

VicHealth partnership activity to prevent violence against women

BACKGROUND

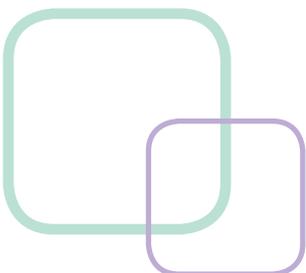
In 1999, VicHealth undertook a wide-ranging investigation into factors contributing to the escalating incidence of mental health problems in our community. Through this work, four major determinants of mental health were given priority for action: 1) social participation, 2) discrimination, 3) violence and 4) economic participation. Given the high incidence of violence perpetrated against women and the vast body of evidence demonstrating the serious social, economic and health consequences of violence for individuals, families and communities, this area was indicated for specific attention.

Through our work we recognise that violence against women:

- Is all too common, has severe and persistent effects on women's physical and mental health and carries with it an enormous cost in terms of premature death and disability.
- Leads to more ill-health and premature death in Victorian women under the age of 45 years than any other documented preventable health risk factor. Thus violence against women must be viewed as a significant public health issue requiring urgent attention.
- Diminishes and affects us all, marring not only relationships between men and women, but also having long-term social and economic consequences for individuals, families and the broader community.
- Is a crime. It is an act of aggression which is most often perpetrated by an intimate partner or another male known to the victim.
- Demands that far greater efforts be placed on promoting respectful and equal relationships between men and women.
- Is best addressed within a human rights, legal and health framework, through development of multi-level strategies and collaborations across community sectors and government at its three tiers.

The following information provides advice on research and current field-based activity designed to prevent violence against women that has been supported by VicHealth in partnerships with government and non-government organisations across Victoria.

The United Nations defines violence against women as any act of gender based violence that results or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.
(United Nations 1996)



RESEARCH

The health costs of Intimate Partner Violence

The study on *The Health Costs of Violence* was led by Professor Theo Voss with support from VicHealth, the Department of Human Services and an advisory group consisting of representatives from across sectors and disciplines. It was the first project in the world to estimate the health consequences of intimate partner violence using the 'burden of disease' methodology developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The study found that intimate partner violence leads to more ill-health and premature death in Victorian women aged 15-45 years than any other preventable health risk factor. As a result of the study:

- In 2005 the World Health Organisation cited the research as being one of the top five contributions to progressing violence against women activity across the globe.
- An 'Access Economic Study' which assessed the economic cost of violence against women drew heavily on the study to produce their findings.
- Health and women's service sectors now utilise the study to inform intimate partner violence priority setting.
- Violence against women is now a focus for a large number of local governments, Primary Care Partnerships and other cross-sector organisations wishing to prevent its occurrence.

Violence against women Community Attitudes project

This project, guided by a multi-disciplinary committee with representatives from a range of sectors, provides information to support VicHealth and other government and non-government organisations to plan future strategies to support positive change in attitudes relating to violence against women. It involved:

- a survey of community attitudes on violence against women and the factors influencing their development. By comparing the results with a previous survey commissioned by the Office for the Status of Women in 1995, it was also possible to assess shifts in attitudes over time. (Project conducted by VicHealth in collaboration with the Centre for Social Research and the Australian Institute of Criminology)
- an environmental scan to identify factors which may have influenced community attitudes in the last decade. (Project input via a national inter-sectoral advisory group)
- documenting what is known about factors that can influence the development of attitudes toward violence against women, ranging from broader social and economic trends through to personal experience of violence. (Prof. Bob Pease and Dr Michael Flood)
- documenting campaigns that have been conducted to address community attitudes on violence against women so that future activity can build on the lessons learned from past work. (Prof. Rob Donovan)

The knowledge gained through conduct of these activities is informing development of a National Community Education Strategy to prevent violence against women. The strategy is being developed by the Australian Football League and VicHealth in conjunction with input from academics, government and non-government organisations.

Violence against women costs the Australian community \$8.1 billion per annum. (Access Economics 2003)

CALD Violence against Women Research project

This project identified risk and protective factors for intimate partner violence in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and effective interventions for primary and secondary prevention. It has a particular focus on families from refugee backgrounds.

Led by Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, in partnership with academics with expertise in refugee health, intimate partner violence and masculinity, the research involved consultations with refugee women, refugee men and service providers in order to:

- engage CALD women in identifying appropriate responses to intimate partner violence;
- strengthen academic and community sector partnerships in the family violence and CALD sectors; and
- provide information for the development of a large national study concerned with refugee communities and intimate partner violence.

Strengthening supports for women: General Practice response

VicHealth, in conjunction with the Department for Victorian Communities and the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC), is supporting a project being undertaken by Dr. Angela Taft from La Trobe University in collaboration with the Department of General Practice, The University of Melbourne and women's health services in northern and western regions of Melbourne. This innovative community intervention trial will evaluate whether trained and supportive General Practitioners and mentoring mothers can reduce intimate partner abuse and depression of women who are pregnant or who have children under five years of age.

Strengthening local government interventions

VicHealth, in conjunction with the Australian Research Council, is supporting a project being undertaken by Dr. Carolyn Whitzman from the University of Melbourne. The project involves collaborative activity with four local government and agency partnerships to develop and evaluate integrated violence prevention policies and programs. These policies and programs will also be informed by an analysis of national and international models of good practice in local government planning.

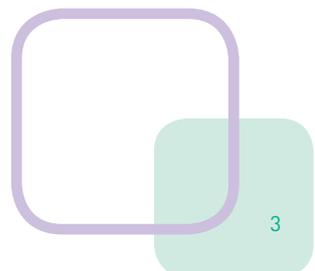
Evidence review & framework to guide future initiatives.

VicHealth has worked in partnership with the Department for Victorian Communities, an Inter-Departmental Committee, a cross-sector advisory group and an academic team to develop evidence-based framework to guide future interventions to prevent violence against women.

Development of the framework involved a review of research on the determinants of violence against women and initiatives that are effective in preventing this violence.

The following material indicates areas identified as being 1) the most promising foci to prevent violence perpetrated against women and 2) current initiatives being supported by VicHealth in each of these areas.

Intimate partner violence alone contributes 7.9% to the total disease burden in Victorian women aged 15-44 and is the leading contributor to the preventable death, disability and illness burden in Victorian women aged 15-44. (VicHealth 2004)



COMMUNITY-BASED ACTIVITY

Working with the Media

The evidence review conducted by VicHealth highlights the role of social norms and attitudes about gender relations and violence against women in the perpetration of violence. The media plays an important role in shaping these norms and attitudes. Accordingly, the following projects are being supported to work with the media to help build a society where there is strong support for the prevention and prohibition of violence in public and private contexts:

- **Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service** – a statewide media advocacy project which will 1) support women who have experienced violence to speak with the media, and 2) work with other organisations to develop messages as a means of influencing community perceptions and attitudes towards violence against women.
- **Domestic Violence Victoria: 'Family Violence Prevention Media Awards'** – a statewide media awards program aimed at influencing community attitudes by encouraging journalistic quality in the reporting and description of individual incidents of family violence across Victoria.
- **Australian Football League: *Respect & Responsibility Community Education Campaign***. VicHealth is currently working with the Australian Football League in development of a far-reaching evidence based public education campaign focusing on 1) the need to develop respectful and responsible relationships, and 2) encouraging men to take responsibility for reducing violence perpetrated against women.

Working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD)

Whilst whole-of-population approaches are integral in the prevention of violence perpetrated against women, evidence indicates that there are clear benefits in targeting and delivering more intensive interventions to certain groups in the population. CALD communities have been identified for targeted interventions because

- Some CALD communities have a high level of exposure to known risk factors for violence both before and after arrival.
- People from these communities, in particular men, are more likely to hold attitudes that condone or support violence against women.
- Women from CALD communities are particularly vulnerable to violence once it has started.
- Experience shows that interventions with CALD communities are more likely to be effective when they are tailored to their needs and developed in co-operation with communities themselves.

Studies suggest that faith communities play an important role in the formation of attitudes pertaining to violence and are an important context for reaching CALD communities.

The following projects are being supported to engage with CALD communities in addressing violence against women.

- **Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre: 'Men Say "No!" To Family Violence'** – a project aimed at engaging community and religious leaders in the development of audio-visual media material featuring men from different faiths and ethnic backgrounds taking a stand on preventing violence against women.
- **Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service** – a project engaging multicultural and faith communities from four communities including Sudanese, Vietnamese, Chinese and Arab speaking communities to support these communities to develop and implement activities to prevent violence against women.
- **Horn of Africa Communities Network** – a project engaging members of the Horn of Africa community in the development and implementation of a community strategy for and by Horn of Africa Communities aimed at preventing violence against women.

- **Federation of Indian Associations Victoria** – a project engaging members of the Indian community in Victoria to undertake activities to raise awareness and increase understanding of issues relevant to violence perpetrated against women.
- **Vietnamese Women’s Association:** *‘Speak Out: Preventing Violence against Women’* – a project engaging Vietnamese women and the broader Vietnamese community in education activities to raise awareness of issues pertaining to violence against women and develop strategies to prevent this violence.
- **Darebin City Council:** *‘Darebin Interfaith Council Taking Responsibility’* – a project to engage faith leaders in the development of a *‘Declaration against Family Violence’*. The process will include training forums for faith leaders to raise their awareness and understanding of issues related to preventing violence against women within their communities.

Working with men and boys

The evidence review identifies the importance of targeting primary prevention interventions to men and boys. This is because, while not all men perpetrate violence, violence is perpetrated largely by men and men are more likely to hold attitudes that support or condone violence. Constructions of masculinity play a role in shaping some men’s perpetration of violence. Also men help to shape the attitudes of other boys and men (for example as parents, sports coaches and so on).

Interventions targeting men in highly masculinised environments – such as some sporting sub-cultures, college fraternities and the military – are particularly important, given both their potential to reach men as well as evidence that these contexts are characterised by a relatively high degree of cultural support for violence and that men associated with them have a greater likelihood of perpetrating violence.

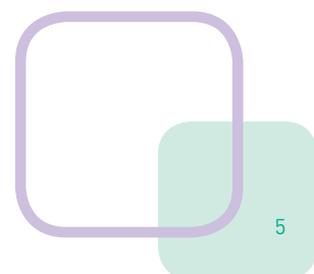
The evidence review highlighted the importance of intervening with young men and boys (when attitudes to gender relations are being formed) and also suggested that there are critical life cycle and relationship stages when intervention may be particularly valuable (e.g. becoming a father).

VicHealth has established a partnership with the **Australian Football League** to support activity designed to prevent violence perpetrated against women. The AFL’s *‘Respect and Responsibility’* project will ensure that:

- Sexual harassment policies and procedures are implemented across state football clubs.
- Organisational policies and procedures to ensure safe, supportive and inclusive environments for women are implemented in national, state and community football clubs.
- Education and training programs focusing on the development of respectful and equal relationships are developed, evaluated and implemented in national, state and community football clubs.

In addition to this partnership, the following projects are being supported:

- **Victorian Women’s Trust:** *‘Living in a Man’s World’* – a state-wide project engaging older men as champions/group leaders to work with younger men in challenging cultural perspectives of masculinity supporting violence against women.
- **Glenview Community Care:** *‘Kicking Goals for Health Relationships’* – a project engaging the local rural community and football club to promote respectful relationships between men and women. Activities will advocate and support change in football club practices and policies.
- **Yarra Council Sports:** *‘Welcome to Yarra Sport’* – A project being undertaken in partnership with No to Violence, Womenssport and Goods Sport Program (ADF) to engage local sports clubs in the City of Yarra in the development of policies and skill development programs to create safe and welcoming environments for women.



- **Whitehorse Community Health:** *'And Baby Makes Three – Promoting Safety and Wellbeing Among New Families'* – a project building upon existing partnerships to engage with first time fathers to focus on the development of respectful and responsible ways of relating at this stage of life.
- **Mallee Sexual Assault Unit:** *'Positive Relationships, Successful Lives'* – a project involving police, education and the Australian Football League to work with young people in the Mildura region to prevent violence against women.
- **No To Violence:** *'White Ribbon Campaign'* A project involving National and State organisations and corporate bodies to develop the white ribbon campaign designed to increase community understanding of the incidence and impacts of violence perpetrated against women and to encourage men to take responsibility for preventing this violence.

Engaging local and regional communities

Community-level norms influence violence perpetration. For example, a high value on the privacy of the family and a reluctance to intervene when violence is occurring are two community-level determinants of violence. There is emerging evidence that neighbourhoods vary in their ability to constrain their residents from violating norms and to intervene when problems arise. Collective efficacy, social cohesion and the preparedness of neighbours to help one another have all been found to have a mediating affect.

For this reason VicHealth has supported implementation of local government and regional networks such as Primary Care Partnerships to support organisational and community change. This includes the following projects.

- **Knox Community Health:** *'The Knox Accord Project'* – The project will work with local organisations and businesses to develop and endorse a City of Knox Commitment Statement and Symbol to promote community safety and reduce violence against women. Education activities throughout the project will culminate in a Knox Commitment Day event.
- **Nillumbik Women's Network:** A project to engage men and the wider community, in *'Saying no to violence - a community responsibility'* through presentations to local sporting clubs. Education, information and promotion of family violence services, linked to the White Ribbon campaign and culminating in a Mayor's WR Cocktail party.
- **Maribyrnong City Council:** *'Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention'* – a project to develop and implement a comprehensive range of strategies which prevent violence against women in a local government context. Project activities include undertaking professional development with Council staff and other stakeholders to integrate violence prevention into new and existing policies, programs and activities in a range of community settings.
- **Colac Area Health:** *'Family Violence Capacity Building Project'* – A project to engage staff, management and broader community members in a 'whole-of-organisation' approach to prevent violence perpetrated against women.
- **Women's Health West:** an action research project engaging member agencies of the Western Metropolitan Primary Care Partnerships to build their capacity to develop integrated health promotion actions aimed at preventing violence against women.

Working with schools

There is good evidence that school-based interventions targeted to young people in secondary school settings are effective in changing attitudes and behaviours associated with violence against women. Such programs target a population understood to be at high risk of perpetrating and experiencing violence at a stage of the cycle when attitudes are being formed. The following projects have been supported:

- **Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre:** *'Partners in Prevention – Victorian Youth Violence Prevention Network'*. This project will establish a network with schools and local community workers to increase their knowledge and skills in the delivery of violence prevention programs targeting young people.
- **Royal Women's Hospital – CASA House** – a project building on the schools program by CASA House to develop a whole-of-school approach to prevent violence against women. It will involve staff professional development and peer education programs to prevent violence against women.

- **Wyndham City Council:** *'Wyndham Says NO to Violence Schools Art Project 2007'* – This project will involve the engagement of Year 7 and 9 students from four local schools in the production of artwork promoting messages related to preventing violence against women. Artwork will be included in an exhibition during Community Safety Month.
- **Gippsland Women's Health Service:** *'Schools Project'* – a project engaging school communities and local family violence service providers in building the capacity of secondary school communities to develop strategies aimed at preventing violence against women.
- **LaTrobe University:** *'Preventing Sexual Violence among University Students'* – a project engaging tertiary students in peer education, marketing and community development activities aimed at preventing sexual violence against women by young male university students.
- **Melton Shire:** *'Melton Says NO!'* – a project working with students from primary and secondary schools to: 1) engage them in dialogue about development of respectful non-violent relationships, and 2) develop a campaign to address the issue of prevention of violence against women by using media and art forms to influence attitudes of the community.

Engaging Indigenous communities

The high rate of violence in Indigenous communities indicates a need for tailored interventions and, as indicated in the evidence review, Indigenous communities need to be leading the development of interventions.

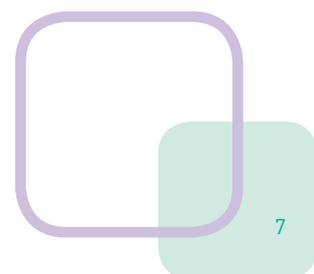
For this reason, the following projects are being supported:

- **Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperation:** *'Tracks to Stronger Communities'* – a project engaging the local Indigenous community in the development of workshops for men and women aimed at increasing their understanding of causes of violence against women and girls within the Indigenous community. A professional development program for health and welfare providers will also be undertaken.
- **Elizabeth Hoffman House for Aboriginal Women:** *'Keeping Kooris Safe'* – a project engaging young Aboriginal women and their children in activities aimed at developing strategies that will assist to prevent family violence.

Making workplaces safe

Evaluation suggests that work place interventions have been effective not only in changing the attitudes of those directly involved but also of others in the organisation and broader organisational cultures. Accordingly, the following projects have been supported:

- **URCOT Ltd:** *'Influencing and Development of Respectful Workplaces for Women'* – a project building on earlier research to link with key union officials and delegates to develop and demonstrate interventions that highlight structural issues, and promote more cooperative and respectful workplaces for women.
- **Moreland City Council:** *'Preventing Violence in Moreland is Everybody's Business'* – a project engaging local businesses in education and training activities to raise awareness and understanding of family violence and support changes in workplace practices and policies to prevent violence against women.
- **Women's Health Victoria:** *'Working Together against Violence'* – a partnership between Linfox and Women's Health Victoria to develop and implement organisational policies and programs designed to prevent violence perpetrated against women.



PUBLICATIONS

VicHealth has a range of publications freely available to download from our website at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au. The following two documents are available to order in hard copy.



The health costs of violence

Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence
Summary of Findings (April 2004)

This publication is a summary of a study conducted to assess the health impact of intimate partner violence on women. The study was supported by VicHealth in partnership with the Department of Human Services and was conducted with contributions from a range of experts from across Victoria and elsewhere. While focusing on health, it complements a vast body of evidence demonstrating the serious social and economic consequences of intimate partner violence for individuals, families and communities.



Two steps forward, one step back

Community attitudes to violence against women
Summary of Findings (October 2006)

This publication looks at the progress and challenges in creating safe and healthy environments for Victorian women. The findings enable us to better understand community attitudes and beliefs and to target future efforts more effectively. The report also provides important benchmark data against which we can monitor progress.

The following publications are available only as PDFs.

- Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women Survey: A Full Technical Report, Taylor, N & Mouzos, J, 2006, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra
Paper 1 of the Violence Against Women Community Attitudes Project
- VicHealth Review of Communication Components of Social Marketing/Public Education Campaigns Focusing on Violence Against Women
Paper 2 of the Violence Against Women Community Attitudes Project
- The Factors Influencing Community Attitudes in Relation to Violence Against Women: A Critical Review of the Literature
Paper 3 of the Violence Against Women Community Attitudes Project
- Refugee Settlement, Safety and Wellbeing: Exploring Domestic and Family Violence in Refugee Communities
Paper 4 of the Violence Against Women Community Attitudes Project

For further information on VicHealth projects and publications focusing on the prevention of violence against women, visit the website: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au



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