

RESPECT VICTORIA



MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM

**THREE YEARLY REPORT TO PARLIAMENT
ON THE PROGRESS OF PREVENTION
2022-2024**

Executive summary

EXECUTIVE

INTRODUCTION

Respect Victoria is required to report to the Victorian Parliament every three years on the trends, progress and outcomes of activity across Victoria to prevent family violence and violence against women under the *Prevention of Family Violence Act 2018* (Vic).

This report shows that primary prevention is leading to change, and we are making positive progress towards a safe, equal and violence-free Victoria. This report captures the extensive efforts of government, the prevention sector and the community to prevent all forms of gendered violence. This includes Victoria's collective leadership in prevention policy, research, system and workforce development, and the design and delivery of innovative and tailored approaches to drive transformational social change across our diverse communities to stop violence before it starts.

This report covers activity from January 2022 to December 2024. It examines work being done in Victoria to prevent family violence, gendered violence and violence against women, analysing:

- positive progress and change
- enablers of and barriers to prevention work
- emerging trends and evolving practices
- opportunities and recommendations for further action and investment.

There is much to be celebrated from the past three years, including significant government investment in prevention and the commencement of Respect Ballarat, Victoria's first at-scale place-

based community saturation model. However, due to the increasing prevalence and complexity of gendered violence across society, there is more that must be done to address the underlying drivers of violence we face in our communities, workplaces and homes. While promising progress is being made, greater, more creative investment and targeted action is urgently required to scale up and supplement efforts to achieve population-level outcomes and drive down rates of violence. Communities are demanding this action, and we must listen and respond.

This report identifies a range of challenges and emerging trends that — without action — risk progress in prevention and lessen the chance of reducing violence. These include the rise of online misogyny and radicalisation of young men and boys, the weaponisation of new technologies such as generative AI, intensifying global backlash against gender equality, the cost of living and rising economic inequality. With bipartisan leadership and commitment, we can face these local and global forces to save lives and prevent untold harms. We can only afford to increase our resolve and our efforts in the face of such challenges.

Now is the time to stay the course on prevention to safeguard the positive progress we have made, to drive forward the change we need to see, and to create a future where all Victorians are safe, equal and respected.

SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

In the past three years, the Victorian Government has built on its ambitious agenda, providing nation-leading investment and working to reform laws, change culture and stop violence before it starts. Significant advances have been made despite systemic challenges and emerging trends. The state's resilient prevention sector has adapted by deepening partnerships, leveraging research and innovation, and evolving to meet growing demand and complexity.

Findings presented in this report show that in the past three years there has been:

- greater community interest, awareness and demands for change to end violence
- continued political leadership and investment
- significant policy and legislative developments
- maturing of prevention system infrastructure
- ongoing workforce growth and development
- groundbreaking research and evidence
- promising community-led, specialist and self-determined prevention work
- increasing momentum for evolving prevention practice, including to: design and deliver innovative place-based approaches; deepen partnerships; foster collaboration across primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery; and enable collaboration between the prevention sector and other sectors working on aligned issues, such as preventing harmful use of alcohol and other drugs, violent pornography, problem gambling and online harms.

This work requires long-term and transformational change, and there is still much to do.

This report explores eight key themes, analysing progress to date and identifying opportunities and recommendations for future attention.

PREVENTION INVESTMENT

Preventing gendered violence, family violence and all forms of violence against women requires long-term investment to address social norms, attitudes, behaviours and systems that drive and reinforce violence in all the places where Victorians live, learn, work and play.

Key progress across the reporting period includes the Victorian Government investing \$130 million in prevention, establishing a number of longer-term funding agreements, and supporting prevention infrastructure and activity across a range of settings and communities. Ongoing political leadership has been significant in achieving landmark investment in Respect Ballarat (formerly the Ballarat Community Saturation Model), as well as ongoing investment in Respect Victoria and the Respectful Relationships initiative.

However, primary prevention in Victoria has still not been funded at a level commensurate with the scale and complexity of the problem.

While significant progress has been made, further investment is needed to sustain and enhance impact, promote coordination and sustainability, and scale up promising practice. There are also opportunities to increase impact by offering more flexible, long-term and fit-for-

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purpose funding models. Without dedicated and enduring investment, we will continue to see unacceptable rates of gendered violence, with some types of violence likely to increase as a result of rising online misogyny and continued gender inequality, homophobia and transphobia.

The report identifies opportunities to sustain and grow investment to support a true whole-of-community approach to prevention. This includes: exploring opportunities for hypothecated funding drawing on established examples in Victoria and beyond; harnessing cross-portfolio funding sources where there are shared benefits and outcomes (such as through the Medicare levy and/or Mental Health and Wellbeing Surcharge fund); and leveraging opportunities for complementary investment from non-government sources.

ENABLING POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Legislative reform and policy are integral to prevention. They create the enabling environment for prevention activity and play a transformative role in systems and social change.

Key progress across the reporting period includes the delivery of a dedicated statewide prevention strategy in the *Free from Violence Second Action Plan (2022–2025)*, the release of the second *Dhelk Dja 3 Year Action Plan* and the launch of *Strong Foundations* (a precursor to *Until every Victorian is safe: Third rolling action plan to end family and sexual violence 2025 to 2027*). Pivotal legislative and regulatory reform also took place during this period, including the introduction of affirmative consent legislation, criminalisation of non-fatal strangulation, and

ongoing implementation of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (Vic).

However, opportunities remain for stronger policy coordination across portfolios and departments, including between the Victorian and Australian governments and related agencies.

There is also an urgent need for increased policy attention on preventing sexual violence, engaging children and young people, and addressing homophobia and violence toward the trans community, as well as on emerging and escalating forms of gendered harm in the digital space.

Throughout the consultations to inform this report, early intervention was also identified as an important component in preventing violence and a policy gap still requiring attention. Primary prevention and early intervention are distinct but complementary fields. A collaborative approach to statewide coordination of early intervention approaches, in partnership with the prevention and response sectors, will allow us to identify effective approaches, address gaps and ensure Victoria is taking every opportunity to prevent violence, minimise harm and keep our community safe from violence.

STRENGTHENING THE PREVENTION SYSTEM

An effective prevention landscape requires a sustainable and mature prevention system, including political and public sector leadership, policy and legislative reform, governance and coordination mechanisms, longitudinal evidence and a skilled workforce.

Victoria's prevention system has grown and matured over the past three years, building

on a foundation of grassroots activism, public health, local government, and community sector leadership and expertise, alongside the reforms related to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, including the continued work of Respect Victoria.

Progress has occurred through enduring state government portfolios and governance structures, Respect Victoria strengthening its leadership and coordination role as Victoria's dedicated agency for prevention, (the only entity of its kind in any state or territory across Australia), stronger partnerships across the sector, and statewide workforce strengthening. This has been enabled across the state by stakeholders such as Our Watch, Safe and Equal, the Women's Health Services Network, family violence services, men's services organisations, and the Municipal Association of Victoria, together with local government, Rainbow Health Australia, Sexual Assault Services Victoria and others.

Aboriginal self-determination continues to be a crucial foundation for Aboriginal-led prevention, with key progress achieved in strengthening Aboriginal-led infrastructure through the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, Koori Caucus and the expertise and leadership of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

Staying the course is essential to ensure Victoria's prevention system infrastructure continues to mature, build evidence and create further impact in preventing gendered violence.

GROWING AND SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE

Victoria has made progress defining, growing and developing a skilled and experienced

prevention workforce, with more organisations and practitioners delivering prevention activities and actively joining the prevention effort.

The strategic foundations for ongoing workforce development are now in place, with government commitments set out in *Building from strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response* and useful evidence, insights and guidance outlined in Safe and Equal's *Foundations for Action* report and Our Watch's *Growing with change*. Practitioner networks, communities of practice, conferences and capability building work led by the peak bodies and other organisations have also been pivotal.

Frequent staff turnover and the loss of experienced and skilled practitioners continue to present ongoing challenges, often driven by job insecurity (including funding uncertainty and short-term contracts), workload pressures and burnout.

Sustained leadership and commitment are required to continue to support workforce development and retention, including building greater diversity across the prevention workforce and supporting practitioner wellbeing and capability building in the face of backlash, resistance and emerging challenges.

BUILDING EVIDENCE AND DATA

Research, monitoring and evaluation are essential to understanding the prevalence, trends and drivers of different forms of violence and what works to prevent them. Evidence is required to demonstrate the magnitude of problems, identify opportunities for intervention, and measure the effectiveness and impact of interventions.

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Important progress has been made over the reporting period, with nation-leading research and evidence produced on the dynamics and drivers of different forms of violence, Aboriginal-led prevention, men and masculinities, and place-based prevention approaches.

Robust data must underpin this work, and there is continued opportunity to build the evidence base on what works to prevent different forms of violence, address data gaps and better evaluate Victoria's progress. It is also crucial to embed Indigenous Data Sovereignty and build the evidence base for Aboriginal-led prevention.

Respect Victoria is developing a statewide monitoring, evaluation and learning system to complement the Victorian Government's broader *Family Violence Outcomes Framework*. This includes a Statewide Theory of Change and impact framework to chart collective progress in Victoria. Investing in outcome evaluations, strengthening data collection systems and capacity, and building monitoring and evaluation capability across government and the sector are crucial to support implementation and ensure Victoria can demonstrate results.

RECOGNISING AND ENABLING COMMUNITY-LED, SPECIALIST AND SELF-DETERMINED PREVENTION

Community-led and specialist organisations are integral to the prevention system.

Over the reporting period, there has been strong leadership by community-led and specialist organisations and increasing government support for community-led and self-determined prevention work, including through *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our*

Way — Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families, the Gender and Disability Workforce Development Program and the Elder Abuse Prevention Networks. Intersectional prevention practice has been strengthened through a number of strategic partnerships, such as the LGBTIQ Family Violence Prevention Project and the Connecting Communities partnership.

However, further support is needed to bolster the important work of community-led and specialist prevention organisations and ensure they have the funding certainty to meaningfully and equitably participate in prevention governance and partnerships and to sustainably meet the needs of their communities.

Long-term investment in Aboriginal-led prevention is also critical to self-determination and ensuring Victoria is Treaty ready.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Community education and engagement are critical to a whole-of-population approach to prevention, reaching broad audiences to increase understanding of gendered violence and challenge the attitudes, behaviours and social norms that drive violence.

Contributors to this report, *National Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women Survey* (NCAS) data and key campaign and event metrics indicate that over the past three years there has been greater public interest in and awareness of gendered violence, family violence and violence against women, alongside greater community readiness to mobilise for change.

Media attention on family violence, and

violence against women specifically, increased considerably over the reporting period. Marches and community activism across the state drew record crowds, particularly in the aftermath of alleged killings and violent attacks on women — indicating growing community demand and mobilisation for change.

Respect Victoria's campaign evaluations show Victorians value both role modelling and articulation of how individuals can act to prevent violence. This report outlines how important it is to elevate approaches to engaging and communicating with various audiences through values-based messaging.

By continuing to invest in well-designed, responsive campaigns and social change initiatives aligned with evidence-based and mutually reinforcing prevention programs, we can strengthen public understanding of violence and its drivers, and build community literacy and reflection, thus contributing to changes in cultural and social norms.

EVOLVING PREVENTION PRACTICE AND APPROACHES

The evidence base for prevention is continuously evolving to inform a deeper understanding of effective approaches to prevent the many forms of family violence, violence against women and gendered violence. This was particularly evident over this reporting period.

Key practice frameworks and tools were updated and expanded to centre and enhance evidence-based prevention of violence against Aboriginal, LGBTIQ+ and older Victorians as well as people with disability.

There was also key progress in promoting and

resourcing place-based approaches. Building on initiatives such as Respect Ballarat — as well as regional coordination of women's health services, local government, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and others — will drive tailored prevention, community readiness and effective intersectional practice.

Alongside continued whole-of-population activity, those who participated in report consultations reflected on the need for more tailored and targeted prevention programs and approaches, including those that are culturally and age-appropriate, and those tailored to specific contexts and settings.

There is increasing interest in integrating prevention across the family violence continuum, including through greater collaboration between the prevention, early intervention, response and recovery sectors.

There is also an opportunity for increased collaboration between the prevention sector and sectors focused on aligned social harms and market-based contributors that reinforce the drivers of violence, such as harmful use of alcohol and other drugs, problem gambling, pornography and online harms.

THE WAY FORWARD

Preventing family violence, violence against women and gendered violence requires a transformational, long-term approach. It requires unwavering commitment from governments, communities and businesses. While a whole-of-community approach to prevention is crucial, government has unique levers that can further primary prevention efforts.

By building on what works, strengthening and safeguarding essential prevention infrastructure and courageously addressing persistent and emerging challenges, Victoria can continue to set the standard on violence prevention.

Respect Victoria presents these recommendations to encourage renewed focus and sustained investment — a necessary and urgent commitment to move us closer to a state where everyone is safe, equal and respected.

In this report, Respect Victoria makes 15 recommendations to the Victorian Government. These recommendations also provide useful guidance for all organisations working in prevention. At Respect Victoria, we stand ready to support, and where appropriate lead, the realisation of these recommendations.





RESPECT VICTORIA RECOMMENDS THAT THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT:

- 1. Publish updated and comprehensive modelling on the cost of family violence and violence against women to the Victorian economy and community as well as economic modelling on the return on investment for prevention every five years.**

- 2. Provide dedicated and enduring funding for primary prevention. This includes:**
 - a. identifying and leveraging funding sources and approaches to prevention that promote coordination and sustainability
 - b. supporting long-term (i.e. five years minimum) and/or recurrent, secure, flexible and fit-for-purpose funding models that enable sustained impact
 - c. implementing funding for scaling up promising practice, particularly place-based approaches to prevention, and investment in tried and tested successful models
 - d. ensuring grant guidelines and eligibility for funding streams across government for health promotion and preventing social issues are inclusive of approaches towards primary prevention of family and gendered violence
 - e. identifying and leveraging opportunities for cross-portfolio funding sources for primary prevention where there are shared benefits and outcomes (such as the Medicare levy and/or Mental Health and Wellbeing Surcharge fund and/or through tailored application or adaptation of the Early Intervention Investment Framework), and exploring hypothecated funding approach for sustainability
 - f. continuing to facilitate funding arrangements that support community-led and targeted prevention with priority communities (including work led by and for First Nations communities, LGBTIQ+ communities, culturally and racially marginalised people, people with disability, children and young people, and older Victorians) including through resourced partnerships with mainstream organisations
 - g. exploring and leveraging opportunities for complementary funding from non-government sources, as part of a mutually reinforcing whole-of-community approach to primary prevention.

3. Develop and implement a statewide strategy for preventing and addressing sexual violence, or at least ensure there is dedicated focus, action and investment on preventing sexual violence throughout implementation of *Until every Victorian is safe: Third rolling action plan to end family and sexual violence 2025 to 2027* and other relevant strategies.ⁱ

4. Work with and advocate to the federal government and other jurisdictions for effective strategies to safeguard against new and/or escalating gendered harms in the digital space.

5. Work in partnership with the prevention and response sector to agree on an approach for statewide monitoring and coordination of early intervention approaches across government departments and agencies, and the Victorian community.

6. Continue to strengthen prevention system infrastructure and coordination through dedicated and enduring funding for:

- a.** Respect Victoria — the statutory agency for prevention of family violence and violence against women
- b.** the peak bodies for Victorian organisations specialising in the prevention of family violence, violence against women and gendered violence, including sexual violence
- c.** the prevention workforce and sector, including women’s health services, local government and specialist community-led organisations — particularly organisations led by and for Aboriginal, LGBTIQ+, and culturally and racially diverse communities, older people, and people with disability
- d.** regional and statewide coordination and governance mechanisms, including self-determined infrastructure led for and by Aboriginal communities, and whole-of-government responsibility
- e.** funded partnerships and programs focused on prevention of gendered violence, including those across the family violence continuum.

ⁱ The Victorian Government released *Until every Victorian is safe: Third rolling action plan to end family and sexual violence 2025 to 2027* in September 2025, outside of the reporting period. Sexual violence is clearly signposted within the title and framing of this action plan. Ensuring this translates into meaningful and targeted action to prevent sexual violence will be important throughout the implementation period.

7. Actively work to grow and strengthen the primary prevention workforce in Victoria by:

- a. implementing *Framing the Future, the second rolling action plan* under the *Building from Strength 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response*
- b. progressing the actions put forward in Safe and Equal's *Foundations for Action* report on further building workforce knowledge, skills, confidence and connection
- c. enabling sector-led implementation support of the forthcoming *Victorian Prevention Capability Framework*
- d. conducting an equal pay review of the family violence sector to ensure remuneration is fairly awarded to skills and activities
- e. enabling the sector to continue to embed intersectional and inclusive practice, including through resourcing community-led and specialist organisations to deliver capability building initiatives and to engage in partnerships with mainstream organisations.

8. Strengthen prevention data quality and evaluation through:

- a. adequately resourcing the evaluation of short-, medium- and long-term outcomes of government-funded initiatives to increase evidence on the effectiveness of current approaches and their impacts
- b. increasing the opportunities for sharing evaluative evidence, including through publishing government-funded evaluations wherever possible
- c. continuing to develop, refine, disseminate and implement evaluation frameworks, standards and tools to support consistent evaluation practice for initiatives related to the prevention of family violence, violence against women and gendered violence
- d. strengthening data collection capability, data linkage and use of existing evaluative data for prevention activity
- e. embedding Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles into data development and evidence building
- f. supporting sector capability and capacity to complete outcome evaluations and undertake effective monitoring.

9. Continue to work in partnership with organisations undertaking prevention work, to harness, build and disseminate research and practice evidence about:

- a.** perpetration of family violence, violence against women and gendered violence in Victoria
- b.** effective intersectional and community-led approaches to address the many drivers of family violence, violence against women and gendered violence against marginalised communities
- c.** evolving approaches to prevent family violence, violence against women and gendered violence across digital platforms, tools and communities, including strategies to safeguard against the gendered harms of social media algorithms, generative artificial intelligence and gendered dis/misinformation online
- d.** newly prevalent forms of violence, including technology-facilitated abuse
- e.** what works to drive enduring behavioural, attitudinal and social norms change at scale.

10. Require, remunerate and resource inclusion of the perspectives and priorities of marginalised communities and under-represented voices in relevant government-funded prevention policy and program design. This includes, but is not limited to the following communities and the specialist organisations that represent them:

- a.** children and young people
- b.** LGBTIQ+ communities, in particular trans and gender diverse people
- c.** culturally and racially marginalised people
- d.** people with disability
- e.** First Nations communities
- f.** older Victorians.

11. Guarantee long-term funding for First Nations led prevention work to address disproportionate rates of family violence and support self-determined prevention activity. This should include resourcing to enable specialist Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to realise Indigenous Data Sovereignty and participate in sector governance and leadership.

12. Continue to support the design and delivery of sustained and responsive social change campaigns that are anchored to evidence-based mutually reinforcing programs focused on:

- a.** promoting healthy masculinities and challenging rigid gender stereotypes that support a culture where violence can occur, particularly through programs targeting men and boys
- b.** sexual violence, particularly the risks of violent pornography and what healthy sexual relationships look like.

13. Continue to invest in and build 'saturation' and place-based prevention and early intervention initiatives to prevent family violence, violence against women and gendered violence across Victoria, including through:

- c.** building on lessons from Respect Ballarat (formerly the Ballarat Community Saturation Model) to guide longer-term (up to 10 years) investment in Ballarat and other sites across Victoria to enable impacts on gendered violence rates to be demonstrated
- d.** advocating to other jurisdictions to learn from the development and implementation of the Respect Ballarat project and to build the workforce and system readiness required to pilot similar initiatives across Australian states and territories.

14. Work with prevention-focused organisations and agencies to better connect and integrate prevention work through:

- d.** expanding efforts to design and deliver integrated prevention approaches, particularly those that combine primary prevention and early intervention approaches
- e.** collaborating with other sectors to develop and deliver nuanced and effective prevention messaging, including through amplifying community voices and diversifying the prevention workforce
- f.** identifying strategic opportunities to embed prevention lessons across early intervention, crisis response and recovery efforts, particularly in the justice system, housing, health and other social service systems.

15. Work with and advocate to the Australian Government and other Australian state and territory governments and agencies to address the commercial and systemic contributors to family violence, violence against women and gendered violence, including by regulating and/or supporting increased cross-sector collaboration on:

- f.** alcohol pricing, availability and advertising
- g.** gambling access and advertising
- h.** production, dissemination and access to violent pornography, particularly for children and young people
- i.** misogynistic radicalisation and gendered disinformation
- j.** interlinking social norms of masculinity, sport, drinking, gambling and pornography that normalise and drive family violence, violence against women and gendered violence.

