

EVALUATION OF THE NORTHERN REGION PREVENTION  
OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN STRATEGY 2011-2016

# Final Evaluation Report

MARCH 2017



MONASH  
University



WOMEN'S HEALTH  
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## Acknowledgements

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Women's Health In the North acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we provide our services. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and recognise the ongoing living culture of all Aboriginal people. We express commitment to Aboriginal self-determination and our hope for reconciliation and justice.

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

GLASS	Gender, Leadership and Social Sustainability Research Unit (Monash University)
NMR	Northern Metropolitan Region
NIFVS	Northern Integrated Family Violence Services
PVAW	Preventing Violence against Women
WHIN	Women’s Health In the North

# Executive Summary

## Introduction to the Project

This project evaluated the regional approach to preventing violence against women in the northern metropolitan region (NMR) of Melbourne, as guided by *Building a Respectful Community – Preventing Violence against Women – A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011–2016*. The Strategy was developed by Women’s Health In the North (WHIN) and it provided a framework, context and evidence-based actions to guide primary prevention work across the region. An evaluation framework was developed and a mid-point evaluation (Phase 1) undertaken in 2013. In 2016, the final evaluation (Phase 2) was conducted and is the focus of this report. Phase 2 builds on the information and outcomes from the first evaluation and provides information and recommendations for the development of the next regional strategy to begin in 2017.

## Stakeholders and Participants

The primary stakeholders were the partner organisations that had committed to the regional strategy and participated in the Northern Metropolitan Region Preventing Violence against Women Committee (the NMR PVAW Committee): local government, community health services and primary care partnerships. The primary group of participants in Phase 2 were NMR PVAW Committee members, directors/CEOs of the partner organisations and members of the Northern Integrated Family Violence Services (NIFVS) Regional Integration Committee.

## Data Collection and Analysis

A range of data collection methods were employed in order to give opportunities for as many people as possible to participate and, therefore, to gather comprehensive and informed data. Methods included an online survey, seven focus groups and one interview. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected.

Data from the online survey, focus groups and interview was analysed together to answer the evaluation questions. In addition, a collective impact framework was used to provide another dimension to the evaluation. The evaluation of large-scale, complex social change, such as preventing violence against women work, requires innovative and whole-of-strategy approaches. The regional strategy and associated goals, activities and interactions very much reflect the five conditions of an effective collective impact initiative.

## Key Evaluation Questions and Findings

Five key evaluation questions were developed for Phase 2.

- 1. How has the ‘regional approach’ influenced preventing violence against women work in the region?**

The findings indicated that the regional approach has consistently influenced preventing violence against women work in the region. The approach has been relevant for individual workers in their prevention work and in their efforts to introduce and embed preventing violence against women and gender equity work in their organisations. Having a sense of working together within a region and with different organisations, despite variations in population numbers and demographics, and differences in organisational acceptance and readiness to engage in prevention work, was a significant influence of the regional approach. The role of the NMR PVAW Committee and WHIN’s coordinating and advocacy roles were valued highly. These findings reflect the collective impact

characteristics of mutually-reinforcing activities developed from a common agenda and shared vision for change. WHIN was clearly viewed as a strong backbone organisation.

## **2. Were the medium term outcomes (identified in the program logic) achieved?**

The medium-term outcomes were achieved throughout the region, particularly in organisations that began preventing violence against women work before or at the commencement of the Strategy. Achievement of the outcomes was indicated by participants' high level knowledge about violence against women, including causes of violence against women and the links between violence against women and gender inequity. Organisational outcomes were demonstrated by changes within organisations and/or service delivery over the last five years in relation to violence against women, and the organisations participating in planning and implementing preventing violence against women strategies.

## **3. What approaches or activities have been most successful?**

The Strategy had been very useful for providing an introductory framework and starting points for preventing violence against women and gender equity work. The inclusion of strategic directions and goals, and suggestions for how actions and activities could flow out of these directions and goals, was valued. Commitment and involvement from organisational management was noted by many participants as one of the essential elements contributing to the successful implementation of the Strategy. Clear communication across the region, collaboration and partnerships across organisations, and competent and informed leadership and coordination by WHIN were other elements that participants identified as particularly successful. These factors reflect those that are included in successful collective impact initiatives.

## **4. What were the barriers and challenges?**

There were some difficulties in successfully involving a range of different organisations in the regional approach when organisations were at varying levels of commitment, involvement and readiness to participate. Most participants had found the Strategy useful during the last three years, but now expressed a need for a revised and updated Strategy. Flexible, fluid yet consistent actions and activities within the Strategy that were relevant and responsive to individual organisations and their level of progress with preventing violence against women and gender equity work were required. This challenge was raised in Phase 1 of the evaluation too; how can a regional approach be flexible enough to meet the needs of different communities and different organisations while at the same time maintaining its consistency in terms of overall direction, goals, change strategies and internal integrity?

## **5. What are the key recommendations for future work?**

This evaluation developed 25 recommendations for future work. These included WHIN continuing to take the leading coordination role in preventing violence against women work in the region and continuing to work at senior and management levels in partner organisations. Engaging a wider range of organisations to participate in preventing violence against women work was encouraged. The next iteration of the strategy required a more tailored approach in order to assist the development of tangible organisation-specific action plans and activities within the overall strategy. Increased opportunities to identify, share and measure changes and achievements in preventing violence against women work were needed. More attention to the diverse needs of different women and an intersectional approach in the development of activities was recommended. Making links between violence against women and gender equality required ongoing work.

## Introduction

This project evaluated the regional approach to preventing violence against women in the northern metropolitan region (NMR) of Melbourne, as guided by *Building a Respectful Community – Preventing Violence against Women – A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011–2016*. The Strategy was developed by Women’s Health In the North (WHIN), the regional women’s health service for the NMR, covering the municipalities of Darebin, Banyule, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Yarra. Specifically, this project evaluated the effectiveness of the Strategy, the collective impact of the regional approach and the processes and activities used by WHIN to implement the regional approach.

The Strategy provided a framework, context and evidence-based actions to guide primary prevention work across the region. Fifty organisations endorsed the Strategy, including all seven local governments, nine community health services, three primary care partnerships and other community service organisations. The primary partnership structure for the implementation of the Strategy was the Northern Metropolitan Region Preventing Violence against Women Committee (the NMR PVAW Committee).

In 2013, WHIN engaged Dr Deborah Western from Monash University’s Gender Leadership and Social Sustainability (GLASS) Research Unit to develop an evaluation framework and conduct a mid-point evaluation (referred to as Phase 1). Specifically, Phase 1:

- established baseline information regarding knowledge about, and attitudes to, violence against women in WHIN’s partner organisations in the Strategy
- evaluated the strategies and processes utilised in the regional approach to the prevention of violence against women in the NMR of Melbourne
- established baseline information regarding the effectiveness of a regional preventing violence against women strategy.

The resulting framework and report can be found at <http://www.whin.org.au/resources/preventing-violence-against-women.html#Evaluation>

In 2016, Dr Western conducted the final evaluation (referred to as Phase 2), which is the focus of this report. The evaluation framework developed in the Phase 1 evaluation was again employed in the development of the research design, evaluation processes and questions, data collection and analysis, and presentation of findings and recommendations.

Data was collected from participants who completed an online survey and/or participated in focus groups and an interview. This data was combined and analysed together in order to answer the evaluation questions. The findings were also considered in light of the notion of collective impact where large-scale social change is achieved through broad cross-sector collaboration rather than separate, individual change efforts.

The final evaluation findings are presented in response to the five key evaluation questions developed for this phase (see page 9).

The Phase 2 evaluation builds on the information and outcomes from the Phase 1 evaluation and provides information and recommendations for the development of the next regional strategy to begin in 2017.

## Stakeholders and Participants

The primary stakeholders were the partner organisations that had committed to *Building a Respectful Community* and participated in the NMR PVAW Committee (previously the Building a Respectful Community Implementation Advisory Group).

Organisations that were members of the NMR PVAW Committee at the time of this evaluation were:

Banyule City Council	La Trobe University
Darebin City Council	Merri Health
Hume City Council	North Richmond Community Health
Moreland City Council	Plenty Valley Community Health
Nillumbik Shire Council	Sunbury Community Health
Whittlesea City Council	Whittlesea Community Connections
Yarra City Council	Banksia Gardens Community Services
Banyule Community Health	Good Samaritan Inn
cohealth	Northern Centre Against Sexual Assault
Darebin Community Health	Hume Whittlesea Primary Care Partnership
Dianella Health	Inner North West Primary Care Partnership
healthAbility	North East Primary Care Partnership

The primary group of participants in Phase 2 were the members of the NMR PVAW Committee, directors/CEOs of the partner organisations and members of the NIFVS Regional Integration Committee.

## Data Collection Methods

Various data collection methods were employed in order to give opportunities for as many people as possible to participate and, therefore, to gather comprehensive, informed and relevant data. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected.

### Survey

The evaluation included an online survey of the members of the NMR PVAW Committee. Thirty-one people were invited to complete the survey; 26 responses were received – a return rate of 84%. Ninety-six per cent of respondents identified as female; one respondent (4%) did not answer this question. Figure 1 shows the organisations represented by the online survey respondents.

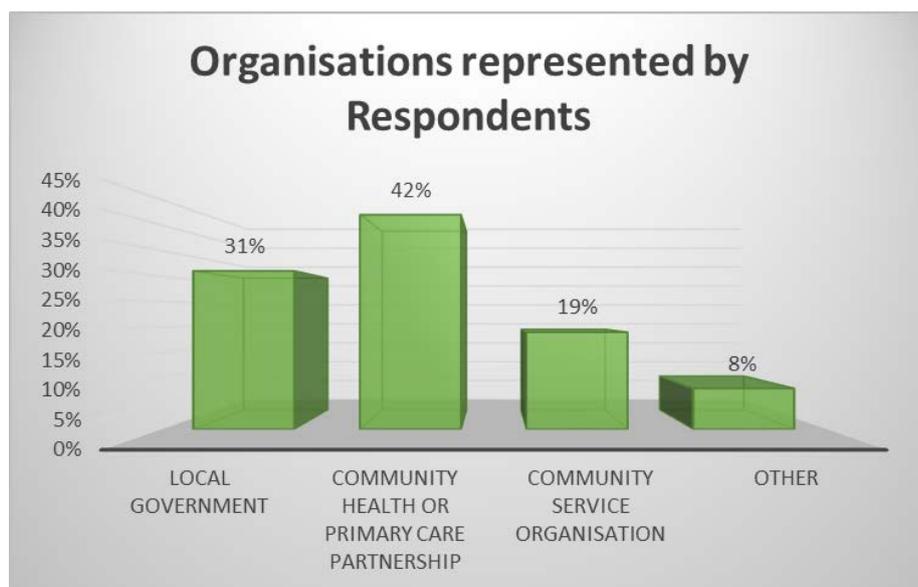


Figure 1: Organisations represented by online survey respondents

Respondents came from a range of organisations, with the majority (42%) working in community health or a primary care partnership. The ‘other’ organisations were a primary health organisation and a sexual assault service within a hospital. See Appendix 1 for a list of the online survey questions.

The large workplace survey (n=631) undertaken in Phase 1 was not repeated in Phase 2 due to various factors, including timing, resourcing and an acknowledgement of the long term nature of work to shift attitudes and behaviours.

### Focus Groups and Interviews

Three focus groups were facilitated with different members from the NMR PVAW Committee. A separate focus group was facilitated with each of: family violence response representatives; community health and primary care partnership CEOs; local government human services directors; and WHIN leadership and health promotion staff. See Appendix 2 for a list of focus group questions. One interview was held with a policy officer from local government.

### Document Reviews

As part of the overall ongoing evaluation, WHIN undertook a number of document reviews. These were: a review of the action plan component of the Strategy; a review of partner organisations’ plans, strategies and policies; mapping of partner activities; review of financial commitments via staff time allocations; evaluation of other projects; and a review of NMR PVAW Committee attendance and minutes.

## Key Evaluation Questions

### Phase 1

In Phase 1 of the evaluation, two major questions were asked.

**Question 1: In what ways have the different approaches and activities employed in the *Building a Respectful Community – Preventing Violence against Women Strategy* achieved their aims?**

To provide a context for this question, the overarching approaches employed in the implementation of the *Strategy* were explained as:

- an integrated partnership approach with a shared regional understanding and partnerships across sectors and settings
- an action plan which outlines actions that organisations can undertake
- the *Strategy* as a tool for advocacy and engagement, including endorsement.

The activities in the Action Plan were organised under the following action areas:

1. Partnerships and structures
2. Community leadership
3. Capacity and tools
4. Communications, advocacy and champions
5. Skills, attitudes and social norms
6. Planning, research and evaluation
7. Embedding.

**Question 2: How successful is a regional approach to a preventing violence against women strategy where regional partners are included in the activities? In what ways is it successful?**

A context for this question was provided by explaining that the regional approach could be assessed looking at two key areas:

- WHIN's regional leadership role and associated actions, including the Building a Respectful Community Implementation Advisory Group, events, resources and advocacy.
- Impact on individual organisations – how has the regional approach furthered the work of individual organisations?

### Phase 2

The evaluation conducted in 2016 (Phase 2) asked five key questions. These were:

1. How has the 'regional approach' influenced preventing violence against women work in the region?
2. Were the medium term outcomes (identified in the program logic) achieved?
3. What approaches or activities have been most successful?
4. What were the barriers and challenges?
5. What are the key recommendations for future work?

### Rationale for the Five Key Evaluation Questions

One objective of the Phase 2 evaluation was to build on the findings from Phase 1 and enable a very broad comparison of findings from each Phase. While worded differently in Phase 2, the two major questions from Phase 1 can still be seen within these five questions of Phase 2. Of overall importance in both evaluation phases was determining the effectiveness of a regional approach for a preventing violence against women strategy and identifying what made such an approach helpful and successful or unproductive. The nature, influence and effectiveness of the roles of regional partners and networks in

the regional approach were also explored in each phase. Another central consideration in both phases was the leadership role of WHIN in the regional strategy and its strengths and limitations.

Analysis of the extent to which medium term outcomes (in the original program logic) had been achieved was important for Phase 2 given this phase marked the completion of the 2011–2016 Strategy. Participants were in a good position at this stage of the evaluation project to reflect on what had been achieved, both by their organisations, and by the regional, collaborative approach. The Phase 1 evaluation had invited participants to suggest possible additional or alternative approaches to the preventing violence against women strategy. Phase 2, however, was much more specific in asking participants their key recommendations that could guide the development of the next iteration of the regional strategy to prevent violence against women. Of particular interest were participants' thoughts about what should be consolidated and/or what new actions or activities should be initiated.

The online survey, the focus groups and interview were guided by sub-questions that were informed by the five key evaluation questions. Appendix 1 presents the online survey questions. Appendix 2 presents the focus group and interview questions. Many of these sub-questions had been asked in Phase 1.

## Challenges in Evaluating Preventing Violence against Women Strategies

When developing the evaluation framework in Phase 1 of the evaluation, attention was given to the potential difficulties and complexities involved in evaluating strategies that are long-term, include behavioural and attitudinal change as goals and outcomes, involve many and varied stakeholders, and are situated on large-scale structural levels. This complexity is worth revisiting in Phase 2 of this evaluation because it provides a reminder of the challenges involved and the context in which this Phase 2 evaluation occurred. The following paragraphs are sourced from the *Evaluation of the Northern Region Prevention of Violence against Women Strategy: Evaluation Framework* (2013), pages 13–15 (<http://www.whin.org.au/resources/preventing-violence-against-women.html#Evaluation>).

*Measuring change in attitudes and behaviour is a difficult endeavour given the many interacting and influencing factors at play when attempting such change. Achieving changes in attitudes from conservative and rigid ideas about violence against women and gender roles to more flexible ideas about gender equity and gender equality can be a long process and a slippery concept to measure; changes in attitude do not always transfer to changes in behaviour. However, any and all change that occurs clearly contributes to the achievement of social justice goals. As other communities, organisations and populations notice these changes and achievements, broader support for the change effort can be activated and shared.*

*In a review and analysis of a range of prevention of intimate-partner and sexual violence programs and strategies, the World Health Organisation (2010) noted the difficulties inherent in evaluating and developing evidence bases for prevention of violence against women programs. In addition to a tendency to separate research and advocacy activities, the contributing factors to violence against women are many and varied. Extra complexity is seen when these factors interact and escalate risk for women. Factors such as gender inequality, gendered social norms around expected behaviours of men and women, and weak and unenforceable sanctions against violence against women are complex, and complicated to measure and it is difficult to distinguish how and when change occurs.*

*This evaluation project aims to evaluate the overall Building Respectful Community – Preventing Violence against Women Strategy rather than evaluate discrete, single programs, projects, policies or practices. Cox et al (2009) use the term ‘strategy’ rather than ‘program’ to describe violence prevention efforts that occur across the individual, relationship, community and societal levels that are central to the socio-ecological model of understanding violence against women. As the name suggests, a whole-of-strategy evaluation seeks to measure a whole strategy by examining the management and implementation of the strategy, the extent to which it is coordinated at the implementation level, and its impact at a broad level. As Marcus and Shaw (2013, p. 16) explain in their whole-of-strategy evaluation, the evaluation is ‘not intended to re-examine each component in detail but examine how the combined effort of all components has worked holistically to achieve outcomes’. This model of evaluation also enables exploration of partnership approaches, including at a whole-of-government level, and a strategy’s effectiveness and sustainability at a regional level. Thus, this evaluation of the Building Respectful Community – Preventing Violence against Women Strategy occurs on multiple levels, at different stages over time and with a variety of data types. Findings from a whole-of-strategy evaluation can provide direction for the future development and management of a strategy.*

*Batliwala and Pittman (2010, p. 10) suggest that more attention be given to the development of evaluation frameworks and approaches that can ‘capture the results of larger-scale women’s*

*empowerment processes that build collective power and deeper change, including accounts of success as well as challenges and backlash'. Wall (2013) notes the complexities and contextual influences that make the evaluation of large-scale, multi-level prevention strategies in fields such as sexual assault and domestic violence so challenging. She advocates for innovative and sophisticated evaluation designs and methods to measure social change emanating from prevention efforts. Similarly, in order to provide consistency with other evaluations carried out in complex service delivery contexts and reflecting an awareness of the complexities involved in evaluating domestic violence services and interagency partnerships, Laing and Toivonen (2012) employed a mixed methodology that included both quantitative and qualitative data.*

## Collective Impact as a Method of Identifying and Analysing Social Change

As the previous section's summaries from Phase 1 indicate, preventing violence against women strategies, including WHIN's regional strategy, occur on multiple levels, involve various stakeholders and partnerships, aim for large-scale change and empowerment processes, and are located in complex service delivery and policy contexts. Their evaluations, therefore, require innovative, sophisticated whole-of-strategy approaches.

Kania and Kramer (2011) confirm the need for such an approach in their writing about collective impact, noting that large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector collaboration rather than a focus on individual change efforts and interventions. Collective impact initiatives differ from other collaborative actions because they 'involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants' (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 38). Collective impact initiatives and actions are particularly effective when working with, and evaluating, complex social problems where more than one 'solution' is required to resolve the problem. Indeed, the possible resolutions to a social problem or to initiate change may not even be known. Moreover, many complex social problems such as violence against women require the involvement of numerous stakeholders and sectors; 'no single entity has the resources or authority to bring about the necessary change' (p. 39).

Kania and Kramer (2011) suggest there are five conditions that enable successful collective impact initiatives:

1. A common agenda and shared vision for change that is held by all participants 'that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions' (p. 39). Such a common vision does not prohibit disagreement as long as the differences are openly identified, discussed and resolved.
2. Shared measurement systems and agreement on how goal achievement/outcomes and project successes will be identified, measured and reported. This approach enables consistent data to be collected and analysed across stakeholders using the same community level indicators.
3. Mutually reinforcing activities. Stakeholders undertake activities in which they have particular skill and expertise and these activities are supported by and coordinated with the activities of all other stakeholders. In this way activities become mutually reinforcing and work towards achieving the same goal(s).
4. Continuous communication which can occur through regular meetings and networks, face-face and electronically. Communication needs to happen on all levels including CEO/managerial levels, direct service provider levels, and project coordinator levels.
5. Backbone support organisations. Successful collaboration requires supporting infrastructure that can coordinate project activities and stakeholders. Generally participating organisations have little or no time to do this themselves so a separate organisation with staff members skilled in coordination, time management, conflict resolution, planning, support, data collection, reporting and leadership is best placed to take on this 'backbone' role.

*Building a Respectful Community – Preventing Violence against Women – A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011–2016* and associated goals, activities and interactions very much reflect these five conditions of an effective collective impact initiative. These five conditions are also useful when analysing the data and findings from the Phase 2 evaluation.

## Data Analysis and Findings

The following sections of this report provide the data analysis and findings. Online survey responses are provided first and are shown through figures and tables. Data collected through the focus groups and interview generally reflected the themes found in the online survey responses. Therefore, data from the online survey, focus groups and interview was combined and analysed together in order to answer the evaluation questions. The findings are also considered in light of the notion of collective impact where large-scale social change is achieved through broad cross-sector collaboration rather than separate, individual change efforts.

The next section of this report now applies the findings from the online survey, focus groups and interview to the five key evaluation questions of Phase 2. Some findings are relevant in answering more than one of the key evaluation questions and this is noted where this is the case.

## Evaluation Question 1: How has the 'Regional Approach' Influenced Preventing Violence against Women Work in the Region?

This evaluation question was answered by analysing the following aspects of the regional approach: the ways in which participants had used the Strategy; how often they had used the Strategy; their thoughts about the level of importance of a regional approach; the impact of the regional approach on participants' work; and the role and strengths of the NMR PVAW Committee.

The findings indicated that the regional approach has consistently influenced preventing violence against women work in the region. The approach has been relevant for individual workers in their prevention work and in their efforts to introduce and embed preventing violence against women and gender equity work in their organisations. Having a sense of working together within a region and with different organisations, despite numerous regional differences in population numbers and demographics, and differences in organisational acceptance and readiness to engage in preventing violence against women work, was a significant influence of the regional approach. There was strong acknowledgement from all participants that preventing violence against women work would be most successful in achieving its goals by working from a regional approach. This acknowledgement reflects the collective impact characteristics of mutually reinforcing activities developed from a common agenda and shared vision for change.

### How the Regional Strategy was Used

Participants were asked about how they used *Building a Respectful Community – Preventing Violence against Women – A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011–2016* and how they participated in the regional activities. Nearly half (42%) of the online survey respondents referred to the Strategy on a regular basis. However, only 15% of online survey respondents reported that they used the Strategy frequently to inform and guide their work.

Information from participants in the focus groups suggested that this infrequent use of the Strategy was due to it now being at the end of its life (end of 2016) and that organisations were starting to, or already have, moved beyond the introductory phase of preventing violence against women work. In many cases preventing violence against women work has become embedded in organisations and they are now at the point of building on this initial work and expanding the preventing violence against women work within their organisations and communities. Figure 2 shows the frequency with which the Strategy was used by online survey respondents.

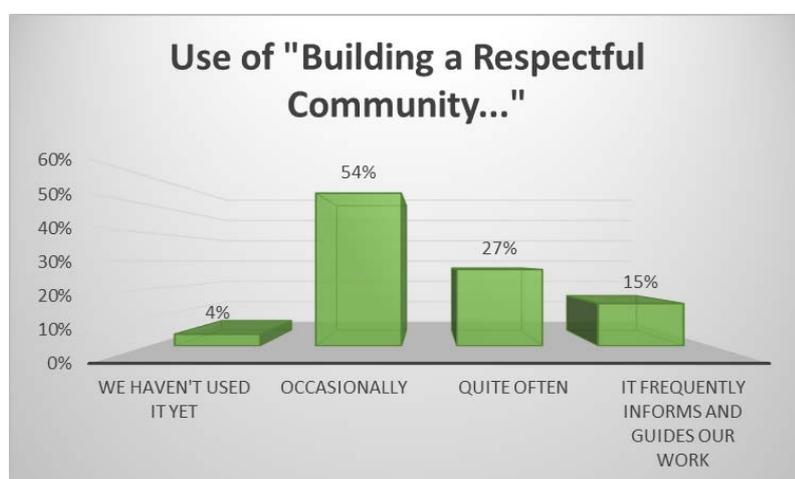


Figure 2: Frequency with which the Strategy was used by online survey respondents

Table 1 shows the ways in which the Strategy was used by online survey respondents and/or their organisations. These responses were reflected by participants in the focus groups.

Use of Strategy	Number of respondents	Percentage
Have not used it	1	4%
Have referred to the background section to increase own understanding	17	68%
Have used the Strategy to inform other major organisational policies/strategies	15	60%
Have used the Action Plan to develop own organisational action plan	13	52%
Have used the strategy as an internal advocacy tool	12	48%
Have used the strategy with an internal working group or network	7	28%

Table 1: Ways in which the strategy was used by online survey respondents and/or their organisations

Use of the background information in the Strategy to increase awareness and understanding of violence against women was important for organisations new to the Strategy. The Strategy had most often been used this way in the early years, 2011 and 2012, rather than more recently. Using the Strategy as an internal advocacy tool was mentioned by many participants who saw this as a valuable, credible way to introduce the concepts of gender equity and preventing violence against women work to their organisations, particularly at management level. One participant noted that her organisation had ‘... used the Action Plan as a reference when we develop our own organisational annual Business Plan’. Another participant explained that the Strategy was ‘not used within a community working group/network but have used it within stakeholders and professional working groups, project groups and networks’. One participant’s comment illustrated the diverse ways in which the Strategy had been used and the different stages of involvement in preventing violence against women work across the region: ‘Honestly, we didn’t use it as much as we should have because we weren’t an active part of the PVAW space until well into the implementation of the Strategy. So we more so were guided by our close work with WHIN, which was like a verbal version of the Strategy. Similarly, joining the PVAW Advisory Committee meant use of the Strategy by proxy.’

### The Importance of a Regional Approach

All participants were asked to rate the importance of a regional approach to work being undertaken in the prevention of violence against women. Figure 3 shows the responses from the online survey participants.

Nearly all online participants (96%) thought that the regional approach was either ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ important. The remaining 4% (1 participant) thought the regional approach was ‘moderately important’. The responses from participants in the focus groups and interview confirmed these findings.

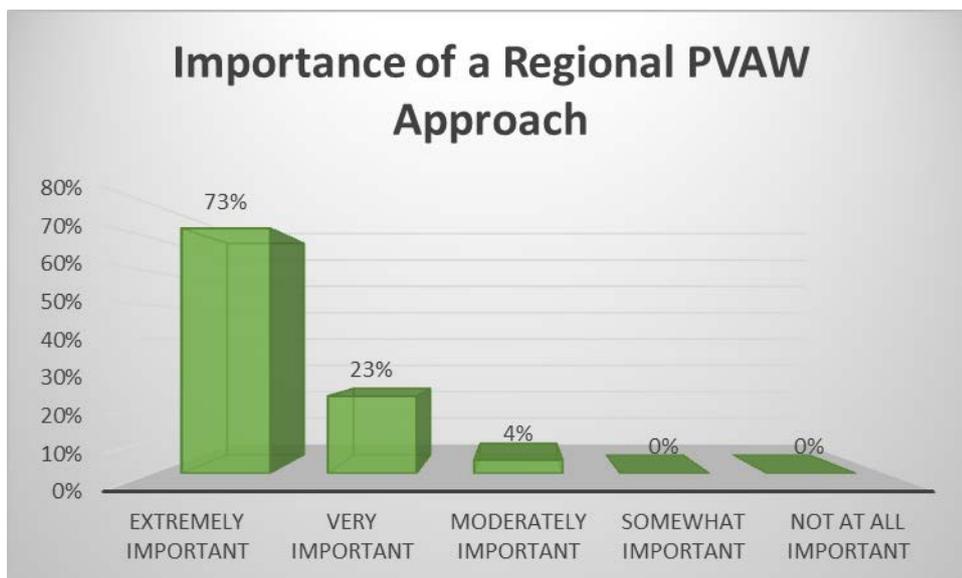


Figure 3: Importance of a regional approach to prevention of violence against women work - online survey respondents

In rating the impact of the regional approach on their work, all online survey respondents thought it was helpful with just over half (54%) rating it as 'very helpful' and about a third (31%) rating it as 'extremely helpful'. Figure 4 shows these responses.

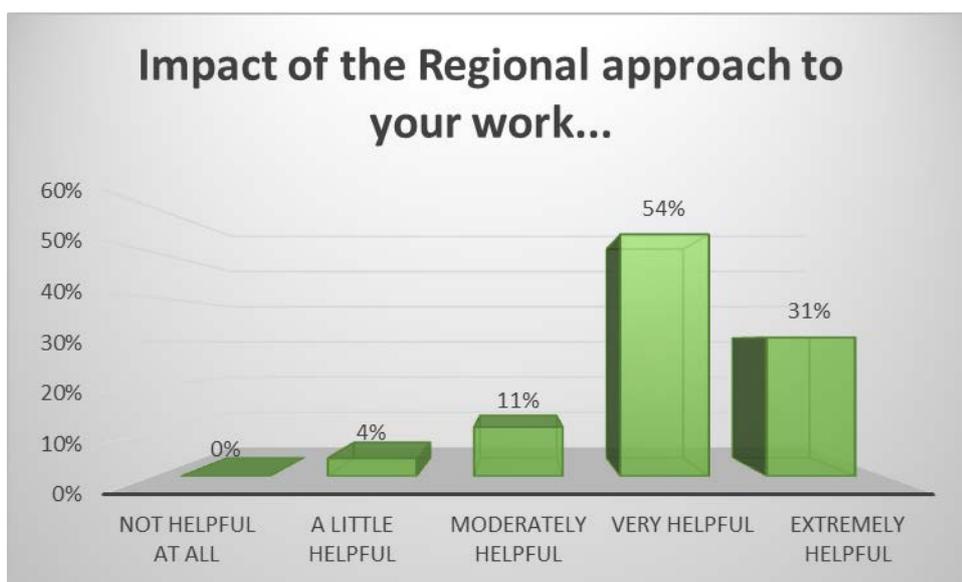


Figure 4: The impact of the regional approach on the work of online survey respondents.

The helpful impact of the regional approach on participants' work was due to factors already discussed, such as the availability of the Strategy and the ways in which it was used, the contact with different workers and organisations, and the support and information that was gained through the NMR PVAW Committee. The evaluation next explored the input of the NMR PVAW Committee.

### The NMR PVAW Committee's Contributions to Preventing Violence against Women

Participants identified a number of roles that the NMR PVAW Committee had assumed over the last four years and that had contributed to the helpfulness and strengths of the regional approach. These included:

- 'Holder of knowledge'. Most participants (survey, focus groups and interview) saw the NMR PVAW Committee as a key body for sharing and disseminating information on preventing

violence against women providing both professional knowledge and an evidence base, but also sharing information about activities occurring in the region, opportunities and practice outcomes.

- Acting as a Community of Practice. As described above, this allowed the opportunity for organisations to share information, reflect on practice, link with other professionals and update on advances in the area. It also acted as a 'peak body' to keep preventing violence against women on the agenda, and advocate on associated issues. One participant summarised the importance of the NMR PVAW Committee in this way: *'Ensuring the issue remains on the agenda, building knowledge and skills, keeping us all informed and up-to-date, reassurance and advice re own work agenda, contributes to creating an authorising environment around the issue'*.
- Networking. The NMR PVAW Committee supported opportunities for different organisations to meet and exchange ideas and expertise. One participant noted that *'the PVAW Committee has provided a network and home or base for the workers to regularly and consistently gather and ensure cross exchange of information, but further it has helped create a place and space for some of this rich knowledge and practice outcomes to be 'held'. It has then further supported practitioners in their spirit and approach to their work and tasks, and connected to this more broadly their organisations own culture, norms and spirit too - however much the level or pace of progress'*.
- Partnership and Collaboration. This type of activity is included in one of the collective impact conditions for effective social change. A participant summarised why the NMR PVAW Committee was important for her: *'Bringing workers / organisations together to increase awareness and promote cross sector collaboration'*.
- Provision of a Framework through the Strategy. The structure and framework provided by the strategy supported organisations to develop their own plans, to link preventing violence against women work with other organisational work, to better understand the activities occurring and to contribute to future work.

## Evaluation Question 2: Were the Medium-term Outcomes (Identified in the Program Logic) Achieved?

The program logic model is located in Appendix 3. It includes four medium term outcomes for individual workers and leadership:

- 1) Increased knowledge of violence against women and how to prevent it
- 2) Increased understanding of gender equity as a key determinant of violence against women
- 3) Increased intention to prevent violence against women and promote gender equity
- 4) Increased confidence to prevent violence against women and promote gender equity.

The program logic model also includes four medium term outcomes for regional partner organisations:

- 1) Increased financial commitment to preventing violence against women and gender equity
- 2) Preventing violence against women and gender equity approaches embedded in policy and practice
- 3) Increased quantity and quality of programs to preventing violence against women and promote gender equity throughout the community
- 4) Increased collaboration between partners across the region.

These medium-term outcomes have been achieved across the region. Some parts of the region, particularly those where organisations began preventing violence against women work before or at the commencement of the Strategy, have achieved these outcomes thoroughly and have worked consistently to do so. Evaluation Question 2 was answered by taking into account participants' level of knowledge about violence against women. This included: what they believed to be the causes of violence against women; their knowledge and understanding about gender equity and the links between violence against women and gender inequity; the changes within their organisations and/or their service delivery over the last five years in relation to violence against women; and their thoughts about which organisations in the region have a role in planning and implementing preventing violence against women strategies and preventing violence against women work.

### Awareness and Knowledge about Preventing Violence against Women

Phase 1 of the evaluation noted that there were 'inherent challenges in evaluating a regional approach or regional strategy', where there can be a multitude of influences and strategies that may impact on the outcomes. As seen in the program logic, the outcomes rely on and are impacted by actions and investment from WHIN's partner organisations, as well as state and federal government. With so many potential impacting factors, it is not feasible to isolate the exact strategies or actions that have resulted in the outcomes' (2013, p. 26).

Nevertheless, some indication of the level and type of awareness of violence against women can be gained from asking questions about this and noting people's responses. Various questions, including scenario-based questions, were asked of the more than 600 participants in the online survey in Phase 1. Fewer questions about awareness and knowledge about violence against women were asked in Phase 2 because there were fewer participants, there was an assumption that participants would have high levels of knowledge and awareness given their work, and one of the aims of the Phase 1 evaluation was to establish a broad baseline indication of the level of knowledge of violence against women among staff at partner organisations.

Online survey participants were asked to rate their knowledge of violence against women. The results are shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Knowledge of violence against women – online survey respondents

The majority of respondents (85%) either knew ‘a fair amount’ or considered themselves ‘thoroughly informed’. Participants in focus groups and the interview rated themselves similarly.

Online survey participants were then asked to describe what they believed to be the main cause of violence against women. Responses were grouped into the following sub-themes:

- Gender inequality or inequity
- Rigid gender norms/ stereotypes or roles
- Power imbalance – with men having greater control and influence
- Patriarchy
- Societal acceptance/normalisation of violence
- Past experiences.

These sub-themes were further analysed and combined into four major key themes:

- Gender inequality or inequity
- Rigid gender norms/ stereotypes or roles
- Power imbalance and patriarchy – with men having greater control and influence
- Societal acceptance/normalisation of violence.

Figure 6 shows the frequency for each of the four major key themes identified by online survey respondents.

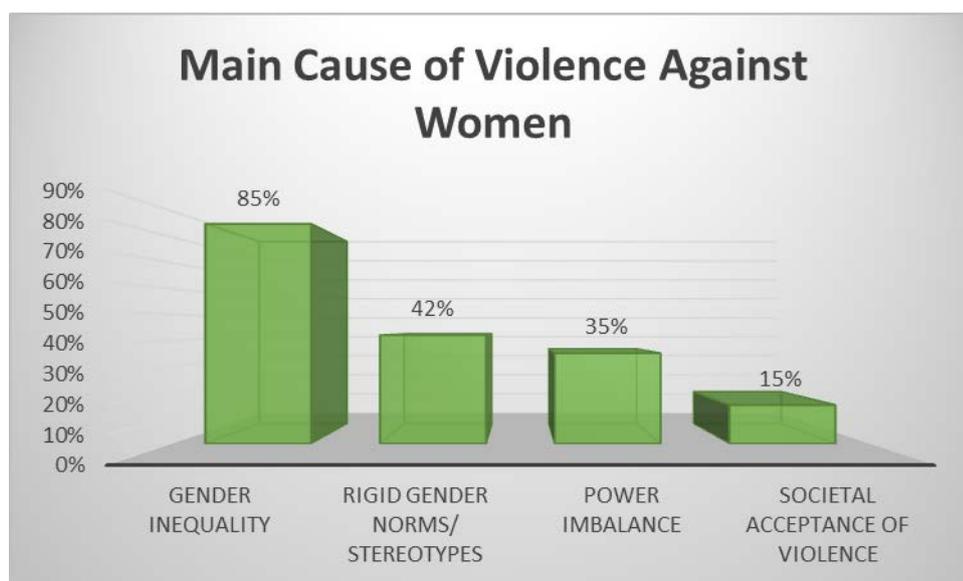


Figure 6: Main cause of violence against women as understood by online survey respondents

The nature of the responses is well summarised by the following comment from one participant who explained that the main cause of violence against women is *'gender inequality, manifesting in unequal social norms and gendered perceptions, violence-supportive attitudes and structures, unequal distribution and access to resources, power and influence'*.

### Gender Equity as a Key Determinant of Violence against Women

Participants were asked what the term 'gender equity' meant to them. Some participants identified the current situation of inequity between men and women, while others identified gender equity as a process of rectifying imbalance and implementing systems and structures that address the imbalance. One participant explained this clearly: *'Equity is the process towards gender equality, meaning how resources and support mechanisms are distributed to ensure an equitable endpoint (that is, equality). Equity means recognising existing imbalances in power, representation and access to resources/opportunities, and looking to address them so that everyone is able to have equal access, power and opportunity. Intersectionality is crucial to understanding gender equity and unpacking complex power relationships.'*

Another participant explained gender equity through a systemic structural lens: *'Gender equity is achieved through addressing structures, attitudes, practices and behaviours at the societal, community, organisational, family and individual level that lead to disadvantage, discrimination, harm, or unjust outcomes on the basis of gender'*.

Overall, all participants identified the following factors as key features of gender equity:

- same rights and responsibilities
- same opportunities – fairness in accessing equal opportunity
- injustice – removal of injustice, to increase 'fairness'
- equality in all areas
- access and participation – removing barriers to improve access and participation
- rectifying imbalance so that all genders can be on an 'equal playing field'
- implementing the structural changes that are required to facilitate gender equity.

Participants in all focus groups agreed that there was increased awareness and understanding of the existence of family violence and violence against women and an increased understanding of what constituted gender equity and gender inequity. There was agreement with the theory that gender

inequity is the key driver for violence against women, although one online survey respondent expressed concern that too much emphasis was placed on gender equity as the sole determinant of violence against women. Participants believed that their organisations, other professionals and community members have good levels of understanding that gender inequity is a key driver for violence against women. However, participants thought that there was limited understanding of exactly how violence against women and gender inequality/gender inequity are linked. This led to some uncertainty about how to pitch preventing violence against women work and what would constitute effective plans, actions and activities.

Participants thought that there was general understanding in their organisations and in the community about the link between violence against women and disrespect – and this had received a lot of publicity through, for example, the Australian Prime Minister giving a speech about this. Other issues like women's lack of access to financial resources, including unequal pay between women and men, were less easily understood in terms of how they might manifest in violence against women and what the various links might be to get from, for example, unequal pay to violence against women. One participant summed up her observations from her work in the community: *'I'm not seeing the link and people are sort of saying 'Well those are people that assault their wives, and this is about pay, and they're quite two separate things'.* Another participant commented on the need to make the concepts relevant to people and introduce them in people's day-day lives: *'So what will you do in terms of gender at home, like how you raise your children, like your son and daughter, and role modelling and things?'*

This next quote from a preventing violence against women worker nicely demonstrates the dilemmas often faced when working with gender equity and preventing violence against women: *'I have found that sometimes the link between preventing violence against women and needing to improve gender equity can make it harder to talk about gender equity. Actually I've found, as an organisation sometimes people are so hung up on wanting to fix the problem of violence against women because they don't have to think about their own place in it all'.*

From focus group discussions and analysis of the data, it would seem that there is a need for continuing education about what constitutes gender equity and gender equality in some organisations. The need to ensure there are consistent understandings at all levels within an organisation, and indeed, across organisations in the regional preventing violence against women work that is undertaken is important. Some participants noted that there were still conservative attitudes about the importance of gender equity and gender equality held by some staff members in their organisations and in some organisations more generally. There seemed to be a link between organisations that had more recently begun involvement in preventing violence against women work and conservative attitudes of staff members in those organisations. Clearly, conservative attitudes and an unwillingness to become involved in an issue that has not been highlighted within an organisation's remit or geographical area, can provide a barrier for preventing violence against women workers in terms of the scope and type of work they can do.

Participants had found resources from WHIN and other organisations such as Our Watch to be very helpful in this aspect of preventing violence against women work. *Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* (Our Watch, ANROWS, & VicHealth, 2015) and the Our Watch video, *Let's Change the Story: Violence against women in Australia*, were noted as useful resources.

### Intersectionality, Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women Work

The preventing violence against women work of making connections between gender inequity and violence against women was found to be more complex when working with community members from different cultural backgrounds. As one focus group participant noted, *'we deal with different cultural*

*constructs in our societies because there are more than 60 different ... cultural groups and the way they view the gender and the way they view violence is different to how generally or principally or academically we see it, and it's really hard to work in those cultural constructs and make people to understand that, yeah, okay, what does that mean, and how, what is the violence, to what extent it is defined as violence, and to what extent it is acceptable and to what extent it is not'.*

Further complexity around talking with communities about the link between gender equity and violence against women was raised by a number of participants when they described the current approach within the Strategy as being 'a very white way' of looking at gender equity and gender equality. The notion of intersectionality is relevant to raise in these considerations. Intersectionality looks at the different levels and types of oppression faced by different people and the different identities with which people characterise and understand themselves. For example, intersections between factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, age or disability can compound the discrimination and oppression experienced by people, depending on the factors with which each individual identifies. Holding this understanding, and using an 'intersectional lens' assists workers to have a broader, more inclusive understanding of equality and oppression – and then how to work toward preventing violence against women where relationship and power dynamics might be very different from what is assumed to be the 'norm'.

Working with refugee communities around violence against women and gender equity/gender equality is complex for myriad reasons, including that of intersecting factors identified through an 'intersectional lens'. One participant explained the challenges: *'In the community that I'm from its, there's lots of men as well who do not have the same rights and the same power as what, we talk about gender equity but you talk about men from the backgrounds of the communities where there's war and they've had a migration experience which has been horrible, you can't say to them and to their wives or their partners that they've got more power than you have, because they don't. ... And so when we ... go into an Arabic speaking group and we go 'Oh yeah, women and men are not equal and men have more power'. They go 'My husband doesn't have work rights'. ... I think that for this Strategy we need to get better at understanding that approach and equipping ourselves to support the services and the organisations that we work with in terms of having those (gender equity/gender equality) conversations'.*

Similar issues were raised in relation to working with Indigenous communities. One participant pointed out that there are existing inequalities in Australia between a white woman and an indigenous woman before the notion of gender inequality is even introduced.

Participants also highlighted the additional and different challenges faced by lesbian women, women of diverse gender and sexual identities, and women with disabilities who experience violence against women. Some participants noted that violence in lesbian relationships had little or no coverage in the current Strategy or information about available resources to support preventing violence against women work in those relationships. They suggested that this was an area that needed developing in the new strategy.

### Work Occurring at Regional Partner Organisations

To encourage reflection and discussion about organisational responses in the preventing violence against women field, all participants were asked what they considered had been the most significant changes within their organisations and/or their service delivery over the last five years.

Responses from participants in the focus groups and the online survey confirmed there had been significant changes within organisations, in their service delivery and in the community generally in terms of awareness of violence against women. As one participant noted, preventing violence against

women work '*... is now seen more as part of the community's responsibility (rather) than just certain services, so it doesn't sit just with domestic violence services anymore*'. Participants believed that greater awareness of family violence and violence against women in the community and in organisations had led to some change, too, in what is identified as violence; for example, rather than defining situations as 'family issues' or 'relationship breakdown' or 'parenting issues', they are named explicitly as family violence or violence against women.

A suggestion was made that there had been a 'tipping point' in and across the region where the amount and scope of preventing violence against women work was evident and noticed. If one organisation was not participating in preventing violence against women work, it becomes obvious. As one preventing violence against women worker noted, '*There is definitely a FOMO - fear of missing out!*'.

The online survey responses focussed on the following key areas, listed below. These were particularly pertinent to indicating the achievement of medium-term outcomes for regional partner organisations. Again, these online responses were reflected in responses from the focus group and interview participants.

- Organisational commitment to preventing violence against women work. This included formal organisational change such as the creation of policy (for both staff and clients), allocation of resources to staff positions that focussed on prevention of violence against women work, and articulating preventing violence against women as an organisational priority. Participants believed these actions sent a message both internally, and more broadly to the community, regarding an organisation's stance on prevention of violence against women.
- The buy-in or commitment specifically of senior management was also seen as a significant and effective change. Less formal commitment included the development of internal working groups, increased awareness of the issue within the organisation, and interdepartmental collaboration around preventing violence against women.
- Education and training which involved encouraging and supporting staff to upskill in the area of preventing violence against women.
- The development of specific programs focussing on preventing violence against women including 'Good People Act Now' and the 'Respectful Relationships' programs.
- An increase in service demand.
- A change in focus to include more 'upstream' (preventative) work in preventing violence against women, with an awareness of the role of gender equity and addressing this rather than solely focussing on crisis management.

Participants were asked which organisations they thought had a role in planning and implementing preventing violence against women strategies and work in the region. Figure 7 shows the responses provided by online survey respondents; these were mirrored in the responses from participants in the focus groups and the interview.

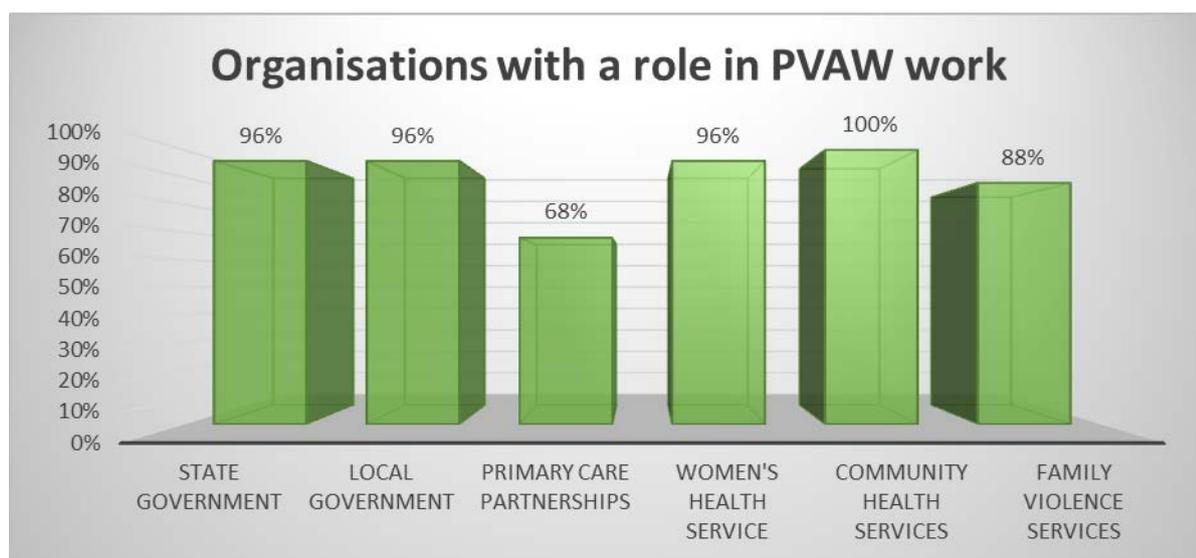


Figure 7: Organisations seen to have a role in prevention of violence against women work – online survey respondents

All participants thought that community health services were best placed to have a role in preventing violence against women work, closely followed by state and local government and women's health services. Interestingly, fewer participants thought that family violence services had a role; these responses probably reflected the non-specific family violence organisations in which the participants worked. These responses may also have reflected participants' beliefs that family violence services were responsible for providing crisis and response services rather than prevention work. There continues to be some tension and uncertainty amongst different organisations and service providers about what constitutes prevention work as opposed to crisis and response work; this is discussed further in relation to Evaluation Question 5.

Participants had additional suggestions for organisations that could take a role in preventing violence against women work:

- neighbourhood houses (suggested by 30% of online survey respondents)
- schools and early years services (suggested by 30% of online survey respondents)
- PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia)
- hospitals
- men's health organisations
- community organisations, such as Whittlesea Community Connections
- workplaces
- sports clubs
- local businesses
- transport companies.

In making these suggestions, participants spoke about the importance of local, accessible, visible community organisations and services being involved in preventing violence against women work. One participant explained the relevance of these organisations in this way: *'Networks, peak bodies, associations that can reach communities via other settings that everyday residents occupy or utilise, e.g. schools, sports, music, food, LLEN's [Local Learning and Employment Networks], TAFEs'*. Another participant noted that preventing violence against women work had become *'everyone's responsibility in government or service delivery'*.

## Evaluation Question 3: What Approaches or Activities have been Most Successful?

Most participants found that the Strategy had been very useful for a number of reasons, including for providing an introductory framework and starting points for preventing violence against women and gender equality work. The inclusion of strategic directions and goals and suggestions for how actions and activities could flow out of these directions and goals were valued. Commitment and involvement from organisational management was noted by many participants as one of the essential elements contributing to the success of the implementation of the Strategy. Clear communication across the region, collaboration and partnerships across organisations, and competent and informed leadership and coordination by WHIN were other elements that participants identified as particularly successful. These factors reflect those that are included in successful collective impact initiatives.

### The Provision of Strategic Directions, Goals, Evidence and Partnerships in the Strategy

Participants were asked about what they found to be most useful, helpful or influential about the Strategy. Their responses were grouped into the following themes:

- provision of strategic directions, particularly from a regional focus, and when working with partners  
provision of clear vision and goals for consideration in developing organisational strategy
- provision of strategies and actions to support the work of organisations
- provision of evidence and data, used both internally and externally, in advocating for additional resources. One participant explained the importance of this when she said: *'Facts and figures to back up messaging. A resource that is seen as more objective than individual worker views. Has been used as leverage for advocacy.'*
- use as a reference document – providing background and ongoing support
- partnerships – the Strategy provided direction and actions for different partners to work together.

Figure 8 shows what was most helpful about the Strategy and how it was used for the 22 online survey respondents to this question.

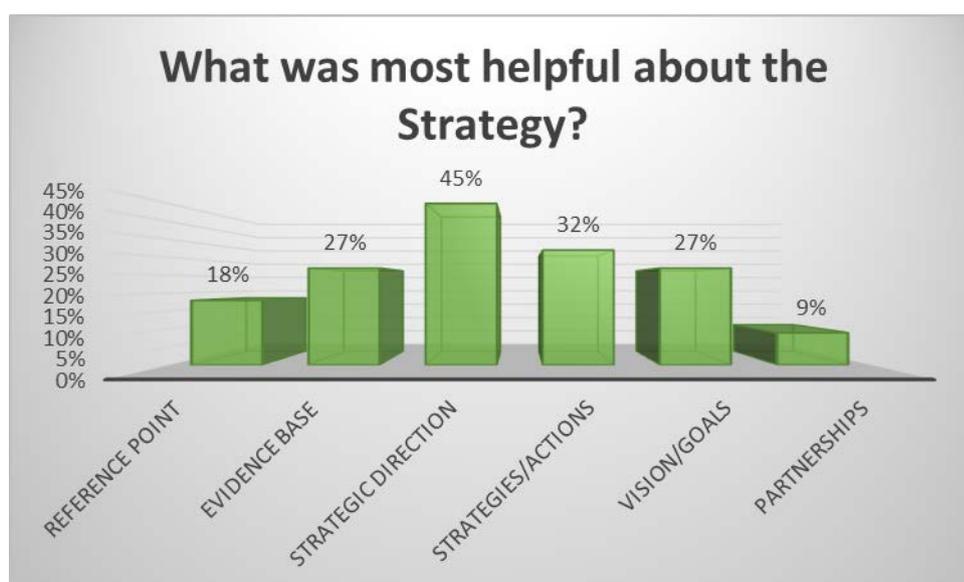


Figure 8: What has been most helpful about the regional Strategy? Online survey respondents

Nearly half (45%) of the online survey respondents found the Strategy a useful tool for providing strategic directions and one participant noted the importance of the regional approach: *'Having a regional framework to inform our local PVAW planning, thinking and actions.'*

Some focus group participants were more specific about what was helpful in relation to strategic directions and noted that commitment from management and leadership was essential. An example of this commitment, raised in several focus groups including the CEOs' focus group, was the ceremony for signing up to the strategy. Participants noted that this commitment enabled preventing violence against women work to be prioritised even if other sections of an organisation didn't see it as a priority or if regional statistics didn't indicate violence against women was a local problem. Staff members were able to use the organisation's status as a signatory to provide a context, a lever, a rationale, and an *'authorisation'* for preventing violence against women work, both within the organisation and with external organisations. Despite some cynicism about the effectiveness of such symbolic events, there was general agreement from participants that these events raised awareness of violence against women and, in the words of one participant, constituted *'one element of the strategic work to bring about change'*.

Seventy-nine per cent (79%) of online survey respondents had used the Action Plan, with 64% aligning key internal plans, such as Health Promotion Plans or Organisational preventing violence against women Action plans, to the Action Plan. In doing so, it was identified that the Action Plan provided a good evidence base to underpin other plans (9%), clarified the focus and strategic directions (32%), identified a range of actions that could be implemented by different organisations, and also helped to identify other partners working in the same area and opportunities for collaboration (9%). One participant noted that it was *'essential to identify the partnerships and leadership aspects. Very good to see the commitments to working with the NMIFVRAG [Northern Metropolitan Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group]. Assists us to see where & who else we can work with'*. Another participant commented that her organisation *'... ensured there was alignment of our own relevant health promotion plans, and we identified actions that we had opportunity or synergy to include in plans, or ones we would like to prioritise advocating for in future'*.

In contrast, three respondents noted that they felt the Strategy was not practical or applicable to their work except on a very broad level and that it seemed to have been established more for use by WHIN than by other organisations.

## The Regional Approach

Building on what was helpful in the Strategy, more specific findings about which aspects of the regional approach were found to be helpful is provided in Figure 9. Similar responses were provided by focus group and interview participants.



Figure 9: Aspects of the regional approach that have been most helpful – online survey respondents

The most helpful aspects of the regional approach were the support, leadership, resourcing and advocacy provided by WHIN and the ongoing existence of the NMR PVAW Committee (more information about the strengths of the NMR PVAW Committee can be found in answer to Evaluation Question 1). One participant commented that *‘the strategy is a piece of the value of WHIN overall. WHIN provides expertise in the space of PVAW and have an excellent approach to leading this work. ... The fact that WHIN leads this work holds Councils to account to be part of regional approaches. It’s powerful and it’s so important that it comes from a women’s feminist organisation’*. Another participant commended the *‘ongoing mentoring and guidance’* from WHIN, while a further participant believed the *‘engagement from WHIN with CEO, directors and the regional management groups’* was an activity that had worked well. In terms of the support from WHIN, one participant commented that *‘WHIN has been an absolute champion in this regard. They supported us to build capacity, understanding and remain on top of best practice information. They were an integral part of our work and this partnership was what made the project so successful’*.

The least helpful aspects of the regional approach were using the Strategy as an advocacy tool (discussed in relation to Evaluation Question 1) and presentations from WHIN, although these two aspects were still rated helpful by almost two-thirds of the online survey respondents. The conceptual framework was considered helpful by nearly three-quarters of online survey respondents and this may have reflected the importance of providing a beginning foundation and structure for preventing violence against women work in organisations.

### The Regional Role and Leadership of WHIN

One of the most frequently identified successful activities was the role and leadership of WHIN. Ninety-six per cent (96%) of online survey respondents believed that WHIN was the best placed organisation to be leading preventing violence against women work in the region. The following quotes provide some explanations for the success:

*‘WHIN has the expertise, and dedicated resources by staff and materials, to propel other organisations and groups to more eagerly, and then easily, make the steps of investing and prioritising this work. ... If WHIN is to lead the mantle of a regional approach, I think the strengths*

are their value base and commitment that all women can experience outcomes of equality, freedom and safety’.

‘WHIN is a health promotion agency. There are few purely health promotion focussed agencies. It is therefore perfectly suited to do this work in terms of its funding and mandate. WHIN receives public funds - and from DHHS, the key state gov’t dept [sic] for health and wellbeing - to improve women's health. The status of women in Victoria/ Victorian society, gender equity and the impact of gender based violence against women are the key challenges to improving the health status of women. Most other agencies have a strong service delivery component so don't have the resources or time to focus on this broader work’.

‘...WHIN are able to bring together multiple agencies and stakeholders without prejudice as they are not a funding body. They are well regarded and respected within the sector. They are able to bring together a regional approach that is not easy for differently placed / focussed organisations to achieve. It has been very helpful in our prevention work in the region to refer to the regional strategy as a guiding document. We have confidence about many of the organisations we partner with knowing that they are also members of the WHIN NMR PVAW Committee and/or signatories to the strategy...’.

Respondents acknowledged the capacity of WHIN to focus on true primary prevention, to maintain objectivity and to allow organisations the flexibility to adapt actions to fit their individual organisational context. Further strengths of WHIN that were mentioned included their knowledge and expertise in preventing violence against women and the respect and support from other organisations.

There were several qualifying remarks noting the importance of continuing to work in partnership with other organisations, the need to develop a strategy to include working with men, and the need to ensure that actions and strategies are practical and able to be implemented. Recommendations have been developed to cover these suggestions from participants (see Evaluation Question 5).

Table 2 shows the ratings given by online survey respondents in relation to the activities undertaken by WHIN in the prevention of violence against women work over the last four years.

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Very Good	Excellent
Leadership	0	0	0	58%	42%
Convening the NMR PVAW Committee	0	0	0	50%	50%
Resource development	0	0	4%	64%	32%
Training and presentations	0	0	8%	63%	29%
Expertise and knowledge translation **	0	0	4%	66%	37%
	0	0	0	65%	35%
Advocacy	0	0	12%	42%	46%
Communication with NMR PVAW Committee members	0	0	0	52%	48%

\*\* Included multiple responses. Second line of % responses is the response distribution when multiple responses removed.

Table 2: Ratings given by online survey respondents in relation to activities undertaken by WHIN in the prevention of violence against women work over the last four years

Particular strengths of WHIN were, again, seen to be around the NMR PVAW Committee in terms of convening the Committee and maintaining regular, informative communication with Committee members. This strength was also noted in responses to Evaluation Question 1.

Respondents were asked to nominate WHIN's best contribution to regional preventing violence against women work. Whilst a variety of qualitative answers were received from 22 online survey respondents, the roles of coordination, '*...bringing it all together...*' (59%) and facilitating partnership work across the region (41%) were seen as two key interwoven functions performed by WHIN. This included the leadership provided by WHIN in '*...a very challenging environment*'.

WHIN's expertise and sharing of contemporary knowledge and best practice relating to preventing violence against women activity were also nominated by 50% of online survey respondents as one of WHIN's best contributions. Other valued contributions included:

- the resources provided (27% of online respondents)
- WHIN's role in coordinating specific campaigns or regional activities (23%). One participant explained the importance of this: '*...Coordination of work such as response to RCFV or gender equity strategy because this is higher level important work that gets pulled together and very much appreciated by partners. Also coordination of projects such as the Clothesline project since this e.g. is very visible in the community.*' Another participant nominated '*The Building Respectful Community strategy, and advocating for all organisations to sign the pledge to be a part of the strategies*' as examples of solid coordination work.
- advocacy (18%)
- training/professional development (9%).

Ninety-six per cent (96%) of online survey respondents thought that the Regional NMR PVAW Committee was 'moderately, very or extremely' important to the development of preventing violence against women work in the region. The participants in all focus groups agreed that the NMR PVAW Committee meetings were vital.

Most participants were extremely positive about the committee meetings, although some people found them less relevant to their role or, at times, frustrating when there was a lot of information-sharing rather than planning and activity development. NMR PVAW Committee meetings provided opportunities for workers to develop their networks across the region. One worker explained the importance of getting to know other workers and what they were doing re preventing violence against women work through '*... taking up different initiatives or even just imbuing their work with PVAW perspectives, or attitudes, or initiatives*'.

Opportunities to work with other organisations, be involved in pilot projects with other organisations and informal capacity building occurred at NMR PVAW Committee meetings and further underscored the value of these meetings. Participants noted that events in the network helped influence the work undertaken in organisations.

Participants confirmed that networks and meetings also provided peer support in what could be a difficult job. This quote from one worker explains the benefits: '*Overall it is great to have a northern regional strategy and approach to guide the work as well as a supportive network of peers with which to sound out and share ideas.*' Some workers reported they had been bullied and criticised by others in their organisations because of their work. This was due to: the nature of the preventing violence against women work and the change efforts; assumptions about what impacts efforts to achieve gender equality would have (for example, break up families); misconceptions and lack of understanding about the dynamics and existence of family violence in their local community; and wanting to maintain the status quo. The provision of a regular debriefing, reflective, professional development opportunity and

the acknowledgement of the challenging, emotive nature of this work for preventing violence against women workers might be an area for WHIN to consider in future. However, while workers appreciated the opportunity to debrief and share their experiences, they did not want to attend additional meetings for this purpose.

## Evaluation Question 4: What were the Barriers and Challenges?

The barriers and challenges in relation to the content and implementation of the Strategy and/or the regional approach revolved around three main elements. Firstly, participants acknowledged the difficulties in successfully involving a range of different organisations in the regional approach when organisations were often at varying levels of commitment, involvement and readiness to participate. Secondly, most participants had found the Strategy useful during the last three years, but now expressed a need for a revised and updated Strategy. Thirdly, flexible, fluid yet consistent actions and activities within the Strategy that were relevant and responsive to individual organisations and their level of progress with preventing violence against women and gender equality work were required. This challenge was raised in Phase 1 of the evaluation too: how can a regional approach be flexible enough to meet the needs of different communities and different organisations whilst maintaining consistent overall direction, goals, change strategies and internal integrity?

This section of the report is fairly brief because many of the barriers and challenges highlighted by participants were linked with suggestions for changes that could be incorporated into the new strategy. These suggestions were provided as recommendations in relation to Evaluation Question 5 and are presented in the next section of this report.

Fourteen online survey respondents provided comments on aspects of the Strategy or regional approach which had not worked so well. Fifty per cent (50%) of these related to the challenges of working across a range of organisations and sectors, where organisations were at different stages of planning or implementation, and had varying capacity or resources to promote the work of the regional approach. It was acknowledged that this was a common challenge in all partnership work, and was not the 'fault' of any one organisation, but needed to be acknowledged and addressed to ensure a genuinely regional approach. One participant explained this clearly: *'I think it's challenging to coordinate a regional approach across agencies where everyone is starting from a very different place. It sometimes makes it challenging to then potentially collaborate across LGAs [local government areas], as timing, capacity and priorities don't always align (sometimes even within LGAs!)*'. Another participant highlighted a consequence of the challenges involved in implementing a regional approach: *'...It still feels like a lot of different activities and work is taking place but in isolated, small pocket scenarios. A joint, collaborative discussion and outcome would feel like it befits a 'regional' approach more powerfully.'*

Some participants wanted a more focused approach in NMR PVAW Committee meetings with an emphasis on ideas for implementing strategies and programs rather than attention on what was not working. One participant described a focused approach in this way: *'[At] network meetings, there is sometimes too much talking about research/risk/theory and not enough information on how to get a project started. Talking about what can we do rather than why we can't or shouldn't do something is helpful.'*

Two online survey respondents thought the focus on community health and local government in the Strategy was too narrow. They suggested the need for a regional approach to include a broader range of organisations and services. This suggestion is consistent with the comments and suggestions made in relation to the organisations that participants thought had a role in planning and implementing preventing violence against women strategies and work in the region – see Figure 7 (page 24).

A small number of respondents expressed concern with a lack of/limited high level advocacy at a CEO/senior management level. This concern is likely to have reflected the progress their individual organisations had made in the preventing violence against women and gender equality space rather than referring to the overall regional approach. Nevertheless, commitment and involvement from

organisational management was noted by many participants as one of the essential elements in the success of the Strategy (see Figure 8 on page 25) and stands as a recommendation for the new strategy (See Recommendation 5 in the next section of this report).

A common barrier in undertaking preventing violence against women work and implementing activities from the Strategy was lack of resources. This referred, most often, to factors such as funding and worker availability, including the minimal time fractions sometimes allocated to preventing violence against women work and other role responsibilities of preventing violence against women workers.

Other responses to the question of barriers and challenges made reference to the shifting social and political environments in which violence against women and preventing violence against women work was now occurring. The increase in public attention given to violence against women and the growing acknowledgement of the significance of it as a community problem was seen by participants as a major positive change. However, as with any social and political change, there comes some uncertainty as organisations and communities grapple with the introduction of new policy, procedures, practice and legislation. Some participants suggested that a more fluid and responsive plan/strategy would be able to retain its relevance over time and in changing environments.

Evaluation Question 5 and the next section of this report considers the suggestions from participants about what needs to be included in the next iteration of the regional strategy to prevent violence against women.

## Evaluation Question 5: What are the Key Recommendations for Future Work?

### A Contextual Background

The recommendations from participants are presented in the context of a changing environment where family violence and violence against women are increasingly recognised as significant and prevalent problems in the community. A number of recent initiatives will influence the preventing violence against women space in the coming years. For example, the Victorian Government has actively responded to the outcomes of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV) and has undertaken to implement all recommendations.

In late 2016, the Victorian Government released *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* and *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*, the government's ten-year family violence reform plan. Scheduled for release in early 2017 are the government's ten-year Family Violence Workforce Development Plan and the Victorian Primary Prevention Strategy. The following quote from one participant highlights the importance of the new strategy, the regional approach and preventing violence against women work aligning with these new initiatives and directions, along with the continuing coordination role of WHIN: *'WHIN continues to lead coordination. Direct engagement with RCFV recommendations and the soon to be released GE Strategy and FV Action Plan. Focus on enabling and supporting partnership development between services to co-design and deliver projects. Continuing to coordinate and disseminate key information, evidence and learning coming out of the RCFV/Dept [sic] of Premier and Cabinet/Our Watch etc.'*

When asked about their thoughts for the new strategy, there was a sense of readiness from the participants for a new iteration of the strategy, for building on work already undertaken and for re-engaging with stakeholders. Participants working in local government believed this to be an opportune time to introduce a new strategy to all councils, especially those where new councillors had been recently appointed.

Participants were looking forward to the new strategy for many reasons, one of which was their opportunity to have input into its development and have shared ownership of it. While very positive about the first Strategy and the options for its use, it was viewed as an introductory framework. Participants were hopeful that the new strategy would include more plans for action with concrete ideas about what the actions might look like and how they could be implemented. One manager summed this up: *'... if the next one was genuinely more in the spirit of collective impact, rather than coordinated impact ... that would be a significant improvement'*.

### Key Recommendations for the New Regional Strategy and Future Work

As with the other evaluation questions, the responses from the online survey respondents were consistent with the responses from the interview and focus group participants.

Twenty participants responded in the online survey to the question of what needed to be included in the new strategy, including what should be consolidated and/or what new actions or activities should be initiated. The main themes related to maintaining and improving collaborative partnerships that built on current work, while linking to new or broader initiatives in the area of violence against women.

Thirty-five per cent (35%) of online survey respondents highlighted the importance of collaboration which involved sharing best practice and encouraging consistent practice to reinforce prevention initiatives. Similarly, 35% were in favour of expanding partnerships to support a broader range of

organisations (Recommendations 11 and 24) and facilitate the linking of practice to evidence (Recommendation 15).

Twenty-five per cent (25%) of respondents highlighted the importance of further exploring the evidence base as well as the different contexts for working on prevention of violence against women. One worker noted that *'There are definitely gaps in the current strategy but I feel that is not something that WHIN [doesn't] agree with. These gaps are due to changing policy contexts, developing a deeper understanding of issues (such as the role of alcohol and gaming). I would like to see a greater focus on the experiences of women and girls in growth area communities and how this impacts and exacerbates the experiences of violence and gender inequities'*. This suggestion supports recommendations 16 (regarding intersectionality) and 17 (regarding violence against women in immigrant and refugee communities) that were discussed earlier in this report.

Twenty per cent (20%) of online survey respondents highlighted the importance of linking a new strategy to other initiatives or policy directions, and to review it regularly to make sure it stayed relevant and was also relevant to all stakeholders.

The following recommendations for future preventing violence against women work and the new strategy have been drawn from the discussions of themes in the foregoing chapters and the ongoing analysis of the data that was collected. Other recommendations came more directly from the participants' responses to Evaluation Question 5.

### WHIN's Leadership Role

**Recommendation 1:** WHIN continues to take the leading role in preventing violence against women work in the northern metropolitan region. This role includes coordination, leadership, advocacy, training, convening the NMR PVAW Committee, resource development, communication with NMR PVAW Committee members and across organisations and communities in the region, and expertise and knowledge translation including development of the new strategy.

### The NMR PVAW Committee

**Recommendation 2:** WHIN continues to convene and resource NMR PVAW Committee meetings as a core component of the new strategy and the regional approach.

Recommendations 1 and 2 were developed from the findings for Evaluation Question 1 where the importance of a regional approach was highlighted by participants and where the NMR PVAW Committee's strong and valued contributions to preventing violence against women work in the last four years were of note.

**Recommendation 3:** WHIN considers offering debriefing and reflective opportunities for workers engaged in preventing violence against women work. These would not be additional activities but could be integrated into existing professional development and reflective training sessions to acknowledge the challenging and emotive nature of this work.

This recommendation was developed from participant discussions that highlighted the, often, difficult nature of preventing violence against women work, particularly in organisations where conservative attitudes toward gender equality dominated the workplace and the work agenda.

## Links between Violence against Women and Gender Inequality

**Recommendation 4:** WHIN continues to provide professional development opportunities and resources for individuals, organisations and community members to learn about what constitutes gender equity and gender equality and their relationship as key determinants of violence against women and of preventing violence against women work.

This recommendation was developed from responses to Evaluation Question 2, particularly in relation to gender equity as a key determinant of violence against women, and from responses to Evaluation Question 5 that emphasised the importance of continuing to build the link between gender equity and preventing violence against women.

### Preventing Violence against Women Work at Senior and Management Levels

Commitment from senior staff and management towards preventing violence against women work and development is essential (see Evaluation Question 3 and Figure 8).

Participants expressed support for the advocacy, communication and advisory work that had been undertaken by WHIN's CEO with CEOs and senior management in other organisations. This particular form of preventing violence against women work and discussion of how organisational change might occur was done at a strategic level. One of the consequences of this work identified by participants was the increase of 'buy-in' to the Strategy at this level. There was strong positive feedback about how this had been achieved in the first Strategy and many favourable comments about WHIN's CEO's willingness to work with other CEOs and management. One participant reinforced the importance of this role for WHIN with the Strategy: *'... Coming in and having conversations with the top level does make a difference ... leveraging that advantage that they've got and using that to help agencies across the region.'*

**Recommendation 5:** WHIN continues to undertake preventing violence against women work at the strategic senior staff and management levels in other organisations. The existing method where WHIN's CEO engages in this role should continue.

Some participants in the managers and CEOs focus groups wondered if leadership could be engaged more effectively through a partnership agreement with executives. No final conclusion was reached.

**Recommendation 6:** WHIN explores the prospect with managers and CEOs of establishing partnership agreements with executives as a way of engaging leadership and their involvement in preventing violence against women work.

### Tailored Approach for the New Strategy

Participant accounts indicated that different organisations were at varying points in their preventing violence against women work, awareness and commitment. Some were still working at what participants described as a superficial level, whereas others had embedded the concept of gender equality into their work, their plans and policies as a matter of course. The type and scope of preventing violence against women work was also dependent on leadership, personalities, hours allocated to preventing violence against women work and what else preventing violence against women workers did in their roles. This could be difficult for workers who work across the region, across different LGAs, and across organisations. As one participant said *'it's kind of where ... the Strategy falls down ... it's a guiding document and you've got to do the best you can for everybody across the region, but there is such variation in where people are in their journey, the leadership buy-in, the capacity in terms of the number of hours people have'*.

As noted in the responses to Evaluation Question 4 about barriers and challenges, a major query related to how the new strategy could maintain its consistency across the region, but build in enough flexibility so that it was relevant to all organisations and all parts of the region. Participants across four focus groups discussed how the new strategy might be contextualised in order to meet the different needs. Participants suggested a ‘tailored approach’ be incorporated into the new strategy as a way of enabling more detailed action plans to be developed for each organisation and, in turn, that this level of detail would take organisations into more nuanced and sophisticated preventing violence against women and gender equality work. Organisational action plans would still be consistent with, and reflect the goals and objectives, of an overall regional action plan in the new strategy.

Participants suggested that a tailored approach might include WHIN consulting with each individual partner organisation in the region about how best to meet the needs of that organisation, group or community and providing a range of resources and ideas for the subsequent preventing violence against women work. There was readiness to look more closely at how, not only gender equality work, but also preventing violence against women work, could be embedded into all areas of work undertaken in organisations.

Within the tailored approach, participants noted there also needed to be a considered strategic plan of action and way of working to ensure that preventing violence against women work responds to the unique needs of each organisation, group or community. One worker observed that there is a tendency for some organisations to do the same preventing violence against women work even if it is not the priority for an organisation: *‘As soon as that new resource comes out (from WHIN) that’s what everybody’s doing and it’s like “But, hang on, is that a strategic approach? Are you meeting people where they’re at? Is that really the best thing for them to be doing?” Sometimes, no.’* There was an acceptance that organisations could focus on different activities, but that overall, there needed to be a collective and consistent impact and message in and for the region. Participants were also clear that ensuring the long-term, foundational ‘ground work’ was done was crucial and that organisations do not embark on activities, programs or change for which they are not ready.

A tailored approach would enable organisations to think clearly about how WHIN might best support them. As one participant explained, for one organisation, this might be the WHIN CEO meeting with management to look at organisational change strategies, *‘But for somebody else it might be program implementation support or planning support’* and the WHIN CEO is not necessary for that work/assistance.

**Recommendation 7:** The new strategy incorporates a tailored approach as a way of enabling more detailed and contextualised plans and actions to be developed with each organisation reflecting their unique organisational and community needs and the preventing violence against women work achieved to date.

### A Fluid, Flexible yet Consistent Strategy

Linked closely to the recommendation that a more tailored approach for preventing violence against women work be included in the new strategy, was the suggestion that a consistent yet fluid approach was also needed. Again, this suggestion seemed to reflect the participants’ observations in both this phase and Phase 1 of the evaluation about a regional approach being flexible enough to meet the needs of different communities and different organisations while at the same time maintaining its consistency in terms of overall direction, goals, change strategies and internal integrity. Participants suggested that a fluid approach was needed because of the amount of change and development in the preventing violence against women field; for example, the implementation of the recommendations from the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence and the new policies and strategies emanating from

the Victorian Government in late 2016/early 2017. Participants wanted the new strategy to be able to incorporate and reflect changes as they occur. One worker noted, *'That's the challenge of a Strategy though, making it broad enough so that it can be tweaked from year to year, but specific enough that it's meaningful'*. One suggestion was that preventing violence against women action plans could be reviewed annually and adjusted and updated as needed each year, in a similar way to Health Promotion Plans.

**Recommendation 8:** The new strategy is fluid and flexible enough to incorporate and reflect developments and changes in policies, information, knowledge, research/evidence and recommendations in the preventing violence against women field.

**Recommendation 9:** The new strategy allows for preventing violence against women action plans to be reviewed annually and adjusted and updated as needed.

### A Need for Tangible Actions, Activities and Outcomes

For most workers and organisations, there was a sense that the initial awareness-raising work regarding violence against women and preventing violence against women had been achieved and that the new strategy would need to focus on tangible and concrete actions that could build on the awareness and knowledge. One suggestion from participants about how to do this was to be explicit about how theory can inform practice and what subsequent practice actions might include. One participant gave an example: *'A link between the theory of Change the Story and the practice on the ground – (for example) a plan for working better with men in the best interest of women'*.

External partnerships and joint working opportunities were seen in a positive light by participants. Pilot projects were mentioned as other examples of tangible actions. These were seen as positive capacity-building opportunities for working in collaborative partnerships with other organisations and across communities. They also appealed because they were planned, structured, manageable and time-limited. Having a finite amount of time to develop and implement a project was often valued because its completion could be seen as an achievement, a completed task in the overall preventing violence against women work and goals. Preventing violence against women workers, in comparison with management and those less involved in direct preventing violence against women work, probably had a more pragmatic approach to the notion of milestones, achievements and completed projects, noting that preventing violence against women work, by its nature, is long-term.

Working groups that had a specific focus for preventing violence against women action, or that covered particular areas of interest, were also noted as examples of tangible activities that could be developed and included in the new strategy. Suggestions were made that calls for Expressions of Interest for potential projects were often welcomed and seen to provide impetus for organisations to 'step up' and get involved. One worker described the benefits of tangible actions this way: *'If it's a package and it says, 'You're going to do this. It's going to be 12 months or it's going to be 18 months, and the key deliverables in that time are going to be A, B, C...', it's just more defined'*. Another worker said *'So you've still got the broader strategy but within that you've just kind of got a couple of areas of particular interest that different partners can get in, so it's like you've got a sub but it's around a project area of interest, rather than the sort of topic as a whole, which is what the strategy drives'*.

**Recommendation 10:** The new strategy includes a focus on tangible actions and activities that have concrete and identifiable outcomes, achievements and change.

**Recommendation 11:** WHIN and the NMR PVAW Committee maintain and strengthen collaborative partnership projects that build on current work while linking to new or broader initiatives in the area of preventing violence against women.

### Demonstrating Commitment and Accountability

Demonstrating commitment and accountability to an action or project by signing up to it was considered helpful by participants. Similarly, the action of reporting back on project progress and completion to a committee, a meeting or Council was encouraged. Participants thought this would build in a sense of accountability to the project and to partners and keep the motivation and focus going for any given project or action.

Some managers and CEOs suggested there would be benefit in establishing a clearer governance structure around the new strategy in order to build in more options/expectations for reporting progress and checking in. Questions could include ‘Where are we all at? What have we agreed to do? What issues are we addressing? How are we moving forward?’ and should be asked throughout the four years of the strategy, rather than waiting until the end of the 4 years. Having a sense of a regional impact regarding preventing violence against women was important to workers too: *‘So that we can evaluate and benchmark what the collective impact is of the regional approach’*.

**Recommendation 12:** The new strategy builds in activities and opportunities for annual reporting of progress on preventing violence against women projects, actions and activities by individual organisations and communities and throughout the region as a whole.

In summary, tangible actions, impact and process indicators, finite projects, reporting back on milestones and completions would all contribute to measurements of successes, achievements, outcomes and change.

### Opportunities to Identify, Share and Measure Successes, Achievements, Outcomes and Changes

A question that arose in the management/CEO focus group was: What does success look like in a prevention space? This is an important question because identifying and measuring change such as attitudinal and behavioural change is roundly recognised as challenging. Attitude change does not necessarily transfer to changes in one’s behaviour and short-term change does not necessarily equate to long-term sustainable changes. What might be considered success varies from one organisation and community to another and can be influenced by many factors, including the level of motivation and commitment to preventing violence against women work.

**Recommendation 13:** WHIN and the NMR PVAW Committee explore methods (both quantitative and qualitative) for defining and evaluating ‘success’ in the preventing violence against women space. Suggested evaluation and measurement activities relevant to individual organisations and communities, as well as on an overall regional basis, could be incorporated into the new strategy.

Nevertheless, opportunities to identify and measure successes, and thereby, having a sense of achievement, was an important component of a new strategy for some participants. There was some sense, particularly from management participants, of organisations wanting to know they are an active and involved member of preventing violence against women work in the region, and that they are part of the change movement. Knowing where their organisation/group/community sat in relation to other organisations/groups/communities across the region was also seen as important, not from a competitive viewpoint necessarily, but from a sense of being part of, and contributing to, an overall movement in preventing violence against women.

Suggestions from participants about how information sharing around measurement might occur included holding quarterly meetings as part of a communication strategy; for example, all community health CEOs together. One CEO described it this way: *'It doesn't have to be big or just sort of regular high-level fact checks. You know, in the last 3 months X this and Y this, to really demonstrate the benefit or the efficacy of what is happening across the catchment.'* Management personnel did not think that information from meetings/networks necessarily found its way up to them from their workers. This was not an indictment of the workers, but more a recognition of the crowded preventing violence against women space and commitments, as well as a lack of structure for communication and information sharing.

An alternative to meetings as a communication strategy was some form of online information or data portal. Organisations would post their actions on a regular basis so a picture would emerge over time of the types and numbers of preventing violence against women activities being undertaken/delivered. No suggestions were made about how a portal might be developed or maintained, but there was a desire for greater communication about achievements and progress. Such a system would also indicate gaps and where a particular focus (for example, gender equity) needed to be more fully actioned or developed. One manager, in summing up some focus group discussion, wondered whether (high level) key indicators of progress in preventing violence against women work could be introduced in order to provide *'a picture of how we are progressing with our preventative efforts in the north'*.

Other suggestions from managers included an annual or 18 month showcase event in which achievements, successes and changes could be shared and celebrated. One participant described how this might look: *'[A] mid-term review or an annual review that says where we're at and what's changed in the environment and what do we need to do differently. What have been our successes and failures?'*

**Recommendation 14:** WHIN and the NMR PVAW Committee consider options for identifying trends, achievements and gaps in preventing violence against women work across the northern metropolitan region. Options to consider might include a data portal; a revised communication strategy that included quarterly meetings specifically for the purpose of sharing and recording achievements, changes and areas requiring further action; gender audits; and annual showcase events.

These events could also contribute to the local and regional knowledge bases about what is happening, and what works, regarding preventing violence against women work. There was some thought from participants that these events and opportunities could assist in translating best practice into action. This suggestion links in with Recommendation 8 about the fluidity and flexibility of the strategy that could incorporate changes and developments in initiatives and information, evidence or research about preventing violence against women. It also connects to Recommendation 15 about linking practice with evidence and identifying emerging practice knowledge.

**Recommendation 15:** WHIN builds on its existing role in expertise and knowledge translation to include opportunities for identifying and learning about emerging research and practice knowledge, and how practice, theory and new initiatives regarding gender equality and primary prevention intersect and influence each other.

### Intersectionality, Inequalities, Diversity and Power Differentials

Some recommendations in this category are broad. They relate to thinking about how gender inequality, gender equality, violence against women and family violence can be talked about, and preventing violence against women work undertaken, in diverse communities including Indigenous communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. As one worker commented, the current strategy was *'a very white way we're looking at (gender equality)'*. There was some appetite for more challenging

work in order to meet the needs of a broader range of people. However, this appetite was more likely to exist in organisations, and parts of the region, that were well progressed in their preventing violence against women work and development, commitment and organisational support. Those organisations in the early stages of preventing violence against women work were likely to experience these suggestions for challenging work as beyond their capacity. These different thoughts from different participants about what might be possible reflected the need for a tailored approach within the new strategy (Recommendation 7).

Some participants suggested the new strategy could give more attention to women of diverse gender and sexual identities and violence against women in relationships that are not heterosexual. As one worker put it, there was a need for greater *'sophistication in understanding [of] ... the different gender inequities different [people] experience'*. Another participant commented that *'looking at all of these different experiences, whether you call it privilege or different experiences of oppression, it will make it a much better and richer plan'*.

**Recommendation 16:** The new strategy includes and integrates the concept of 'intersectionality' with those of 'diversity' and 'inclusion'. These concepts together will strengthen the existing foundation of the strategy and the actions within the strategy.

**Recommendation 17:** The new strategy continues to build on and extend the knowledge about violence against women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. This will contribute to the range of information, resources, training and other actions that can assist preventing violence against women work in various settings and organisations. Continued and increased engagement by WHIN with CALD communities is important.

**Recommendation 18:** The new strategy continues to build on and extend the knowledge about violence against women in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in order to develop additional and targeted prevention activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, communities and organisational partners.

**Recommendation 19:** The new strategy gives more attention to the nature and dynamics of violence in lesbian relationships. Further information and resources be developed to support this preventing violence against women work.

**Recommendation 20:** The new strategy gives more attention to the nature and dynamics of intimate partner violence against women of diverse gender and sexual identities. Further information and resources be developed to support this preventing violence against women work.

**Recommendation 21:** The new strategy continues to build on and extend the knowledge about violence against women with disabilities. Further information and resources be developed to support this preventing violence against women work.

**Recommendation 22:** WHIN and the NMR PVAW Committ develop or advocate for more resources in community languages.

### The Response-Prevention Continuum

In the preventing violence against women field, there is typically discussion and sometimes confusion about how this continuum needs to be represented and where, if at all, response and early intervention activities fit into prevention work. This issue was raised in the focus groups and in Phase 1 of the evaluation. Some workers believed there was too much separation between response and prevention

and that the separation is arbitrary because discussion is one thing, but action can be another; for example, it is possible that response can help prevention work. Other participants thought that in some meetings, discussion and consideration of prevention work tended to be hijacked by repeated emphasis on response. They wanted to see a clear demarcation between response and prevention.

Perhaps the best approach is to accept that response and prevention can work side-by-side and that, therefore, workers and organisations can also work in a shared way, although not necessarily jointly. The links between response and prevention need to be emphasised and clarified. As one participant noted: *'Essentially we're looking for a collective impact around the spectrum but it's just about being really clear and people understanding what the different roles are across that spectrum and what role this strategy plays.'* There may also be lack of clarity about the skill bases and knowledge required for response and for prevention and which professionals and organisations in the preventing violence against women field possess them. These issues tie in with previous points in this report about developing practice skills and knowledge in relation to new initiatives and emerging research/evidence about preventing violence against women work.

**Recommendation 23:** The new strategy includes a recognition and explanation of the links between response and prevention work and how these links and commonalities can inform preventing violence against women work and activities.

### Additional Settings and Organisations

In relation to Evaluation Question 4 on barriers and challenges with the Strategy and the regional approach, some participants were concerned about the focus on community health and local government. Some support existed for developing partnerships with other organisations and exploring how and where they connect with preventing violence against women work undertaken by NMR PVAW Committee members. Neighbourhood houses were given as an example of where extended reach could be directed, given that neighbourhood houses have identified family violence and violence against women as an issue for them. Working more closely with children in the early years and the organisations that provide services for young children and their parents were other suggested areas for focus.

**Recommendation 24:** The new strategy engages additional settings, sectors and organisations with the Strategy. This needs to include suggestions for how a wider range of local community organisations and services can be introduced to, and supported in, regional preventing violence against women work.

### Role of Men in Preventing Violence against Women Work

There was general agreement from participants for the inclusion of men as allies in preventing violence against women work, but what that looked like was not clear. However, participants generally agreed that preventing violence against women work needed to go beyond White Ribbon. White Ribbon was given as an example of where an organisation runs a preventing violence against women event but most of the work will be done by women. The point was also made that this depends on how progressed organisations are in preventing violence against women work and understanding. As one worker said, *'it's just that's where we're at as an organisation, where it's still women's work to get this done, whereas there are other organisations where ... there's a better understanding of the role of men within it (GE and PVAW). ... Or even just maybe CEOs being more across it, of their own volition'.*

**Recommendation 25:** The new strategy includes a range of ideas and activities that considers the role of men in preventing violence against women work.

## Summary of Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1**

WHIN continues to take the leading role in preventing violence against women work in the northern metropolitan region. This role includes coordination, leadership, advocacy, training, convening the NMR PVAW Committee, resource development, communication with NMR PVAW Committee members and across organisations and communities in the region, and expertise and knowledge translation including development of the new strategy.

### **Recommendation 2**

WHIN continues to convene and resource NMR PVAW Committee meetings as a core and valued component of the Strategy and the regional approach.

### **Recommendation 3**

WHIN considers offering debriefing and reflective opportunities for workers engaged in preventing violence against women work. These would not be additional activities but could be integrated into existing professional development and reflective training sessions to acknowledge the challenging and emotive nature of this work.

### **Recommendation 4**

WHIN continues to provide professional development opportunities and resources for individuals, organisations and community members to learn about what constitutes gender equity and gender equality and their relationship as key determinants of violence against women and of preventing violence against women work.

### **Recommendation 5**

WHIN continues to undertake preventing violence against women work at the strategic senior staff and management levels in other organisations. The existing methods where WHIN's CEO engages in this role should continue.

### **Recommendation 6**

WHIN raises the prospect with managers and CEOs of establishing partnership agreements with executives as a way of engaging leadership and their involvement in preventing violence against women work.

### **Recommendation 7**

The new strategy incorporates a tailored approach as a way of enabling more detailed and contextualised plans and actions to be developed with each organisation reflecting their unique organisational and community preventing violence against women needs and level of development.

### **Recommendation 8**

The new strategy is fluid and flexible enough to incorporate and reflect developments and changes in policies, information, knowledge, research/evidence and recommendations in the preventing violence against women field.

### **Recommendation 9**

The new strategy allows for preventing violence against women action plans to be reviewed annually and adjusted and updated as needed.

**Recommendation 10**

The new strategy includes a focus on tangible actions and activities that have concrete and identifiable outcomes, achievements and change.

**Recommendation 11**

WHIN and the NMR PVAW Committee maintain and strengthen collaborative partnerships that build on current work while linking to new or broader initiatives in the area of preventing violence against women.

**Recommendation 12**

The new strategy builds in activities and opportunities for annual reporting of progress on preventing violence against women projects, actions and activities by individual organisations and communities and throughout the region as a whole.

**Recommendation 13**

WHIN and the NMR PVAW Committee explore methods (both quantitative and qualitative) for defining and evaluating 'success' in the preventing violence against women space. Suggested evaluation and measurement activities relevant to individual organisations and communities, as well as on an overall regional basis, could be incorporated into the new strategy.

**Recommendation 14**

WHIN and the NMR PVAW Committee consider options for identifying trends, achievements and gaps in preventing violence against women work across the northern metropolitan region. Options to consider might include: a data portal; a revised communication strategy that included quarterly meetings specifically for the purpose of sharing and recording achievements, changes and areas requiring further actions in regional level preventing violence against women work; and annual showcase events.

**Recommendation 15**

WHIN builds on its existing role in expertise and knowledge translation to include opportunities for identifying and learning about emerging research and practice knowledge, and how practice, theory and new initiatives regarding gender equality and primary prevention intersect and influence each other.

**Recommendation 16**

The new strategy includes and integrates the concept of 'intersectionality' with those of 'diversity' and 'inclusion'. These concepts together will strengthen the existing foundation of the strategy and the actions within the strategy.

**Recommendation 17**

The new strategy continues to build on and extend the knowledge about violence against women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. This will contribute to the range of information, resources, training and other actions that can assist preventing violence against women work in various settings and organisations. Continued and increased engagement by WHIN with CALD communities is important.

**Recommendation 18**

The new strategy continues to build on and extend the knowledge about violence against women in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in order to develop additional and targeted prevention activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, communities and organisational partners.

**Recommendation 19**

The new strategy gives more attention to the nature and dynamics of violence in lesbian relationships. Further information and resources be developed to support this preventing violence against women work.

**Recommendation 20**

The new strategy gives more attention to the nature and dynamics of violence against women of diverse gender and sexual identities. Further information and resources be developed to support this preventing violence against women work.

**Recommendation 21**

The new strategy continues to build on and extend the knowledge about violence against women with disabilities. Further information and resources be developed to support this preventing violence against women work.

**Recommendation 22**

WHIN and the NMR PVAW Committee develop or advocate for more resources in community languages.

**Recommendation 23**

The new strategy includes a recognition and explanation of the links between response and prevention work and how these links and commonalities can inform preventing violence against women work and activities.

**Recommendation 24**

The new strategy engages additional settings, sectors and organisations. This needs to include suggestions for how a wider range of local community organisations and services can be introduced to, and supported in, regional preventing violence against women work.

**Recommendation 25**

The new strategy includes a range of ideas and activities that considers the role of men in preventing violence against women work.

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[http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007\\_eng.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007_eng.pdf)

## Appendix 1: Online Survey Questions

1. Are you: Female; Male; Prefer not to specify
2. What type of organisation do you work in? Local Government; Community Health or Primary Care Partnership; Community service organisation; Other.
3. On the following scale, where would you rate your knowledge of violence against women? Scale: 1 'Non-existent' to 5 'Thoroughly informed'.
4. What do you think is the main cause of violence against women?
5. The term 'gender equity' is often used when talking about preventing violence against women work. What does the term 'gender equity' mean to you?
6. To what extent do you use and/or consult 'Building a Respectful Community – Preventing Violence against Women – A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011–2016' in your work? We haven't used it yet; Occasionally; Quite often; It frequently informs and guides our work.
7. How have you or your organisation used the Strategy? Choose all that apply: Have not used it; Referred to the background section to increase own understanding; Used Strategy to inform other major organisational policies/strategies; Used the action plan to develop organisational action plan; Used Strategy as internal advocacy tool; Used Strategy with community working group or network, Other.
8. With regard to preventing violence against women, what do you consider have been the most significant changes within your organisation and/or its service delivery over the last five years?
9. How important do you think it is to have a regional approach to preventing violence against women? Scale: Not important; Somewhat important; Important; Very important.
10. How helpful do you think the regional approach has been to your work? Scale: 1 'Not at all helpful' to 5 'Extremely helpful'.
11. What aspects of the regional approach have been most helpful in your work? Choose all that apply: Implementation Advisory Group; Support from WHIN; Action plan in the Strategy; Conceptual framework in the Strategy; Professional development events; Using the Strategy as advocacy tool; Presentations from WHIN; Other.
12. What aspects of the Strategy or regional approach have not worked so well?
13. Across the northern metropolitan region, which organisations do you think have a role in planning and implementing preventing violence against women strategies and preventing violence against women work? Choose all that apply: State Government; Local Government; Primary Care Partnerships; Women's Health Service; Community Health Services; Family Violence Services; Other.
14. Is WHIN the best-placed organisation to be leading preventing violence against women work in the northern metropolitan region? Yes/No. Please expand on your answer.
15. How would you rate WHIN's activities in relation to preventing violence against women work over the last four years? Scale: 'Very poor'; 'Poor'; 'Average'; 'Very good'; 'Excellent'.
  - Leadership
  - Convening the NMR PVAW Committee
  - Resource development
  - Training and presentations
  - Expertise and knowledge translation
  - Advocacy
  - Communication with NMR PVAW Committee members.

16. What do you think is WHIN's best contribution to regional preventing violence against women work?
17. Please rate how important you consider the NMR PVAW Committee is to the development of preventing violence against women work in the region? Scale: 'Highly important'; 'Reasonably important'; 'Of average importance'; 'A little bit important'; 'Not at all important'.
18. What are your key recommendations for preventing violence against women work in the new regional strategy to prevent violence against women 2017-2021? (For example, what should be consolidated and/or what new actions or activities should be initiated?)
19. Do you have any other comments?

## Appendix 2: Focus Group and Interview Questions

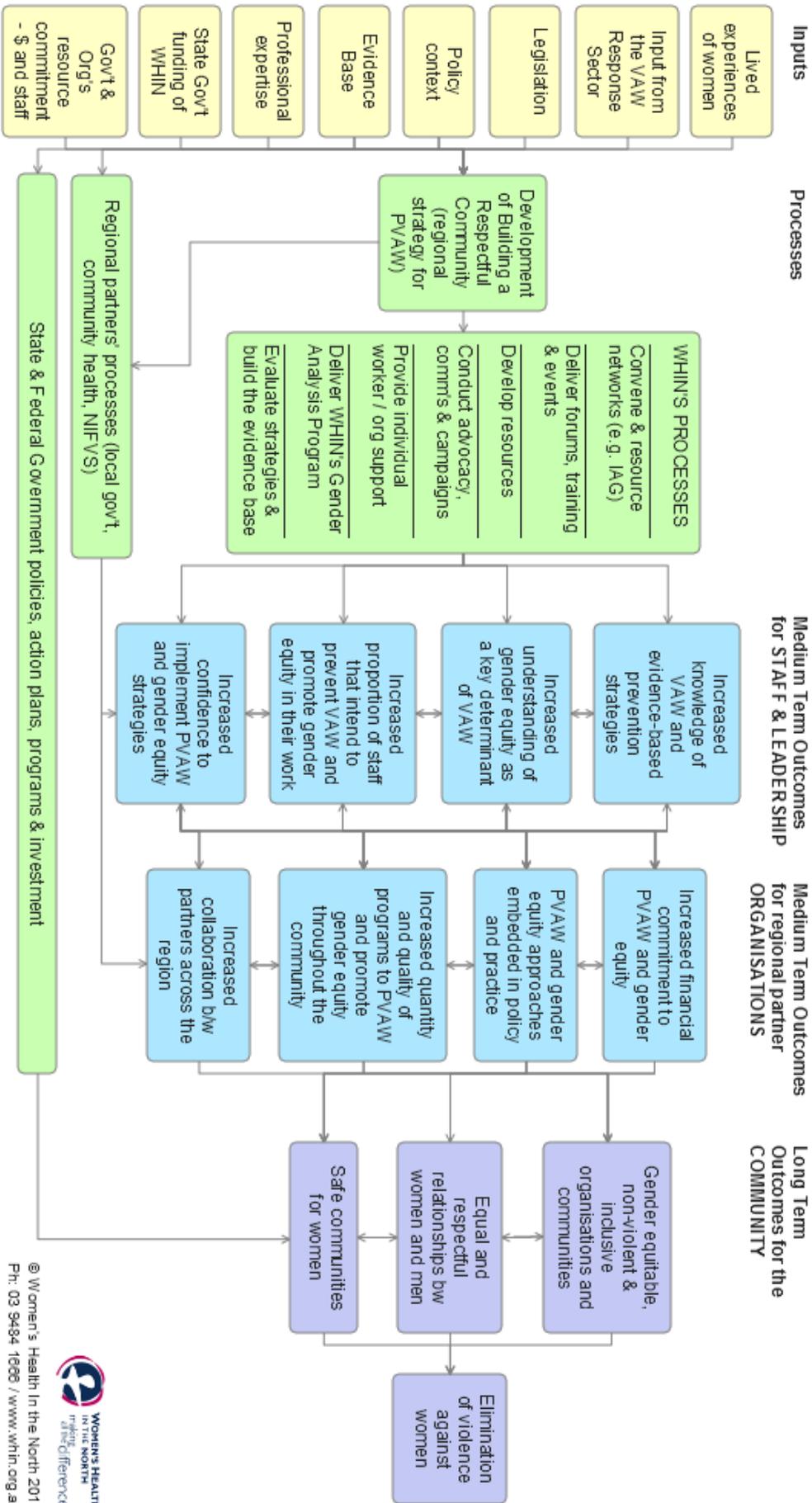
### CEO Focus Group Questions

1. In what ways do you think *Building a Respectful Community* (the 'regional strategy') has influenced the work undertaken in your organisation?
2. How effective do you think the 'regional approach' has been? (What is to be gained by organisations working together in a coordinated manner, rather than on an individual basis, to prevent violence against women?)
3. What recommendations do you have for the new regional strategy? (How could the new regional strategy be made most relevant and influential for your organisations?)
4. What would you change from what is currently done on the regional level re PVAW strategy/strategies?
5. What is the best way to engage leadership in the regional strategy? (i.e. how can we involve you?) (For example: some regions have an executive governance group for their regional strategy) Any comments on WHIN's role here?

### Other Focus Groups and Interview Questions

1. How familiar are you with *Building a Respectful Community*, the NMR's regional strategy to prevent violence against women? Do you know if your organisation endorsed it?
2. To what extent has it influenced work at your organisation?
3. How would you describe 'preventing violence against women work'?
4. Do you, or your organisation, do any prevention work? What is it?
5. What does the term 'gender equity' mean? How does it relate to preventing violence against women?
6. Do you feel like PVAW work in the NMR is well connected to the response sector?
7. How do you think prevention work and response work should be connected/linked?
8. How do women's experiences inform prevention work? Any examples? How could this be improved?
9. How effective do you think the regional approach has been in undertaking PVAW work? For example: What is to be gained by organisations working together in a coordinated manner, rather than on an individual basis, in PVAW work?
10. What changes, developments and improvements in preventing violence against women activities in the region have you noticed since the regional strategy was introduced?
11. What recommendations do you have for preventing violence against women work across the region for the next 4-5 years? What would you like to see happen?
12. Reflect on WHIN's role in PVAW.

# Appendix 3: Program Logic







**WOMEN'S HEALTH**  
**IN THE NORTH**  
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