

Prevention Policy and Practice: Preventing Violence Against Women

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“Prevention in CALD Communities: Building on Strengths to Progress Everyone’s Work”

SECTION ONE

ACKNOWLEDGE

- the traditional owners of the land.
- work undertaken by **In Touch, Multicultural Women’s Health** and other mainstream and CALD specific organisations who have consistently worked to place violence against women from CALD backgrounds on the public agenda.
- the leadership role that VicHealth has played in placing the PVAW on the community, state and National agenda.
- The work that organisations such as Our Watch and ANROWS are undertaking on the National stage in order to progress activity which many of you here today have undertaken. AMES is a relatively new player in this arena so that work that has allowed us to be here today is honoured and appreciated.
- VicHealth and the DSS for supporting work to explore issues associated with Preventing violence Against Women in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities in order to identify actions that could be considered to address this issue moving forward. **This work underpins my presentation today.**

INTRODUCTION

- The title of this presentation is: **Preventing Violence Against Women in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities: Building on Strengths to Progress Everyone’s Work. I’d like to say a little more about this.**
 - In 2015 we have extensive knowledge about Preventing Violence Against Women at the general population level and are refining knowledge in PVAW at the sub population level.
 - We also have extensive knowledge of issues pertaining to Multiculturalism, Immigration, and service delivery for those settling in Australia.
 - Our task in planning and implementing future activity to Prevent Violence Against Women in CALD communities is to integrate this knowledge, derived from these separate disciplines and sectors, into a strategy to PVAW in CALD communities.
- Given I’ve been allocated 25 minutes to canvas issues pertaining to preventing violence against women in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities, from here on in I will fall into acronym land and refer to preventing violence against women as PVAW and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities as CALD communities.
- When using the term PVAW I am referring to the PVAW before it occurs.

AMES is committed to making contribution to PVAW & acknowledge that this violence:

- is a breach of human rights
- is prevalent,
- has serious and enduring impacts on individuals, communities and our society as a whole
- is against the law and both **undermines and reflects gender equality**:

The extent and impact of Violence Against Women makes prevention of this violence, everybody's business.

At AMES we are also committed to PVAW in CALD communities.

AMES works at the National level to provide settlement services to over 100,000 Migrants, Refugees, Humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers settling in Australia each year.

We know that if the economic and social objectives of immigration are to be met, women need to be able to participate in our social, economic and political environments. **Violence works against this.**

Let's look at the context in which we all operate.

Australia is among the most culturally diverse societies in the world.

In addition to diversity among our Indigenous population, our post-colonial history involved successive waves of immigration from many different countries and cultures.

- Almost half of all Australians are born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas.
- We speak almost 400 different languages and identify with 270 ancestries.
- Whilst the majority of Australians identifying a religion are Christian, there are a growing number of people identifying with other faiths, including Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism.
- Australia's population is predicted to grow to 27.2 million by 2026, with migration expected to account for 55 per cent of this growth.

Australian settlement policy is underpinned by the principle that there are benefits in providing support as early as possible in the settlement period to identify problems and prevent them becoming enduring barriers to settlement.

More positively, the early settlement period is also a time of change and transition, offering the opportunity to make positive changes in family and gender relations.

Violence Against Women is a significant barrier to successful settlement both of individual women and their children as well as of CALD communities as a whole.

A specific focus on PVAW in CALD communities ensures that strategies to preventing violence are integrated into settlement policy and that strategic opportunities are taken to engage individuals and communities early in their settlement.

Consequently, whilst focusing on CALD communities we believe it is important to give priority to recently arrived communities.

Whilst all forms of Violence against women are serious we also believe that it is important to "Bite off chunks" that are doable and not repeat the work of others. Consequently to retain consistency with the National Plan, when discussing PVAW in CALD communities I am referring to prevalent forms of this violence, specifically intimate partner violence, and non-partner sexual abuse.

SECTION TWO

Now let's look at what the research tells us.

There is no data on the prevalence of violence against women in **individual CALD communities**. Australian population surveys have found rates of violence among women from CALD backgrounds as a whole, to be the same as or a little lower than among the Australian-born. We don't know whether this reflects actual prevalence of violence or is due to the influence of situational or cultural factors on reporting.

Whilst we don't have access to good prevalence data, through the NCAS we do have access to data which tells us what people think about the issue.

This is important because we know that attitudes toward violence are an important indicator of the extent of the problem.

A consistent finding of both the 2009 and 2013 NCAS is that people born in countries in which English is not the main language were more likely than the Australian-born to have:

- a lower level of understanding of the nature of violence against women;
- a lower level of support for gender equality;
- a higher level of endorsement of attitudes supportive of violence against women.

This was especially the case for respondents who are recently arrived or who have poor proficiency in English thus exemplifying the need to ensure that new and emerging communities receive the support required to prevent violence against women.

On some questions responses were the same between people born in a non-English speaking country and in Australia. However people born in a non-English speaking country were substantially more likely than the Australian-born to:

- excuse violence against women in certain circumstances; for example if the violent person is under stress;
- to believe that women who are sexually harassed should sort things out themselves;
- to privilege family privacy and 'keeping the family together' over women's right to safety;
- transfer responsibility for violence from the perpetrator to the victim.

Among respondents from non-English speaking countries, country of birth had a stronger influence on attitudes than factors such as education, employment or living in a disadvantaged area. However, both knowledge and attitudes improved with length of time in Australia.

Now let's look at what the practice tells us.

As part of our work for VicHealth, we undertook a rapid review of activity taking place over the past ten years to PVAW in CALD communities. This proved to be a hard task as much of the practice undertaken at the field level is not documented and is certainly not readily available via standard search mechanisms.

At the National level,

- Of the 44 specific projects identified, the majority were located in Victoria.
- While gender inequality and gender stereotyping are acknowledged as underlying factors associated with violence against women, few projects promoting gender equity to PVAW within CALD communities were identified.
- **Early Activity** focused on Awareness Raising which was used as a strategy to inform people of the interpersonal factors that support violence against women. Some campaigns included translated materials and used participatory approaches that encouraged communities to identify and respond to VAW in localised and culturally appropriate ways.

- **More recent activity** in Victoria began to incorporate focus on community strengthening activity to be applied for use with CALD communities. While this is a strategy which can impact on social norms, cultural beliefs and violence-supportive attitudes, other jurisdictions did not appear to be investing this approach.
- **Current Activity** such as campaigns initiated by White Ribbon and Our Watch, and initiatives such as “The Line” and Scholl based “Respectful Relationship programs” were most commonly cited by government websites as key investments; however, CALD communities were rarely identified as a specific target group in these activities.

At the International level, 20 projects were identified. The majority used individual level and communication strategies as their major primary preventative approach with four incorporating a focus on community strengthening to PVAW.

In summary

While strategies to prevent violence against women in the general community have been implemented over the past ten years, strategies to PVAW with CALD communities in countries with high levels of migrant and refugee settlement remain embryonic. Put bluntly, CALD Communities have not received the services or focus required to assist in improving responses to violence against women or preventing it.

Now let’s look at what the advice from field stakeholders tells us.

Earlier this year we consulted with stakeholders leading work at the National and state levels, on issues relevant to development of a strategy to PVAW in CALD communities moving forward.

There was a clear view expressed indicating that before moving to action we need to understand the underlying factors relevant to PVAW in CALD communities that need to be considered.

It was acknowledged that:

- There is substantial diversity *between* and *within* CALD communities. There is also increasing diversity in the composition of our migration program. When undertaking action to PVAW in CALD communities, the varying cultural, religious, social and economic circumstances of communities needs to be considered.
- **Violence against women is rooted in gender inequality, including discrimination and harmful cultural and social norms. Addressing the social norms, structures and practices that support inequality between men and women in both public and private life, along with harmful gender stereotypes and identities is critical for PVAW.**
- Gender inequality, roles and relationships are influenced by a range of historical and contemporary social and economic factors and vary between groups. For this reason, assessing the ways in which gender relations are structured in specific groups and the ways in which they influence violence against women is an important step.
- Culture is neither fixed nor an inherent feature of particular individuals or groups. Rather it is shaped and therefore can be changed by social and economic forces.
- **All groups have cultural factors that protect against and increase the risk of violence. PVAW involves identifying and strengthening protective factors as well as addressing new or heightened risks associated with exposure to Anglo-Australian and globalised cultures.**
- There is a need to address specific norms, practices and structures that support, glorify or fail to sanction against the use and portrayal of violence in general, and VAW in particular.
- **Social exclusion, stigma, and racism affecting CALD communities can increase the risk of violence. These factors isolate communities, work against acculturation and negatively affect responses to and by CALD women affected by violence. This in turn undermines the prospects of men being held accountable for violence and therefore of establishing social norms against this behaviour.**

- There are a range of factors that increase the risk of violence against women in particular groups and contexts. They do this by interacting with the influences of gender inequality and cultural support for violence. Addressing these factors in conjunction with reducing gender inequality and violence-supportive norms, structures and practices can help to reduce the prevalence of VAW.

For example, some factors contributing to VAW in CALD communities involve current or past adversity experienced by perpetrators. These factors can provide the context for understanding violence and need to be addressed. **However, they do not excuse violent behavior. The use of violence is a choice and it is important that men who use violence are held accountable for their behavior through informal and, where necessary, formal sanctions.**

When developing an overall strategy to PVAW we need to:

- Adopt a rights-based approach that prioritises the safety, agency and empowerment of women;
- Move away from stand-alone interventions which have limited success to employ a coordinated program of mutually reinforcing strategies to be implemented across sectors and settings;
- Manage the risk that prevention activity may be used to further stigmatise some CALD groups. However, violence against women is too prevalent and serious for this risk to be a reason for inaction.
- **Adopt a two-pronged approach is that includes:**
 - **activity designed to reach the general population;**
 - **activities tailored to specific communities.** Those most likely to require tailored approaches are:
 - CALD groups with large proportions of recent arrivals;
 - new and emerging communities;
 - longstanding migrant groups affected by social exclusion.
- **Acknowledge that levels of awareness and understanding of VAW is low** in some CALD communities, and raising this will be an important precursor to further prevention activity.
- **Prioritise strategies that utilise and build on existing resources** and infrastructure and have the potential to reach large numbers of people, particularly in groups with a high level of need.

We also need to work with men as the majority of CALD men do not use violence, and can be important allies in prevention. Engaging non-violent men can also help prevent ‘backlash’ and deal more effectively with it should it arise.

In most forms of violence against women the majority of perpetrators are men and certain aspects of masculine roles, identities and peer associations are well-established risk factors for this violence. Addressing these by working with CALD men and boys, and the contexts shaping their responses to violence is a critical component of prevention efforts.

In recognition of the fundamental underlying role of gender inequalities in violence against women, efforts to prevent this violence **must also empower CALD women** by engaging them as leaders in prevention programs and settings.

Although violence against women is inexcusable regardless of the circumstance, certain aspects of feminine roles and identities (e.g. highly subordinate or sexualised identities) may increase women’s vulnerability to violence. Addressing these will also be critical aspects of prevention.

There are also benefits to reaching people at life-stages when they are at particular risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence, or developing precursors that will increase their risk later in life. This means that priority focus should be applied on **working with young men and women.**

When developing strategies to PVAW in CALD communities it is important to identify **sectors that can add value** and form planning and implementation partnerships accordingly.

Current activity to PVAW in the general population occurs across a range of settings. It is important that interventions taking place in these settings reach and are relevant to people from CALD backgrounds.

In addition to reaching CALD communities via universal interventions, there are additional environments where more targeted activity to PVAW in CALD communities is required.

SECTION THREE

So: How do we incorporate research, policy and practice knowledge into future activity?

Whilst considerable advancements have been made in responding to and PVAW in Australia, CALD communities have been largely neglected in this work. As a multicultural, egalitarian society, this neglect can no longer continue.

Having said this, we are all cognisant of the resource constraints we live with so, in identifying actions that could be implemented, emphasis is placed on those requiring minimal resourcing. These include:

- **Policy and legislative reform** to achieve women's safety and protection during the immigration, arrival, transition and settlement process.
- **Education and awareness raising** via inclusion of a focus on CALD communities in existing campaigns seeking to change social norms via attitudinal change. The campaigns should be delivered through a range of CALD communication mediums and be part of a wider strategy to PVAW which consists of mutually reinforcing activity.
- **Development and national dissemination of culturally relevant resources** to raise awareness of the prevalence, causes, impact and unacceptable nature of violence against women in CALD communities.
- **Conduct of a review to determine the most appropriate education and settlement service intervention points** to raise awareness of the rights and entitlements of women in Australia and to promote gender equity to PVAW. Possible intervention points could include:
 - Development of a module pertaining to PVAW within the Adult Migrant English Program.
 - Strengthening current orientation programs for migrants, refugee and humanitarian entrants to include information on the rights and entitlements of women in Australia and the unacceptable nature of gender inequity and violence against women.
- **Workforce Development** including widespread dissemination of up-to-date research and practice tools and education and training for those engaged with CALD communities to ensure that they are aware of the prevalence and impact of VAW and have the requisite skills to promote gender equity to PVAW and refer women experiencing violence to the appropriate agency.
- **Community Mobilisation** including:
 - Support from small grants to communities, to conduct community forums, with support from PVAW specialist agencies, which act as a catalyst for community action.
 - Intensive Programs to build the skills of CALD women to lead activity to PVAW within their specific communities.
 - Intensive programs to build the leadership skills of young CALD people concerned by the issue of VAW who want to work with others to prevent it.
 - Resource material and programs to encourage CALD community members to take action to PVAW, sometimes referred to as bystander interventions.

- Programs engaging CALD men to act as ambassadors or role models to reach other men with prevention messages.
- **Individual skill development** in programs such as those tailored to CALD parents that discourage gender stereotyping and focus on supporting development of healthy gender identities for children and young people. These programs were also important sources of social support for women.
- **Integration of PVAW focus into current programs including:**
 - Further development of The Line social media platform to include material relevant to CALD young people.
 - Adoption of increased focus on CALD young people in current school-based strategies designed to develop a whole-of-school approach to PVAW.
 - Integration of strategies to transform gender relations and promote gender equality into programs contributing to the empowerment of CALD women (e.g. through education, employment, microeconomic enterprises).
 - Relationship and sexuality programs to enhance the knowledge and skills of CALD young people to develop healthy sexual practices, understand and practice consent in sexual relationships and foster respectful relationships and communication.
 - School based Pastoral Care Programs in faith-based schools strengthen focus on development of equitable and respectful relationships between girls and boys.
 - Programs that empower CALD young women, promote healthy gender identities of young CALD women and men and facilitate development of equal and respectful relationships.
 - Programs that connect CALD women with one another as a means of breaking down social isolation and increasing social support, which provide women with the skills required for employment.

National and State collaboration also needs to occur to ensure that activity to PVAW in CALD Communities is further integrated into

- National and State PVAW Plans;
- The work of Our Watch and ANROWS;
- National bodies focusing on migration and settlement issues;
- The strategic plans of State settlement committees.

Coordination mechanisms that strengthen partnership activity between government departments responsible for PVAW policy and programs and multicultural policy and services is also critical as are state mechanisms to ensure inclusion of CALD stakeholders in PVAW work.

At a Local level we need Cross-sector network development to build relationships between organisations working in the PVAW and CALD sectors.

Finally, we need Research and Evaluation which assists us to

- monitor the prevalence of violence against women in CALD communities and attitudes towards the problem
- longitudinal studies to better understand the impact of migration and settlement on gender relations and violence
- studies which identify interventions that PVAW in CALD communities that can be taken replicated across other communities.

CONCLUSION

The protection of human rights, support for cultural diversity and social inclusion, ensuring freedom from both race- and gender-discrimination and building strong settlement services and policies are a critical aspect of building a strong foundation to support our PVAW work.

In turn, the success of these policies and programs will depend on them attending to the rights and concerns of women from CALD backgrounds and addressing VAW as a barrier to achieving policy objectives.

General population level strategies to PVAW provide an important foundation for PVAW in CALD communities. The National Framework to Prevent Violence Against Women and Their Children being developed by Our Watch will be critical to further shape this work.

It is also important that this framework incorporates the means to ensure that general population level strategies reach and are responsive to CALD communities and that there are additional strategies tailored to specific communities.

When Martin Luther King announced “I had a dream” he didn’t suggest that we then have workshops, forums and meetings to fully explore this. He knew that to remove the scourge of racism from our landscape, **ACTION WAS REQUIRED**

Australia has led international work in the PVAW and has aspired to ridding the scourge of violence against women from our landscape. We assume that this means ridding us of violence perpetrated against all women and not just those who fit the dominant culture and norms.

In 2015:

- We know how many CALD women are affected by violence
- We know the impact of this violence and
- We know how to prevent it.

It’s now time to cease our deliberations and to prioritise our actions.