

Maribyrnong Respect & Equity: Preventing Violence Against Women

Guide for Local Government



Introduction

In 2008 Maribyrnong City Council was successful in obtaining funding from VicHealth for a three year Respect and Equity: Preventing Violence Against Women project. This funding enabled the appointment of a full-time Respect and Equity Coordinator and provided the organisation with the dedicated resources to design a program to focus and influence the administration and political arms of Council regarding their unique and important role in the primary prevention of violence against women. The project was supported by Councillors and management and implemented through coordinated and integrated organisation-wide activities. It aimed to create a community where women live free from violence and fear of violence.

The project built on significant research that informs local government efforts in primary prevention. Primary prevention is about taking a long-term, systemic approach to stopping violence before it occurs by focusing on structural, cultural and societal contexts in which violence occurs and the underlying causes; the unequal power relations between women and men, adherence to rigid gender stereotypes and broader cultures of violence.

This guide outlines the successful approach and strategies that Maribyrnong City Council undertook. This approach is shown to be successful because it is evidence-based and evidence-building. The guide is designed for local government organisations that have evolved to begin a whole-of-organisation culture change program working in-depth to reorientate their council operations to primary prevention and to create safer communities for women.



About Maribyrnong

This guide for local government describes those strategies and approaches that reflect the most promising practice to date in primary prevention of violence against women.

It's important to state that in any cultural change process there are many factors that may or may not have contributed to strong practice outcomes. There were a number of direct and indirect public policy, research and Maribyrnong-specific factors, related to both administrative and elected arms, that prepared Maribyrnong City Council to do primary prevention work, even before it received additional funds from VicHealth in 2008.

In nine years of active involvement – including six years prior to receiving dedicated funds – the following have had an incremental, cumulative and mutually reinforcing influence, which was crucial in clarifying and defining the scope of a primary prevention agenda:

a) Organisational:

- An executive management team including equal number of men and women
- An elected arm with a history of a high number of female Councillors
- A strong organisation with a culture committed to integrating and influencing systemic and structural change eg: integrating and elevating the Municipal Public Health Plan into the Council plan
- A culture that promotes and advocates the principles, values and practice of social justice and human rights as the normal Council practice

b) Public policy:

- Increasing focus by Office of Women's Policy on women experiencing violence, and the distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary prevention
- Victoria's state plan and funding investment for preventing violence against women
- Increasing profile of women's violence via a female Victorian Police Commissioner and associated culture change in enforcement ranks.

c) Research:

- Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention (GLOVE) Project
- National Community Attitudes Survey towards Violence Against Women
- VicHealth's Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria 2007

During the past decade the Maribyrnong journey ebbed and flowed (and continues to do so today) and often progress occurs in seemingly inconsistent or unintended ways. The key message is to be constantly open to conversations, inquisitive to policy mood and continue to mainstream gender equity principles throughout the long journey. Over time this will create a community that upholds gender respect and equity and where women are free from violence and fear of violence.

About Maribyrnong City Council

The City of Maribyrnong is located in Melbourne's inner west in Victoria, Australia. The Council is responsible for maintaining over \$380 million of infrastructure, including facilities, roads and footpaths for residents and about 5,000 businesses. Over 72,000 residents call Maribyrnong home representing a wide range of cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. Council acknowledge that whether collecting rubbish, planting trees, constructing new buildings or providing maternal and child health care, everything contributes to community wellbeing. You can find the latest information and statistics about Maribyrnong and its community by going to www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

“There was good evidence behind why we would do it. We had a leadership group supportive of innovation and a Council that was a leader around social policy issues. The willingness of the organisation is always the biggest enabler.”

Lynley Dumble, Manager Family Services and Community Projects

Understanding the Maribyrnong approach and strategies

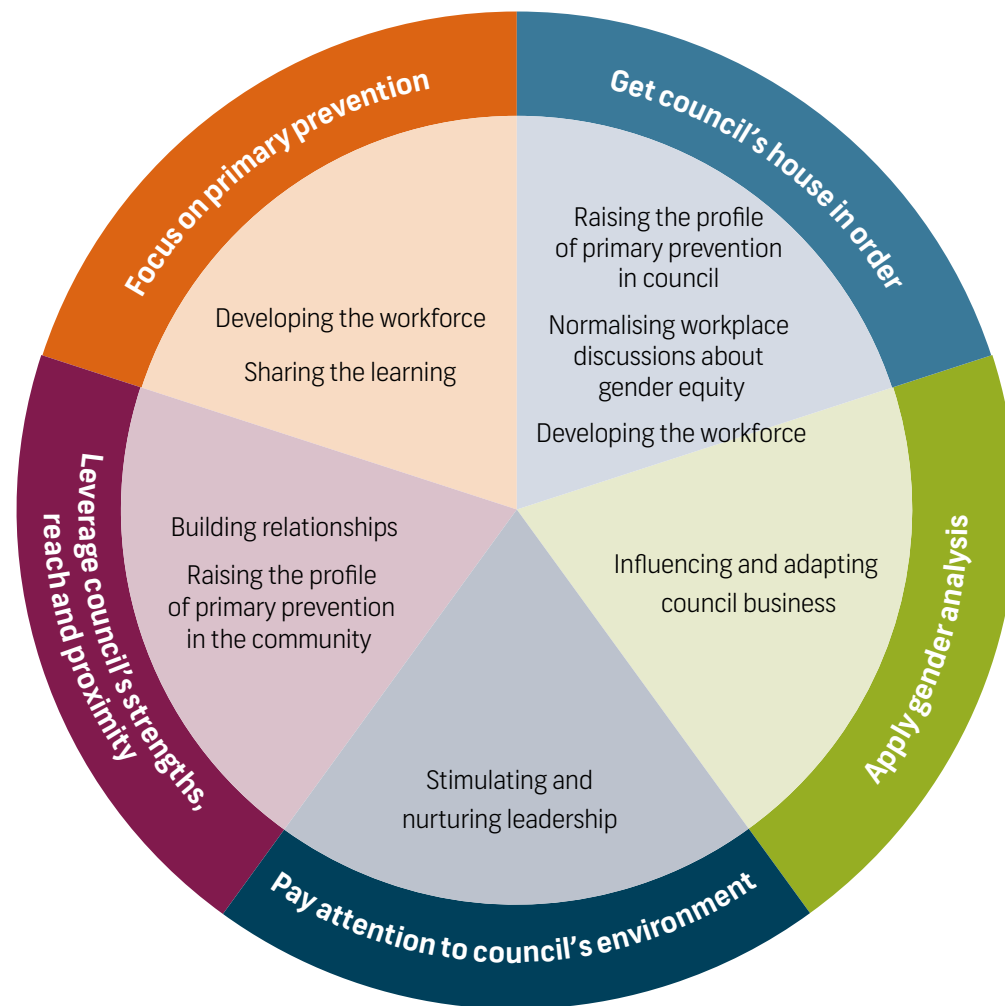
The Maribyrnong approach was underpinned by the following principles. This approach forms the context and underpins the strategies and actions undertaken by Council. There is nothing particularly radical about this approach, however it served to reaffirm and focus Council's role as an arm of government.

The approach and strategies are represented in this diagram shown right. While the diagram and guide is structured to show that some strategies are more closely aligned to some principles than others, in reality all the principles provide context and relate to all strategies all the time. The circular image represents the non-linear approach to the project with all elements working together and affecting each other.

Defining the approach

The five essentials of the approach are described as:

- 1. Focus on primary prevention:** Primary prevention is about stopping violence before it occurs in the first instance; it addresses the underlying causes of violence against women. VicHealth and the World Health Organization describe these causes as: the unequal power relations between men and women; adherence to rigid gender stereotypes and broader cultures of violence. Respect and gender equity is the focus of primary prevention at Maribyrnong. Often these are long term structural approaches, which reaffirm Council's position as best placed to create a primary prevention agenda.
- 2. Get council's house in order:** Maribyrnong recognised that to affect community change it needed to ensure its own culture, policy, planning and programs demonstrated gender respect and equity. By using a range of mutually reinforcing strategies simultaneously across Council, it built momentum and shifted cultural norms and practice. As this culture embedded, it spread through the organisation, increasing its ability to model respect and equity and contributed to increasing community awareness through leadership, political governance, networks and service delivery.



- 3. Apply gender analysis:** A gender analysis and understanding considers the role gender plays in shaping our male and female lives, work, experiences and choices. Also known as a gender lens, this highlights the different experience gender shapes for women and men. By understanding that violence disproportionately affects women and is invariably gendered in nature ie: directed against a woman because she is a woman, we can begin to address the underlying gender power imbalance and prevent violence in the first place. Maribyrnong applied gender analysis when assessing their operations and practices and implementing strategies.
- 4. Pay attention to council's environment:** An organisation with elected officials and where issues emerge in response to community concerns contributes to a constantly evolving council environment. Primary prevention outcomes can be lost or diluted in a contested public policy environment and when there is community anxiety for a response. Maribyrnong identified Council and employee strengths and pursued these opportunities to progress the Respect and Equity project. Regular discussions (both formal and informal) by the team responsible for the project included honestly challenging each other's existing knowledge, assumptions and relationships with colleagues and other teams. By continually reviewing the project approach the focus on primary prevention progressed.
- 5. Leverage council's strengths, reach and proximity:** Local government has a democratic mandate and role in creating environments for everyone to prosper and enjoy improved health and wellbeing. Council's recognised experience and strength lays in this universality – by providing safe public environments, developing community facilities, access to sport, culture and employment and providing health and community services. Existing infrastructure and resources can be leveraged to reach people efficiently; create links to primary health organisations and women's health and integrated family violence services; manage and fund small-scale initiatives; generate community action and advocate through its elected arm. Over time, this has a cumulative affect that builds, is mutually reinforcing and resilient. Maribyrnong City Council used their reach and proximity to extend its influence into the community.

Defining the strategies

The seven broad strategies used by Maribyrnong are:

- 1. Developing the workforce:** Developing the knowledge and skills of both the individuals responsible for implementing the project and other Council employees was key to building Council's capability to respond to gender inequality. The Safer Communities and Health Promotion team and the Respect and Equity Coordinator were responsible for implementing the project at Maribyrnong. Gender respect and equity was a team priority and they shared the workload for developing themselves and their colleagues to build organisation-wide capability and support for gender equality.
- 2. Sharing the learning:** Sharing Maribyrnong's experience was key to refining the project and encouraging primary prevention capability in the community and other councils. Showcasing and talking with partners and peers about how Maribyrnong's project was implemented, and its successes and challenges, led the Council to more opportunities for progressing and funding future work. In turn, each interaction has deepened the Maribyrnong team's understanding and ownership of the issue and their ability to contribute to the prevention of violence against women.
- 3. Raising the profile of primary prevention in council and community:** Communicating the causes of violence against women, barriers to equality and tailoring messages to internal and external audiences such as Council employees and community members was done through messages at events, existing programs and media. It was important for Maribyrnong to reinforce primary prevention in the Council and community consciousness, so project activities such as planning and policy development and community conversations had context.

- 4. Normalising workplace discussions about gender equity:** Inviting, initiating and promoting conversations about the causes of violence against women breaks the taboo associated with what was once considered a private matter and makes it public, enabling colleagues to explore opinions and challenge each other in a safe environment. The team responsible for Maribyrnong's project talked consistently about the causes and impacts of violence against women. These conversations helped people make connections between the causes of violence against women such as gender inequality and the role we all have in local government to address it. Such conversations encouraged people to confront their assumptions and beliefs and take action in a way that was comfortable and meaningful for them.
- 5. Influencing and adapting council business:** Putting primary prevention and gender equity into mainstream Council operations and practice, promotes and supports respect and equity in the community. Maribyrnong continued to finetune and examine their plans, policies and programs so it could embed real and lasting change in the organisation beyond the life of the project and the capabilities of the team responsible for the project.
- 6. Stimulating and nurturing leadership:** In Maribyrnong's project no single individual or leader was identified as the expert. Instead, through a process of facilitation and collaboration, groups developed expertise and helped spread the gender equity message and behaviours more thoroughly than one person. These leaders at all levels and departments reinforced the messages to their teams and within their networks. The senior leaders provided the necessary authorising environment for promoting gender respect and equity, knowledge and skills across the Council. Understanding there is no single expert or leader but rather everyone can contribute to creating an informal network of leaders or champions. This also means that people at different stages of engagement stay involved and connect with others for inspiration and support.



7. Building relationships: At Maribyrnong the team built informal relationships and formal partnerships to build their knowledge and skills and support for the project. Within their organisation, the team connected with and made the most of a broad range of Council activities and networks to influence community attitudes. External relationships which other teams in council have, such as local sporting groups, businesses, other Victorian councils and the state government, enabled the team to draw from a range of perspectives and pursue various opportunities.



How to read this guide

This guide is a series of tip sheets. Each tip sheet lists a series of strategies undertaken by Maribyrnong City Council and locates that strategy in one of five essentials of the approach. It outlines the resources required to implement the strategy (financial, people and information, which could apply to more than one strategy), some enablers behind the strategy, suggested activities, and considerations that may be suitable for you, your team or organisation. These sheets represent a holistic approach to the program and do not have to be read sequentially.

The guide is explicit about what has worked well in the Maribyrnong community and the conditions under which it worked. These are not the same for all organisations. Assess your environment to understand your local conditions and readiness to better undertake a significant program.

Note: Some listed resources or organisations are unique to Victoria and may not have an equivalent organisation in your state or country.

Developing the workforce

Building the knowledge and skills of an individual or team responsible for the program around addressing the causes of violence against women is important to beginning a program with credibility and confidence.

Note: see Tip Sheet Five about how to develop the knowledge and skills of the organisation's employees.

Resources

- A person in council who has the skills or can be trained in gender equity and the determinants of violence against women to define and guide the program eg: a health or social planner, health promotion officer, community safety officer, etc
- Commonwealth government's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022
- Each state and territory has (or is developing) their own action plan for preventing violence against women
- VicHealth's Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria 2007
- Victorian Family Violence database for information on the prevalence of violence at www.justice.vic.gov.au

Enablers

- A nominated person/council officer who is responsible and accountable for guiding and driving the program
- This person has the support of their manager and the time and capacity to do the work
- This person is physically and structurally located within a team that also supports this work

“In our team we made sure staff were supported to pursue their own interests, so there was flexibility and adaptability but also shared priorities. This created the necessary sustainability in the team around the respect and equity work.”

Georgie Hill, Safer Communities and Health Promotion Coordinator

Activities

- Read the many resources available on the causes and statistics of violence against women and discuss these with your manager and colleagues.

QUICK WIN

- **Join and participate in the Municipal Association of Victoria Preventing Violence Against Women (MAV PVAW) Network Committee that includes many like-minded council officers, Councillors and community stakeholders.**
- Attend conferences or events that include themes of gender inequity and preventing violence against women to build your knowledge and networks.
- Contact community service organisations in your municipality who have daily experience of violence against women – develop a relationship, share evidence, understand their priorities and what they are doing in the area of prevention so you can work together.
- Seek prevention networks and contact other councils who have undertaken similar work and use their experiences to implement your program.
- Engage senior management and Councillors.

Consider

- Involving all team members to build skills and an integrated approach to work and priorities encourages the connection that gender equity is everybody's business, regardless of position or expertise
- Gathering local and national evidence about the prevalence, causes and responses to violence against women to develop the knowledge of the person or team responsible for implementing the program
- Adopting a mentor outside your organisation to be an independent sounding board and guide you in your program evaluation eg: someone from another council, a peak body, an external supervisor or someone from the community and women's health sector
- Using simple language and a non-judgmental tone when engaging with people
- Using the knowledge and skills of individuals and teams that already exist, before making a case for a new, dedicated, position
- Developing a plan to guide the work



Sharing the learning

During a long-term cultural change program organisations can keep work relevant and top-of-mind by sharing learnings in primary prevention among colleagues and peers. In turn, understanding and learning will be deepened which will improve the program.

Resources

- Council officers and team members prepared to meet and discuss learnings
- Evaluation plan
- Expertise of a skilled evaluator or researcher
- Websites, conferences and evaluation reports related to local government and preventing violence against women eg:
 - Local Government Preventing Violence Against Women - www.mav.asn.au/gender-equity
 - Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse - www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au
 - World Health Organization - www.who.int/en
 - United Nations Organization - www.un.org.au
 - VicHealth - www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

Enablers

- Documentation of learnings as a part of program evaluation
- Qualitative data, which is valued for its rich storytelling possibilities
- Having multiple people involved in your program and able to share experiences from their perspective
- People are comfortable sharing challenges and examples of where things haven't worked well

Activities

- Collect quantitative and qualitative evidence according to your evaluation framework from: internal and external reports and presentations, how resources were produced and used, media, interviews and discussions at network meetings, tearooms, over email and at conferences.

“I was quite shocked when I realised at the (international) conference how unique Victoria is in having primary prevention initiatives led by local government. Although I was incredibly nervous and felt underqualified compared to the majority of the other presenters and attendees, I was far more comfortable in discussing how Council’s approach to primary prevention was effective for the sector and the community than I had anticipated, which really surprised me but made me realise how much my skills and capacity had increased during my time at Maribyrnong.”

Jane Torney, Safer Communities and Health Promotion team member



- Keep a reflective journal where you frequently write observations and notes to yourself about the program.
- Look for places where you and other colleagues can share your knowledge and experiences: local or international conferences, community events, network/partner meetings and academic institutions.
- Get on mailing lists of national and state wide networks to keep you informed of upcoming topics, campaigns and events in the integrated family violence, women's and community health sectors.
- Join a local network focusing on primary prevention that synthesises relevant information, saving you time and effort in attending multiple network meetings and reading e-newsletters.
- Actively participate in your local government association meetings and state government advisory groups to advocate putting and/or keeping gender equity and preventing violence against women on the government agenda.

QUICK WIN

- Take the influencers in the organisation to conferences and events and support them to speak about your program

Consider

- Establishing an evaluation framework before you start a program, which encourages you to consistently reflect on and adjust your practice and program activities
- Reviewing evidence regularly during the program to ensure you're capturing the right information
- Alternative event or conference topics such as safety, health, urban planning or early childhood that can be related to gender respect and equity and preventing violence against women.
- Who you are sharing your information with, to what purpose and the most appropriate way of delivering it
- How to gain and maintain audience interest. Consider the current level of your audience's knowledge and understanding, tailor your communication and tone to your audiences by varying your language, minimising jargon, using practical stories and pictures and inviting questions

Raising the profile of primary prevention in council

Boosting awareness of what violence is, its causes and prevalence, is the first step to developing colleagues' knowledge about violence against women and what they can do to prevent it.

Resources

- Internal communications channels (intranet, council or department newsletters, posters and events)
- Management/team meetings

Enablers

- A person or group in the organisation who, after appointment or training, is already aware and has knowledge of violence against women, gender equity and primary prevention
- The organisation has an appetite to progress public policy
- There is a culture of integration, willingness to learn and collaboration.

Activities

- Take advantage of nationwide campaigns such as White Ribbon, Not 1 More and Cultural Diversity week to do some promotional activities like posters, emails and footpath stencilling in and around council buildings.

QUICK WIN

- Use personal stories from guests outside of council, connected to the integrated family violence sector or survivor advocates, to talk to colleagues about real experiences honestly and without sensation to help build understanding and commitment to cultural change.
- Explain the actions for the primary prevention of violence against women eg: gender equity, but be aware the topic may be too complex to grasp at first. Use examples from the family violence sector to explain and personalise why it's important to address violence against women.

“Hearing the personal stories of the victims made it clear it wasn't just about physical striking. It (the stories) allowed me to think and reflect that one step further and that could be me. You become very aware. You've got to make a conscious effort.”

Tom Gladwin, White Ribbon Working Group member

- Use messages from related campaigns ie: equal pay for men and women or maternity/paternity leave arrangements, to generate discussion about gender equity.
 - Hold activities and have conversations about respect and equity between men and women in departments and council areas like the work depot/centre. Invite a respected guest speaker to share experiences and kick-start the discussion. Afterwards get the team to suggest how to promote respect and equity in their daily work and how they can implement some change in the workplace.
- Consider**
- A lot of information about violence against women is readily available. Use your partnerships with existing community service organisations and networks such as local police, Department of Health or Office of Women's Policy to gather information and use in your work
 - Keep talking and testing messages with trusted colleagues and networks
 - Up-skilling people to deliver messages appropriately and sensitively
 - Engaging other parts of the organisation like human resources and communications teams and work with them to develop ideas and support
 - Other successful change management processes in your organisation as a model for primary prevention
 - The time of year when holding an event; a quieter time might boost participation in your event.
 - Simple ways to tell individual and personal stories and experiences of violence and link them to causal factors to avoid victimising and attacking people.



Normalising workplace discussions about gender equity

Introducing and being able to clearly articulate the principles and practice of gender equity can help council employees make the connection between violence against women, how to prevent this in our community and the role of local government.

Resources

- Someone who understands the subject matter
- Someone who can facilitate discussions with all types of people
- Current research and statistics about gender inequality

Enablers

- Council officers who are prepared to support new ideas, are willing to change their culture and change the way they respond to issues of gender inequality
- Women and men who understand that gender inequality disadvantages women, and support change
- Engaged Human Resource Managers

Activities

- Use the staff intranet, discussion or photo boards to publish news items and get conversations going. Topics like women and workload surveys and women in leadership are tangible examples to explore gender equity themes. Get relevant concise snippets from different e-newsletters, working groups or media.

- Keep your champions and supporters interested by emailing them information about gender equity that appears in the media, being available to talk at any time, connecting each other with colleagues doing similar work and attending prevention training, events and conferences together.
- Be prepared to share your experiences, ideas, values and opinions and others will be more likely to do so. These help people make the connection between their experiences and that of violence against women. Remember to keep disclosures confidential and connect the person with appropriate services when necessary.

QUICK WIN

- Council barbecues, morning teas and brown bag lunches are all useful opportunities for people to enjoy some free food, hear more about gender equity and talk with colleagues.

“It has made me think about how I respond to others being inappropriate... I can respond and say, ‘Mate what if that was your Mum or daughter?’ It’s not about getting people to change who they are but helping people to find a way to deal with it (gender equity) in a way that is comfortable to them.”

Chris Leivers, White Ribbon Day Ambassador



- Invite guests to speak at your council. An external speaker or expert can offer a powerful outside view and encourage others to speak more openly.
- Use stories and statistics from the integrated family violence sector to provide an accessible way for people to understand and engage with the issue. While your focus is in primary prevention, these stories and relationships with the sector ensure we are talking about real women's lived experience.

Consider

- Taking care of yourself and the team – preventing violence against women can be confronting. If appropriate, have an informal debrief or regular supervision with a colleague or an external mentor
- How the White Ribbon campaign and other national campaigns and events can be leveraged to introduce the issue to your organisation and build momentum

- Empowering people to talk about violence against women, gender stereotypes and inequality in their own way, is sometimes more important than an eloquent or correct message or presentation
- Being explicit about the availability of employee assistance or family violence support programs
- Creating the time, space and authority for honest and challenging conversations within the team
- How to develop the team's active listening skills and ability to be non-judgemental

Developing the workforce

Once a team is established and beginning to develop their capability, the next step is to spread those skills and knowledge through the rest of the organisation so everyone can incorporate gender respect and equity into their work and engage confidently with their colleagues, external partners and the community about these issues. *Note: see Tip Sheet One for developing the knowledge and skills of a program coordinator or team responsible for the program.*

Resources

- People involved from every department in council
- VicHealth's Preventing Violence Against Women short course and other gender training provided by women's health services
- Community service organisations

Enablers

- Your program coordinator and team are sufficiently skilled to work with others
- Your management team have given you the mandate and support to work across your organisation

Activities

- Get involved in existing working groups or committees in your organisation. This builds your team's ability to address gender inequity in the context of their colleagues' priorities and work eg: cross branch policy development groups, council planning committees, or enterprise bargaining agreement negotiating committee.

- Host the VicHealth Preventing Violence Against Women short course in your region. Invite interested colleagues and those in roles responsible for running community programs to this health promotion focused course.
- Encourage colleagues to develop and implement their own ideas to promote gender equity instead of the program coordinator – it builds their capability and encourages ownership.
- Encourage employees to be responsible for designing and replenishing printed material at council offices and venues eg: family violence help cards and posters.
- Get representation on working groups from the work centre/depot. The depot can be isolated from the main council building and this relationship can keep dialogue flowing with a generally male dominated area of council.

“The big idea is that every area of Council has a role to play in preventing violence against women and that by influencing and engaging with them and supporting them to do their work we are influencing community attitudes and behaviours beyond the Council.”

Georgie Hill, Safer Communities and Health Promotion Coordinator

- Build the communication and media team's confidence to respond to enquiries about respect and equity. Talk regularly and provide information so they can write and speak knowledgeably and comprehensively. Use the Eliminating Violence Against Women in Media (EVA) award as an opportunity for the team to build relationships with journalists and raise the profile of primary prevention.
- Build a group of speakers including senior management, White Ribbon working group members and Councillors to talk knowledgeably and confidently about respect and equity.
- When budgets are tight and colleagues are generating ideas, encourage them to find resources to implement their ideas
- Training that is tailored to meet the needs and expectations of diverse audiences and teams
- Time, resources, skills and the preparedness of your staff to be able to embed gender equity practices and behaviour in the workforce – be realistic

QUICK WIN

- After speaking at an event discuss your experience and share your notes with colleagues and other speakers by uploading them on the intranet or shared drive.

- Upload any templates, tools and resources on the intranet for your colleagues to access.

Consider

- Looking for opportunities to promote respect and equity that fit with existing team plans and don't require extra money or people from council



Influencing and adapting council business

Considering gender in every aspect of how council does business, through plans, policy, programs and practice, can ensure gender equity is standard practice and role-modelled at every opportunity.

Resources

- Existing policy frameworks in your organisation
- Women's Health Victoria, other councils and universities for examples of their own family violence policy and clauses
- Policy review tools available through the Gender Equity and Local Government group
- Australian Bureau of Statistics Census for demographic information
- Annual surveys of residents in your municipality

Enablers

- Your organisation has processes and structures that enable regular planning and review of operations and practice
- Your organisation has a regular planning cycle

Activities

- Integrate into your annual council or business plan actions related to preventing violence against women that support community wellbeing.
- Encourage all departments to put actions in their business plans that state how their department will promote gender equity and respect with colleagues and in their work.
- Review all relevant council policies by considering how each policy advantages or disadvantages women and takes into consideration women and men's different experience of working, including their differing and actual perceptions of safety.
- Do a literature review looking at all council documentation ie: reports and promotional material to assess if and how it promotes gender equity.
- Analyse community stakeholders to see how groups consult with women and collaborate with council with respect and equity. Your community engagement officer or team could help you identify these groups.

“We can't just talk about violence between people – violence is being used by men, against women, to enforce their power and control. These are not random acts against random people. All the evidence shows this violence is happening because women are not respected as equal to men. Violence is the extreme example. When we talk about violence against people in general, women are silenced again, and we won't stop the violence if we ignore why and to whom it's happening in the first place.”

Emma Wilkinson, Respect and Equity Coordinator

QUICK WIN

- Do an audit of council's facilities examining how women use them and how they promote safety, respect and equity.

Consider

- Appointing a dedicated person for the policy review, this may include a student or external consultant
- Employee training to inform and embed policy changes into working practices
- Evaluating policies at a suitable interval to assess their impact on women in the council and community
- How your organisation role-models gender equity in its organisational structure
- Incremental and planned change as it is more likely to be sustainable
- Managing expectations carefully by assessing the impacts and process of change before you start
- Opportunities for positive reinforcement for people who can help



Stimulating and nurturing leadership

Being aware of council's strengths and opportunities enables your team to engage potential leaders to support gender respect and equity and embed the program throughout the organisation.

Resources

- People from all organisational levels ie: formal leaders like Councillors and executive management team (EMT) members, informal leaders and influential people and managers who have the resources and ability to say yes
- Boost management teams' understanding of the causes and complexity of violence against women; take every opportunity to present the facts, involve them in council-wide events and coach on appropriate messages.

Enablers

- Your management team recognises preventing violence against women as a priority for your community
- People are willing to be champions
- You are connected to various areas of council and able to read and make the most of opportunities as they arise

Activities

- Demonstrate to your EMT how primary prevention fits into the broader vision of council and their department's priorities.
- Provide regular and relevant reports to EMT and Councillors about program progress. Each report should have a purpose, be succinct, use simple messages and demonstrate impacts and benefits.
- Keep note of people in council who are interested in gender equity so you can ask for support or encourage them to participate in activities as they arise.
- Work with the Youth Service team to engage young people in activities and events.

QUICK WIN

- Start a White Ribbon Day working group to engage men and boost their knowledge to champion and support stopping violence against women.

“It was easy to get involved. I knew there were good people involved and the commitment was manageable. One of the best things about working with the group is there is not one particular way of doing things. Everyone's ideas were explored and our work was a true team effort.”

Jules Griffith, White Ribbon Working Group member

- Engage leaders in the community. Consult your networks widely to find influential people that role-model respect and equity, with family, colleagues and the community through clubs, schools and faith-based institutions.
- Participate in activities or plans generated by colleagues that may not be directly related to preventing violence against women, but will help build your relationship and progress the program.
- If someone makes a suggestion to promote respect and equity, work with them or a small group to make that happen.

Consider

- Assessing your organisation's structure and how it supports access to management and Councillors. Work with the strengths of your organisational structure
- Where you and your team are physically located; do you have physical and informal access to communicate with decision makers?
- Referencing studies of the financial impacts of violence to families, employers and communities when speaking to decision makers

- Testing your messages with someone who is knowledgeable in local government and can assess them from a political perspective
- Using the White Ribbon working group to identify what other teams are working on, their priorities and how to connect to the wider organisation
- Creating a safe environment for positive critique: ensure documents and strategies are robust and stand up to scrutiny
- Succession planning for when influencers leave the organisation
- Style, persona and subtext when promoting a male leader. Ensure that male leaders are not invoking male privilege



Building relationships

Council's strategic role across all areas of the community means it's uniquely placed to form and build productive partnerships with those well placed to do primary prevention. These can include community service organisations or groups that manage community facilities and programs, integrated family violence or women's health sector, local businesses and private enterprises or public and private investments in the area such as housing, transport, primary health care, sporting groups, local community groups and education and media sectors.

Resources

- Integrated Family Violence Committees and services in your region
- Other councils in your region
- Primary Care Partnerships
- Local police
- Australian Football League (AFL) Respect and Responsibility program
- Local government associations in your state
- Community and women's health centres

Enablers

- Your team or other teams in council are already in contact with people in these and other relevant organisations.
- Your team has a mandate for doing primary prevention in the community.
- Other organisations understand the role of local government in primary prevention

Activities

- Identify the main settings to work within the community where an existing partnership, specific funding or other opportunity may be. These settings could be those listed above or others depending on your local area. Specific groups that your council may have a formal connection with include maternal and child health, early childhood services, youth services, disability, aged care and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Create or get involved with state wide or local working groups or networks dedicated to preventing violence against women. These are great opportunities to demonstrate willingness, ask questions when you're unsure and test ideas. They may also help with funding.

“There are quite a few examples when we went out to sporting clubs that have generated follow-up discussions and provoked thoughts and conversations beyond just that one interaction. I think that has been a measure of success.”

Georgie Hill, Safer Communities and Health Promotion Coordinator

QUICK WIN

- Look for opportunities across your region to partner with organisations on resources, events or programs eg: help cards that list telephone numbers in case of family violence.

- Nominate appropriate senior management to represent council on related advisory groups. This builds their interest, boosts their profile and personal prestige. In turn, they'll be strong advocates for council and local government's role in preventing violence against women.
- Ask appropriate people in the sector to guide or mentor your work.

Consider

- Identifying issues on local, state and federal government's agenda so you can leverage these opportunities to talk with the community service organisations about gender equity eg: greater inclusion and participation in sports or creating safer environments for children
- Using existing working groups and structures where possible – only create new formal structures if necessary
- Existing relationships within council and opportunities to leverage influence in these groups, before establishing new relationships



Raising the profile of primary prevention in the community

Council's unique position in their community enables easy access to communicating directly with people they govern and spread the message about priorities and responses to community safety and wellbeing.

Resources

- Established community campaigns and events and organisations such as International Women's Day, Not 1 More, Reclaim the Night, White Ribbon Foundation of Australia and family violence peak bodies.
- Council's communications and media team
- Councillors
- Colleagues in all council departments

Enablers

- You have been working within council to raise the awareness of the issue and its causes among employees
- Council is skilled and committed to lead in the community

Activities

- Work with your communications and media team to educate them about the causes of violence against women and why it is important to council and the community, and then you can ask confidently for their advice before approaching media organisations.
- Use Council newsletters or website, CEO/Councillor speech notes or letters to the editor to introduce and reinforce the respect and equity message to the community.
- Encourage your team and council champions to seek out opportunities to showcase your council's work and maintain a collective profile at local government events.
- Hold community conversations or forums to explore opinions, ideas and stories about experiences of gender equity.
- Partner with ongoing programs run by service providers, local police and community groups, in your municipality.
- Provide community grants and civic awards that promote gender respect and equity.

"I want to pass on my thanks... We were very happy with the number of participants for the walk. It was our biggest yet, and we only hope to improve on that next year. We would definitely love to have you involved again next year. Again, a big thank you from the Walk Against Family Violence committee."

*Di Ashwell, Family Violence Advisor,
North West Metropolitan area*

QUICK WIN

- Host a Leaders Lunch which brings together community, business and council leaders in your region to raise the profile and talk about addressing the causes of preventing violence against women.
- Use technology or music to engage young men and women to boost understanding and discuss with each other the importance of respectful relationships between men and women.
- Sports and recreation is an obvious area in which to discuss issues of concern to men. The Australian Football League's (AFL) Respect and Responsibility program is an established way to partner and encourage conversations in this traditionally male dominated area.

Consider

- Nominating White Ribbon Day Ambassadors
- Building a community information resource or collection of popular fiction and films in your public libraries relating to issues about gender (in)equity
- Creating public statements about gender equity for Councillors and management teams to use at public forums

- Using external bodies, respected corporate connections or community influence to incorporate this issue into their core business
- Creating a suite of primary prevention messages and phrases that can be adopted for a range of council activities and audiences – always test messages with the community and your networks.



If you are in a violent situation, know someone who is experiencing violence, or know someone who is using violence please use support numbers below or talk to someone you trust.

- In emergency situations or immediate danger call Police on **000**
- Women in Victoria needing help or referral for domestic violence can call the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service on **(03) 9322 3555 or 1800 015 188**
- People in Victoria who have experienced sexual assault can call the Sexual Assault Crisis Line on **1800 806 292**
- Men in Australia concerned about their behaviour at home can call the Men's Referral Service on **1800 065 973**
- Children/young people in Australia needing help should call Kids Helpline on **1800 551 800**
- For confidential help and referral in Australia call the National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line on **1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)**

Acknowledgements

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Further information

A comprehensive evaluation report on the Respect and Equity project is available at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

Further information about Maribyrnong City Council can be found at www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Further information about VicHealth can be found at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

Many tools, templates and examples mentioned here are available at the Municipal Association of Victoria at www.mav.asn.au