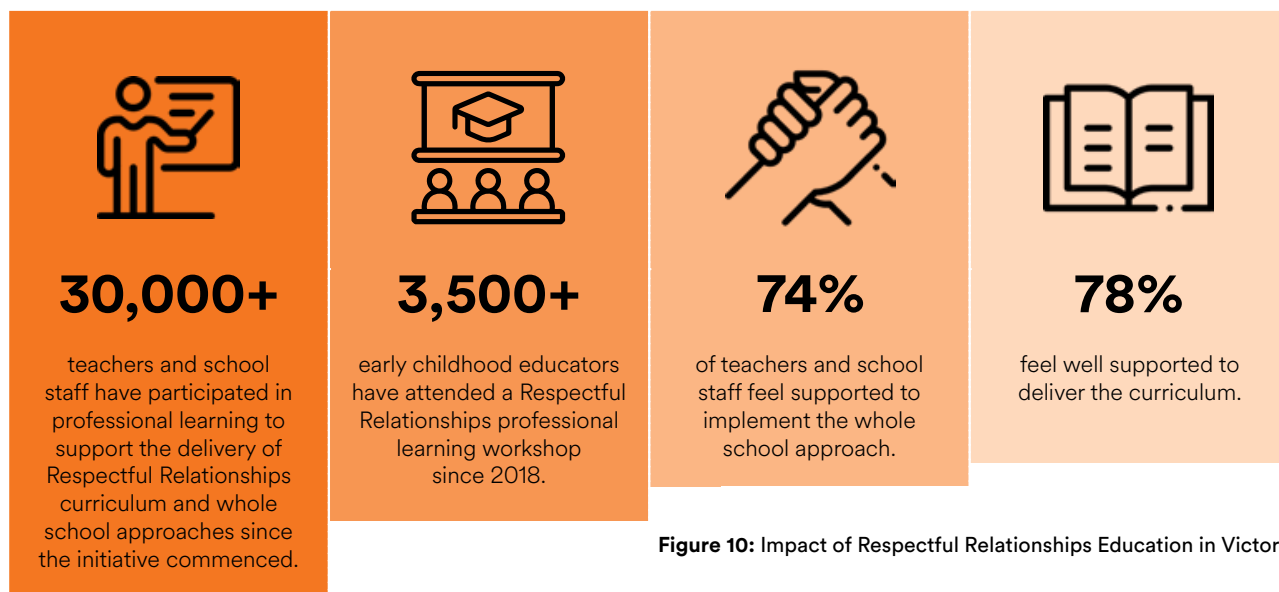


Figure 10: Impact of Respectful Relationships Education in Victoria

Source: Victorian Government. Respectful Relationships Progress Summary. Melbourne: Victorian Government; 2022.

Stakeholders reported that there is a clear commitment to the Respectful Relationships initiative across schools and a much better level of understanding and acceptance of the need for the work by educators and other school staff. They also noted that conversations about respectful relationships and consent are much easier now and they are met with far less resistance than when the initiative commenced.

The rollout of the Respectful Relationships initiative has been a valuable demonstration of how efficiently and effectively initiatives can be scaled-up when they are informed by a strong evidence base and are adequately funded. It has also highlighted the value of regional models to support implementation, including centralised program governance and dedicated support for program implementers.

Feedback from stakeholders suggests that the appropriate settings are in place to support effective implementation of the Respectful Relationships Initiative, but that in order to sustain and embed it within schools over the long term, there will need to be stronger ongoing investment in the initiative, including the regional support

structures and dedicated funding for individual schools to support local capacity building and implementation. As highlighted in a recent FVRIM review, there is an implementation risk stemming from staff at the school and regional level being stretched too thinly across different priorities. Careful attention is needed to maintain a focus on, and fidelity, to the intended program model. This also requires expert input to training and support of program staff.

Formal reviews and informal feedback also point to opportunities to strengthen the initiative and extend its impact. While the initiative clearly acknowledges that a whole-of-school approach is critical for achieving impact, it is unclear to what extent the initiative has influenced parents, carers and the broader community. While there is strong support for the program, there appears to be scope for increased community awareness of the initiative and for it to be embedded beyond curriculum to all aspects of an effective whole-of-school approach. Future progress could involve:

- > ensuring a continued focus on gender equality in the content
- > maintaining a whole of school approach
- > increasing collaboration between schools and other key leaders in prevention
- > improving engagement with parents, careers and families, and better linking the initiative to mutually reinforcing activities being implemented within the community
- > better responding to the needs and experiences of different populations including multicultural communities and students with disabilities.

### Tertiary education settings

As with school settings, tertiary education institutions are important settings for prevention initiatives, given their extensive reach across students, staff and their local communities through the provision of education, research and services that can influence, produce and reinforce attitudes and norms.

A key commitment of the Victorian Government's first *Free from Violence Action Plan* was the development of a whole-of-campus model for the primary prevention of violence in tertiary education settings. The need for this model was informed by and built on evidence from earlier sector-wide initiatives, particularly the *Respect, Now, Always initiative* implemented by Universities Australia, which aims to prevent sexual violence in university communities and improve the way universities respond to and support those affected by it.

The whole-of setting model was developed by Our Watch, in partnership with the Victorian Government and Universities Australia, in consultation with Monash University, Western Sydney University, Southern Cross University and La Trobe University. Further funding was provided in 2021 to support the rollout of the Educating for Equality model to all Victorian Universities, which includes a comprehensive package of resources and tools designed to support tertiary education settings to challenge the behaviours, cultures, norms and structures that drive violence, including a framework, implementation guide, teaching and learning resources, key messages and training packages<sup>(47)</sup>.

The Respect and Equality in TAFE project, funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Training in 2019, worked with Our Watch in five pilot TAFEs to develop a whole-of-institution approach to primary prevention. It aimed to transform business as usual to enable gender equality, reject discrimination, sexism, harassment and violence and make TAFE campuses safer places. The project involved the development of a whole-of-TAFE framework to implement and to support primary prevention of violence against women in collaboration with five Victorian TAFEs (SuniTAFE in Mildura, Swinburne TAFE, Melbourne Polytechnic, Bendigo Kangan TAFE and Chisholm TAFE). An evaluation of the pilot found the framework developed was useful and practical for the TAFE sector<sup>(48)</sup>.

In addition, VicHealth has supported work in the bystander arena including bystander interventions against sexism and discrimination in two universities in partnership with the Global Behavioural Insights Team. The first trial was implemented at the University of Melbourne and involved testing a normative email approach to communicate with staff and students about bystander action. The second trial was implemented at Victoria University, which involved testing a voluntary bystander awareness and action e-learning module with students<sup>(49)</sup>. Both interventions aimed to strengthen the capacity of individuals to be active bystanders by equipping them with the information and skills they need and motivating them to take action.

The results of the first trial showed that emails with a 'majority' social norms messaging (i.e. that suggest an action is common) were the most effective at increasing active bystander action in response to sexual harassment, and that the social norms messaging approach increased active bystander action in response to sexism by women but not men<sup>(50)</sup>. Due to low participation rates in the second trial, the impact of the online training could not be determined; however, low engagement in the initiative suggests that voluntary training may not be the most effective way of reaching students or encouraging their involvement in bystander action.

These initiatives across different parts of the tertiary education sector have laid important foundations for engaging the sector as a whole and individual institutions by producing critical resources that assist institutional decision makers to make TAFEs and universities places where respect is fostered and violence against women is rejected. While universities have been implementing their own responses to sexual violence on campus, there is a clear need for further tools, resources, ongoing support and leadership to embed and tailor agreed and consistent approaches. This need is heightened by recent findings of continuing high rates of sexual violence against women in the 2021 National Student Safety Survey<sup>(51)</sup>.

### Media, advertising and online settings

Media settings include the industries and organisations that deliver media, including in print, television, radio, podcasts and other digital media formats. Media are important settings for prevention work as they have a significant influence on public discourse, shaping not only attitudes and social norms, but also opinions about family violence, violence against women and gender inequality<sup>(2)</sup>.

There have been a number of key initiatives implemented across media settings in Victoria in recent years, with Our Watch playing a significant role in this space (building on work that was initially led by the Victorian family violence peak body, then named Domestic Violence Victoria). Our Watch developed the *Victorian Media Reporting Guidelines*<sup>(52)</sup>, which aim to ensure media outlets and journalists report on violence against women in a way that does not cause harm to survivors or perpetuate beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that support violence. Our Watch also developed *Guidelines for Reporting on Aboriginal People's Experience of Family Violence*<sup>(53)</sup>, and a resource for improving sports reporting on violence against women. They have also developed an online Media Making Change Hub, which contains a wide range of other tools and resources to support appropriate media reporting.

A key initiative of Our Watch is their *Media Making Change: Equality and Respect in Sports Media project*<sup>(54)</sup>, in which they work directly with sports media and provide seminars and forums that highlight the connection between sports media coverage, respect and the cultural change that is needed to prevent violence against women.

While there is sector readiness to change reporting methods and the widespread availability of various best practice guidelines, evaluation research across other jurisdictions has found they have only had a limited impact on Australian media reporting on violence against women<sup>(55)</sup>. In part, this has been due to challenges in uptake and implementation of these guidelines across various media platforms. However, there is evidence to suggest that the publication of guidelines, coupled with complementary interventions (such as direct participation programs that engage individual journalists) can have some positive impact on changing individual media reporting practices.

An assessment of the Our Watch Fellowship Program, which is delivered in partnership with the Walkley Foundation, found some positive changes\* to individual journalist's reporting violence against women following participation in the training program<sup>(56)</sup>. The effectiveness of the training program points towards the importance of multiple, mutually reinforcing prevention initiatives/ interventions in driving positive change.

A significant body of work focused on media settings has been developed in Victoria as part of the *shEqual* Project, which is led by Women's Health Victoria and informed by a dedicated project reference group of gender equity practitioners and leading voices from the advertising industry. *shEqual* is the first coordinated effort in Australia to promote gender equality and address the drivers of violence against women in the advertising industry. The project has contributed significantly to evident and practice in the advertising industry through the development of frameworks, guidelines and research reports, and a dedicated online hub.

\* The findings are presented with the caveat that it is difficult to directly attribute changes to one single intervention.

Key resources include:

- > Seeing is Believing: A National Framework for Championing Gender Equality in Advertising<sup>(57)</sup>
- > Gender Equality in Advertising and Communication Guidelines for Local Government<sup>(58)</sup>
- > Female Stereotypes in Advertising Guide<sup>(59)</sup>
- > The shEqual Survey Report on perceptions of gender equality in Australian advertising<sup>(60)</sup>.

Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC) has also launched the Online Active Bystander Project<sup>(61)</sup>, which is a world-first initiative that aims to support people to be active bystanders on social media when they see sexism, harassment and discrimination online. The project provides training and includes a toolkit and video to support individuals to play a role in creating a safer online environment. It also provides advice on how to report serious harassment to the Office of the national eSafety Commissioner.

The e-safety Commissioner has more generally taken an increasing interest over the past few years in women's safety online, with prevention being one of their three pillars of action. Their work in this area has been supported by partnerships with a number of leading Victorian agencies working to prevent violence against women, including Djirra, who have delivered culturally safe, self-determined eSafety campaigns for Aboriginal communities. In monitoring and reporting of online abuse, the Commissioner has begun to consider how online environments can be designed for women's safety and how they can be an effective channel for more 'upstream' primary prevention effort (for example, through embedding educational materials and promoting respect and equality).

Primary prevention work focused on media and online settings has taken some valuable early steps over the review period. There is significant need and opportunity to take this to a more systemic level over coming years. There is also a need to build capacity to be responsive to rapidly evolving technologies and online platforms that often foster unhealthy attitudes and behaviours but also offer potential for prevention.

## Sports settings

Sporting institutions and clubs are important social settings for shaping values and norms, due to their large reach into communities, including through the involvement of players, staff, supporters, sponsors and the media. Many of the entrenched beliefs, behaviours and social norms in society are played out in sports settings, making them important vehicles for prevention initiatives. Over the past three years there has been growing interest in Victoria in conducting primary prevention activity in professional and community sport settings with several key initiatives demonstrating support for this focus.

Our Watch has played a key role in advancing work in sports settings at a national level, building on a history of sports focused prevention work led by VicHealth, supported by a range of tools and resources, which aims to build the capacity of national sporting organisations to promote gender equality and thereby prevent violence against women.

In Victoria, there has been a significant focus on women's participation in sport, particularly on increasing women's participation, recognition and leadership roles in sport settings, in both organised sport and general recreation, physical activity and non-organised forms of sport. While these programs often have the broad goal of increasing women and girls' participation in sports, initiatives designed to support women into leadership and management positions in sports settings can help to disrupt cultures built on dominant forms of masculinity and that foster male peer relationships that emphasise aggression and dominance.

The Victorian Government's *Change Our Game* initiative, which was established in response to the Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation has been a large contributor to this work. Delivered through the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, the initiative aims to increase opportunities for women and girls in the sport and active recreation sector through programs and resources, including *Recruitment and Retention Guidelines for Women in Sport and Recreation*<sup>(62)</sup>.



The *Change Our Game* Community Activation Grants Program provides one-off funding to eligible sport and active recreation organisations to deliver events to celebrate the role of women and girls at the grassroots level and has supported over 350 sport and active recreation organisations since 2018. The *Change Our Game* Guidelines support sport and recreation clubs to increase the number of women and girls in leadership roles within their organisation by providing guidance on creating an inclusive culture, undertaking the recruitment process and supporting women into decision-making roles. The initiative also includes a Scholarship Grants Program that supports women working and volunteering in the sport and active recreation sector to access professional learning and development opportunities to enhance leadership and management skills, while also supporting eligible organisations to deliver organisation-wide professional development activities.

Programs delivered via the *Change Our Game* initiative support the professional development of women in sports administration and in media/broadcast; community clubs to promote opportunities for women and girls; universities to undertake research into barriers faced by women and girls in all levels of sport; and advocacy to improve gender equality across the sporting sector.

Nine pilot projects involving Victorian sports associations, local government, Regional Sports Assemblies and non-for-profit organisations were funded under the first *Free from Violence* Action Plan, the aim of which was to test guidelines developed by La Trobe and Swinburne University to promote gender equality and primary prevention and ultimately drive culture change within the sports sector<sup>(63)</sup>. As a result of these pilot projects, the *Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women—Taking Action Through Community Sport*<sup>(64)</sup> were redeveloped and launched in March 2022. These guidelines will be used to drive change across sports institutions and clubs at all levels in Victoria and will inform and guide the two-year projects using community sport to prevent gender-based violence, funded under

the Preventing Violence through Sport Grants Program launched in early 2022. Through this grants program, sporting organisations are funded to partner with primary prevention experts and local councils to deliver gender equity initiatives—creating safer and more inclusive clubs for women, girls and gender diverse people and contributing to a Victoria free from violence.

These initiatives have been complemented by Respect Victoria's *Sexism and Sport: Call it Out* campaign, launched in late 2020. This campaign recognises that despite significant steps taken by many state and national sporting codes over the past decade to move towards equality, sexism is still part of the sporting world—within teams and organisations, as well as in the stands and in the homes of fans.

The campaign highlights the opportunity to use sport—playing, watching and learning about it—to:

- > break free of stereotypes that harm women and girls
- > create an even playing field for future players and fans
- > challenge outdated ideas about men and masculinity
- > foster safe, inclusive communities on and off the field.

These recent activities have all usefully explored the unique opportunities that sport settings present for primary prevention. This focus builds on robust evidence across health promotion theory and sport engagement research that supports the use of sport as a key setting for social, behavioural and attitudinal change. Work has progressed at different levels and involved government, the violence against women prevention sector and sporting sector through campaigns, practice frameworks and resources and direct targeted activity with clubs. Work with state-wide and national sporting associations has been an important feature of some of this work and is key to wider systemic implementation supported by policy and regulatory measures.

## Equality and Respect in Sport—Our Watch

Our Watch's *Equality and Respect in Sport* aims to assist national sporting organisations build their capacity to promote gender equality. The project has been working with professional sport since 2014 and is built on a tested, evidence-based approach, tailored for each sporting code or organisation's needs.

Our Watch conducts surveys to help develop organisational recommendations that can inform culture change strategies and action plans. The surveys are anonymous, internal and confidential.

Our Watch also offers a wide array of resources and tools for organisations, workplaces, groups and clubs. These include instructional videos such as 'Unpacking violence: Locker room talk,' evidence guides such as 'Preventing violence against women through sport,' the National sporting codes joint leadership statement and even tips for sports journalists.

An example of Our Watch's success is its collaboration with Rugby Australia as their gender equality partner. The 'Sports Engagement Program' established in 2015 with the Commonwealth Government's Department of Social Services brought sporting organisations together and

encouraged them to act in preventing violence against women and children. The 'Sports Engagement Program Phase Two' program began in 2018 and now involves Football Federation Australia, the National Rugby League and the Australian Football League. This program helps sporting organisations embed gender equality and respectful relationships into their workplace. It also creates cultures which help prevent violence against women and their children.

Similarly, NRL's 'Voice Against Violence' aims to support the Rugby League community in preventing violence against women and children. The workshops increase awareness and understanding of gender-based violence. Participants are provided with insights into what this violence is, the different forms it takes and why it occurs. This information is intended to empower people to stand up, speak out and contribute to the prevention of violence.

These partnerships are just a couple of the many examples of how Our Watch aims to support primary prevention of violence against women in key settings like workplaces, sport, media and education.



## 2.2 Population group-specific initiatives

The Royal Commission into Family Violence drew attention to the family violence experiences of various communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, older people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the LGBTIQ+ community and people with disabilities and made specific recommendations to develop programs and initiatives that respond to the needs of these communities.

Through *Free from Violence*, the Victorian Government made a strong commitment to developing and implementing prevention initiatives that are tailored and targeted to the specific needs and experiences of diverse communities. This has included reinforcing the importance of intersectional approaches across policies and programs, developing the *Everybody Matters Inclusion and Equity Statement*<sup>(65)</sup> and a significant investment in programs that enable communities to lead prevention activities. Equally important over recent years has been the strengthened leadership on these issues by community leaders and agencies representing the interests of particular communities.

### Aboriginal communities

Colonisation has had a profound impact on Aboriginal peoples and continues to significantly influence their lives and experiences. Intersecting forms of oppression such as racism and discrimination mean that Aboriginal peoples, particularly Aboriginal women and children, experience higher levels of family violence than non-Aboriginal people. The marginalisation and discrimination that underpin this are also central to the situation that denies victims the protection of and access to all the health, welfare and justice systems available.

Aboriginal communities and services have been leading violence prevention initiatives in Victoria for over two decades, drawing on the strengths of Aboriginal peoples, and the commitment of key agencies to support families and individuals to be safe, supported, connected to culture and to thrive. The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum has been central to this work, together with the community-led Dhelk Dja Action Groups. Following the Royal Commission, the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum developed a new 10-year agreement: *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way—Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*<sup>(66)</sup>.

Dhelk Dja is built on a foundation of Aboriginal self-determination and sets out the long-term partnership, vision and directions for family violence prevention and response in Aboriginal communities. Under Dhelk Dja, the Victorian Government has made an annual investment of \$1.1 million in the Aboriginal Community Initiatives Fund, which enables the 11 Dhelk Dja Action Groups across Victoria to support local Aboriginal community-led family violence prevention and education projects. There have been over 30 projects funded through the Preventing the Cycle of Violence Aboriginal Fund and Aboriginal Community Initiatives Fund since 2018.

Aboriginal-led prevention initiatives have also been supported under *Free from Violence*, including the 13 projects funded through the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Innovation Fund. An evaluation of the program was completed in 2021, which found that approximately 400 activities were generated as part of the projects, including cultural camps, Zoom sessions, health challenges and cultural workshops. It also found that more than 1,100 people had engaged directly in project activities<sup>(67)</sup>.

The evaluation showed that the program achieved most of its intended objectives, namely, to support Aboriginal-led organisations to design and deliver family violence primary prevention projects, to test new forms of partnership and collaboration and to grow or scale-up existing ways of working. The projects also showed alignment with a number of outcomes in the Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework, including<sup>(67)</sup>:

- > an improved understanding of, and connection to, Aboriginal culture
- > an increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of family violence and support services
- > more confidence, self-esteem and empowerment
- > a better understanding and knowledge of healthy and respectful relationships.

A recent mapping project on Aboriginal family violence prevention initiatives in Victoria since 2016 identified a total of 251 government funded initiatives\*. These were delivered by 132 agencies or partnerships across Victoria, 88% of which were Aboriginal community-controlled bodies. These initiatives most commonly involved workshops, cultural activities and events such as camps and community forums. The most common settings were health, community and family services, with a smaller proportion of projects delivered in sports, recreation, arts, education and childcare settings.

Findings from 37 formally evaluated initiatives showed that key outcomes included strengthening of well-established protective factors, including connection to culture and community, awareness of family violence and its impacts and understanding of healthy respectful relationships. The reach of initiatives varied from small groups to several hundred people, with a few reporting they reached more than 1,000 participants. The project was not able to measure outcomes in terms of violence prevention. More effort on research and evaluation here is clearly needed (see also comments in the next section of the report).

The consultations conducted as part of the mapping project also showed that extensive relevant activity is being resourced by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and other community organisations outside of specific government funding for prevention, although this activity is not always easy to measure or categorise as family violence prevention specifically.

\* Urbis Consulting, Draft report on Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Mapping Project, May 2022, cited with permission of Dhelk Dja Partnership.

The findings from the evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Innovation Initiative, the mapping project and consultations to inform this report highlighted a number of key opportunities to strengthen efforts to prevent family violence and violence against women in Aboriginal communities. These included:

- > better embedding self-determination in all prevention funding focused on Aboriginal communities to support them to shape and manage initiatives in accordance with community preferences
- > supporting violence prevention activities to embrace culture as a protective factor and clearly promote the agency of Aboriginal women
- > better tailoring messages and approaches to communication and education on healthy and respectful relationships to ensure they are culturally relevant
- > taking a more holistic, trauma-informed approach to family violence prevention
- > expanding the scope of prevention initiatives to include a stronger focus on all forms of family violence and violence against women, and the needs of specific cohorts (including Elders, LGBTIQ+, perpetrators and lateral violence)
- > utilising strengths-based approaches and avoiding deficit approaches and language that frame Aboriginal peoples and communities as inherently violent.

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of government organisations to deepening engagement and collaboration with ACCOs and that more broadly, there remain opportunities to strengthen prevention by increasing investment in the ACCO sector to lead and prioritise family violence prevention work in Aboriginal communities. Stakeholders also articulated the importance of long-term resourcing to support practice that is including adequate long-term resourcing to lead and evaluate evidence-based practice underpinned by principles of Indigenous data sovereignty and understanding of what works to build resilience and social and emotional wellbeing in the lives of Aboriginal children, young peoples and families.

Some stakeholders are keen to see a clearer lead agency for family violence prevention across the ACCO sector, and identified a range of priorities for ACCO leadership, including through the development of culturally appropriate frameworks, research and prevention approaches and the establishment of outcomes and measures of success that are relevant to Aboriginal communities.

The Victorian framework underpinning the prevention of family violence in Aboriginal communities (*Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework 2012*) is under review. This process should create an opportunity to increase the use of the existing prevention evidence base for tailoring and application in future work with Aboriginal communities. To support this process an international review of the evidence pertaining to the prevention of family violence in First Nation Communities has recently been commissioned.

All this work should be seen as a crucial part of ongoing action to meet the shared responsibility for Victoria's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan and to progress Victoria's commitments and goals under the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023.

## Aboriginal Prevention Project—Djirra, Young Luv

Djirra is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation providing practical support to all Aboriginal women and particularly to Aboriginal people who are currently experiencing family violence or have in the past. All Djirra programs support Aboriginal women on their journey to safety and wellbeing. Djirra community education and early intervention and prevention programs (Sisters Day Out, Young Luv and Dilly Bag) focus on family violence prevention by:

- > drawing on cultural strength to increase resilience
- > reducing social isolation and vulnerability to family violence
- > promoting healthy relationships
- > creating awareness about the ‘power and control’ dynamics of family violence and family violence red flags.

Young Luv is a workshop for young Aboriginal girls aged 13–18 to prevent violence against women and girls and build personal and cultural strength. The Young Luv concept arose out of discussions held at numerous Sisters Day Out workshops. Younger Aboriginal women, in the company of their Aunts, Mothers, Sisters, Cousins and other community members, spoke of the need to give teenagers an awareness-building program tailored to their needs, as they approach their first intimate relationships.

The objectives of Young Luv are to:

- > Promote an awareness of healthy relationships amongst Aboriginal teenagers.
- > Provide a culturally safe environment that encourages participants to talk, reflect on and better understand important issues around healthy relationships.
- > Help participants to build resilient attitudes through recognising cultural strength.
- > Develop coping strategies to deal with issues impacting upon their lives and their communities.

The impact and success of Young Luv relies upon creating an atmosphere, which validates and celebrates the Aboriginal culture and experience of the girls. Only then will many of the girls take a risk and consider participating in discussions about the challenging, often very personal issues facing them in their daily lives.

The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. It highlights the extent to which the girls value the opportunity to come together in a culturally safe environment to discuss important issues for them with Aboriginal facilitators who understand and share their culture and community.

## LGBTIQ+ communities

The development of evidence, practice and programs focusing on the prevention of family and relationship violence for LGBTIQ+ communities has advanced significantly over the review period, with Victoria being a national leader. Advocacy and leadership from the LGBTIQ+ community itself has been pivotal.

Rainbow Health Australia (formerly Rainbow Health Victoria) has played a significant role in this work. A seminal initiative was their LGBTIQ+ Family Violence Prevention Project, a first of its kind in Australia. The project sought to address critical evidence gaps, strengthen understanding of the drivers of violence, and build the expertise of various sectors to effectively deliver evidence-based programs for LGBTIQ+ communities<sup>(68)</sup>.

*Pride in prevention has really changed the national conversation about how to look at primary prevention for LGBTIQ communities, so it's had a massive impact. I think that there's a confidence now to have the conversation. When we started out, it was a very wary conversation where people were scared to make mistakes and worried that if we talk about LGBTIQ experiences and particularly trans experiences, then what does that mean for a focus on men's violence against women? I think it's gone from a quite trepidatious approach to giving us a way to talk about the issues, and to begin to find the synergies and the connections around the common work."*

**Director, Rainbow Health Australia**

It was through this project that *Pride in Prevention: A guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities*<sup>(3)</sup> was developed, which provides a conceptual model for the drivers of violence in LGBTIQ+ communities and recommends priority interventions to address these drivers. The guide is complemented by the *Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide*, which

\*(<https://transfemme.com.au/>)

provides further support to organisations and practitioners on effective and appropriate messaging in public campaigns, social media, communications and policy work<sup>(69)</sup>. Together these guides have made a substantial contribution to evidence and prevention practice in Victoria.

In the second phase of the project, three pilot projects were undertaken to test and deliver community-based primary prevention activities with and for LGBTIQ+ communities. The first was a workforce capacity-building project undertaken in partnership with Safe and Equal. The project aimed to demonstrate how work that challenges the drivers of men's violence against women and work that challenges the drivers of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ communities could be integrated conceptually and implemented effectively. The project resulted in a comprehensive update of Safe and Equal's foundational training package *Prevention in Practice* to include LGBTIQ-focused evidence and practice<sup>(70)</sup>.

The second project was the *Safe Always Campaign*, a community-led messaging campaign delivered in partnership with Thorne Harbour Health, which aimed to challenge myths and build awareness of LGBTIQ+ intimate partner violence. The campaign was delivered across print, radio, online and outdoor platforms and had a significant level of reach and engagement. The online campaign alone reached 116,539 people, and had over 530,000 impressions in a four-week period<sup>(71)</sup>.

The final project was a community-led capacity-building project delivered in partnership with Zoe Belle Gender Collective to co-design an online resource\* that aims to reduce the impacts of shame, stigma, silence and discrimination surrounding trans women in relationships with cisgender men. TransFemme is the first primary prevention project in Australia with a specific focus on trans women and their cisgender partners.



Respect Victoria has been working to raise community awareness and understanding of violence against LGBTIQ+ people through the Respect Each Other: Pride, Respect, Equality campaign in 2021. The campaign highlights the important role families can play to support and celebrate LGBTIQ+ loved ones by promoting pride and positive relationships and shifting outdated ideas about gender and sexuality amongst parents, siblings and extended family.

*I think the brilliance of the Pride, Respect, Equality campaign, among many other things, is that it gave life to an understanding of how microaggressions feature on the scale of family violence as well. The aunt stink eye and uttering under her breath is very much capturing a moment that most LGBTIQ+ people can relate to. That advert brought to life beautifully—the microaggressions that we experience and actually showed that when we talk about violence, it's not just the visible beatings that we need to think about. There are so many different levels that contribute towards making people feel unsafe in their lives, their families' homes."*

**Principal Advisor to the Commissioner for  
LGBTIQ+ Communities**

An important complementary focus has been taken by Drummond Street Services' Centre for Family Research and Evaluation to research, design and implement primary prevention addressing the emergence of family violence for LGBTIQ+ people transitioning to parenthood. This work has advanced understanding of this particular aspect of LGBTIQ+ family violence and engaged affected communities and perinatal services in practical preventative strategies.

The work undertaken to date to understand the complexity of LGBTIQ+ experiences of relationship and family violence, and to develop effective approaches to preventing the violence they experience is acknowledged by many stakeholders as nation-leading. The leadership role of Rainbow Health Australia has been crucial, working closely with core prevention of family violence and violence against women agencies. Many organisations and practitioners have actively sought to implement prevention activities that address violence against women and LGBTIQ+ communities, including greater inclusivity in their language and addressing the impact of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia and the discrimination experienced by people with intersex variations.

All this work has clearly improved the knowledge and understanding of prevention practitioners, as well as the knowledge and attitudes of the LGBTIQ+ community about family violence and intimate partner violence. To ensure the success of this work is sustained going forward, there will need to be ongoing capacity building of the workforce, strong partnerships between LGBTIQ+ specialist organisations and prevention organisations, as well as more nuanced programs that account for the full range of family and relationship violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people.

## Pride in Prevention—Rainbow Health Australia

Released in 2020, the Pride in Prevention Evidence Guide was produced to inform primary prevention initiatives aimed at family violence experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) communities. The guide provides a conceptual model for the drivers of violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities and outlines key actions on these drivers. It was developed as a resource for those engaged in the primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities and those engaged in the primary prevention of violence against women—pointing towards ways of working together.

The Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide was released in 2021 as a companion. It provides additional support to organisations and practitioners in developing effective and appropriate family violence prevention messaging and delivering this through public campaigns, social media communications and policy work. It aims to support community engagement in developing and delivering prevention messaging, and specifically engaging with LGBTIQ communities.

Prior research and primary prevention policy responses have identified and primarily focused on gender inequality as the key social factor driving violence against women. This was associated with rigid gender roles and stereotyped

constructions of masculinity and femininity. Pride in Prevention added to this picture by drawing on existing research and theoretical work to develop a conceptual model for the drivers of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities. This model outlined the shared drivers of violence against LGBTIQ communities and women.

Drawing on the conceptual model for the drivers of violence proposed in the Pride in Prevention Evidence Guide, two pilot primary prevention activities were developed with LGBTIQ organisations. These were done alongside a partnership with Safe and Equal with a focus on workforce development. The SafeAlways campaign was an LGBTIQ community-led campaign that challenged key myths around experiences of an intimate partner, subverting the notion that family violence only happens in cisgender and heterosexual relationships and families. And, the TransFemme website and resources were designed to challenge the drivers of violence in relationships between trans women and cis men.

The resources have been downloaded 8,000 times, and the launches have been viewed over 700 times on YouTube. Pride in Prevention was also cited in Change the Story and many other key policy documents nationally.

## Women with disabilities

It is well established that women with disability in Australia experience significantly more violence and abuse than women without disability. Two in three women with disability (65%) have experienced at least one incident of violence (physical violence, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, emotional abuse and/or stalking) since the age of 15<sup>(19)</sup>. Despite the heightened risk of violence of women with disability, evidence on effective prevention practices and approaches has been slow to emerge.

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) has been instrumental in improving practices and approaches to the prevention of violence against women with disability in Victoria, including through the provision of state-wide capacity-building initiatives, the development of toolkits, guides and resources, evidence frameworks and research reports.

WDV was funded to develop and deliver the Gender and Disability Workforce Development Program under *Building from Strength: A 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response*<sup>(72)</sup>. The program provided training to disability support workers, supervisors, managers and affiliated services with the aim of increasing their ability to reduce gender and disability-based discrimination within their organisations, as well as prevent violence against women with disabilities more broadly. Evaluation of the initiative reported that the program has contributed to an improved understanding and awareness of prevention of violence against women with disabilities across the prevention workforce and other service providers.

WDV also developed the *Prevention of Violence Against Women's Health Toolkit*<sup>(73-75)</sup> to strengthen the capacity and practice of Women's Health Services to include the rights and perspectives of women with disabilities into their violence prevention activities. The toolkit was piloted in partnership with women's health services, and WDV plays an ongoing role supporting women's health services and other organisations to address the needs of women with disabilities.

Earlier this year *Changing the Landscape—a national resource to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities*<sup>(5)</sup> was launched. Developed in partnership between Our Watch and Women with Disabilities and informed by the lived experiences of women with disabilities, this resource has made a significant contribution to the evidence base and practice guidance on the prevention of violence against women with disabilities. Stakeholders reported that there has been wide interest and engagement with the resource by WDV members and practitioners across various sectors, and they anticipate that it will enhance the capacity of organisations to address the needs of women with disability as part of their prevention programming and organisational change efforts.

*"I think for people who are already interested in preventing violence against women and girls with disabilities, the Changing the Landscape Framework can give them the latest research data in one place that can help with anything they're working on with an easy-to-use, up-to-date evidence base, which people are always after. And it can give them a language and ideas about how to conceptualise and advocate for addressing sexism and ableism."*

Senior Policy Officer, Women with Disabilities Victoria

While this work is widely valued, stakeholders noted that investment in programs and initiatives specifically focused on women with disability has been limited, and that many prevention initiatives—including those funded under *Free from Violence*—are often not accessible to or inclusive of women with disability. Future universal and targeted prevention efforts will be strengthened by stakeholders working more closely with disability organisations and people with disability (in both design and delivery) and ensuring a stronger focus on peer support efforts and peer-led models.

## Migrant, multicultural and faith communities

Structural and systemic racism and discrimination are major contributing factors to a social environment that condones violence against members of migrant, asylum seeker and refugee communities. A key commitment of the Victorian Government under *Free from Violence* was to invest in initiatives that build evidence on what works to prevent family violence and violence against women within communities affected by multiple forms of disadvantage and discrimination.

In 2018 AMES Australia, a Victorian statutory body delivering settlement services to refugee and humanitarian entrants to Victoria worked in partnership with VicHealth and the Commonwealth Government to conduct a national consultation to inform a conceptual framework and strategy to prevent violence against women in migrant and refugee communities. It was acknowledged that migrant and refugee communities had not had access to prevention resources and interventions afforded the wider community and would benefit from those utilised to build wider community awareness and mobilise action.

AMES then undertook leadership development to support prevention activity across migrant and refugee communities in Victoria. Over 200 community leaders from varying backgrounds have completed the intensive program with the majority of participants going on to support interventions in their own communities. Initiatives such as this could be taken to scale if the short-term nature of some funding programs could be addressed.

Several grants programs have been funded by the Victorian Government to enable local service providers and communities to deliver programs aimed at preventing and responding to family violence in culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities. This investment recognised that family violence and violence against women intersects with other forms of discrimination and requires specialised approaches. There were 20 organisations funded under the *COVID-19 Multicultural Family Violence Program* to deliver awareness-raising activities, early intervention projects and support services to multicultural, migrant and refugee communities in Victoria. In addition, 33 organisations were funded under the

*Supporting Multicultural and Faith Communities to Prevent Family Violence Program* to deliver prevention programs and activities within multicultural and faith-based settings, with a focus on addressing the gendered drivers of violence, challenging stereotypes and strengthening positive, equal and respectful relationships.

In addition, Safe and Equal, in partnership with the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, have been funded to provide a multi-year capacity-building project to target and strengthen the specific capability needs of these 33 organisations.

*Engaging communities is a very dynamic and complex situation because just trying to understand one community alone is complex, let alone a myriad of communities. So, I appreciate efforts need to be going into understanding and then finding out the most effective ways to attend to prevention. But that requires a bit more flexibility, a little bit more community involvement and little bit more conversation. It also requires greater sharing of the decision-making process through codesign, engagement, education and leveraging lived experience. I know this can be difficult, but if you go to communities and say, we have got a solution for you, you're already starting off on the wrong track."*

**Victorian Multicultural Commissioner**

All these initiatives have stimulated valuable discussions within targeted communities; however, as with many other more targeted prevention initiatives, limited information is available at this stage on their ultimate impact on prevention outcomes. Feedback from stakeholders suggests that more work needs to be done to reach and engage culturally and linguistically diverse communities in prevention work. This includes the need to strengthen communication and engagement with migrant, refugee and asylum seeker communities to build trust and better understand their needs and experiences. There is also a need to better resource and support community leaders and other trusted community members to lead prevention work within their own communities; doing this effectively will require consideration of the ways in which grants are funded and administered.

## Supporting Multicultural and Faith Communities to Prevent Family Violence Program

The Supporting Multicultural and Faith Communities to Prevent Family Violence Program (the Program) was established in 2021. The program, funded until 2024, supports community, faith and cultural organisations to build the capacity of multicultural and faith communities in family violence primary prevention.

Through the program, 27 cultural and five faith groups are being supported to address and prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women. Participating groups include Diversitat, Jewish Care, Buddhist Council of Australia, Wellsprings for Women, the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, the Board of Imams and the Victorian Sikh Gurdwaras Council.

Several projects are being delivered through the program, one example being Jewish Care's Equal for All: Supporting Primary Prevention in the Victorian Jewish Community. This project saw the development of resources on healthy masculinity; an active bystander program; provision of capacity building and secondary consultation for faith leaders; and in-language/culturally accessible resources for the Hebrew and Russian-speaking communities. The project has already shown positive impacts in the community for example, participants of Tuning In to Kids, a capacity-building

workshop aimed at parents, reported feeling more confident as parents and being able to respond to children's needs. This included 'sitting with' emotional displays and experiences by children that do not correspond with the general gendered societal expectations (e.g. displays of anger from daughters; tears/sadness from sons).

The Program also funded South East Community Links (SECL) to deliver a number of prevention activities tailored to the needs of specific communities. SECL developed a Change the story video in both Hazaragi and Hindi with overwhelmingly positive feedback from those in the community who viewed the video. All Hindi speaking participants indicated that the video improved their understanding of family violence and how it might occur in their community and all participants agreed that the video in Hindi was a good way to communicate about gender equality and family violence.

The projects funded under the Supporting Multicultural and Faith Communities to Prevent Family Violence Program demonstrate the effectiveness of primary prevention initiatives that are developed and delivered by cultural and faith organisations to their communities.

## Older people

According to the Federal Government's National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study released in December 2021, elder abuse affects 15% of Australians 65 and above each year. This includes 12% experiencing psychological abuse, 2% physical abuse, 2% financial abuse and 1% sexual abuse. A large proportion of this abuse is perpetrated by children or partners, with men being more likely to commit elder abuse than women (55% compared to 45%)<sup>(76)</sup>.

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence recognised elder abuse as a form of family violence featuring unique dynamics between an older person and a trusted person, such as a family member, often an adult child. It can also involve short- or long-term intimate partner violence, carer abuse and long-term family conflict. In response to the Royal Commission findings, the Victorian Government prioritised a number of initiatives to address and prevent elder abuse. Firstly, the Commissioner for Senior Victorians was appointed as Ambassador for Elder Abuse Prevention and plays a critical role in raising awareness about elder abuse prevention with senior Victorians and across the organisations that work with older people. The Commissioner has also worked in partnership with the Office of the Public Advocate to develop resources for older people, including the booklet *Your Voice, Trust your Choice*<sup>(77)</sup>.

*There was a good and a growing narrative about family violence and gender-based violence where people could see themselves in the language and the voices and the faces. I felt there was a real gap from an older person's perspective at a higher-level narrative. But last year, the Victorian Government announced their commitment to deliver on that by developing an elder abuse statement. I have confidence this is a significant step forward, because older people are going to see themselves represented in those voices, and represented in commitments that are fundamental to prevention."*

Commissioner for Senior Victorians

Ten Elder Abuse Prevention Networks were also established in 2017–18 (and became eight from January 2021), which are leading the development and implementation of prevention projects within their local areas utilising a primary prevention approach. Given limited existing evidence on effective approaches to preventing elder abuse, they have had a focus on undertaking research and developing practice guides to support this work. Projects have included:

- > Older, Better, Together: The Primary Prevention of Elder Abuse by Primary Prevention Networks Action Research Project
- > Preventing Elder Abuse: A literature review for the South Melbourne Primary Care Partnership Elder Abuse Prevention Network
- > Framing Age Message Guide (developed by a consortium of multi-agency Elder Abuse Prevention Networks with Common Cause Australia)
- > Preventing Abuse of Older People in Melbourne's East: A Primary Prevention Framework and guide
- > Prevention and Response Toolkit by North Metropolitan Elder Abuse Prevention Network.

The Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) together with Swinburne University were funded to trial a new initiative for the Prevention of Elder Abuse Project funded under the *Free from Violence* Grant Program. The project, *Older People: Equity, Respect & Ageing (OPERA)* aimed to understand how ageism is perceived and experienced by older people and how that evidence can be used to frame a co-designed digital intervention on community experiences of ageism in the Eastern Metropolitan region<sup>(78)</sup>.

Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria is also working in partnership with ethnic and multicultural organisations to deliver culturally appropriate messages about elder abuse prevention and pathways to support. Seniors Rights Victoria is funded to provide information, support, advice and education to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older people.

In June 2019, Respect Victoria launched its third campaign, *Respect Older People: Call It Out*, which aired from June to July and again in October 2019. The campaign was supported by a series of printed materials distributed broadly to seniors' services, non-government organisations, councils, libraries, community groups and hospitals to raise awareness of elder abuse among their clients and members and connect them to the range of information and support services across the state. The advertisements and support materials were also translated into five of Victoria's common language groups: Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese.

Understanding of elder abuse prevention and early intervention continues to evolve, and there has been some early success in relation to improving awareness and influencing attitudinal change. Stakeholders reported a need to deepen an understanding of the drivers of elder abuse and effective approaches for preventing it. Important work is underway to develop a Primary Prevention Elder Abuse Framework for Victoria, the intention of which is to provide clear guidance on contemporary evidence to support the sustainability of primary prevention efforts.

*Through the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the tireless work of so many organisations, positive momentum is growing in a number of places to raise awareness of elder abuse. We're seeing greater collaboration and more organisations joining the fold and taking action."*

**Commissioner for Senior Victorians**

## **OPERA Project—Eastern Community Legal Centre and Swinburne University**

The Older People: Equity, Respect and Ageing (OPERA) Project works to create a society where all people, regardless of age, feel valued, safe and respected. Through community consultation and co-design approaches, the OPERA Project aims to gain a deeper understanding of how older people experience discrimination based on their age. With this insight, OPERA aims to work towards primary prevention against ageism and elder abuse Victoria-wide.

The OPERA project was conducted in two phases. The first phase of the project primarily focused on fact-finding and gleaning insight from community members through interviews and workshops. The project team consulted with over 300 community members in Melbourne's eastern region to explore their experiences of ageism and their perceptions and understanding of the underlying causes.

The findings from the first phase informed the second phase of the project which was redirected into a strengths-based approach: the production of nine short

videos. These videos use personal storytelling techniques to highlight and challenge negative attitudes that can lead to ageist behaviour. The process of recording these videos was deeply impactful to the individuals who participated. Further, the videos have been widely received throughout the Victorian community helping to raise awareness about ageism.

Overall, this worthwhile initiative has developed a suite of informative resources for the Victorian community, including a dedicated OPERA website, the OPERA video series and detailed reports on findings. A Primary Prevention Framework was also developed from the project's findings, which is used by more than 50 partners Victoria-wide, including government bodies and community organisations. This project and its findings are instrumental to the cultural and systemic change needed to end ageist behaviour and promote a society of where older people feel safe, valued and respected.



## Children and young people

Primary prevention is needed across every stage of the life course to build and reinforce positive knowledge, attitudes and social norms over a person's lifetime, and embed and sustain change across the whole population. Early childhood, primary school years and adolescence are critical life stages of development and therefore offer important opportunities to address the drivers of violence.

In Victoria, prevention work involving children and young people has largely centred on the Respectful Relationships Initiative in primary and secondary schools described earlier in this report. There have also been several projects funded under various *Free from Violence* grants programs that have specifically targeted children and young people, many of which have focused on healthy relationships, challenging harmful beliefs and stereotypes, bystander action, engaging young men and encouraging young people to be leaders in prevention.

Various stakeholders have reported the need to increase focus on children and young people as victims of family violence and violence against women in their own right, however a dedicated focus on children and young people in a primary prevention context is more centred around tailoring messaging and language to their specific needs, age and developmental stages. Data from 2017 show that young women (15–19 years) have the highest rates of reported sexual assault of any age and sex group, followed by 10–14-year-old girls, and that young men (15–19) have the highest offending rate of sexual assault<sup>(2)</sup>. Young women are also at high risk of intimate partner violence in the form of 'dating violence'. A number of prevention initiatives in the tertiary education system that tackle this issue are noted earlier in this report.

Contexts where children are victims include those where children witness family violence as well as being a direct victim of violence perpetrated by their parent or other family member. Prevention efforts must also consider adolescent violence in the home, where the young person is using violence towards a parent or sibling. The Respectful Relationships initiative broadly addresses these issues—and makes important links to early intervention.

*It is important to have us as young people involved in the prevention programs, because we can share perspectives with other people about the things that have worked for us... It would be more empowering for many, many other people, if we had more lived experience input into these programs. I do feel that a lot of the prevention work can be improved by being more practical and more on the level of children and young people, which can really only come from children and young people ourselves."*

VSAC Representative

Further work is needed to understand the drivers and reinforcing factors related to adolescents use of violence in the home, and whether there is a relationship between the drivers of this unique form of violence, and the already well understood drivers of violence against women (which includes violence against young women and girls). This will support activities that help prevent children and young people from being victims and users of violence. This will require sensitive approaches to the overlap between primary prevention messaging and the experience of violence in the context of children's lives and experiences. It should also complement work across the family violence system on disrupting cycles of violence and reducing the potential for future re-victimisation or perpetration for children and young people who have been impacted by violence.

Consultations with stakeholders who work with children and young people highlighted the need to develop a more nuanced understanding of how violence prevention approaches should be tailored to the needs of children and young people at different life stages of their social and emotional development. This will require strengthened collaboration between prevention specialists and people who work with children on both the design and implementation of prevention initiatives and activities.

More importantly, there are significant opportunities to engage children and young people as advocates and leaders in prevention work, including in the design and delivery of prevention initiatives, including peer-led prevention programs and activities. The young people involved in

consultations also highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for young people to share their experiences of violence with other young people as a way of empowering them, as well as the need to provide them with relevant and accessible information and strategies to support early intervention and prevention work with young people.

### Engaging men and boys

Addressing men and masculinities is integral to preventing violence against women<sup>(79)</sup>. While work to engage men and boys and address masculinities has a long history in the women's movement and health promotion field, engaging men and boys in the prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women has emerged as a key priority for the Victorian Government and the Victorian community sector over recent years. The second edition of *Change the Story*<sup>(2)</sup> reflects this necessary focus on engaging men and boys by articulating the importance of a focus on addressing male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control (one of the four gendered drivers of violence), and the importance of developing more nuanced approaches to engaging men and boys in primary prevention.

In 2019, Our Watch released *Men in focus: unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women*<sup>(80)</sup>. This evidence review provides an important consolidation of the existing literature analysing the relationship between dominant forms and patterns of masculinity and violence against women. Importantly for the prevention sector, this review also articulates how work designed to engage men and boys in primary prevention should deploy multiple strategies including:

- > policy-based initiatives
- > practice-based initiatives
- > community-based initiatives
- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives
- > media and social marketing initiatives
- > sports-based initiatives.

The Men's Project, an initiative of the Victorian-based agency Jesuit Social Services (JSS), seeks to build respectful and safe communities by supporting men and boys to live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives free from violence and other harmful behaviours. Drawing from their Man Box research<sup>(81, 82)</sup>, JSS delivers a range of programs within schools, workplaces and the broader community designed to promote positive and healthy masculinities to reduce violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men.

For example, the Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) program supports members of local communities to develop skills and knowledge that will help them create change in their community around issues of respect and equality, particularly among boys and men. This program has been delivered via several local Councils within Victoria, with participants reporting an increased ability to promote positive and flexible ideals of masculinity and facilitate meaningful discussion on these issues, as well as the confidence to respond to difficult questions relating to gender equality and violence against women.

A range of other interventions have been implemented in Victoria over the past three years focused on engaging men and boys in primary prevention. These range from resources, such as the VicHealth *Healthier Masculinities Framework for Gender Equality*, a planning tool to support people and organisations promoting health and wellbeing, to direct participation programs, such as *The Rural Challenge Project Gender Equality Leadership* program, which seeks to engage men as positive role models in the community.

\* Information obtained from internal project reports

In reviewing a number of relevant *Free from Violence* activities undertaken in several organisations, we note that efforts made to better engage men and boys in the work of primary prevention have seen significant increases (of between 24% to 33% depending on the organisation) in self-reported knowledge of program participants of the potential consequences of stereotypical masculine norms. This has resulted in changes to the perceived level of influence that organisations have to bring about change in attitudes and behaviours about stereotypical masculine norms (increase of between 3% to 19% depending on the organisation). While these results are at a small scale, they are a promising start.\*

Overall, this activity has meant organisations in various settings are now increasingly likely to work with men and boys to change their attitudes and behaviours around stereotypical masculine norms in the interests of preventing gender-based violence. As a number of stakeholders have stressed, there is considerable progress to be made in aligning and connecting such work with initiatives aimed more directly at prevention of violence against women, rather than it being siloed. In doing this, standards must be applied to ensure that programs have an appropriate approach to gender issues and do not inadvertently cause harm. Such programs also need to be complemented by social and economic reforms that are needed to bring about wider, sustained and institutionalised change.

## 2.3 Program implementation concerns

While our consultations with stakeholders did not focus specifically on program implementation matters, a number of themes emerged on the strengths and limitations of funded projects and the rollout of grants programs to date. It was widely acknowledged that there has been a significant uplift in prevention programming across various settings, and that the various funded programs have been an important vehicle for supporting a wide range of organisations as leaders in prevention, raising awareness of family violence and gendered drivers and engaging communities in prevention activities. They have also provided the seed funding needed to build an evidence base on whole-of-setting approaches and community-specific initiatives.

Whilst expressing support for the breadth of investment to date, stakeholders also noted the importance of a stronger focus moving forward on funding that enables more intensive and longer-term prevention efforts. Coupled with this, appropriate planning and staging of funding are critical enablers that will allow funded agencies to develop stronger partnerships, involve communities more intensively and demonstrate greater impact. Some stakeholders also articulated the importance of grants programs being structured in a way that actively encourages them to collaborate on shared priorities and goals.

Another key issue highlighted through multiple consultations was the opportunity that will arise as the Victorian approach to prevention matures into its next stage. There is a strong desire for this next stage of strategy, planning and funding to be designed and delivered in a way that will enable agencies to retain skilled and experienced staff, to sustain collaborative partnerships and ensure the ongoing engagement of communities in prevention activities.

This matured approach will be essential to ensure impact of long-term prevention work, as previously addressed by the Royal Commission into family violence.

Stakeholders reported a number of ways in which the development and delivery of prevention efforts can be more impactful and the good work undertaken to date built upon, including to:

- > support specialist organisations to lead prevention initiatives with specific communities
- > increase involvement of communities in the design and implementation of projects, particularly diverse communities
- > expand prevention work into more settings, particularly in those where there is a strong evidence base on effective approaches
- > ensure a clear link between mass campaign messaging and the prevention projects and activities that are being implemented at the grassroots community level.

Some experts have pointed to the need to employ a model program approach involving 'saturating' a particular setting or geographical communities to achieve both depth and breadth of action, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure optimal impact. This has been used successfully in other public health and social change areas, and in an early prevention of violence against women program funded by VicHealth.

Stakeholders also emphasised the need to move beyond projects and initiatives that focus on awareness raising and attitudinal change, to significantly increase the focus on initiatives that address the underlying social and cultural norms that drive violence, particularly sexism, misogyny and harmful masculinities.

**03**

**Strengthening the  
prevention system**

Victoria is arguably a national leader when it comes to improving gender equality and addressing family violence and all forms of violence against women, having built the foundations for a strong prevention system over many decades. Establishing the infrastructure to support the delivery of multiple, mutually reinforcing primary prevention efforts is critical for achieving sustainable, long-term, progressive change.

The key elements of effective prevention infrastructure can be identified as:

- > sustained political leadership
- > private sector, civil society and community leadership
- > a well-resourced, independent women's movement
- > policy, regulatory and legislative reform
- > mechanisms for coordination, collaboration and quality assurance
- > mechanisms for workforce and sector development
- > a strong evidence base informed by ongoing research, practice and evaluation
- > monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

In the period covered by this Report, there have been some significant advances across each of these elements of the prevention system, which are outlined below.

A key development over the past few years in Victoria has been the active discussion amongst stakeholders, sector leaders and policy makers about what is needed to strengthen the prevention system. This has included a recent review by the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor (FVRIM) to understand the scope and maturity of Victoria's primary prevention architecture. The FVRIM review report was not available at the time of writing this report, but the Monitor generously shared early findings, which have been one of many inputs into this section of the report.

The overall picture that emerges from analysis and stakeholder consultation is that Victoria has continued to usefully expand this infrastructure over recent years. This has involved both major new elements (such as the establishment of Respect Victoria) as well as many incremental steps. There is also broad consensus that this needs continued focus to achieve a comprehensive, cohesive and inclusive system. The goodwill and cooperation that exist amongst the growing number of leaders and contributors in the community sector need to be supported by government policy and funding arrangements so that there are clear roles and responsibilities and a shared understanding of how all the elements of the system fit together for collective impact.

## 3.1 Policy, regulatory and legislative reform

Legislative reforms, together with associated regulatory and policy tools, are important in this area not only in terms of their direct impact on society, but also in facilitating and supporting focused primary prevention activity. In this way, they become part of the enabling infrastructure for prevention work. Substantial legislative and policy reform of this nature over the review period will help drive prevention in Victoria over the long term:

- > introduction of the Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018, which included the establishment of Respect Victoria as a statutory entity and dedicated prevention agency
- > introduction of the Gender Equality Act 2020, including the establishment of the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner as a statutory authority, and regulatory requirements that mandate defined public entities to improve gender equality within the workplace and through policies, programs and services
- > amendment to section 26 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, which requires local governments to incorporate measures to prevent and respond to family violence in their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans (amendment in 2017, taking effect in the 2017-2021 plan cycle).
- > proposed Occupational Health and Safety Regulations relating to psychological health, including possible need for prevention plans for issues such as sexual harassment and gendered violence
- > decriminalisation of Sex Work in relation to impact on respect and safety of women engaged in this industry.

The above legislative reforms have been created from a clear legislative foundation for preventing and responding to family violence and all forms of violence against women. The introduction of the *Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018* enshrined the importance of primary prevention in addressing these issues and in doing so set in place a critical piece of the prevention infrastructure by creating Respect Victoria, the first specialist agency dedicated to the prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women.

At the same time a number of prevention policies and plans have also been developed and implemented, signifying the Victorian Government's commitment to gender equality and prevention of violence, as well as setting the vision and directions for prevention work across the state. These policies sit within a broader global international and national context, as well as operating as part of the overarching Victorian family violence reforms, set out in *Ending Family Violence—Victoria's 10-Year Plan for Change*. Key strategies and plans to support effective policy change include:

- > *Free from Violence*: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women
- > *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way—Strong culture, strong peoples, strong families*
- > *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*
- > *Building from strength: 10-year industry plan for family violence prevention and response*
- > Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019-2023.

These policies and plans are supported by rolling action plans that operationalise the Victorian Government's priorities for preventing family violence and promoting gender equality, including the responsibilities and accountabilities of key stakeholders. **Figure 11** sets out the collective framework provided by these policies and plans.

The introduction of these policies and strategies have provided the enabling environment and an overarching guiding framework for government, to address family violence and violence against women. Importantly, this has helped to share the responsibility for addressing these issues across both the community sector and whole of government with these strategies providing greater public accountability and a clear mandate for the funding of prevention programs and initiatives.

These government-led strategies are appropriately long-term, providing a 10-year outlook with shorter sequenced action plans. This is also the first time we have seen an integrated primary prevention to response strategy, but with prevention separately addressed in a stand-alone strategy, as well. To varying extents, these strategies bring to bear the various levers government have available to address these issues, although as with any large-scale, complex reform there are always opportunities for strengthening as we move into the next phase of our prevention journey as a state.




As these specific strategies have been developed, it has also been important for prevention of family violence and violence against women to be clearly embedded in mainstream strategies. In this respect, whole-of-government new state strategies and plans over the past few years in areas such as public health, disability, youth and LGBTIQ+ equality have all helped bolster the focus of *Free from Violence*. This is a positive development, but there is an emerging risk that the prevention task detailed in this report is seen as the sole responsibility of specialist agencies of government rather than shared broadly (see also comment below under Political Leadership).

*“Since the release of Free from Violence; Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence primary prevention work in Victoria has had a lot more visibility than it did three years ago. The conversation has moved from 'what is primary prevention' to a much more sophisticated understanding across government departments, key agencies, and the sector of what is primary prevention and what is needed to create sustainable, evidence-based change.*

**Director of Innovation, Our Watch**



# Global, national and state policy context

 <p><b>INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT</b></p>	<p><b>United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)</b></p>		
 <p><b>NATIONAL CONTEXT</b></p>	<p><b>National plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2012–2022 (1993)</b></p>		<p><b>Second national plan to end violence against women and children</b></p>
 <p><b>VICTORIAN CONTEXT</b></p>	<p>Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)</p>		
	<p><b>Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016)</b></p>		
	<p><b>Ending family violence—Victoria’s 10-year plan for change (2016)</b></p>		
	<p><b>Family violence reform rolling action plans</b></p>		
	<p><b>Overarching commitments to inclusivity and representation in the family violence reform agenda</b></p>		<p>Safe and Strong: A Victorian gender equality strategy (2016)</p>
<p>Everybody Matters: Inclusion and equity statement (2018)</p>	<p>Dhelk Dja: Safe our way—strong culture, strong people’s, strong families (2018)</p>	<p>Nargneit Birrang: Aboriginal Holistic Healing Framework for Family Violence (2019)</p>	<p>New Victorian gender equality strategy</p>
<p><b>Free from violence: Victoria’s strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women (2017)</b></p>	<p><b>Building from strength: 10-year industry plan for family violence prevention and response (2017)</b></p>		<p>Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)</p>
<p>First action plan 2018–2021</p>	<p>Strengthening the foundations: first rolling action plan 2019–2025</p>		<p>Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs)</p>
<p>Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018 (Vic)</p>	<p>Second rolling action plan 2022–2025</p>		
<p>Second action plan 2022–2025</p>	<p>Third rolling action plan 2025–2028</p>		
<p>Third action plan 2025–2028</p>			

**Figure 11:** Global, national and state policy context

**Source:** Adapted from *Free from Violence Second Action Plan*, Victorian Government, 2021

## Gender Equality Act 2020—Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner

The Gender Equality Act 2020 (the Act) came into effect in 2021 to improve workplace gender equality in the Victorian public sector, universities and local councils. The objects of the Act include reference to reduction of gender-based violence, and the Principles of the Act explicitly state that gender equality is a prerequisite for the prevention of family violence and other violence against women and girls.

The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector supports the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner to oversee the implementation of the Act and promote gender equality in the public sector workforce and the broader Victorian community.

The Act requires Victorian public sector organisations with 50 or more employees to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality and to promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services. They must:

- > Develop and implement a Gender Equality Action Plan, which includes results of a workplace gender audit and strategies for achieving workplace gender equality.

- > Publicly report on their progress in relation to workplace gender equality.
- > Complete gender impact assessments when developing policies, programs and services that impact the public, to prevent creating or exacerbating inequality.

Gender Equality Action Plans focus on strategies and measures to improve the seven key areas where workplace gender inequality persists, including sexual harassment.

For many organisations, having to meet the various requirements of the Act, has meant having wide conversations for the first time about gender equality and its relationship to violence against women—elevating the profile of the issue, improving their monitoring of relevant factors underpinning it, and identifying workplace approaches for addressing it.

The Gender Equality Commission is working closely with key prevention sector agencies, particularly Our Watch, GEN VIC and Women's Health Services to support the implementation of the Act.

## 3.2 Leadership for prevention

### Independent Women's Movement

As noted in *Change the Story*, strong, autonomous feminist movements have been shown internationally to be effective in driving impactful and sustainable public policy change to address violence against women<sup>(83)</sup>. In Victoria, the strong advocacy and leadership from women's organisations and feminist movements have been essential for promoting action to prevent family violence and violence against women. Organisations that advocate for a greater focus on violence against women and family violence are but one element of this part of the prevention infrastructure. Community and political mobilisation, including those community networks, collectives, groups and individuals who participate in marches, sign petitions and work across different forms of media, have helped to keep violence against women and family violence front and centre of the policy agenda in Victoria and across Australia.

### Specialist agencies

Many organisations have played an ongoing leadership role in the prevention of violence against women in Victoria over many years and continue to be integral partners in the prevention system. Others have emerged or taken up strong roles in this area much more recently. A major strength of the prevention effort has been the ongoing and leadership of organisations such as Our Watch, Respect Victoria, Safe and Equal, Gender Equity Victoria, regional and state-wide women's health organisations and the Municipal Association Victoria amongst many others.

Stakeholders acknowledged that their specialist expertise, development of evidence and practice resources and facilitation of sector partnerships have been integral to the advancement of prevention in recent years. The number and type of government and non-government entities has also grown, including various government departments and agencies, specialist prevention organisations, service sector organisations and other interested

stakeholders becoming involved in prevention work. This has notably included many agencies that focus on issues affecting diverse population groups and communities.

With this expanded engagement, there has also been a growing feeling amongst stakeholders that leadership roles and responsibilities are not as clearly defined and agreed as they need to be, and that stronger coordination mechanisms are needed. This message has come through a number of consultations including the recent Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor review of primary prevention system architecture.

### Private sector, civil society and community leadership

We have also seen a significant growth in the number and breadth of organisations actively contributing to the prevention of family violence and violence against women in Victoria, including across new sectors and settings. This includes organisations who are involved in state-wide prevention networks and regional prevention partnerships, those engaged in workplace change initiatives and organisations that have been funded to deliver prevention projects and activities under major government programs.

In addition to the growing number of prevention organisations in Victoria, victim survivor advisory structures and advocacy networks have become important mechanisms for consultation and engagement in Victoria. The Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, which was established in 2016, has continued to play a key role informing policy development and service delivery reforms to achieve better outcomes for all Victorians.

Outside of formal government advisory structures, community organisations have also established their own independent victim survivor advisory groups as a mechanism for embedding lived experience in their own work. These groups complement the grassroots victim survivor advocacy networks and advisory bodies that exist

at local and regional levels. More broadly, victim survivors of family violence or violence against women (both in Victoria and throughout Australia) have been pivotal in keeping these issues in the public consciousness and have been engaged in grassroots advocacy and community engagement efforts to drive awareness and education.

There is also an emerging interest and engagement from a number of philanthropic organisations which have important potential to contribute to increase the funding pool available and potentially to test new, higher risk prevention efforts that can be more complex for governments to fund.

### Sustained political leadership

Political leadership for prevention has increased significantly in Victoria in recent years, not only as evidenced by the Victorian Government's reform agenda, but also through the establishment of dedicated authorities such as Respect Victoria and the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner, which are collectively tasked with a critical leadership role in driving systemic and structural change to support gender equality and the prevention of family violence and violence against women.

There is also greater leadership and accountability for prevention across government departments. The Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and Coordination, with the support of Respect Victoria, is responsible for leading the delivery of Victoria's *Free from Violence* Strategy, and several other departments and agencies have a responsibility for specific initiatives under *Free from Violence*, including Family Safety Victoria, the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

*If we had a whole-of-government response to family violence, and we had all government departments, whether it's education, justice, housing and homelessness, if they all had a statement of commitment or standard, we could start to look at the role of the whole government rather than just Family Safety Victoria (FSV)... If there was a broader overarching policy framework that went across the whole sector around family violence, then I think there would be greater capacity to measure early intervention and prevention type activities.*

NGO Interviewee

The result of this has been the incremental 'mainstreaming' of prevention across new areas of government business. Stronger impact will be seen if this is taken further to secure shared responsibility and joint accountability across government. The Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor (FVRIM) has commented on this issue and pointed to the parallel way in which all government departments have become engaged in family violence early intervention through the family violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management framework (MARAM). At the same time, stakeholders see an emerging risk that certain parts of government draw back because they see other units within government having more specific responsibility.

An example of this is the commitment that the Health portfolio makes to prevention of violence against women through its public and community health promotion plans and funding. This has been a key contribution for many years, but some stakeholders have expressed concern that the issue is not as strongly prioritised within broad public health programs and not subject to specific reporting. Maintaining the current significant political leadership—including the importance of specific areas taking a leadership role within their portfolio, as part of a whole of government approach to prevention—is critical to maintaining and further embedding the current commitment to prevention.

## 3.3 Mechanisms for coordination, collaboration and quality

Clearly defined coordination and collaboration mechanisms are integral for promoting consistency between legislative and policy reforms, programs, communications campaigns and other prevention efforts. This requires the deliberate development of, and investment in, quality standards, governance mechanisms to support coordination and advisory bodies.

Consultations have highlighted the need for greater clarity on the role, purpose and objectives of Respect Victoria, and a clearer delineation between their role and that of the Office for Prevention of Family Violence and Coordination and Our Watch. Some stakeholders have articulated the importance of ensuring that resourcing for state-wide agencies tasked with leading prevention efforts is commensurate to the scale and remit of their role.

Furthermore, stakeholders have expressed the need for a clear coordinating function to oversee the funding and implementation of prevention activity across the growing prevention system.

Stakeholders reported that the coordination mechanisms for prevention have matured significantly over the past 12 months. In particular, the Prevention Sector Reference Group has played a key role in shaping the *Free from Violence* second action plan, working in close collaboration to ensure the plan represents both government and sector priorities for prevention.

Stakeholders acknowledged that the new governance arrangements represent a significant shift in the enabling infrastructure for prevention, and that they have the potential to strengthen coordination of the prevention elements of the reform. They have also identified a number of priorities to support the consolidation of progress on governance made to date, including the need to:

- > clarify the roles and responsibilities of key prevention agencies and organisations involved in prevention across all sectors
- > agree on and establish key accountability measures and mechanisms to ensure all stakeholders are working towards a coherent plan and shared goals
- > improve integration and communication between prevention, intervention and response elements of the reform governance structure, including consideration of appropriate membership of each of the governance levels and groups
- > improve connections with prevention stakeholders across women's health services and local governments
- > improve integration of sector partnerships and networks into the overarching governance structure, including better oversight of regional primary prevention partnerships.

As a key commitment under the *Free from Violence* second action plan, Respect Victoria—in consultation with key stakeholders, including government—is leading work to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different agencies and organisations across the prevention system, particularly those involved in planning and delivering prevention initiatives. There is also a strong focus across government departments and agencies on establishing new partnerships to increase resourcing and collaboration.

## Partnerships

Prevention networks and partnerships have been integral to the prevention effort in Victoria for over a decade. The Regional Primary Prevention Partnerships, Partners in Prevention (PiP) Network and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) networks in particular have provided critical prevention infrastructure, sector leadership and a level of coordination and built a strong specialist prevention workforce across sectors over many years. These networks and partnerships have contributed significantly to the development of the prevention system and effective prevention approaches, which created a strong foundation on which prevention activity has been able to build on following the Royal Commission into Family Violence (more information on specific activities can be found under the *Local and regional place-based activities* section).

Women's Health Services have a long history of leading and driving gender equality and primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria, particularly through their role as convenors and coordinators of Regional Primary Prevention Partnerships (**Figure 12**). There are nine regional partnerships across Victoria, which together bring together hundreds of organisations across local government, health and community services, education, sport and recreation, arts and culture and other community settings to collaborate on regional planning, resource development, preventions programs, campaigns and events and policy advocacy<sup>(84)</sup>.

### **Regional Partnerships—Women’s Health Grampians (Communities of Respect and Equality Alliance)**

Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) is an alliance of organisations, businesses, clubs and groups that share a vision for safe, equal and respectful communities. Members of CoRE commit to promote gender equality and challenge discrimination and sexism in their workplaces and communities.

CoRE is led by Women’s Health Grampians (WHG) and has a member base of 120 organisations, including all 11 local councils in the region. CoRE operates across the Grampians Region, and CoRE’s Regional Consultants build the capacity of CoRE members to implement sustainable changes that support gender equality within their organisations and spheres of influence.

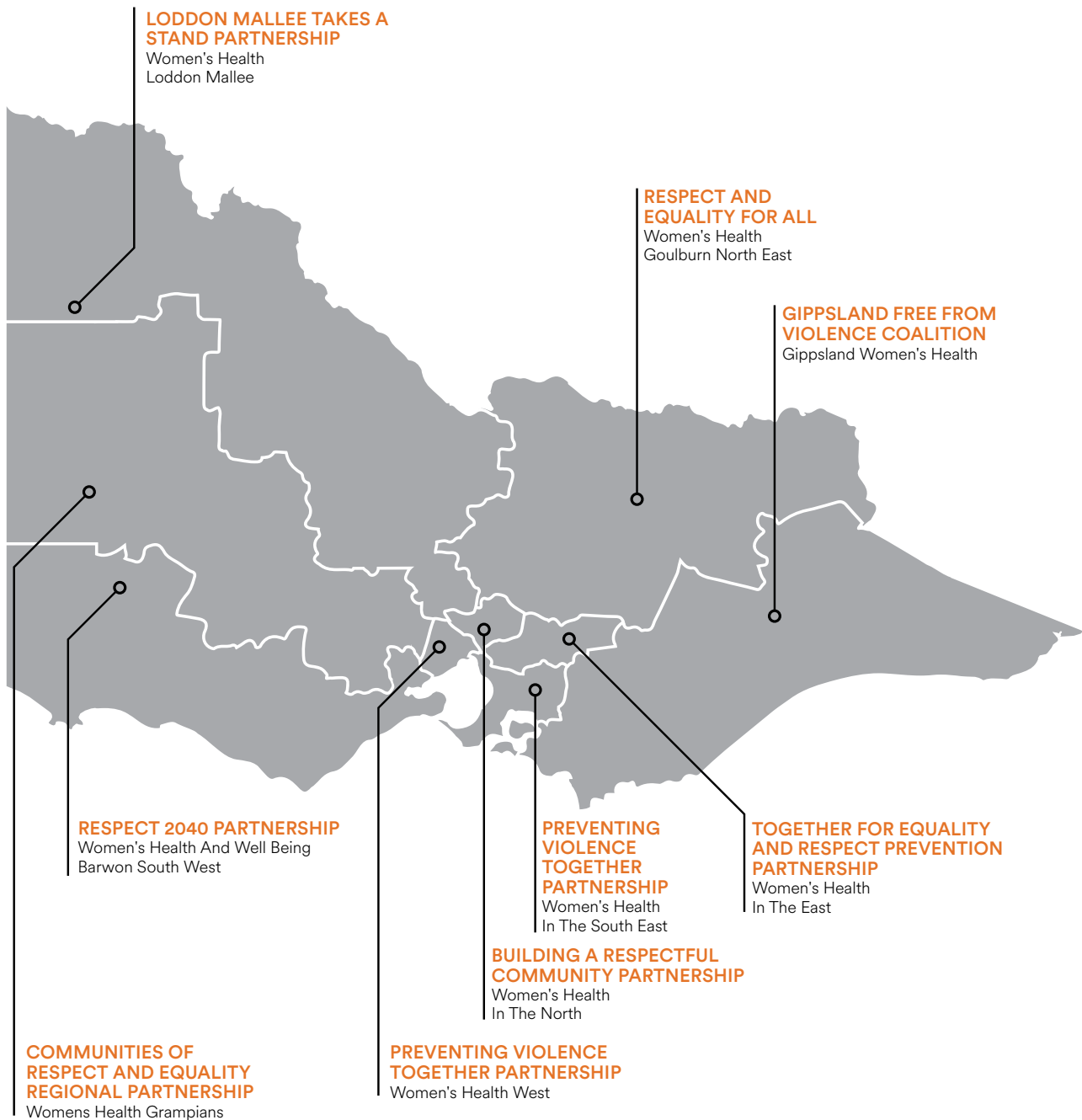
Members have significant choice in the way they embrace CoRE. They attend events, have access to a wide range of resources and training programs and can draw support from the Community of Practice. A suite of projects helps to support the CoRE mission in more targeted ways, such as Act@Play, supporting local sporting clubs and associations to achieve gender equality outcomes; or Equality for All, seeking to raise awareness of diversity and empower local women to lead change within their communities.

CoRE members are expected to develop a CoRE Action Plan to progress gender equality within their organisations, supported by their Regional Consultant. For example, one CoRE member describes:

“Our approach, with our Regional Consultant, has been to provide small but powerful resources to members: crafting a governance statement, providing images and imagery training and supporting our members to engage with CoRE at their own pace, according to their focus and needs.”

In the past four years, the majority of members have either made significant progress or have an Action Plan in place. As more groups and organisations continue to take action within CoRE’s support framework, more people collaborate to drive cultural change, reduce barriers to gender equality and re-frame cultural norms and acceptable behaviour.

# Regional Primary Prevention Partnerships



**Figure 12:** Regional Women's Health Services and Prevention Partnerships  
Reproduced in amended form with permission of GEN VIC



The critical role of regional primary prevention partnerships has been recognised and supported by the Victorian Government through additional funding under *Free from Violence* to sustain local collaboration on primary prevention initiatives and systems change. A number of partnerships have recently developed new regional strategies and action plans, which set a vision and priorities for preventing violence and promoting gender equality at the local level. They also continue to play an integral role in the development of the local primary prevention workforce, evaluation practice and evidence of effective prevention approaches, and are increasingly demonstrating the collective impact of collaborative effort at the local level.

The Partners in Prevention (PiP) Network was established in 2007 to provide support to practitioners working in education, early childhood and community sectors supporting schools with the delivery of respectful relationships and consent education and primary prevention activities in education settings. With the increased level of prevention activity in Victoria over recent years, the focus and reach of the PiP Network has expanded significantly. The membership base of the network has grown to over 2,500 people and now supports practitioners across a broader range of sectors and settings, including workplaces, health and community service organisations, faith-based organisations, the arts sector, sports sector and government sectors<sup>(85)</sup>. Their expansion work has been supported by additional funding from the Victorian Government to drive the ongoing development of the prevention sector and workforce across the state, including through the delivery of training and capacity-building initiatives, communities of practice and the development of practice guidelines, tools and resources.

Similarly, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) Gender Equality and Preventing Violence Against Women and all forms of Gender-based Violence Network has been operating since 2010, with its membership and level of engagement increasing substantially over the past few years. This is indicative of strong leadership and coordination from MAV, which has resulted in the long-term commitment of local governments and their increasing level of involvement in primary prevention work. The network continues to play a

strategic role in building the knowledge, expertise and skills of local governments to prevent gender-based violence and promote gender equality, as well as facilitate collaboration and partnerships between Councils and other sectors<sup>(86)</sup>.

*MAV provides strong prevention infrastructure. It is a sustained network, where people can come together to discuss what's working.*

**NGO Informant**

Over the past few years, MAV and the network have also played an important role supporting Councils to develop and implement prevention initiatives and programs under *Free from Violence*, including the Local Government Guide for Preventing Family Violence and all Forms of Violence Against Women, participation in annual 16 Days of Activism Campaign activities and the various projects funded under the *Free from Violence* Local Government Grants Program.

*The Regional Primary Prevention Partnerships (RPPP) are an example of best practice in Victoria. No one else in the country has them. It's one of the reasons the Royal Commission's recommendations have been able to be delivered so well. When the Royal Commission recommendations landed there was already a 500+ organisation strong commitment, built over a long period of time, to the reform agenda.*

**CEO, GEN VIC**

While there has been close collaboration between the Regional Partnerships and local councils, there is some concern amongst stakeholders that the respective roles of these two groups—and the flow of support and funding to each—need clarification.

Recognising the leadership role these partnerships have played and continue to play in prevention in Victoria, it is important that state-wide prevention efforts and the work of the Partnerships and other local agencies align to state-wide governance and coordination structures are planned collaboratively.

Following on from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, new prevention networks and partnerships have also been established to support the development, implementation and coordination of prevention activities at local levels across the state. A notable example has been the establishment of ten Elder Abuse Prevention Networks, comprised of government, health and community sector organisations who work collaboratively at a local level on shared objectives and activities to prevent elder abuse. To date they have played a key role building the evidence base on elder abuse, developing interagency protocols, toolkits and resources, leading community engagement and awareness raising activities and informing the development of an elder abuse framework for Victoria.

## Governance

Strong governance is an essential component of the prevention system, as it ensures effective oversight and integration of policy and programs, communication and collaboration between stakeholders and ultimately accountability for the successful implementation of system-wide reform.

Victorian Government governance structures and mechanisms to support the prevention system have been continuously evolving, in line with broader changes to the overarching family violence reform governance arrangements. As it stands, the Family Violence Reform Advisory Group and the Family Violence Reform Board provide the overarching governance mechanisms for the reforms. The Advisory Group is responsible for providing expert advice to government on system-level impacts of the family violence reform and making recommendations to achieve an improved whole-of-system approach to prevention and response. The Advisory Group is supported by a series of working groups that are responsible for specific priority areas under the Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change—Rolling Action Plan 2020–2023, including the Primary Prevention Sector Reference Group<sup>(87)</sup>.

The Primary Prevention Sector Reference Group is co-chaired by Respect Victoria and the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and Coordination, and provides an important forum for sector stakeholders shape government policy and

investment in family violence and violence against women. It also provides a mechanism for ensuing government accountability back to the sector about how the reforms are being implemented. More recently, the Family Violence Reform Board expanded its remit to include prevention, which has elevated the visibility of the prevention effort as a key priority under the family violence reforms<sup>(87)</sup>.

In their recent review on reform governance, the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor made several recommendations for improving governance for prevention, which were either implemented or well under way by early 2022<sup>(87)</sup>. These included:

- > improving the visibility of the reforms as a whole among sector stakeholders
- > giving formal oversight and accountability for the *Free from Violence* strategy to the reform board
- > formally engaging other government partners who have a direct implementation role under *Free from Violence*
- > undertaking consultation with relevant sectors and partners to inform further improvements to the governance structures for primary prevention.

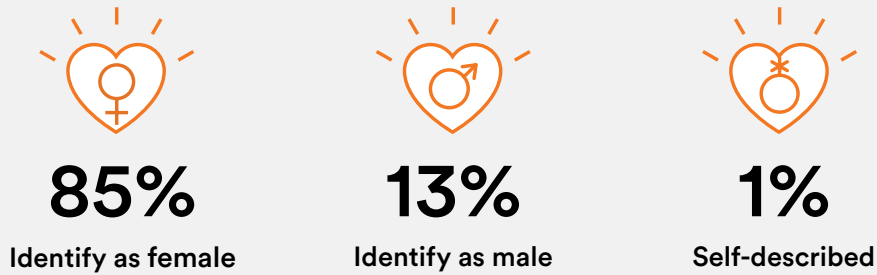
*I had hoped that Respect Victoria would do in part what I think Government has really struggled to do, and that is to create the sense of state-wide coordination. I think Respect Victoria has got a great opportunity to take on the coordination between senior political leadership and the grassroots work, and help to integrate it.*

NGO Informant

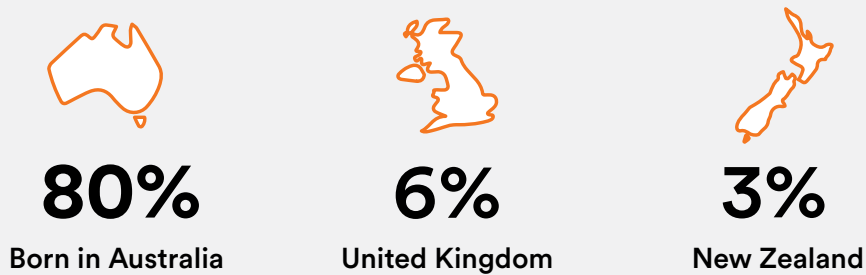
# 3.4 Mechanisms for workforce and sector development

## Snapshot of family violence prevention workforce in Victoria

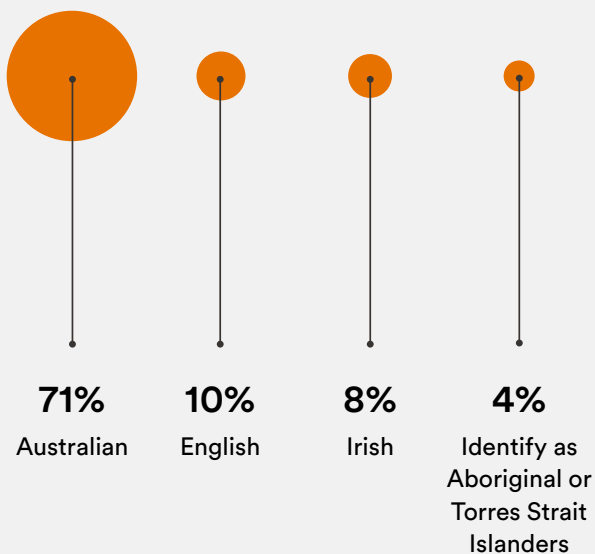
### Individuals in the workforce:



### Places of birth:



### Cultural backgrounds/ethnicities:



### Employment conditions:

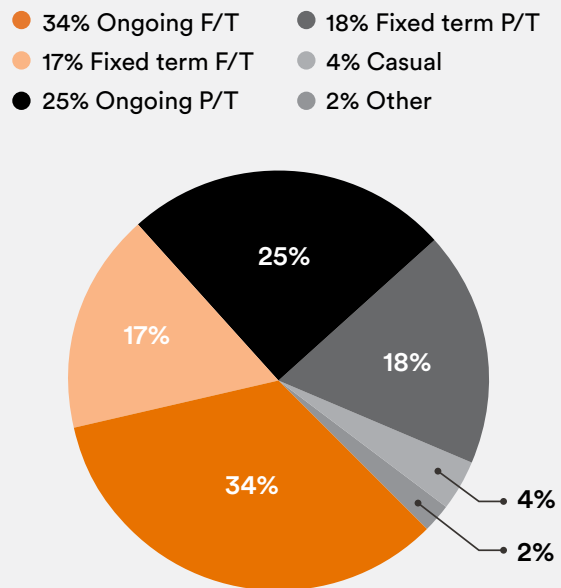


Figure 13: Snapshot of family violence prevention workforce Victoria

Source: Family Safety Victoria. 2019–20 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence

Workforce development has been increasingly recognised in policy and strategy documents as a key element of an effective prevention system and a critical foundation for supporting the planning, implementation and evaluation of work to prevent violence against women and their children<sup>(2)</sup>. Progress in prevention depends critically on focused efforts to better define and grow the workforce required to meet the existing demand for prevention activities, to build the capability of those who are currently working in primary prevention and to increase the reach, uptake and impact of prevention efforts, informed by the latest evidence.

There are several key overarching strategies and frameworks which articulate the Victorian Government's plan for developing the primary prevention workforce, most notably the *Building from Strength: 10-year Industry Plan*.

*Building from Strength* outlines the long-term vision for the workforces that prevent and respond to family violence. The first rolling action plan under the industry plan, *Strengthening the Foundations*, outlines seven focus areas to support achievement of the long-term workforce vision<sup>(72)</sup>:

- > building workforce capability
- > enhancing training architecture
- > recruiting and retaining specialist workforces
- > strengthening leadership in the specialist sectors
- > prioritising health, safety and wellbeing
- > building sector and organisational capability
- > working in a connected and cohesive system.

The Centre for Workforce Excellence, which sits within the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, has played a key policy and leadership role in developing the primary prevention workforce, including overseeing the implementation of *Building from Strength* and its Rolling Action Plans. They work in partnership with and support a range of workforces, including the family violence response and prevention specialist and contributor workforces to strengthen workforce capability, and also funded the development of the Prevention of Family Violence and Violence Against Women Capability

Framework which identifies the the foundational skill sets required to deliver prevention of violence against women initiatives.

*There is stronger recognition of a primary prevention sector and a workforce, and the value of that work now, which I think is incredibly important... There is a significant opportunity to sharpen and build on that work through the industry plan, which includes prevention.*

Government Informant

### The prevention workforce

The Royal Commission-led reforms have led to increased demand for skilled prevention managers and practitioners across Victoria. Developments in the primary prevention workforce have paralleled increases in the size and scope of the family violence service system workforce. While the necessary skills are distinct, there continues to be a significant and useful cross-over of workers between these systems including within individual agencies.

The prevention workforce has been defined broadly as comprising two parts<sup>(88)</sup>:

- > Prevention practitioners are those who “specialise in designing, implementing and monitoring actions to prevention violence against women”. This includes but is not limited to those working in agencies that have a specific or primary focus on addressing gender equality, women's health, family violence, sexual violence or violence against women.
- > Prevention contributors are “those who are located within specific sectors or disciplines where participation in prevention of violence against women practice may be part of their role but is not their primary focus” (for example a teacher in a school or a human resources manager in a workplace). The language of ‘contributor’ is not to understate the critical roles they play often over extended periods. This contributor workforce will over time form the largest part of the prevention workforce as activity is embedded across all settings where people live, work, learn, socialise and play.

Over the past few years, the primary prevention workforce in Victoria has developed alongside the increased scope and scale of gender equality initiatives, which intersect significantly with primary prevention work. There have also been significant developments in other workforces that play important roles in implementing primary prevention in specific settings and with specific communities—such as the Respectful Relationships Education Coordinators in the Victorian school system.

Stakeholders spoke of the extensive experience and deep prevention practice expertise of the specialist primary prevention workforce in Victoria, which has developed over several decades of leading prevention work nationally. There is a strong recognition of the need for a dedicated workforce to drive prevention work, and over the past three years has been a considerable focus on defining who and what the prevention workforce is, as well as identifying what is needed to build and sustain it going forward. Despite this, many stakeholders still find it difficult to define precisely who the primary prevention workforce is and comment that strategic workforce development efforts or smaller scale workforce capability initiatives are often impacted by shifts in funding and organisational priorities.

This workforce has grown in size and diversity, and there is a stronger understanding of primary prevention language, approaches and evidence-based practice across a broad range of sectors and settings. However, there have been ongoing challenges to the sustainability of the workforce due to the often short-term, insecure nature of prevention roles, and high levels of turnover that result in practice knowledge and expertise being lost across key sectors. This has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused major disruptions to the operations of most organisations, including the utilisation and overall structure of their workforce.

The 2019–20 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence included responses from over 500 self-identified primary prevention practitioners<sup>(89)</sup>. This number needs to be treated with great caution as it is not comprehensive and does not include the contributor workforce (for example, the thousands of school personnel engaged in Respectful Relationships Education).

The Census also demonstrated the relatively short tenure of much of the primary prevention workforce, with the majority of participants (54%) only having worked in their current role for less than five years. This may be due to high turnover linked in turn to short-term project-based funding periods, but is also likely due to the fact that the number of prevention roles significantly increased as a result of the funding dedicated to prevention since the Royal Commission.

The primary prevention staff captured in the 2019–20 Census work across a broad range of organisations and sectors, including community organisations, local council/government, policy, research and advocacy, community health, women's health, health promotion, legal services, multicultural services and more. Activities undertaken by primary prevention practitioners are also broad and include developing and maintaining partnerships and networks, project planning and management, community development and education, organisational change, social marketing, training and capacity building<sup>(89)</sup>.

### Workforce development initiatives

The Victorian Government has made some important early investments in training and capability building in the primary prevention workforce over the last three years. This has supported a stronger prevention system through consistency in understanding, approach and language used to address the drivers of family violence and violence against women. This work responds to findings from the Census that while prevention practitioners generally have a high level of education, only half (49%) felt very confident that they had enough training and experience to perform their role effectively.

### Dedicated training

Specialised training for the primary prevention workforce has largely been led by Safe and Equal and Women's Health Services who have designed and delivered a range of professional development and capability building opportunities for primary prevention practitioners and contributors at different stages of their careers, including training on primary prevention aligned to the capability framework, unpacking resistance and bystander training. Many of these courses have been funded

under the *Free from Violence Workforce Capacity Building Project* and have been effective in building practitioner's knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver evidence-based PVAW initiatives. For example, 94% of participants who completed Safe and Equal's Prevention in Practice training across 2020–21 and 2021–22 reported that they felt that the training had deepened their understanding of evidence-based practice in primary prevention. The training also had a large impact on practitioners' confidence, with all participants reporting an increase in confidence to either design, implement or evaluate best practice prevention initiatives<sup>(90)</sup>.

Building regional capability in primary prevention has also been a significant achievement. Women's Health Services have led regional primary prevention partnerships across Victoria in the delivery of workforce capacity and capability programs. In 2019, Women's Health Services delivered training to 7,099 participants across 42,885 hours largely focused on the prevention of violence against women including focus on gender equity, bystander action, introduction to the prevention of violence against women, healthy masculinities and intersectional perspectives on family violence<sup>(91)</sup>.

Feedback from the Census described above also indicates a need for leadership and management development support within the specialist prevention sector. Since 2018, Family Safety Victoria has funded a leadership program—Fast Track—a 10-week intensive leadership program that provides mid-career and senior practitioners within both the family violence response and primary prevention sectors with the leadership skills to advance their careers. There has been an ongoing demand for leadership and professional development demonstrated through applicant numbers, alumni referrals, retention rates and consistent positive participant feedback.

### Communities of Practice and other collaborative forums

State-wide communities of practice and networks have been successful in reaching a large part of the prevention workforce and increasing the knowledge and connection between practitioners.

The Partners in Prevention (PiP) Network has grown in reach and scope in recent years, currently convening a network comprised of over 2,500 practitioners across Victoria<sup>(92)</sup>. Evaluations of PiP in 2018 and 2019 demonstrate the success of the project in building the capability and expertise of the growing primary prevention workforce. Key findings indicate that PiP has been effective by:

- > providing evidence-based advice, information and resources, which have increased PiP members understanding of prevention practice concepts
- > creating valued opportunities for practitioners to connect, share knowledge and challenges and problem solve together.

The Municipal Association of Victoria's Gender Equality and Preventing Violence Against Women and all forms of Gender-Based Violence Network is also widely considered a leading example of an effective and collaborative knowledge-sharing and capability-building forum. The Network has been proactive in increasing accessibility of capacity-building activities for regional, rural remote councils, which has enabled online participation via web conferencing since 2018.

### Vocational and higher education and training

Embedding prevention and gender equity into relevant vocational courses has also been a priority. *The Free from Violence Second Action Plan* includes a commitment to strengthen training and education pathways for those entering the prevention workforce. Work related to this commitment has included the development of the Course in Contributing to the Prevention of Family Violence and Violence Against Women, which is a course to be accredited to deliver skills and knowledge for the prevention contributor workforce.

In addition, the Gender Equity Training Project, delivered by Women's Health Victoria between July 2018 and December 2020, produced gender equity education programs which are being delivered in the vocational education system. The programs were developed in partnership with experts in gender equity, intersectionality and education and informed by evidence on appropriate pedagogical approaches required to teach gender equity<sup>(93)</sup>.

An evaluation of the pilot project found that students gained important knowledge and skills in thinking about and practising gender equity, with all students demonstrating a positive shift in gender equity readiness post training<sup>(93)</sup>. The pilot project has been completed, with training providers now funded and equipped to provide the accredited Course in Gender Equity in settings across Victoria.

The development of this and other accredited primary prevention training within vocational education systems provide important opportunities for many students and workers across various sectors and industries. Going forward, it is critical to ensure that such courses (including higher education qualifications) are both designed and delivered by professionals with a good level of expertise in the field, and that they use sound conceptual frameworks (a challenge given the relatively small number of specialist workers and accredited trainers in the area).

### Findings of workforce development reviews

It is too early in the investment cycle to fully assess the overall impact of all the initiatives outlined above, but a number of structured consultations undertaken recently through government agencies, as well as consultations specifically undertaken for this report, identify some clear areas for focus:

- > **Scale and sustainability:** The growth reported above reflects a positive outlook for primary prevention workforce in Victoria. Yet there remains a significant challenge to offer more secure and longer-term employment, which is critical to developing the skills of individuals and sustaining the field as a whole. The coming period provides an opportunity to improve the structures of employment available in this area and to continue the move towards being able to offer rewarding career pathways to workers who may move in and out of this specific field of work as well as those who see it as a long-term option.
- > **Enhancing primary prevention capabilities and practice:** Work is required to clearly articulate the knowledge, skills and capabilities required for effective primary prevention work, including the main types of primary prevention activities. The review of the Primary Prevention Capability

Framework due to be completed in mid-late 2023 will address this. Further to this, leaders in the field point to the need for practice frameworks and standards to achieve consistent application.

- > **Workforce leadership and oversight:** An important issue in primary prevention workforce development in Victoria is the need for clearer leadership and governance. This includes defining the roles and responsibilities of key agencies involved in workforce development, expert oversight of standards and quality assurance mechanisms and collective monitoring progress in workforce development.
- > **Responsiveness to diversity and intersectionality:** A clear need has been identified through program evaluations and stakeholder consultations to increase the capability of primary prevention organisations and staff to work in ways that are culturally safe and sensitive with communities who experience other forms of marginalisation, discrimination or oppression. This is linked to the need to enhance the diversity of the prevention workforce itself to better reflect the diversity of the communities with which they need to work.
- > **Aboriginal self-determination and cultural safety:** Achieving Aboriginal self-determination will be enabled partly by better resourcing Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to lead workforce development for prevention and by greater flexibility in funding models for this work.
- > **Focus on working with men and boys:** Stakeholders point to a particular need to build the capacity of the primary prevention workforce to work effectively with men and boys. This includes equipping practitioners with the language and skills they need to effectively engage with men and boys on topics such as healthy masculinities and respectful relationships. Lessons can be learnt from the Respectful Relationships, community agencies such as Jesuit Social Services with a long history of work with young men, and ACCOs which take a holistic approach to family violence response and prevention work with men and boys.

## 3.5 Strong evidence base informed by ongoing research, practice and evaluation

Research is a pivotal function in preventing family violence and all forms of violence against women. It builds our understanding of the drivers and reinforcing factors that can lead to violence and the strategies and activities that create change.

In the period of this report, primary prevention research activity across Victoria has increased with the following results:

- > The number of researchers undertaking research and developing both undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the prevention of family violence domain has increased.
- > Research collaborations across academic institutions and with field-based organisations, have expanded. This has resulted in the conduct of research which combines both academic and practice expertise that can be applied ‘in real time’.
- > Improved processes for translation and dissemination of research findings have been developed. This has resulted in development of evidence-based tools and resources to guide prevention practice in a range of domains.
- > Activity in building the systems and partnerships needed to achieve required research outputs has been initiated.
- > The evidence base underpinning models of good prevention practice has been strengthened.
- > Gaps in our knowledge are better understood.

Improved access to data and evidence has informed a better understanding of intersecting factors that need to be considered when developing frameworks, strategies and interventions to prevent family violence and violence against women across specific cohorts.

### Strategic commitment to strengthen research in the prevention of all forms of violence against women and family violence

The *Free from Violence First Action Plan* (2018–2021) recognised the growing body of research and evidence on the causes and impacts of family violence and violence against women, while also identifying critical gaps including research required to improve our understanding of factors which intersect with family violence and strategies that need to be developed to prevent this violence across cohorts. Consequently, research was supported with focus on violence against women with disability, LGBTIQ+ people and elder abuse and ways to engage men and boys in prevention efforts.

The *Second Action Plan* (2022–25) includes a number of priority actions based on research across a range of areas including Aboriginal-led prevention action research, program evaluations to build evidence, the development of standards to support effective programming and activities to support research coordination.

*Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way—Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families* (2018) commits to developing an evidence base on what works to support Aboriginal people and communities to prevent, respond to and heal from family violence. It also prioritises strengthening the capacity of services and workforces to drive Aboriginal-led and informed data collection, evaluation and research. Dhelk Dja working groups focused on Aboriginal-led prevention and Aboriginal-led and informed innovation. Data and research have brought greater focus to Aboriginal-led culturally appropriate and participative research and the importance of data sovereignty.



These plans are reinforced by Victoria's first-ever Whole of Government Family Violence Research Agenda 2021–2024 led by Family Safety Victoria (FSV) which provides a platform to support research that fills gaps in the evidence base across prevention, early intervention and response. Respect Victoria is strategically placed to guide and contribute to this agenda whilst also leading the development of research which meets the immediate needs of the prevention field.

### National agencies

Our Watch and the Australian National Research Organisation on Women's Safety (ANROWS), established under the National Plan to *Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children* (2010–2022), have made sector-wide contributions to primary prevention research during the reporting period. Strongly supported by Victoria, the work of these organisations has included the auditing or collation of research (for example through databases), development of conceptual frameworks for primary prevention, production of research products and translation of research to inform practice across the country.

Research products from Our Watch involving Victorian agencies have included: Respectful Relationships education in schools: Evidence paper (2021); Pornography, young people and preventing violence against women background paper (2020); Men in focus: unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women (2019) and Challenging gender stereotypes in the early years: the power of parents (2018).

ANROWS has funded or undertaken a range of prevention focused research projects including a 'What Works' project from which several publications about what works in primary prevention have been released. The 2020–2022 ANROWS Core Grant Research Program identifies priorities in data including the National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS). Priority research topics (primarily in responding to violence, but also with some focus on prevention) for this period have focused on children and young people, understanding the intersecting drivers of violence against women, sexual violence and harassment, what works to prevent violence

against women and what works in responding to violence against women.

Rainbow Health Australia (formerly Rainbow Health Victoria) based with La Trobe University has played a significant role over this period in building solid research capacity and evidence—as profiled earlier in this report.

### Victorian research organisations

The breadth and quality of primary prevention research in Victoria over this reporting period has emerged through a diversity of pathways including traditional institutional research publication, practice partnerships between delivery agencies and research institutions and dedicated researchers or research units in the not-for-profit and private sectors.

At a state-wide level, Respect Victoria has initially existed as a commissioner of research, partnering with a variety of academic institutions and community-based organisations to deliver research projects across several key areas, with findings disseminated through forums, webinars and sector networks. Over the period of this review, Respect Victoria has commissioned several significant pieces of research each year with particular emphasis on research into the drivers of different forms of family violence and action research on prevention approaches, as well as data collection to better understand community attitudes. Increasingly, Respect Victoria will also focus more strongly on research translation to support policy, practice and communications outcomes in prevention.

The organisation has also commenced work to identify research priorities and gaps in the primary prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women (see below). An important piece of work has also been initiated with the Australian Institute of Family Studies and relevant experts to summarise existing research to enhance our understanding of 11 distinct forms of family violence and violence against women. This will identify similarities and differences existing across the different forms of violence and inform prevention approaches which can be applied.

Several Victorian universities have established research networks dedicated to addressing and preventing family violence and all forms of violence against women through innovative research, evaluation, knowledge translation, education and training. These include Deakin University (Deakin Research on Violence Against Women Network), La Trobe University (La Trobe Violence Against Women Research Network), Monash University (Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre), RMIT (Gendered Violence and Abuse Research Alliance) and the University of Melbourne (Melbourne Research Alliance to End Violence against women). These research networks take an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together diverse expertise across the spectrum of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

Several not-for-profit and community-based organisations have co-led projects with university partners, and some have created dedicated researcher positions or established purpose-driven research centres that have undertaken work on specific forms of violence against women and family violence, including prevention. Organisations making important contributions to this research include, but are not limited to, the Equality Institute, the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, InTouch, Thorne Harbour Health and drummond street services. These agencies bring an important perspective to the research on violence because their work often intersects with other key social justice and social priorities of the host organisation. In particular, their research methodologies are often action-oriented, bringing a critical lens to the causes and manifestations of diverse forms of violence and potential strategies for change.

### Key research themes

Respect Victoria has identified a range of key research themes pursued over the past few years directly relevant to this field. This is not based on an exhaustive survey but on broad monitoring of academic and practice-based research, and intelligence gathered through key informants:

- > primary prevention in the context of disasters and COVID-19

- > prevention of sexual violence and harassment
- > the causes of, and experiences of, violence for LGBTIQ+ communities
- > the causes and manifestations of violence for diverse women and girls with disabilities
- > understanding and preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children
- > prevention of elder abuse and violence against older women
- > children and young people as victims and perpetrators of family violence
- > the needs and experiences of young women
- > engaging men and boys in primary prevention and understanding the links between masculinity and violence against women
- > primary prevention of family violence and violence against women in migrant and refugee communities.

More information on specific research undertaken across these themes over the past three years is provided in **Appendix 4**.

### Review of research gaps and priorities

In 2020 Respect Victoria undertook a survey to gather perspectives from Victorian academics, government staff and community practitioner organisations on research priorities in primary prevention. Feedback indicates a desire for more longitudinal data on what works to prevent violence against women and the importance of co-design methodologies in this process.

*Building the evidence base is the next thing. I am talking about a very long piece—building the evidence base on effective programs as well as on interventions over time. You need to do the longitudinal evaluation work, not just short-term program evaluations.*

NGO Informant

Several key themes in terms of types or contexts for violence emerged from the survey as summarised below.

Amongst areas of interest for further research were cyber abuse, sexual violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), child-to-parent abuse, financial abuse, stalking and reproductive coercion.

The survey also asked respondents to nominate themes in regard to the focus for research into different aspects of prevention design and practice.

### ‘Big picture’ topics/themes

Intersectionality, an area that has received increased research focus in the past three years, was identified as a big picture topic of interest. So too was working with men and boys and masculinities, backlash and resistance, attitudes and behaviours towards violence (through the last NCAS survey) and bystander action. It should be noted the survey was completed before the onset of COVID-19.

In 2020 researchers from La Trobe University conducted the Respect Victoria Evidence Review to assess current evaluation research on the primary prevention of family violence (FV) and violence against women (VAW). The review found a lack of separation between primary and secondary prevention across many studies internationally. It also identified gaps in intimate partner violence (IPV) research; other forms of family violence such as elder abuse; reproductive coercion; adult targeted (and potentially) universal populations in relation to sexual assault, harassment and stalking across a broader range of contexts such as workplaces, public transport and public spaces. It also identified a need for better evidence on work with particular population groups (disabled, Aboriginal people, migrant and refugee, LGBTIQ+) and on how to target men and boys in Australia to engage with primary prevention.

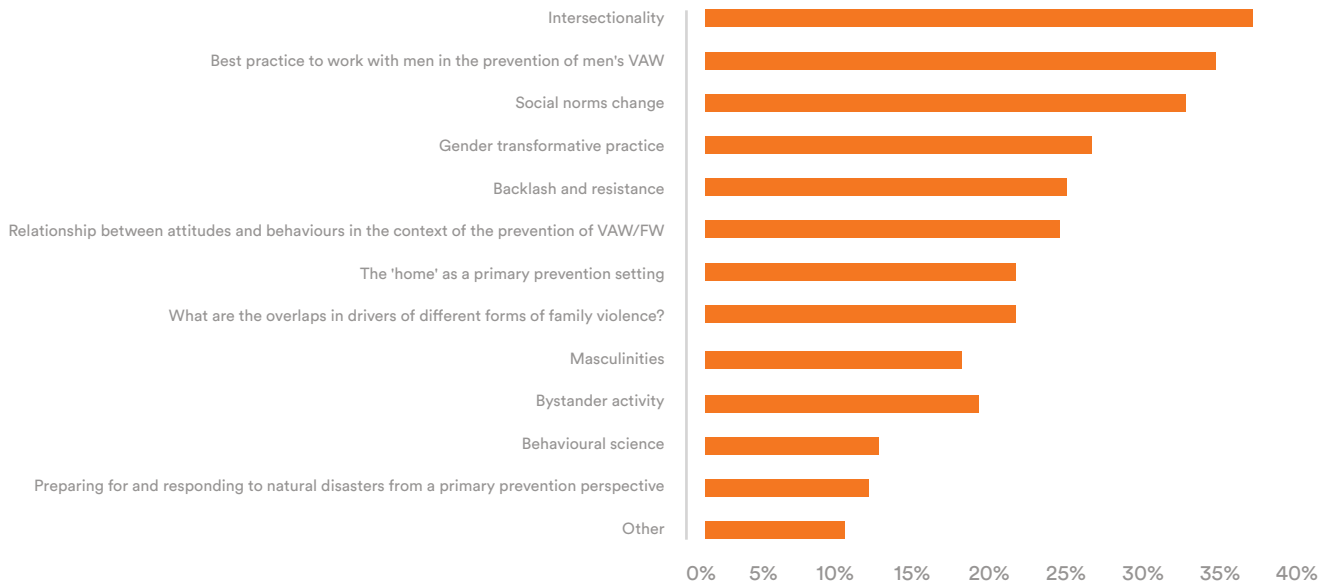
### Research dissemination

Increased dissemination of research has occurred in the reporting period, especially through online forums and seminars since the COVID-19 pandemic. Online events have provided a low-cost mechanism for increasing awareness of research. The result has been a much wider level of participation, especially from people with disabilities, people in rural areas and those residing large distances away. Rainbow Health Victoria noted this trend after having attained substantial state-wide and national reach for the online webinar to release *Pride in Prevention: A guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ communities*.

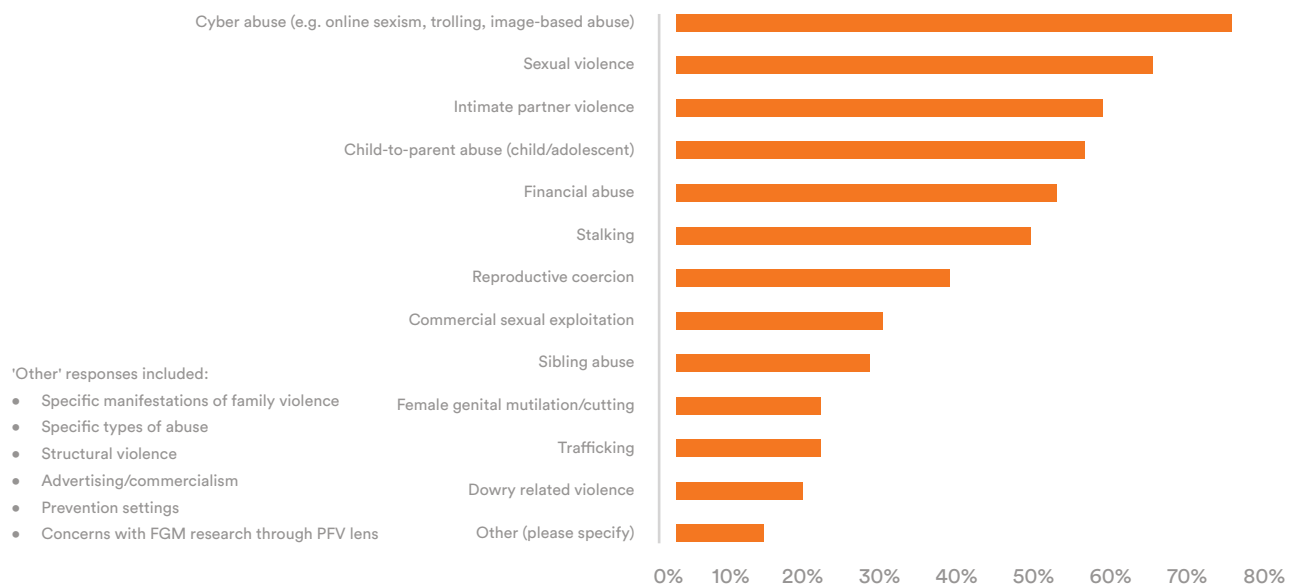
The availability of online spaces has transformed the work of many agencies and increased the reach of their activities, including communities of practice, launches, forums, and opportunities to meet with national partners and funders in other states. This has meant rural and regional practitioners and organisations have felt much more included.

The Respect Victoria *Research Seminar Series: Building the evidence to stop violence before it starts* was launched in 2020 to share results from its first four action research projects. These webinars addressed the prevention of violence against women with disability, elder abuse, *preventing family violence for LGBTIQ+ parented families* and a suite of research on the impact of COVID-19 aligning with the drivers of elder abuse, LGBTIQ+ family violence as well as the impact on primary prevention practitioners.

**Priority areas for further research within the primary prevention field.**



**'Big picture' topics/themes**



**Figure 14: Responses to survey questions.**

## 3.6 Monitoring and reporting mechanisms

Monitoring, evaluation and learning are critical to the improvement of primary prevention programs as they evolve and grow. Understanding the impact of our efforts in prevention is necessary to our learning so we can change the norms, practices and structures that drive family violence and violence against women.

Leadership on these functions is shared. The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) has led significant work on a broad outcomes framework in the context of the Victorian Family Violence reforms (as described in **section 3.1** above). The establishment of Respect Victoria incorporated a number of specific responsibilities to advance data sharing, monitoring and evaluation.

### Monitoring and Evaluation Strategic Framework

In 2020–21, Respect Victoria released the *Free from Violence Monitoring and Evaluation Strategic Framework* (the ‘MES Framework’)<sup>(94)</sup>. The MES Framework is a principles-based document, outlining an overarching strategy for evaluating primary prevention programming across the state. It provides an evaluative ‘big picture’ for organisations leading or funding prevention programs or initiatives under *Free from Violence*.

The MES Framework contains advice on who should evaluate, appropriate evaluation methods and when evaluation should happen. It also offers a set of key evaluation questions for evaluators or those overseeing external evaluation of *Free from Violence* activities or programs of work. The document creates a coherent line of sight to evaluation priorities under *Free from Violence*, recognising that stakeholders come to the strategy with differing levels of evaluative capacity. It also outlines strategy-level activities designed to build sector knowledge and provide insights into the implementation and outcomes of *Free from Violence*.

As part of the MES Framework work plan, in mid 2022 Respect Victoria released an online Monitoring and Evaluation Practice Guidance and Toolkit to support organisations seeking to build on their own evaluative practice in primary prevention. This will help ensure a sound, locally-driven and participative approach to evaluation.

*We're a little bit behind the global standards when it comes to evaluation of prevention programming. Australia hasn't rolled out a lot of work and we haven't evaluated as rigorously as other programs have been evaluated around the world. And I think that's a shame because it does make it hard to get a clear direction of where we should be investing. We need to know what works, but it's also very useful to know what doesn't work and we don't invest enough in understanding that.*

Director, The Equality Institute

## Evaluation activity

Monitoring and evaluation activity in primary prevention has grown considerably in the period of this report. Significant evaluative work has occurred in relation to:

- > building prevention systems and structures (for example, a state-wide workforce development program, gender and disability workforce development program and Women's Health South workforce capacity development program)
- > innovation and information (for example, evaluations of the Aboriginal Innovation Fund, Multicultural Family Violence package, and Creative Victoria Change Makers)
- > engaging and communicating with community (for example, campaigns on respecting women, LGBTIQ+ community behaviour change, elder abuse, COVID-19 and the 16 Days of Activism)
- > scaling up and building on what we know (for example, the Workplace Equality and Respect evaluation, post-secondary education reviews, local government pilots, new parents' program and partners in prevention) other priority areas (for example, prevention in bushfire affected communities, elder abuse prevention networks and a Multicultural COVID-19 Family Violence Program)
- > a major evaluation of the Respectful Relationships Education pilot program was also released in 2021 drawing on evaluation work carried out over several years.

These kinds of evaluations have provided valuable advice on how initiatives can be effectively implemented and on the efficacy of particular prevention approaches in specific contexts. They have been somewhat limited however in their ability to assess sustainable change. The next steps should be to evaluate multiple initiatives against common indicators to better understand their collective impact, to address the importance of

evaluating against indicators of perpetration and indication and to ensure longitudinal evaluation. This could focus on initiatives addressing the same aspects of family violence, the same underlying drivers or reinforcing factors or using the same prevention approaches.

Respect Victoria has also conducted early, rapid reviews of programs and an overarching review of initiatives funded under the first *Free from Violence Action Plan*. It revealed a diversity of evaluative approaches ranging from small-scale, internally-evaluated activity to large-scale, externally-commissioned evaluations. While program recipients report on activities, there is not yet a consistent approach to reporting on impacts or outcomes. Funded initiatives had been largely implemented as proposed, and most could demonstrate some level of positive impact when measured against their aims. The review was less able to demonstrate the overall impact of the suite of funded initiatives or the potential for impact to be sustained and broadened over time; this will be an important area for future attention.

## Indicators, measures and data systems

As described earlier in this report under "Measuring progress towards outcomes in prevention" (section 1.2), there remains considerable work to do in measuring the impact of prevention activities beyond population-wide measures. Stakeholders have noted that the sector does not currently have either the required, sector-wide capability or the mechanisms for consistent collection of data and evidence to demonstrate progress in prevention activities to understand what is and is not working. We require a better understanding of outcomes in the short and medium term and the kinds of systematised data required to show collective impact.

*"We haven't really had a consistent approach to evaluation and monitoring. Hence, we haven't been able to determine the system's impact. We don't yet have common indicators."*

NGO Informant

Work that measures collective impact over sectors and settings has been flagged as a priority for coming years. This needs to be complemented by a framework and associated data system that defines short-, medium- and long-term outcomes and indicators to support measurement of the change journey and impacts across all prevention activities, including but not limited to those that sit within the Victorian Government's *Free from Violence* strategy.

Respect Victoria is also leading development of a complimentary Outcomes Framework and a system-wide Theory of Change that will link short- and medium-term outcomes with longer-term impact, detailing the conditions and assumptions required to sustain that change. This work will support identification of the most critical data gaps and guide investment in future data collection.

Experts in this field have noted that comparatively speaking there has been a stronger investment in research on specific forms and experiences of family violence than on monitoring, evaluation and learning. Significant benefits will be garnered from increasing the number of longitudinal studies that track the impact of prevention on defined cohorts over time.

Making effective use of these kinds of developments will require new technology-enabled platforms for compiling, aggregating, sharing and reporting relevant data and information.

## Prevention of Family Violence Data Platform

In June 2021, Respect Victoria launched the Prevention of Family Violence Data Platform (Data Platform), a tool developed in partnership with Victoria's Crime Statistics Agency. The Data Platform is the first of its kind in Australia and is designed to bring together data from a range of existing collections associated with underlying drivers and reinforcing factors for family violence and violence against women.

Specifically, the Data Platform is designed to:

- > enable monitoring of long-term, population-level progress towards the primary prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women in Victoria
- > improve targeting of programs through measurement and analysis of the drivers of violence
- > guide and support the prioritisation of primary prevention policy, program design and investment in Victoria
- > drive the consolidation, expansion and uptake of the quantitative evidence base and enable the identification of key data gaps to highlight opportunities for future investment in data collection.

The Data Platform includes a series of data visualisations of primary prevention data, explanatory materials and links to external resources. It currently draws data from over 34 existing sources (reported between 2009 and 2021) on the prevalence of violence, community attitudes towards gender inequality and other markers of discrimination. In June 2022 the Data Platform was refreshed to include updates on existing data sources and several new data sets.

**04**

**Conclusions and  
future outlook**



## 4.1 Overarching commentary on progress

This section of the report provides an overall summary of recent progress in prevention and points to key opportunities to strengthen and accelerate the prevention effort to consolidate achievements to date. We draw on the various information sources, evidence and stakeholder input gathered through this review to provide our independent perspective on the nature of progress and future priorities, as a specialist violence prevention agency. We are nonetheless confident that our conclusions reflect the perspectives of the many organisations currently engaged in prevention in Victoria and share a commitment to ending family violence and all forms of violence against women.

In providing an overview of recent progress in this field, we are keen to recognise the legacy and ongoing roles played by individuals and groups who have provided critical leadership in both the political and civil society spheres for many years. This includes those who have generated public discussion and support for the need for change, building on the long history and proven effectiveness of feminist social movements in influencing policy change on these issues. It also includes those who have helped bring vital resourcing to many aspects of this work, within and beyond government. All these inputs remain fundamental to progress and need sustained and strengthened support.

As set out early in this report, the scope of the challenge to eliminate family violence and violence against women through prevention is huge, and we need to be realistic about the trajectory for progress. This is a matter of generational change—it involves building momentum, shifting attitudes and culture through progressive steps and, critically, structural institutional change across different parts of our social and economic systems before the full extent of promised outcomes can be realised. This is not a one-way street either—we know that events such as the COVID-19 pandemic can bring backward steps, and that resistance to progressive change comes from many directions.

There have been promising aspects of real community change in the period covered by this report—a broadening of community awareness and public support on the unacceptability of

family violence and violence against women and a significant increase in the number of individuals, organisations and settings involved in leading prevention efforts across the Victorian community. At the same time, the data highlight serious continuing concerns such as the lack of willingness of many men and boys to call out sexist or violence-condoning attitudes, the fact that fewer rather than more people understand the gendered dynamics of violence, or the still large numbers of people who hold attitudes that condone violence against women.

Victoria has been on an important journey over many years to better understand and address the various forms of family violence and violence against women from a more preventative perspective. We recognise that social movements, community organisations and public policy processes are driving different elements of this agenda in slightly different ways and at different rates. We want to see all these strands benefit from a collective commitment to primary prevention approaches, taking account of the common underpinning factors as well as the distinctive issues emerging from evidence that will help focus effort as required.

The Victorian Government's *Free from Violence Strategy*—the first three-year phase of which largely coincides with the review period for this report—has been a central feature of recent progress. Involving over 130 discrete initiatives over its first four years, the strategy has also been key to starting the work of building and

strengthening core infrastructure and supports and has been a catalyst for engaging a variety of settings and sectors across the community. As a public framework for government funded work, it has helped facilitate engagement in awareness raising and prevention efforts from broad elements of the community and has built some important connections to related areas of public policy. The strategy—along with the history of the work led by a relatively small group of dedicated organisations—has cemented Victoria’s reputation as the national leader in this field.

A key future priority will be to build on the significant policy and institutional changes that have been undertaken to date and to facilitate a stronger focus on coordinated, strategic and mutually reinforcing programmatic efforts, using a range of tried and tested prevention techniques.

A key message from this report is that there is a large body of prevention work occurring in Victoria, and the need for continued strategic leadership to progress our work as we move further into the 21st century cannot be underestimated. Respect Victoria is keen to amplify the voices of many of those people and organisations working on the ground either as leaders in various community settings or running smaller, targeted prevention activities—a consistent message being about the criticality of funding that is commensurate with the size and scale of the issue we are working to address, and the importance on further developing a strong system that can underpin high quality and well coordinated efforts, now and into the future.

While individual programs and activities have important roles to play, they need to function as a coherent total effort and be complemented more widely by work to shift institutions, systems and structure that help generate, reinforce or condone violence against women and family violence. This means ensuring that work within particular settings or organisations can reach out and join up with change required in the broader society.

There is a critical task ahead for Victoria to grow and strengthen the system needed to deliver on this progress. We note some important advances in workforce, data sharing and local partnership structures, but also point to the importance of a continued focus on strengthening coordination, building a sustainable workforce and ensuring that all Victorians can engage with prevention efforts where they live, learn, work, socialise, worship or play. Victoria has taken immense strides in building the foundations for an effective prevention system, and together we are now turning our focus towards drawing this together into a truly coherent whole that connects the parts—especially linking local and state-wide effort, and specialist, mainstream and universal agencies and practitioners.

All this effort depends—as emphasised by the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor—on sustained investment in primary prevention at a level commensurate with the size and scale of the issue—the case for which is summarised earlier in the report. During the review period, both state and federal governments have made a range of important new investments in this area, and much of this investment is focused on driving the next stage of change that will ensure programmatic efforts are connected across a range of different settings and sectors, that campaign activity is supporting on-the-ground prevention and that will facilitate the leadership of backbone organisations whose role is to support high quality, impactful prevention efforts and ensure that more individuals than ever are engaged in the work of prevention.

We want to be clear that government funding alone cannot and will not fix this problem. Other sectors and institutions also need to play their part in investing—not only to increase the total amount of funding available, but also to properly engage their commitment to practical change. This is no different to many other areas of public policy that ultimately rely on complementary mobilisation and resourcing from outside government to prevent social harms—the drive to address climate change and the effort to combat alcohol-related harm being just two examples.

While this report doesn't capture the full breadth of current resourcing, we can confidently say that there is significant direct and in-kind investment outside prevention initiatives specifically funded by government, much of which does not necessarily take the form of discrete programs or projects. These other sources, be they business, community or philanthropic, need to be supported and encouraged to contribute in a more aligned and consistently evidence-based way.

As we have noted earlier in this report, there are still some gaps in what we know works, and in the data and evidence we have available on the impact of primary prevention, and this will be an area of focus for Respect Victoria—amongst many other agencies—over the coming years.

## 4.2 Key Areas for Future Progress

The areas below are presented as Respect Victoria's view—informed by the current evidence, practice wisdom and insights from stakeholders—on a broad agenda to further progress the prevention of family violence and violence against women over the medium term. All these priorities depend on effort to maintain the gains summarised above, including critically maintaining a high level of political leadership and the momentum provided by advocates in feminist social movements and across the community.

The financial and practical challenges described here are not seen as the sole responsibility of governments but are intended to reflect current efforts that all those working in this field, in the corporate, philanthropic and non-government sectors, need to make collectively and in partnership with the Victorian community. Our hope in drawing attention to these opportunities for leadership and action is to further influence public policy by consolidating and expanding on past gains and by bringing more individuals, organisations and sectors into this important work.

These challenges will not be fully addressed before the next three-yearly report in 2025—many of them are significant pieces of work and require dedicated funding, long-term strategy and coordinated effort. However, we do expect that with adequate resourcing, public support and a continued strong policy focus, this work should be substantively progressed on these fronts over the next three years.

### 1. Strengthen state-wide prevention systems and capacity

*1.1. Consolidate a cohesive violence prevention system in Victoria with enhanced coordination, leadership and comprehensive supporting infrastructure.*

This report attests to the breadth of effort in primary prevention across an ever-increasing number of agencies in Victoria and a definite advance in the network of agencies working toward a systems approach to underpin and strengthen future work.

While there have been some useful initiatives to draw parts of this work together and develop leadership roles for certain functions, stakeholders have expressed a strong view that we need a more coordinated approach to building a sustainable system that will underpin strategy development and guide funding and implementation activity moving forward. This approach should be informed by principles of collective impact, which will mean agencies across the state can work as a unified system with clearer division of roles for specialist agencies, impactful and strategic funding allocation, consistently applied evaluation and practice standards and shared access to common support needs such as workforce development, tools and resources to support practice uptake across settings (see 1.3 below).

A good system 'architecture' should help create partnerships between agencies with different expertise (for example, in working with particular population groups, in particular settings or in shifting institutional policies) and between state-wide and local agencies. It should also focus on coordination between efforts within and between different settings (see also 3.2 below). Government has a key responsibility to provide the funding and policy framework needed to facilitate this, however relevant agencies with a state-wide or national prevention leadership role must also work collaboratively with government and other like bodies to achieve these conditions for collective impact.

A sector-led blueprint is needed to achieve this, together with a strongly-led coordination and collaboration structure. Over the next 12 months,

Respect Victoria will establish a Prevention Alliance in order to identify the required architecture of a system to underpin future work. This work will ultimately be designed to achieve a more inclusive prevention system that brings leaders and contributing partners from many different sectors into a mutually supportive, coordinated and cohesive effort.

**1.2. Promote primary prevention as a valuable social investment and expand resourcing to match the scale of the problem and potential gains to be made.**

The trajectory of outcomes described by experts, coupled with emerging international evidence regarding the value of prevention investment in this domain, present a strong argument for growing resourcing for primary prevention over the next decade.

Primary prevention effort will generally take significant time to demonstrate sustained change—although there is strong evidence to suggest that reductions in perpetration can be achieved over the limited timeframes over which people are engaged in specific programs in community settings. Yet the population-wide impact means that the returns can be very substantial and at relatively low cost for the harms avoided. Early work to define this ‘return on investment’ and to build a stronger economic case for the societal, cultural, organisational and individual benefits that arise from effective prevention needs to be further advanced to support the case.

Setting targets for this investment and measuring interim benefits against appropriate, shared progress indicators of change is critical. They should also recognise the importance for critical mass to implement prevention across whole settings and sectors; without this, prevention efforts are unlikely to yield sustained change.

Victoria is well placed to lever recent increased Commonwealth investments in this area to complement existing state effort. This could include clear mechanisms through which Victorian effort can contribute to progressive national plans and for resourcing to support Victoria to further develop and demonstrate the wider applicability of

its prevention work. We also need to better account for and encourage the investments made beyond governments by the community, philanthropic and business sectors. The expansion of resourcing does not only require financial resources (although this is critical), but also a commitment from a range of settings and sectors to use their existing human resources to conceptualise, implement and evaluate prevention work and provide community leadership in their spheres of operation. This is a vital element that can be harnessed quickly and effectively to achieve change.

**1.3. Support continued growth and capability of all workforces engaged in primary prevention of family violence and violence against women, delivered through both specialist organisations and all sectors in which this work needs to occur.**

A coherent, strategic approach to state-wide workforce development for primary prevention is a critical input to guide progress in this area.

The number and range of people involved in work which aims to prevent family violence and violence against women must be actively fostered in the medium-term. These people will continue to be located in diverse workforces and professions; and as such we need to build better ways to enable them all to embed prevention activity as part of their day-to-day work—be they teachers, journalists, youth workers or human resources managers.

There is a small but growing group of specialist practitioners dedicated to this field of work. The next three to five years should bring to maturity the identity of this group as a distinct body of professional practice and expertise, clearly articulated and connected with associated bodies of specialist practice. This requires the strengthening of professional frameworks and standards, clearer education, training and career pathways into and through the sector, a focus on addressing issues around remuneration, attraction and retention and strategies to improve job satisfaction and health and wellbeing. At the individual level, we need to expand the diversity of individuals skilled and enthusiastic to work in this field to ensure the workforce better reflects the Victorian population, and ensure that all

prevention professionals are equipped with greater capacity to focus on systemic issues, not only individual-level change.

A strategy to build and sustain a prevention workforce and expand the multi-disciplinary workforce who lead prevention efforts across a range of different sectors and settings needs to have a long-term focus with staged effort over this period, which seeks to:

- > gain consistency in the types of roles required to be performed across the emerging prevention system with clearly articulated core functions that are needed to be performed across these roles
- > identify the required knowledge and skills to perform varying roles within the system
- > guide development of formal tertiary courses as well as multi-method professional development programs, both of which need to be designed to build knowledge and skill in core function areas
- > maximise the use of current industrial instruments to ensure that a standardised and equitable approach to specialist role classification and remuneration is achieved
- > address workforce supply issues currently impacting on many spheres of operation including focus on establishment of more clearly defined education and employment pathways into the work
- > support the attraction and retention of a knowledgeable and skilled specialist prevention workforce.

In the short-term, it will be important to ensure that a focus on workforce strengthening is embedded in the current prevention system and that high quality, standardised, multi-method professional development programs are delivered.

**1.4. Build on the vital work of local and regional partnerships and activity being led across settings in order to achieve collective impact in creating a violence-free Victoria.**

Future progress in this area will depend heavily on the capacity for well-planned and targeted work led by local and setting-specific agencies using participative, place- or settings-based structures. Well-established regional and setting-specific

partnership structures across Victoria should continue to evolve, and better connections need to be forged between these structures and state-wide and national agencies.

The importance of dedicated resourcing for these regional coordination functions cannot be underestimated in order to enable the implementation of effective and mutually reinforcing prevention efforts in all communities across Victoria. Agencies performing these functions will need to have a strong connection to a state-wide coordinating function (to ensure consistency across regional approaches) and the existence of state-wide infrastructure from which these regional partnerships can draw, including consistent evaluation models, programming and practice standards and strong evidence-informed conceptual frameworks to drive collective impact.

Effective local prevention effort needs continuing support that recognises the complex relationships between local government, women's health services, community health and family violence services, amongst others. It also requires commitment from government and community sector agencies at state-wide level to provide strategic guidance and feedback channels to help local and regionally-based effort to shape a coordinated state-wide approach.

**1.5. Expand new data collection and sharing, research and evaluation to provide more confident advice on what makes for effective prevention action and facilitate better monitoring of progress.**

Information and evidence—relating to drivers, reinforcing factors and effective prevention approaches—should be extended and brought together more coherently to support future progress in prevention. A range of initiatives, data platforms and informal information sharing opportunities developed in Victoria over recent years provide a strong starting point for a more streamlined, effective and comprehensive knowledge bank.

Addressing the current gaps in national data platforms and strengthening current Victorian-based data platforms and data collection mechanisms will be an important foundation

from which we can build stronger evidence about what works in preventing violence at a state-wide level. These should capture not only attitudes and behaviours, but also organisational and systemic factors known or believed to underpin this violence. Further, data must capture more about the perpetrator or potential perpetrator population in order to inform prevention approaches. Data collection tools should also have the ability to drill-down to different population groups and local areas.

The Victorian Government's Monitoring and Evaluation Strategic Framework provides a strong foundation from which further effort can be driven. An important priority for the next period is establishment of a set of short-, medium- and longer-term indicators to underpin coordinated evaluation effort addressing the breadth of work being done (including but not limited to activity funded under *Free from Violence*). This will ensure everyone collects consistent data against common indicators that make logical and defensible connections between prevention activity and pathways to social change. Applying such indicators across initiatives will facilitate aggregation of data to give us a stronger picture of activity, impact and progress across the state.

Over the short term, it is critical that we invest in design and evaluation activities that focus on the impact of multiple initiatives and of concurrent or staged activity across whole organisations, sectors, settings and communities. It will also be important to increase our focus on building longitudinal data to assess the impact of sustained prevention on systems, practices, attitudes and behaviours over a longer period of time.

## **2. Drive real and sustained change in the community, organisations and institutions**

### ***2.1. Strengthen gains in the Victorian community's rejection of family violence and violence against women and intensify efforts to shift social norms relating to the underpinning drivers of this violence.***

There are signs of positive shifts in community awareness and attitudes associated with family violence and violence against women across Victoria over recent years, but these are uneven and subject to reversals—as we saw with the

social pressures brought about by the pandemic. Prevention effort needs to be sustained, broadened and reinforced. Governments, business and the community sector share this fundamental prevention task to maintain it as a high-profile priority and work together to achieve sustained change.

We need to take the community as a whole further on the path from individual awareness, understanding and attitudes, to willingness and ability to change behaviours. Widespread and sustained change in social norms will flow only when we reach saturation point in reach and messaging and have repeated engagement with Victorians across all aspects of their lives. To both create and sustain changes in behaviour, messaging alone is not enough; this work needs to be coupled with practical support to build people's capability to make the change needed. Importantly, this effort needs to be maintained across the population while targeting particular sections of the community where change has been slower to take root.

In addition to change at an individual level, it will be important to place stronger emphasis on building community recognition and acceptance that this violence is underpinned by systemic, gendered inequalities of power and control. This is vital to underpin the critical policy and institutional changes addressed in other key areas below, and maintain the strong foundations that have already been laid.

### ***2.2. Strengthen the focus on efforts to remove structural barriers to positive change and embed supportive policies and systems to undermine the exercise of power and control that underpins violence.***

The need for change at multiple levels—from the individual to whole of society—has been clearly articulated in the policies and strategic frameworks guiding prevention effort in Victoria and nationally.

Important progress has been made over the past few years in making many Victorian workplaces more gender equal and safe from sexual harassment and gendered violence. Some significant legislative and regulatory reforms have occurred or are in train to support this. Yet this change is still at early stages of being embedded

across all Victorian workplaces; as a result, we are yet to see the sustained impact we would expect to become apparent in future years. Future efforts should build upon the strong foundations that have already been established, and reforms (such as those introduced by the Gender Equality Act and Occupational Health and Safety regimes) and should be drawn upon to drive prevention of violence against women more specifically.

We also need to focus more on the many other ways in which organisations, and the sectors of which they are a part, influence drivers and reinforcing factors for this violence—not only on the workforces they employ but in the way they interact with clients and stakeholders, in the products and services they deliver, the cultures they create and in their exercise of social responsibility.

The need for change across whole sectors has just begun to be tackled in Victoria, with some promising initiatives in industries such as tertiary education, local government, advertising and sport. However, it is critical to build upon this early-stage change by ensuring that policy, regulatory, systemic and structural levers are utilised to drive and embed effort in all tertiary education institutions, all local governments or all sports clubs as part of structured, setting-based approach to prevention.

Over coming years this kind of effort needs to be lifted up to ensure systemic policy and cultural change in sectors who are already engaged is maintained and further developed and is also expanded to other sectors who are only in the very early stages of understanding and actioning their role in prevention.

***2.3. Build approaches to address all forms of family violence and violence against women and consider the balance between integrated and more targeted approaches.***

A future priority will be to design creative and strategic solutions to address recent and emerging public discussion, research and reviews which have shed light on a range of particular types or manifestations of family violence and violence against women that cause enormous harm in the community. While the starting point for action is often, quite appropriately, the response required

of the justice and care systems, it is equally important to consider the opportunities for primary prevention alongside critical response priorities.

Prevention action should be squarely focused on addressing the underlying causes or ‘drivers’ of violence. The drivers of violence against women (as a population group) are articulated in Change the Story, supported by other conceptual frameworks that address the drivers specific to particular cohorts of women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, LGBTIQ+ communities and women with disabilities. Whilst it is important for prevention initiatives to be as inclusive as possible in addressing a range of different forms of violence against women and family violence, the strategies required to prevent particular forms of family violence will at times be inherently different and require targeted initiatives.

Each distinct form of violence should be addressed on the basis of known and emerging evidence about common and unique underlying drivers or causes and reinforcing factors. We need further research to identify these factors and how they operate in particular social contexts. The types of violence that may be the focus of attention may be based variously on the relationship between perpetrator and victim, the characteristics of the violence itself, and the channel or setting through which the violence is perpetrated.

This work is important to ensure that we pursue a well-balanced and prioritised effort, taking into account the burden of harm associated with different forms of family violence and violence against women, their readiness for attention (including the state of our knowledge) and the various ways in which action should be joined with or be distinct from primary prevention of other types of violence.

***2.4. Increase focus on changing men’s and boys’ perspectives, challenge unhealthy models of masculinity and shift outdated ideas about men’s power and control in relationships.***

Change in the attitudes and expectations of men and boys, and the social and economic systems that reinforce them, are central to preventing violence against women. Men are chiefly the ones causing the harm (not only to women, but also to



themselves and other men) and the ones who stand to benefit from the current inequitable situation (recognising that this is not the same for all men and is influenced by other forms of systemic disadvantage and discrimination). Therefore, men as a population group with immense influence and reach are a critical aspect of the solution and they need to be a more central focus of prevention work.

Some good progress has been made in this respect, with more men and boys than ever engaged in discussing and responding positively to these issues. The reported attitudes of men to underlying social issues of privilege, harmful masculinities, gender equality and power remain significantly more problematic than those of women, as does their willingness to call out peers on inappropriate attitudes and behaviours.

We need to do more to help men understand why dominant forms of masculinity are harmful, both to themselves and to women, and how these harmful masculinities operate at an individual, group and society level. Change will depend on efforts from many sides to challenge unhealthy models of masculinity, including more efforts led by men themselves not only in their own private lives, but also in their schools, their workplaces and in social settings.

This should be complemented by practical, positive values-based effort to support men and boys from all parts of the community to say no to sexism, misogyny and the harmful exercise of power and control over women. This shift needs to be driven through all the places, spaces, groups and organisations that shape men's behaviours on a daily basis and reinforced through relevant policy, legislative and regulatory systems.

### **3. Expand the scope, scale and effectiveness of targeted prevention action**

***3.1. Governments and policy makers need to continue the leadership already demonstrated and drive more strategic long-term, coordinated whole-of-government efforts to advance prevention.***

There is a need to move to further sophistication in our prevention strategies and develop a stronger articulation of a whole-of-government approach which focuses more strongly on a

staged, multi-technique and mutually reinforcing approach to activity. Enabling this vision with require co-investment at a national, state and local government level, with a tailored set of efforts supported at each of these levels. This would ideally involve a formal agreement about priorities on say a three to five year basis, a rolling plan that identifies actions that will be aligned or co-funded and a common set of outcome and progress based accountability measures.

The post Royal Commission years have demonstrated the importance and impact of strong leadership to enable whole-of-government approaches to reform. These foundations can be strengthened to drive more explicit articulation and integration of prevention policy within and across a range of portfolios to drive the *Free from Violence* strategy to the next level of change. This will require an increased focus on strategic coordination and collaboration between departments, joint resourcing and budget bids, and shared accountability across portfolios including health, community services, education, sport and recreation and justice. Such approaches can be pivotal to achieving mutually reinforcing action across different parts of the social system on which government has influence.

### ***3.2. Focus more of Victoria's prevention effort on whole-of-setting program scale-up.***

As the analysis in this report highlights, Victoria has made good progress over recent years in commencing the scale-up of a small number of prevention programs based on the idea of engaging the whole of an organisation or setting; this enables impact from action focused on different levels of change, including individual attitudes, organisational structures and policies, professional cultures and design of physical space (amongst others).

The task is not simply to roll out specific programs to a larger number of organisations. It is to embed the principles, approaches and policies that are critical elements of these programs systemically across an entire setting—a range of organisations performing a like function, connecting with particular elements of the Victorian community, with its own skilled workforce. A fully realised settings-based approach to prevention will provide

an overarching infrastructure for prevention work that is tailored to the unique features of each particular setting in its day-to-day work, reinforcing the efforts of individual organisations to achieve collective impact.

Evaluations and expert advice suggest that whole of settings approaches are crucial to future progress. Settings that may be ready for this approach or could be helped to be ready in the medium term in Victoria include schools, tertiary education institutions, local government bodies, the arts, workplaces, sporting clubs, online platforms, the media industry and health and community services (amongst others). This is about leading action in more different parts of the community so that people have more touchstones on the ground for positive, mutually reinforcing change.

This work requires clear identification of and support for lead agencies, focused effort to tailor primary prevention guidance resources, communication tools to the uniqueness of particular settings and adequate resourcing that is commensurate to the task of setting-wide (rather than organisational-wide) prevention efforts.

**3.3. Design and evaluate efforts at a whole-of-community level through trialling a saturation or scale-up approach in a ready area or setting.**

Clear evidence and advice from a range of sources indicates—as a result of strong leadership and lessons learnt from a multitude of prevention programs being trialled across the state—our focus can now shift toward a more strategic approach towards gathering the evidence required to implement successful initiatives on a larger scale. The missing piece of the puzzle is the impact on both attitudes and behaviours when a range of evidence-informed prevention activities are implemented in a single area with both depth and breadth of focus, and a community is ‘saturated’ with prevention messaging and guidance about how to address the drivers of violence in every area where they live, work, learn, socialise and play.

This process will require attention on gathering the evidence underpinning the tailoring and translation of effective initiatives to ensure they are fit for implementation across varying settings and for use with varying cohorts. This is an essential step

in moving further toward the ‘saturation’ required at the population level in order to realise long-term and sustainable change. Effective evaluation of a ‘saturation’ approach will also be required, which should seek to understand the impact of these mutually reinforcing prevention efforts on the prevalence of violence in a community, on individual attitudinal and behavioural change as well as the organisational, institutional and societal impacts. Further, a focus on longitudinal evaluation is required as part of programmatic scale-up or saturation efforts to measure the impact on perpetration and victimisation over time.

Strengthening of the current prevention system is an important enabler to underpin a scale-up and saturation approach to ensure well-targeted investments are made, initiatives worthy of scale-up are identified, mechanisms for tailoring and translating initiatives are in place and the delivery systems (including things like program design standards, practice advice and a skilled workforce) are up to the implementation challenge.

**3.4. Ensure that prevention initiatives are responsive to the needs of diverse Victorians and put in practice the growing understanding of the way intersectional factors drive this violence.**

Expanded interest by lead agencies for different diverse communities in Victoria has been a notable development over this period. The importance of an intersectional approach to the design and delivery of prevention activity has also become better understood in Victoria over recent years as a result of state-wide leadership, practical initiatives and discussions within different communities. Yet there is more work needed to embed this as a consistent part of primary prevention action and to move beyond siloed programs for narrowly defined groups.

It will be important that we continue to support initiatives that are inclusive and responsive to the way in which gender inequality intersects with other factors—such as ageism, racism, homophobia, ableism—that ultimately affect the perpetration of family violence and violence against women. We also need to better address the complex forms of disadvantage and

disempowerment that impinge on the success or failure of efforts to shift the drivers and reinforcing factors for this violence.

Continuing priority must go to prevention work with Aboriginal communities in Victoria both to support the leadership of ACCOs and to ensure a more significant focus on preventing violence against Aboriginal women, who experience significantly higher rates of violence and more severe violence than non-Aboriginal women. As highlighted in this report, there have been many projects undertaken under *Free from Violence* and the Dhelk Dja Partnership. It is now crucial to draw on the learning from all this work and consolidate a sound, evidence-based, community-led approach that will deliver sustained outcomes. This requires governments and specialist prevention agencies to significantly deepen their engagement with the Aboriginal community-led sector and for Aboriginal agencies to engage more fully in the knowledge derived from population-level initiatives that may be usefully tailored to enable their future work.

Agencies leading on this issue for different communities need to be adequately resourced, in part to provide ongoing advice and engagement broadly, including to mainstream services and organisations, to support their work being informed by and connected to population-specific expertise and leadership, but also critically to support agenda-setting and design of initiatives by communities themselves.

***3.5. Assess prevention activities against consistent measures to support good design and implementation planning, allow comparisons of effectiveness and value for money and understand the complementary roles of different efforts.***

As the number and range of prevention activities in Victoria has expanded, there is an increasing need to more deeply assess the quality and effectiveness of these activities, both as stand-alone activities and as part of a coordinated and planned state-wide approach to settings-based activity. To do this we need consistent standards and criteria that can be applied at the early design and development stages of a program to maximise its likely effectiveness, as well as over the life of the program's implementation.

We also need common but adaptable measures for monitoring and evaluating the success of the work at the level of an individual program and across multiple programs of a similar nature. These measures should be applicable regardless of the funding source of a program or initiative. This kind of benchmarking must be supported by an implementation system that involves experts providing ongoing advice and oversight, and an accessible knowledge base of prevention program models and guidance resources to support easy tailoring to different organisations and communities.

With these tools in place, Victoria will be in a strong position to ensure quality in the planning, design and delivery of prevention efforts. We will also gain increased confidence that the right combination of initiatives is being pursued in the right sequence to achieve optimal outcomes.

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# Appendix

# Appendix 1: Stakeholders involved in key informant interviews

## Interview participants represented the following bodies

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Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

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Commissioner for Children and Young People

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Commissioner for Gender Equality

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Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities

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Commissioner for Senior Victorians

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Department of Education and Training

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Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

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Department of Justice

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Family Safety Victoria

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Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor

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Gender Equity Victoria

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Municipal Association of Victoria

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Our Watch

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Rainbow Health Australia

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Safe and Equal

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Tarneit P-9 College

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The Equality Institute

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Victim Survivors' Advisory Council

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Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

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Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner

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Victorian Multicultural Commissioner

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Victoria Police

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Victoria University

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Women's Health Victoria

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Women with Disabilities Victoria

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## Appendix 2: Respect Victoria key milestones

2018

Respect Victoria is established as a business unit of the Department of Health and Human Services with an interim Advisory Board and Chief Executive Officer

The Prevention of Family Violence Bill 2018 is passed in the Parliament of Victoria and receives Royal Assent, coming into operation on 4 October 2018

Respect Victoria commences as a Statutory Authority with Board, Chair and Chief Executive Officer officially appointed

Relaunch of Respect Women: 'Call it Out' cafe campaign

2019

Release of Respect Victoria Strategic Plan 2019–2022

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Respect Victoria undertakes Primary Prevention Action Research into elder abuse, LGBTIQ+ family violence, and violence against women with disability

Respect Victoria releases the National Community Attitudes Survey towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) Toolkit for Prevention Practice

Launch of Respect Women: 'Call It Out' (public transport) campaign

Launch of Respect Older People: 'Call it Out' campaign coinciding with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2019

2020

Respect Victoria launches the Prevention of Family Violence Data Platform

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Launch of Respect Women: 'Call It Out' (Respect Is) campaign

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Respect Victoria releases 'Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Victoria's family violence primary prevention workforce' with Gender and Disaster Pod (GAD Pod) and 'The impact of COVID-19 pandemic response on older people' with GAD Pod the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI)

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Launch of Respect Each Other: 'Call It Out' (COVID-19)

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Respect Victoria releases the Guiding Principles on Primary Prevention During COVID-19 and Advocacy Resource

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Respect Victoria provides a submission to the national Parliamentary inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence

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Launch of research seminar series: 'Building the evidence to stop violence before it starts'

2021

Respect Victoria responds to the Draft National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–32

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Respect Victoria provides a submission on the Renewal of Safe and Strong: Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy

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Respect Victoria responds to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with a Disability Issue paper on violence and abuse of people with disability at home  
Respect Victoria attend the National Summit on Women's Safety and release Primary Prevention Priorities paper

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Launch of Respect Each Other: Pride, Respect, Equality campaign

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Respect Victoria partner with the Victorian Government to release the *Free from Violence Second Action Plan (2022–2025)*

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Respect Victoria release 'New Parents, New Possibilities—Family Violence Prevention for LGBTIQ+ parented families' prepared by drummond st and 'No More Excuses'—Primary Prevention of Violence Against women with Disability, prepared by UniMelb

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Respect Victoria launch first Reconciliation Action Plan

## Appendix 3: Regional primary prevention projects

Below is a list of the regional and local projects delivered by each of the Regional Prevention Partnerships in Victoria. This has been drawn from a range of sources including annual reports, action plans and available evaluation reports. The list profiles projects that are part of the Partnerships' most recent action plans, generally ranging from 2016 until 2021, but does not purport to be an exhaustive account of the work undertaken by the Partnerships over the review period.

### Loddon Mallee Takes a Stand Partnership led by Women's Health Loddon Mallee

- > 2021 Regional PVAW Community of Practice to build workforce capacity and collaborative action towards the primary prevention of violence against women
- > 'Preventing Violence against Women and Children in Our Community', a project focused on awareness raising and training of staff and policy development
- > bystander training delivered to over 2,500 workers in the region
- > school resources including Solving the Jigsaw were created to promote knowledge and cultures that address power and control
- > a radio campaign supporting by Mallee Family Violence Executive to raise awareness of family violence
- > Gender Fairness—Conversations about Equity card set developed in partnership with St Luke's Innovative Resources
- > Loddon Mallee Takes a Stand Workplace Resource Kit which includes a guide, templates and information about organisational policy and structures
- > application of gender analysis in policy—for example the Macedon Ranges Community Safety Plan specifically acknowledges violence against women as an issue and includes a focus on women in its actions against all focus areas
- > Men Can Bake Cakes, a group of Castlemaine men doing community activities to demonstrate

how men can take responsibility for the prevention of violence against women

- > Northwest Region Country Fire Authority have established an internal strategy to increase gender equity and ensure violence prevention within its organisation.

### Communities of Respect and Equality Partnership led by Women's Health Grampians

- > Act@Play, an intensive program to support local sporting clubs and associations to achieve gender equality outcomes
- > The Equality for All project which seeks to raise awareness of diversity and empower local women to lead change within their communities
- > CoRE Hi-Vis, a free 6-month program which supports businesses to attract and retain women into construction and manufacturing roles
- > Act on Site, an organisation-wide culture change program, tailored to attract and retain women in traditionally male-dominated industries
- > See What You Can Be which supports women in male-dominated industries to become leaders and advocates
- > The Unstoppable Women project which supports women from diverse age, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds to develop co-facilitation, presentation, planning and peer education skills
- > Building a Respectful Community Partnership led by Women's Health in the North

- > Gender (in)Equity in Employment, a project focusing on promoting gender equity in employment practices
- > The Count Me In Too project, which supported women and girls from culturally diverse communities to participate in sports which challenge traditional gender roles
- > participation in the Victorian Government's 'Gender Equality Map' pilot project to support the application of a gender lens in public safety and infrastructure upgrades
- > delivery of 'Balit Booboop Narrkwarren' program, a culturally adapted model of 'Baby Makes 3' designed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander communities
- > 'Stand Up, Speak Out' program was launched to provide young women leaders with knowledge on how to take action against violence against women
- > Resilience Camps: Preventing the Cycle of Violence camps were run by VACSAL to support whole-of-family connection and healing
- > support for new fathers in the transition to parenthood and to foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- > a program to train and support staff as Gender Equity Advocates, tasked with providing presentations and information to staff teams across the organisation on gender equity
- > 'Speak Up, Speak Out', a program which engaged Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in activities on respectful relationships, gender equity and 'upstander' (active bystander) actions.

#### **Respect and Equality for All Partnership led by Women's Health Goulburn Northeast**

- > delivery of capacity-building workshops to a total of 156 participants
- > organisational development and culture change towards more gender equitable workplace policies and practices (with two local governments)
- > a number of organisational training activities including bystander and gender equity
- > development and promotion of the Courageous Conversations campaign, which encourages

individuals and organisations to have conversations that challenge sexist comments, discrimination and disrespectful behaviour

- > gender Audit undertaken by both Alpine Health and Murrindindi Shire Council, resulting in both organisations developing a gender action plan
- > delivery of training to approximately 20 members of the leadership team at Benalla Saints Sports Club.

#### **Preventing Violence Together Partnership led by Women's Health in the Southeast**

- > Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women in the Workplace Progress Surveys, which identified gender inequality and prevention of violence against women strategies within their workplaces to track and showcase progress in a 20-month period beginning in 2020
- > Gender Equality in the Workplace Toolkit, which guides workplaces on their gender equity journey
- > mapping of primary prevention activities in Southern Metropolitan Melbourne and the creation of a digital tool that presents this data
- > Respect Together Think Tank, an event attended by over 50 people from the sector where Dr. Michael Flood delivered a speech titled 'Men's Positive Role in Change'
- > launch of Communities of Practice on intersectionality and diverse communities and the Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality Community of Practice
- > Preventing Violence Together Forum which sought to link primary prevention practitioners across the region, explore trends in primary prevention and map workforce needs to priorities
- > creation of the Critical Friends Network, which supports schools with their gender auditing and action planning.

#### **Gippsland Free from Violence Coalition led by Gippsland Women's Health**

- > The Change for Sam initiative was established to coordinate actions in the Cowes community aimed at preventing family violence and identifying gaps in response

- > co-design and development of training packages in less resourced and remote areas in Gippsland such as Orbost, Omeo and Mallacoota
- > delivery of foundational training to workers in the PVAW sector to increase their capacity and capability
- > delivery of 41 capacity-building events including MATE Bystander sessions, gender equality training, PVAW Communities of Practice and a region wide forum reaching 747 participants.

### **Together for Equality and Respect Partnership led by Women's Health in the East**

- > Together for Equality Respect (TFER) Leaders Event, which profiled the TFER partnership and champion support for the PVAW in the Eastern Metropolitan Region
- > Early Years Showcase Event, which profiled the high volume of PVAW work taking place in the Early Years setting
- > Four Community of Practice sessions on a range of topics including promoting gender equality in the early years, preventing violence against women with disabilities, framing gender equality messaging and prevention of violence against women and elder abuse
- > Eastern Metropolitan Region-specific 16 Days of Activism campaign with tailored toolkits consisting of social media tiles, copy and a communications guide for partners to share on their social media platforms
- > Framing Gender Equality Messaging Guide Masterclasses which provided a unique opportunity for workers to gain valuable skills creating meaningful and impactful messaging for future gender equality projects
- > Preventing Violence Together Partnership led by GenWest (previously Women's Health West)
- > the formation of two new working groups, The Engaging with Men group and the Preventing Violence Together Evaluation and Gender Equity Policy Working Group

- > the delivery of numerous tailored training sessions to nearly 800 attendees in 2020-2021 on gender equity and the prevention of family violence. This included:

- Understanding Gender Equality sessions to 236 participants of the Western Bulldogs' Daughters of the West program
- family violence information sessions for TAFE Diploma of Justice students
- training on identifying family violence delivered to Candidates for Ministry in the Anglican Church
- delivery of the Hair 3Rs (recognise, respond, refer) program which trains hairdressers to support customers when they suspect they are experiencing family violence.

### **Respect 2040 (previously G21 & Great South Coast) Partnership led by Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon Southwest**

- > development of the Respect 2040 website
- > delivery of the Action, Mentoring, Prevention Workplace program (a progression of the previous Take a Stand program) to workplaces
- > Four Community of Practice events held in partnership with The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre
- > Baby Makes 3 Plus program which focused on supporting men and women during the transition to parenthood and encouraging equal and respectful relationships
- > You the Man performances across secondary schools which aimed to increase secondary school students' knowledge on intimate partner violence and bystander action
- > a toolkit to prevent violence against women launched in partnership with the PVAW Health Alliance which provided simple and consistent messages to explain the drivers and effects of violence against women.



## Appendix 4: Summary of recent research

This appendix provides an overview of the breadth of research that has been undertaken over the reporting period across the *Key Research Themes* identified in the report, either in Victoria or with significant input by Victorian researchers. It is not intended to be a complete account of all research that has been undertaken in the prevention of family violence and violence against women field.

### Prevention research in the context of disasters and COVID-19

A strong focus in the reporting period has been the correlation between disasters and increased violence, especially during Covid-19. Respect Victoria partnered with the Gender and Disaster Pod (GAD Pod), which has since evolved into a national research organisation, Gender and Disaster Australia (GADAus) and other research partners to examine themes including:

- > impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Victoria's family violence primary prevention workforce (I); COVID-19 LGBTIQ+ Family Violence Prevention Project: Prevention in The Pandemic (II) and Primary prevention of family violence among older people in Victoria (III)
- > Left Behind: Migrant and refugee women's experiences of COVID-19 (IV)
- > identifying the experiences and needs of LGBTI communities before, during and after emergencies in Victoria (V)
- > Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre Responding to the 'shadow pandemic': practitioner views on the nature of and responses to violence against women in Victoria, Australia during the COVID-19 restrictions (VI).

### Sexual violence and harassment

Sexual violence and harassment remain a need for further research. This was identified by a comprehensive report published by the Judith Lumley Centre at La Trobe University in 2021 entitled *Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence and Harassment Against Women and Girls: Combining*

*Evidence and Practice Knowledge—Final Report and Theory of Change* (VII)

The extensive evidence review found a significant gap in Australian—and specifically Victorian—evaluative research to assess programming in sexual violence and harassment. The report also pointed to the need for specific studies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, migrant and refugee women and girls and LGBTIQ+ communities to assess primary prevention programs in sexual violence and harassment specifically for these more at-risk women.

### LGBTIQ+ communities

The field of literature exploring the drivers, reinforcing factors and occurrence of violence in LGBTIQ+ communities has increased markedly during the reporting period. In 2020, Rainbow Health (now Rainbow Health Australia) and the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University, released *Pride in Prevention: A guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities* (VIII). Additional examples of research include:

- > *New Parents, New Possibilities: family violence prevention for LGBTIQ+ parented families* published by Drummond Street Services' Centre for Family Research and Evaluation, commissioned by Respect Victoria (IX)
- > *Navigating Intersectionality: Multicultural and Multifaith LGBTIQ+ Victorians talk about Discrimination and Affirmation*, developed by the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) and the Australian LGBTIQ Multicultural Council (X).

### Women and girls with disability

Research addressing the causes and manifestation of violence for diverse women with disabilities is beginning to emerge. During the reporting period, Our Watch and Women with Disabilities Victoria produced *Changing the Landscape: A national resource to prevent violence against women and*

girls with disabilities (XI). Other examples of research include:

- > *Primary prevention of violence against women with disability: Evidence synthesis*, University of Melbourne commissioned by Respect Victoria (XII)
- > *No More Excuses: Final report - primary prevention of violence against women with disability*, University of Melbourne commissioned by Respect Victoria XIII)
- > *Young Women's Report: A report of the Young Women and Non-Binary People's Forum 7 July 2021 and AWAVA's Young Women Survey 2021*, AWAVA and WESNET (XIV).

### Aboriginal communities

A considerable proportion of research on Aboriginal family violence is focused in the response sector and undertaken with service organisations, police and the court systems. This research has relevance for prevention—especially concerning methods of research (co-design and self-determining priorities) and respect for persons (data sovereignty, diverse ways of knowing).

Several research publications exploring Aboriginal family violence prevention and response were released during the reporting period. These include:

- > *Changing the Picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children* (XV) based on the evidence and analysis from the *Changing the Picture Background paper: Understanding violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children*, both produced by Our Watch (XVI)
- > understanding the role of law and culture in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities in responding to and preventing family violence published by ANROWS (XVII)
- > *Rante-rante ampe Marle and Urreye "Safe, Respected and Free from Violence: An evaluation of primary prevention projects"* published by ANROWS
- > *'Can I just share my story?' Experiences of technology-facilitated abuse among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from regional*

*and remote areas*, published by the Office of the ESafety Commissioner (XVIII)

- > *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing our rights, securing our future report*, published by Australian Human Rights Commission (XIX)

### Elder abuse and violence against older women

Research on the prevention of elder abuse has had a comparatively higher investment nationally and in Victoria but is still at early stages of maturity. With some notable exceptions, there has been less of a research focus on gender-based violence against older women.

Examples of elder abuse prevention research include:

- > *Everybody's Business: Stocktake of Elder Abuse Awareness, Prevention and Response Activities in Australia* (XX)
- > *National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study: Final Report* (XXI)
- > *Preventing Abuse of Older People in Melbourne's East: A Primary Prevention Framework & Guide* (XXII)
- > *Elder Abuse as Family Violence* discussion paper (XXIII)
- > *Preventing Elder Abuse: a literature review* (XXIV)
- > *Elder Abuse in Rural & Remote Communities: Social Policy, Prevention and Responses* (XXV).

In Victoria, several action research projects by Celebrate Ageing, and the Older Women's Network (NSW); and the National Aging Research Institute and Respect Victoria have also contributed to the field.

### Children and youth

Internationally there is growing global recognition of the need for intersectional approaches that examine and respond to both violence against women and violence against children. The Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI), is working with the World Health Organisation to develop global research priorities on the intersections between Violence against women and Violence Against Children. In Australia, child abuse has been addressed through *Beyond 18: The Longitudinal Study on Leaving Care* from Australian Institute for Family Studies (AIFS) (XXVI) and *How Australia can*

*invest in children and return more*, a collaboration between the Early Intervention Foundation, The Front Project and CoLab at the Telethon Kids Institute (XXVII).

### Young Women

The reporting period has witnessed an increased awareness of the specific needs of young women, especially from an intersectional perspective. Examples of research include *The Young Women's Report: A report of the Young Women and Non-Binary People's Forum 7 July 2021* and *AWAVA's Young Women Survey 2021 (XIV)* and *(Re)Shaping Respect: LGBTIQ young people talk healthy, equal relationships* (XXVIII).

### Migrant and Refugee Women

The body of evidence around issues of primary prevention for migrant and refugee communities, remains very limited. Respect Victoria has commissioned Monash University and InTouch Community Services to undertake research on preventing coercive control in migrant and refugee communities, due for completion in December 2022. Other research from the reporting period includes:

- > a University of Melbourne study entitled *What works to address violence against women and family violence within faith settings: An evidence guide* (XXIX)
- > 2021 saw the release of *Migrant and Refugee Women in Australia: The Safety and Security Survey (XXX)* funded by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Office for Women and conducted by Monash University in partnership with the Harmony Alliance.

### Men and masculinities

There is considerable literature on men and masculinities that draws upon academic and practice-based research. The XY website is a comprehensive online repository of literature on men and positive masculinities, curated by Professor Michael Flood. The repository makes a significant national and international contribution to preventing male violence against women. Further research of note during the reporting period includes *Men In Focus: Unpacking Masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women*, published by Our Watch (XXXI).

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