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# Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan

2015-2017

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## 1. Introduction

The Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan will be implemented in the period between July 2015 to July 2017 at which point it will be aligned to the review cycles of three overarching policies including the Darebin Council Plan 2013 -2017, Darebin Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013 -2017 and the Darebin Equity & Inclusion Policy 2015 -2017.

Violence against women has been referred to as ‘the most pervasive yet least recognised human rights abuse in the world’ by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2008<sup>1</sup>). Such is the gravity of the problem that important international organisations, including the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), acknowledge it as a violation of the rights and freedoms of women to take their equal share in political, economic, social, cultural and civil life (UNGA, 1993).

Violence against women has significant consequences on the health and wellbeing of women and children, with severe and persistent effects on physical and mental health and enormous costs in terms of premature death and disability. All forms of violence against women potentially reinforce a range of other known determinants of overall health problems; these include poor physical and mental health, gender inequity, social isolation, and economic disadvantage.

This action plan takes a settings-based approach that recognises the gendered-nature of violence against women and works to tackle the root cause of the issue.

**Objective 1:** To reduce and prevent violence against women in Council as a workplace

**Objective 2:** To ensure Darebin Council services, programs and policies are gender equitable, actively encourage women’s full and equal participation and are inclusive of strategies preventing violence against women and children

**Objective3:** To develop and maintain collaborative activities at the regional level to address prevention of violence against women.

Measure	Current	Target
% of staff aware and understand Darebin’s Family Violence Policy each year	% 76 <i>Source: Workplace Attitudes &amp; knowledge survey</i>	10% more
Number of staff participated in capacity building each year: - Identifying Family Violence - Preventing Violence Against women - Family Violence Policy E-Learning	Identifying Family Violence - 50 Preventing Violence Against women - 40 Family Violence Policy - 0	25% more 25% more 75% more
Number of Council departments involved in Action Plan each year	5 departments	3 additional

## **Addressing violence against women across the spectrum of strategies**

Addressing violence against women can occur across a spectrum of strategies, from tertiary response, secondary prevention and primary prevention. Each of the levels for action are key to the elimination of violence against women and children. This action plan focuses on primary and secondary prevention, due to the nature and opportunity of local government to influence systemic and cultural change. However, Council has a key role to advocate for and work closely with services to ensure the safety of women and children.

*Primary Prevention* recognises the importance of mutually reinforcing initiatives that work to promote gender, respect and equity and seek to prevent the underlying causes of violence against women. A primary prevention approach recognises that violence against women occurs and is perpetuated across all levels of society:

- Institutional and systemic level
- Organisational and community level
- Individual, family and peer group level (VicHealth, 2007).

*Secondary Prevention or early intervention* focuses on taking action to address the early signs of violence against women. It aims to 'change the trajectory' for individuals at higher-than-average risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence.

*Tertiary prevention or response* supports survivors and holds perpetrators to account. It also aims to prevent the recurrence of violence.

## **Key drivers of violence against women**

There is no single cause of violence against women. Evidence has established that violence against women arises from a complex interaction between individual attitudes towards women, and social and cultural practices and values across our society and communities. These attitudes and practices can foster unequal and abusive power relations between men and women, gender stereotypes and can often exist in broader cultures of violence.

Addressing gender inequity has been identified as one of the key strategies in the prevention of violence against women. A number of factors are known to be the key drivers of violence against women, these are:

- Unequal power relations between women and men
- Adherence to rigid gender stereotypes
- Broader cultures of violence (VicHealth, 2007)

**Contributing factors** that have been identified as being correlated to men's use of violence against women, in some cases, include:

- Witnessing or exposure of violence as a child
- Attitudinal support for violence against women

- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Weak social connections and social cohesion
- Threats of, and/or previous use of violence against current or former partners, children, pets, other family members
- Limited access to systems of support

Gender equity is key to ending violence against women. The strongest predictor of high levels of violence against women is unequal power between men and women. When we address gender inequity to prevent violence against women and improve women's equal participation, we improve outcomes for the entire community.

## 2. The Extent of the Issue

Violence against women is a pervasive issue that occurs among all cultural, religious, and socio-economic groups. Violence against women shows no boundaries. However, as gender relations are intersected by factors such as age, culture, ethnicity, ability, sexual identity and visa status, women who are marginalised by these factors may be more vulnerable to violence and experience additional barriers to seeking support (Reference MCWH, on her way).

Violence against women has significant consequences on the health and wellbeing of women and children. It 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. It is responsible for more preventable ill-health and premature death in Victorian women under the age of 45 than any other of the well-known risk factors, including high blood pressure, obesity and smoking (VicHealth, 2004).

In 2013/14 there were 1,685 reported incidences of family violence in Darebin, of these reported incidents, Children were present at approximately 25%. This is a 12% increase from 2012 – 2013, and an 89% increase from the 890 incidents in 2009/2010. While an increase is partly shaped by improvements to the reporting system, confidence in reporting incidents to the police, the data also illustrates that family violence remains a pervasive issue for the Darebin community and overwhelmingly, the most significant crime against the person in the municipality.

In Darebin an average of 32 incidents of family violence are reported to police every week, women are the majority of victims – 75 per cent. 72 per cent of victimised women are aged between 15 and 44 years. Where victims reported they were *fearful* or *very fearful*, 85 per cent were female (Women's Health in the North). It is understood that less than 20 per cent of women who experience violence report to authorities, therefore it is likely that these rates are in fact significantly higher.

Police records of sexual assault are another measure of the extent of violence against women. In Darebin an average of four sexual assault offences are recorded by Police each week. Of these offences, the majority of victims are women – 86 per cent, and 93 per cent were aged less than 35 years. Of these offences, 93 per cent of alleged offenders were male.

As a crime, family violence has a profound effect on the health and wellbeing of women and children and the wider community. Family violence compounds the effect of the determinants which

underpin our wellbeing, reducing the capacity to access safe housing, economic participation and opportunities to experience meaningful and supportive social connections. Fear of male violence significantly limits the participation of women and girls in community life. In many local government areas we know that public parks and recreation areas are used significantly more by men than by women. This contributes to disparity in health outcomes, feelings of social exclusions and poor perceptions of safety for women (reference).

### **3. Priority Population Groups**

There are population groups that are at an increased risk of experiencing violence. In Australia, women that experience higher rates of violence include Aboriginal women, women with disabilities and women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds – including newly arrived immigrant and refugee women. The complexities that surround these experiences can have a detrimental effect on access to family violence services and the service system more broadly.

### **4. Key definitions**

#### ***Violence against women***

The United Nations General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, 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”. It encompasses, but is not limited to, “physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere; trafficking in women and forced prostitution; and physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs.”

#### ***Family violence***

Family violence is defined in accordance with section five of the Victorian Family violence Protection Act 2008, as:

- a) Behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour is
  - I. Is physically or sexually abusive or
  - II. Is emotionally or psychologically abusive or
  - III. Is economically abusive or
  - IV. Is threatening or
  - V. Is coercive or
  - VI. In any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or
  - VII. Behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviours in paragraph a).

### ***Gender equity***

Refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of rights, responsibilities and resources between women and men according to their respective needs. The concept of gender equity recognises that men and women have different life experiences, different needs, different levels of power and access to decision-making levels in our society and differing expectations by others. Gender equity strategies seek to achieve fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men, and recognise that different approaches may be required to produce equitable outcomes.

### ***Gender equality***

Gender equality is defined as the absence of discrimination, on the basis of a person's sex, in opportunities and the allocation of resources or benefits or in access to services. The concept of gender equality has evolved over time: initially, gender equality was concerned with treating everyone the same. By acknowledging and addressing different needs, interests and values, Councils can work to overcome these inequalities and arrive at equitable outcomes. Gender equality is the outcome reached through gender equity strategies.

### ***Gender***

Most commonly refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relationships between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are to a large extent socially constructed and are learned through socialisation processes since infancy. They are context/ time-specific and changeable.

## **5. Darebin's Journey so far**

Darebin City Council has a long standing commitment to gender equity and preventing violence against women. Some of the work achieved since 2008, includes:

- Establishment of the Darebin's White Ribbon Action Team
- Development of Darebin's workplace family violence policy
- Endorsement of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter 2008
- Endorsement of Darebin's first Women's Equity Strategy 2012-2015 and associated Gender Equity and Preventing Violence Against Women Annual Action Plans
- Endorsement of Building a Respectful Community – Preventing Violence Against Women – A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011-2016.
- Investment in funding a dedicated Preventing Violence Against Women Officer
- Implementation of a workplace program to prevent violence against women
- Council's submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

## 6. Policy Context

<b>State and Federal, National Policy</b>			
National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 and second Action Plan: Moving Ahead 2013-2016	Our Watch Five Year Strategic Plan 2014-2019	Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children 2012-2015: Everyone has a responsibility to act	
<b>Regional Policy / Partnerships</b>			
Building a Respectful Community – Preventing Violence against Women – A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011-2016	Northern Integrated Family Violence Services Regional Plan 2013-2017	Darebin Family Violence Network	
<b>Darebin City Council Policy</b>			
Darebin Council Plan 2013 – 2017			
"Strategy 2.16: promote gender equity, prevent violence against women and support the right of women to engage and participate fully and equally in all aspects of community life"			
Darebin Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017			
"Strategy 3.1.4: Promote gender equity, prevent violence against women and support the right of women to engage and participate fully and equally in all aspects of community life, by ongoing implementation of the Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan"			
Darebin Active and Health Ageing Strategy 2011-2021	Darebin Leisure Strategy 2010-2020	Darebin Community Safety Strategy 2012-2016	Darebin's Workplace Family Violence Policy
<b>Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan 2015-2017</b>			
Goal 1. To build an organisation within Council that is inclusive and reflective of Darebin's diverse communities	Goal 2. To build services and programs that are inclusive, responsive, accessible and equitable	Goal 3. To contribute to building inclusive and empowered Darebin communities	
To reduce and prevent violence against women in Council as a workplace	To ensure Darebin Council services, programs and policies are gender equitable, actively encourage women's full and equal participation and are inclusive of strategies preventing violence against women and children	To develop and maintain collaborative activities at the regional level to address prevention of violence against women	

## 6. Evaluation and Monitoring

Council will monitor and evaluate the Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan on an annual basis to measure outcomes and impacts. Monitoring will be supported through Council annual reporting cycles across each department and annual reports back to council and community.

**Equity and Inclusion Goal 1:** To build an organisation within Council that is inclusive and reflective of Darebin’s diverse communities

**Objective:** To reduce and prevent violence against women in Council as a workplace

Action	Lead department and partners	Output	Resources required	Timeline
1.1 Continue to implement and raise awareness of Council’s Family Violence Policy	<b>People and development</b> Corporate Risk	Policy is updated annually	Within existing staff resources and budget.	Ongoing
1.2 Develop and implement a workplace survey to assess staff knowledge and attitudes towards violence against women	<b>Community Wellbeing</b> People and Development	Survey developed and implemented in 2015	Within existing staff resources and budget.	Year 1
1.3 Develop an E-Learning module for the Family Violence Policy	<b>Community Wellbeing</b> Learning and Development	E-learning module developed and 50% of staff completed	Within existing staff resources and budget.	Year 1
1.4 Implement Darebin Says No to Family Violence – preventing violence against women in the workplace: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthened organisational processes to support staff experiencing family violence</li> <li>- Challenge and build the capacity of the workplace to prevent violence against women</li> </ul>	<b>Community Wellbeing</b> People and Development  No to Violence, Women’s Health in the North	Partnership with NTV continued  3 workshops annually  Evaluation of three years completed in 2016/17	Estimated cost – up to \$3K annually, from PVAW annual \$10k budget	Ongoing

<p>1.5 Deliver Identifying Family Violence Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop targeted training opportunities for specific teams</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p>Learning and Development</p>	<p>2 sessions held annually</p> <p>1 targeted department session held annually</p>	<p>Estimated cost – up to \$2.5K – PVAW budget and Diversity Capabilities Training budget</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>1.6 Develop a comprehensive induction process for new employees</p>	<p><b>People &amp; Development</b></p> <p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p>Departments across Council</p>	<p>All new employees receive information about Council’s commitment to prevent violence against women</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget</p>	<p>Year 1</p>
<p>1.7 Raise awareness of the causes and impact of violence against women through internal communications</p>	<p><b>Communication and Marketing</b></p> <p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p>	<p>Messages shared through various internal channels</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

**Equity and Inclusion Goal 2: To build services and programs that are inclusive, responsive, accessible and equitable**

**Objective:** To ensure Darebin Council services, programs and policies are gender equitable, actively encourage women’s full and equal participation and are inclusive of strategies preventing violence against women and children

Action	Lead department and partners	Output	Resources required	Timeline
<p>2.1 Continue to work across the Early Years setting to embed positive gender norms and prevention of violence against women</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support and enhance Maternal and Child Health responses to family violence as part of KAS visits</li> <li>- Expansion of place-based family violence prevention program at East Reservoir neighbourhood House</li> </ul>	<p><b>Family Services</b> <b>Community Wellbeing</b></p>	<p>Maternal and Child Health Service Improvement Plan include actions to increase responses to family violence</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget.  \$22K as per 2015/16 NIB budget</p>	<p>Year 1 and 2</p>
<p>2.2 Build the capacity of schools in Darebin to develop whole-of-school approaches to preventing violence against women and building respectful relationships</p>	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b> Youth Services</p>	<p>Final evaluation of Thornbury High school Partnership</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and PVAW budget.</p>	<p>Year 1</p>
<p>2.3 Scope the opportunity of training opportunities with a focus on the experience of women with disabilities</p>	<p><b>Aged and Disability</b> Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>Scoping and feasibility of training undertaken</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget.</p>	<p>Year 2</p>
<p>2.4 Scope the opportunity of training opportunities with a focus on the experience of elder abuse</p>	<p><b>Aged and Disability</b> Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>Scoping and feasibility of training undertaken</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget.</p>	<p>Year 2</p>

<p>2.5 Create a safe and responsive space in Darebin Libraries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Undertake a Gender book audit</li> <li>- Promote respectful and non-violent books</li> <li>- Promote female authors</li> <li>- Author talk opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p><b>Libraries</b></p>	<p>Gender audit undertaken</p> <p>25% of new children's books purchased consider gender</p> <p>2 Author talks focus on women's safety/empowerment</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget.</p>	<p>Year 1 and 2</p>
<p>2.6 Deliver targeted identifying family violence training / preventing violence against women training for departments/settings across Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Darebin Libraries</li> <li>- Customer Service</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p>Departments across Council</p>	<p>Training developed and delivered to targeted areas across Council</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget</p>	<p>Year 1</p>
<p>2.7 Development of a Muslim specific resource for Muslim leaders, based on the Interfaith Respectful Relationships Toolkit.</p>	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p><b>Equity and Diversity</b></p>	<p>Targeted resources developed and disseminated</p>	<p>\$8K as per 2015/16 NIB budget</p>	<p>Year 1</p>
<p>2.8 Gender and women's safety lens considered in key policy development across Council</p>	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p>Departments across Council</p>	<p>Gender Lens and Women's Safety lens taken in relevant planning across Council</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2.9 Develop social messages that address community attitudes towards violence against women</p>	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p>	<p>All communications platforms are used to develop social messages</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

**Equity and Inclusion Goal 3: To contribute to building inclusive and empowered Darebin communities**

**Objective:** To develop and maintain collaborative activities at the regional level to address prevention of violence against women

Action	Lead department and partners	Output	Resources required	Timeline
3.1 Provide support and Partnership with Aboriginal services to prevent violence against women through the delivery of a Darebin Sister's Day Out	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p><b>Equity and Diversity</b></p> <p>Aboriginal Family Violence Legal and Prevention Service</p>	Sister's day out held in Darebin – 25% of participants are Darebin residents	\$10K allocated as New Initiative Bid for 2014/15 – Women's Equity Budget	Year 1
3.2 Support the development of local training for settlement/ migrant/ family violence/ homelessness and housing workers – i.e culturally safe Common Risk Assessment Framework	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p><b>Equity and Diversity</b></p> <p>Multicultural Centre for Women's Health; InTouch; Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre</p>	Partnership with WHIN to work across the NMR	Within existing staff resources and PVAW budget.	Year 1
3.3 Convene and support the Darebin Family Violence Network to address and respond to the local needs of women and children  - including support for women's refuges across Darebin	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p>Elizabeth Morgan House; Good Samaritan Inn; Georgina Martina Women's Refuge ; Crossroads</p>	6 meetings held annually	Within existing staff resources and budget	Ongoing
3.4 Participate and contribute in local and state partnerships:  - MAV's Preventing Violence Against Women	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p>Municipal Association of Victoria; Victorian Local Governments;</p>	Participate in 80% of meetings	Within existing staff resources and budget	Ongoing

<p>Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Northern Region Preventing Violence Against Women Committee</li> <li>- NEPCP Preventing Violence Against Women Collaborative</li> </ul>	<p>Women’s Health in the North; North East Primary Care Partnership</p>			
<p>3.5 Recognition of Key campaigns to prevent violence against women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Week Without Violence</li> <li>- 16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence &amp; UN International day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p>	<p>Each campaign is recognised with one event and communications via various media and social media platforms</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>3.6 Advocate for the elimination of violence against women across local, state and federal government levels and in the community, with particular focus on key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gender equity</li> <li>- Adequate resources to respond to the demand on family violence services</li> <li>- Safe, secure and accessible housing for women</li> <li>- Women’s economic independence</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Wellbeing</b></p> <p>Departments across Council</p>	<p>Contribution to key state and federal policy development annually</p>	<p>Within existing staff resources and budget</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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