COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

— FOR —

Preventing Violence Against Women

MAY 2020

WOMEN'S HEALTH
IN THE NORTH
voice • choice • power

BUILDING A
Respectful
Community

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Women's Health In the North acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

Women's Health In the North acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we provide our services – the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation – and pay our respects to their Elders past and present and emerging. WHIN acknowledges that Aboriginal sovereignty was never ceded and expresses hope for justice and reconciliation.

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> **This resource is for communications professionals to support them in promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women.**

A note on language used in this guide

As a women's health service, WHIN focuses on addressing the disproportionate levels of violence perpetrated against women. WHIN acknowledges that LGBTIQ communities experience similar levels of violence, perpetuated by similar drivers of violence as violence against women. Challenging gender binaries in theory and practice for all communities is key to preventing all forms of gender-based violence. As a direct action of the regional strategy for preventing violence against women, *Building a Respectful Community Strategy 2017–2021*, this resource aims to primarily address violence against women, while also being inclusive of people of all genders and sexualities.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REFERRAL INFORMATION

In an emergency, call Victoria Police on 000

Violence Against Women and Children Referrals

1800 RESPECT	1800 737 732 (24 hours)
Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre	1800 015 188 (24 hours)
Berry Street Northern Family & Domestic Violence Service	(03) 9450 4700
The Orange Door, North East Melbourne	1800 319 355
Centre Against Sexual Assault	(03) 9635 3600 (24 hours)
Northern Centre Against Sexual Assault	(03) 9497 1768
Sexual Assault Crisis Line Victoria	1800 806 292 (after hours)
InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence	1800 755 988
Elizabeth Morgan House Aboriginal Women's Service	(03) 9403 9400
Djirra (formerly Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria)	1800 105 303
Child Protection Crisis Line	13 12 78 (after hours)

LGBTIQ Referrals

WithRespect	1800 LGBTIQ (1800 542 847)
Switchboard Victoria	1800 184 527

Men's Referrals

Men's Referral Service	1300 766 491

General Support and Information

WIRE Women's Information and Referral	1300 134 130
Victims of Crime Helpline	1800 819 819

ACRONYMS

ANROWS	AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY
BRC	BUILDING A RESPECTFUL COMMUNITY
GENVIC	GENDER EQUITY VICTORIA
LGBTIQ	LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX AND QUEER/QUESTIONING
PVAW	PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
WHIN	WOMEN'S HEALTH IN THE NORTH

1. INTRODUCTION

Communications professionals have an important role to play in creating equal and respectful workplace cultures and influencing community attitudes to violence against women. Through your day-to-day work you can provide accurate, evidence-based information about violence against women, challenge myths, and promote equality, safety and respect for women and girls.

This resource is for communications professionals or any staff who are responsible for creating communications outputs, to support them in promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women. It provides an overview of how to apply a gender impact assessment to communications and outlines ways to incorporate preventing violence against women messaging across internal and external communications.

The role of organisations in advancing gender equality is highlighted through The Victorian Government's _Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy_ (Victorian Government, 2016) and _Free From Violence: Victoria's Strategy to Prevent Family Violence and all Forms of Violence Against Women_ (Victorian Government, 2017) and is now mandated in legislation through the _Victorian Gender Equality Act (2020)_ (2020).

The processes outlined in this resource will support organisations to meet these requirements. At a national level, this resource draws on the evidence base outlined in _Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women and their Children in Australia_ (Our Watch et al., 2015) and aligns with the _Workplace Equality and Respect Standards_ (Our Watch, 2018d).

Women's Health In the North leads the _Building a Respectful Community Partnership_ which is the regional partnership for preventing violence against women for Melbourne's northern region (Women's Health In the North, 2020).

Ensuring 'communications that are gender equitable and inclusive' is an identified goal of the _Building a Respectful Community Strategy 2017–2021_ (Women's Health In the North, 2017).

The _Communications Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women_ are designed to assist partners of the Building a Respectful Community Partnership in fulfilling this goal. This resource is also designed to be relevant to any organisation that is committed to the health, wellbeing and safety of women.

2. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is a devastating human rights violation that causes significant harm to individuals, families, communities and society. All communities, businesses and institutions have role to play in creating an equal, safe and respectful society that is free of violence against women.

Violence against women is defined as 'any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life' (United Nations General Assembly, 1993). This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience, including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/ spiritual and financial, that are gender based (VicHealth, 2017). It includes violence in public or private spaces, including institutional settings, such as care facilities and prisons, and violence and harassment online. This definition includes family violence and intimate partner violence.

In Australia, one in three (31%) women have experienced physical violence and one in five (18%) have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). On average, one woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner (Bricknell, 2019). Violence against women and their children costs Australia $21.7 billion each year (PwC, 2015).
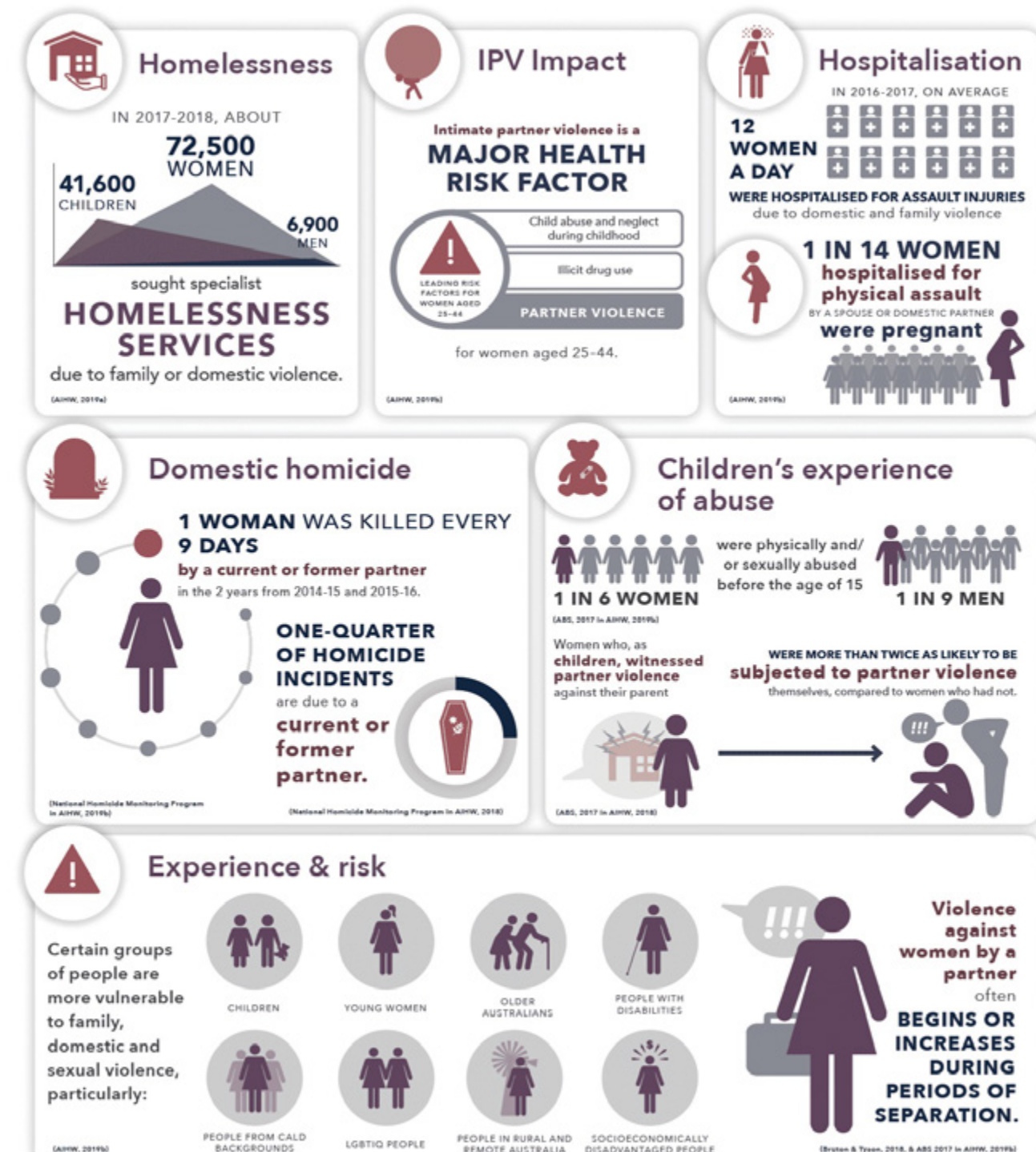
Nearly two in five (39%) women, compared with one in four (26%) men, have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018a). Examples of gender-based violence in the workplace range from more normalised forms of gender harassment such as sexist remarks, infantilisation, work-family policing, gender policing, sexually crude and offensive comments to unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion (Leskinen & Cortina, 2014).

Other forms of discrimination and oppression – including colonisation, racism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia and classism – intersect with sexism and misogyny to increase the prevalence and severity of violence (Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2016; Our Watch et al., 2015). Violence can intensify during different life circumstances, including youth, pregnancy or when women attempt to leave relationships (VicHealth, 2017).

- Women and girls living with disabilities are 1.6 times as likely to experience violence and as women without a disability (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019).

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women report experiencing violence that is more severe and complex in its impacts, and at over three times the rate of non-Indigenous women (Our Watch, 2018a).

- Hospitalisation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women due to family violence related assaults are 32 times that of non-Indigenous women (Our Watch, 2018a).

- Refugee and migrant women may experience barriers due to immigration status or financial dependency, language, social isolation, racism, lack of culturally safe support services and fear of police and courts (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2018).

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals experience intimate partner violence at the same or higher rates as that of heterosexual, cisgender individuals (GHLV; OurWatch; Victorian State Government, 2017).

Impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence

Figure 1. Impacts of Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, 2019a)

Violence against women has serious and long-lasting consequences for women's health, in particular their sexual and reproductive health and mental health (Australian Women's Health Network, 2014; UN Women, 2015). It also has significant social and economic consequences, negatively affecting academic performance, employment and participation in public life (UN Women, 2015). Additionally, exposure to violence against a mother or caregiver can cause profound and long term harm to children (Our Watch et al., 2015).

Experiences of violence are gendered, with women and men experiencing different types of violence in different contexts (Our Watch et al., 2015). The majority (95%) of all victims of violence, both women and men, experience violence from a male perpetrator (VicHealth, 2017).

The two most common forms of violence against women in Australia are intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual assault (Cox, 2016).

RESOURCES

Violence against women facts and statistics:

1. *Quick Facts* ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts/ (Our Watch, 2020)

2. *Violence against women: Accurate use of key statistics* anrows.org.au/publication/violence-against-women-accurate-use-of-key-statistics/ (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, 2018)

Violence against women is prevalent, serious but not inevitable. A growing body of practice and evidence shows us how to prevent future violence across all levels of society.

MYTHS ABOUT VIOLENCE

MYTH 1: MEN SHOULD MAKE THE DECISIONS AND TAKE CONTROL IN RELATIONSHIPS…	**FACT:** Violence is more common in families and relationships in which men control decision making, and less so in those relationships where women have a greater degree of independence." The belief that men and women have different roles or characteristics (whether in relationships or society in general) is known as gender stereotyping. International studies have shown time and again that belief in such stereotypes is one of the most significant predictors of violence. That is, individuals who hold such beliefs are more likely to perpetrate violence against women, and countries where gender stereotyping is more accepted have higher levels of violence against women. We know that in societies where men and women are more equal in their relationships, and where they are not expected to play different roles based on their sex, violence is less common. Greater equality and more flexible gender roles give everyone more opportunities to develop to their full capacity.
MYTH 2: THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH A SEXIST JOKE…	**FACT:** The most consistent predictor for support of violence by men is their agreement with sexist attitudes. Sexist jokes reflect and reinforce sexist attitudes. They excuse and perpetuate the gender stereotyping and discrimination against women that underpins violence.
MYTH 3: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS OK IF THE PERPETRATOR GETS SO ANGRY THEY LOSE CONTROL…	**FACT:** Violence against women is about something more than just losing your temper. There are no excuses for violent behaviour. Ever. Violence is caused by an individual's attitudes towards women, and the social and cultural influences that say violence is ok.
MYTH 4: WOMEN COULD LEAVE A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP IF THEY WANTED TO…	**FACT:** The most extreme violence, including murder, often occurs when a woman tries to leave a relationship. When it is assumed that a woman who is a victim of domestic violence stays by choice, blame is taken away from the perpetrator. This puts the responsibility for dealing with the violence on the victim, who might not be able to leave a relationship because she fears for her life or the safety of her children.

Table 1. Myths about Violence against Women (Our Watch, 2018b)

MYTHS ABOUT VIOLENCE

MYTH 5: IF A WOMAN IS DRUNK OR ON DRUGS, SHE'S PARTLY TO BLAME FOR BEING RAPED…	**FACT:** You can't legally give consent when you're intoxicated. The perpetrator is always the only person responsible for sexual violence.
MYTH 6: MEN RAPE WOMEN BECAUSE THEY CAN'T CONTROL THEIR NEED FOR SEX…	**FACT:** Sexual violence is an abuse of power. Men rape women because they believe women are possessions, not equals, and that they have a right to women's bodies. Myths like this place responsibility on the woman and encourage more victim-blaming.
MYTH 7: WOMEN ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE RAPED BY A STRANGER IN A PUBLIC PLACE…	**FACT:** Both men and women are more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know than by a stranger. According the Australian Bureau of Statistics 15% of all women and 3% of all men aged 18 years and over have been sexually assaulted by a known person. This is in comparison to the 3.8% of all women and 1.6% of all men who had been sexually assaulted by a stranger. The stranger danger myth is one of the reasons that women are less likely to report a sexual assault perpetrated by someone they know. They may fear no one will believe them or that they encouraged the perpetrator in some way. Once this myth is busted, women may be more willing to come forward and report a known attacker.
MYTH 8: MANY WOMEN MAKE FALSE CLAIMS ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT…	**FACT:** False claims of domestic violence or sexual assault are extremely rare. 80% of women who experience current partner violence don't contact the police about the violence. The same is true with sexual assault; 80% of women do not report sexual assault to police.

3. PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Primary prevention of violence against women initiatives aim to stop violence before it occurs, by addressing the key drivers of violence against women: the unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men, and an adherence to rigid gender roles.

Local government, education institutions, community and health organisations are uniquely placed to engage with communities and respond to local issues. Given the pervasive nature of violence against women, organisations and institutions have a responsibility to demonstrate leadership in the effort to prevent violence against women and embed strategies to address the issue through their programs, processes, policies and organisational plans.

Research nationally and internationally has found gender inequality to be the underlying cause of men's violence against women (Our Watch et al., 2015). The more that individuals, communities and institution perpetuate gender inequality, the more likely that violence against women will persist.

In *Change the Story,* Our Watch, VicHealth and ANROWS identified four gendered drivers of violence against women:

- condoning of violence against women
- men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships
- rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
- male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

They also identified five essential actions to prevent violence against women:

- challenge condoning of violence against women
- promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships
- foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships between women and men, girls and boys
- promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.

Figure 2. Make the Link – Gender equality prevents violence against women (Gippsland Women's Health, 2015)

RESOURCES

Demonstrating the link between gender inequality and violence against women:

1. *Let's Change the Story* video ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story/ (Our Watch, 2016)

2. *Make the Link* makethelink.org.au/ (Gippsland Women's Health, 2015)

The Essential Actions to Prevent Violence Against Women

Change the Story identifies five 'essential actions' to prevent violence against women. Here are some examples of how to put these into practice in communications.

Essential actions to prevent violence against women:	Examples of how communications staff can put these into practice:
Challenge condoning of violence against women	• Frame men's violence against women and children as a community safety and public health issue. • Address and dispel commonly held myths about violence against women and their children (Table 1). This might be in specific posts during campaigns or in moderating community dialogues.
Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships	• Apply a gender impact assessment (page 18) to an output e.g. invitation to a town hall or community consultation. Consider if it would attract more men than women and tailor imagery or language for different audiences. • Promote initiatives that support women's participation and leadership e.g. sports and business programs. • Engage in days of observance or campaigns e.g. Week Without Violence or 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence (Appendix 1).
Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles	• Challenge traditional notions of parenthood e.g. gendered roles and identities associated with care for children so as to support equitable parenting roles. • Don't rely on gender stereotypes to tell a story — show different groups engaging in various activities and roles. • Communicate your organisation's human resources policies that support gender equality to all of staff in order to normalise equitable access.
Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships between women and men, girls and boys	• Share resources and tips on how to be an active bystander when witnessing sexism and gender discrimination. See Respect Victoria, OurWatch's *The Line,* Gender Equity Victoria's *Online Bystander Project* and VicHealth's *Take Action.* • Depict girls, boys, women, men and gender-diverse people participating in various contexts together. • Promote and support programs that build equal and respectful relationships
Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life	• Showcase any organisational initiatives that support these actions e.g. Gender Equality Strategies or relevant human resources policies. • Depict a range of women in leadership roles

Table 2. Applying the Essential Actions to Communications

The Gender Equality Act 2020 was enacted on 25 February 2020. The Act requires 300 employers, including public sector organisations, local councils, universities and TAFEs, Victoria Police and court services to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality. The Act requires organisations to develop and implement Gender Equality Action Plans every four years, report on sexual harassment and equal pay, achieve targets on hiring and promoting women and undertake gender impact assessments to ensure that policies, programs and services consider the different needs of Victorians of all genders (Gender Equality Act, 2020).

3.1. Gender Equality

Gender inequality is the unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunity and value afforded to women, men, trans and gender-diverse people. Unequal access limits the participation of women and gender-diverse people in public and private life (Figure 3). It has historical roots in laws and policies that constrained the rights of women, and is reinforced and maintained informally and formally, through social norms, practices and structures. For example, gender inequality in the home is perpetuated by beliefs that women are better suited to caring roles, the common practice of unequal sharing of parenting responsibilities between women and men, and the structural differences in pay and parental leave entitlements between women and men.

Gender equity recognises that people may have different needs, access and power related to their gender, and that these differences should be identified and addressed to rectify gender-related imbalances. Gender equality refers to the equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes between persons of different genders (Gender Equality Act, 2020).

Gender equality is a human right, makes our communities safer and healthier, is beneficial to organisational performance and Australia's economy, and is key to preventing violence against women.

RESOURCES

Facts and statistics on gender equality in Australia:

1. *Face the Facts – Gender Equality 2018*
   humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/face-facts-gender-equality-2018
   (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018b)

2. *Gender Equity Statistics*
   genvic.org.au/resources/gender-equity-statistics/
   (Gender Equity Victoria, 2019b)

1. *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*
   www.vic.gov.au/safe-and-strong-victorian-gender-equality
   (Victorian Government, 2016)

" Such norms, practices and structures encourage women and men, girls and boys to adopt distinct gender identities and stereotyped gender roles, within a gender hierarchy that historically positions men as superior to women, and masculine roles and identities as superior to feminine ones.

(Our Watch et al., 2015 p. 24)

The average full-time weekly wage for a woman is **15.3%** less than a man's.[1]

$1

85c

In 2015-2016, average superannuation balances for women aged 60-64 were **just over half (58%) those of men.**[2]

$270,710 average super payout for men

$157,050 average super payout for women

WOMEN ON THE BOARDS OF ASX 200 LISTED COMPANIES HAS GROWN FROM 8.3% in 2009 to 26.2% in 2018[3]

1 in 2 women have experienced sexual harassment during their lifetime

1 in 3 women have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15

1 in 5 women have experienced violence by a partner since the age of 15[5]

1 in 2 mothers reported experiencing workplace **discrimination** as a result of their pregnancy, parental leave or on return to work, while

1 in 5 mothers indicated that they were made redundant, restructured, dismissed, or that their contract was not renewed[4]

Australia ranks 48th in the world in terms of female political empowerment (the representation of women in politics). This is down from 32nd in 2006[8].

68%

70%

58%

Australian women account for:
▶ 68% of primary carers
▶ 70% of primary unpaid carers for children
▶ 58% of primary unpaid carers for the elderly and people with disability or long-term health condition[6]

Women spend almost **twice as many hours** each day performing **unpaid care work** compared to men[7]

64.4% of the total work day for women
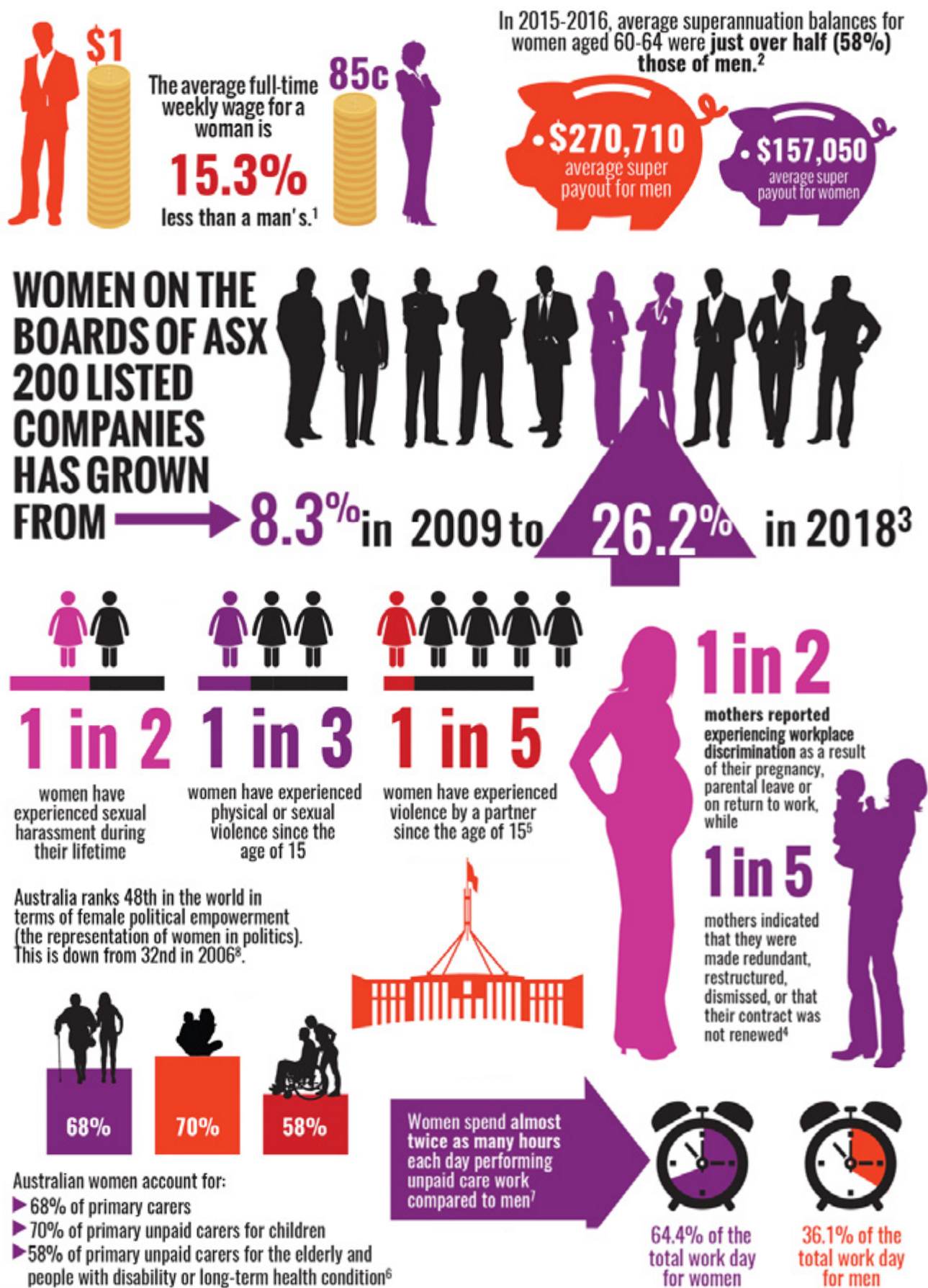
36.1% of the total work day for men

Figure 3. Gender Equality in Australia (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018b)

4. THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Communications staff play a pivotal role in efforts to prevent violence against women. You are critical in shaping and projecting the voice of your organisation.

Your work facilitates communication between service providers and end users, and raises awareness of key issues of community health, safety and wellbeing.

This can apply to communications such as:

All-staff emails, email signatures, internal and external newsletters, staff surveys, intranets, internal and external social media, notice boards, media releases, websites, blogs, photography and videography, on-hold messages, marketing collateral, community meetings, consultations.

Communications staff also play an important role in whole-of-organisation gender equality policy and practice work. You are uniquely placed to support all employees to strengthen their understanding of gender equality, why it's important and relevant to them and what they can do to help achieve it. Workplaces can significantly influence attitudes, beliefs and behaviours both professionally and personally, and this has an impact on the communities in which we participate in.

Creating organisational and community understanding of the link between gender equality and preventing violence against women can be strengthened by consistent messaging, repetition, using multiple communication channels, and tailoring messages for specific target audiences and channels.

> " Progressing gender equality at all levels of society is the primary strategy for preventing violence against women.

5. GENDER ANALYSIS

Learning how to apply a gender analysis to communications is one of the most important steps you can take towards preventing violence against women. This will help you to recognise opportunities for positive action or where a communication output might inadvertently promote a harmful message.

5.1 What is Gender Analysis?

Gender analysis is a process of considering gender and gender inequalities in program planning. It identifies action to address inequalities arising from the different roles of women, men, and gender-diverse people, the unequal power relationships between them and the consequences of these inequalities on their health, safety and wellbeing (Women's Health In the North, 2016a).

Gender analysis can be used to:

- ensure that women, men and gender-diverse people are not disadvantaged by a policy, program or project (including communications outputs)

- consider how gender inequalities are reduced, maintained or increased, resulting in negative consequences

- enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of activities

- identify priority areas for action to promote gender equality (Women's Health In the North, 2016a).

A gender impact assessment (see next page) is a framework for applying a gender analysis to a policy, project, service or strategy using a series of questions. The answers to these questions might change in different contexts and may be different within your team. Having a diversity of experience and opinions adds rigour and depth to your assessment.

You can apply it to any external communications, from media releases, Facebook posts and newsletter articles, to public meeting invitations and community event promotions. Internal communications can also benefit from a gender impact assessment and reveal any blind spots that create inequity or restrict participation of employees.

Gender Impact Assessment For Communications

Consider some or all of these questions:

1 How might this communications strategy or output affect women, men and gender-diverse people differently?

2 Are different approaches needed to meet the needs of women, men and gender-diverse people?

3 Are different approaches needed to engage and meet the needs of:

- *Aboriginal women and men?*
- *Refugee and migrant women and men?*
- *People of diverse gender and sexual identities?*
- *Women and men with disabilities?*
- *Women and men of low socio-economic status?*

4 Does this communications strategy or output consider and represent the diverse lived experiences and voices of women? Has it been tested or developed with a diverse range of community members?

5 What assumptions about women and men is this output making? *(For example, an assumption that all mums 'stay at home' and can thus participate in activities during business hours.)*

6 Does this strategy or output capitalise on or perpetuate gender stereotypes, or does it promote diverse gender roles?

7 How might this strategy or output reduce, maintain or increase the gender inequalities between women and men?

8 How could the organisation measure whether communication outputs have improved outcomes for women and gender equality?

Try applying the gender impact assessment to the following examples:

EXAMPLE 1:

You work for a local council and you've been asked to post an invitation on Facebook to a community basketball tournament. The photos the organiser has have provided were taken at the previous year's event and comprise entirely of people who appear to be white, able-bodied men.

EXAMPLE 2:

You work for a neighbourhood house and the nearby public library have recently completed a gender audit on their children's books. They have prepared an item about this for you to include in the your next newsletter. They are also holding a library story time morning-tea event on a Monday morning to discuss gender equity in the early years and are inviting parents and carers.

RESOURCES

To support your application of a gender impact assessment:

1. *WHIN Gender Analysis Planning Tool*
   whin.org.au/resources/resources-for-gender-equity/
   Women's Health In the North, 2016b)

2. *Changing the Picture*
   ourwatch.org.au/resource/changing-the-picture/
   (Our Watch, 2018a)

3. *Victorian Government resources to support the Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020* (pending release) register for updates at *https://www.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-bill*

4. *Our Right to Safety and Respect*
   wdv.org.au/our-work/our-work-with-organisations/safeguards-project/
   (Women with Disabilties Victoria, 2017)

5. *Reporting it Right: Media Guidelines to Portraying People with a Disability*
   https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/reporting-it-right-guidelines-portraying-people-disability-word
   (Department of Health and Human Services, 2012)

6. *Step Up: A Guide for Practice from the Voices of LGBTIQ Young People*
   whe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/12/Step-Up-FINAL.pdf
   (Women's Health East, 2019)

7. *Rainbow Tick Guide to LGBTI inclusive practice (section 4.2)*
   www.rainbowhealthvic.org.au/research-resources
   (Rainbow Network, 2016)

8. *Intersectionality Matters: A Guide to Engaging Immigrant and Refugee Communities to Prevent Violence against Women*
   mcwh.com.au/intersectionality-matters-a-new-resource-for-preventing-violence-against-women/
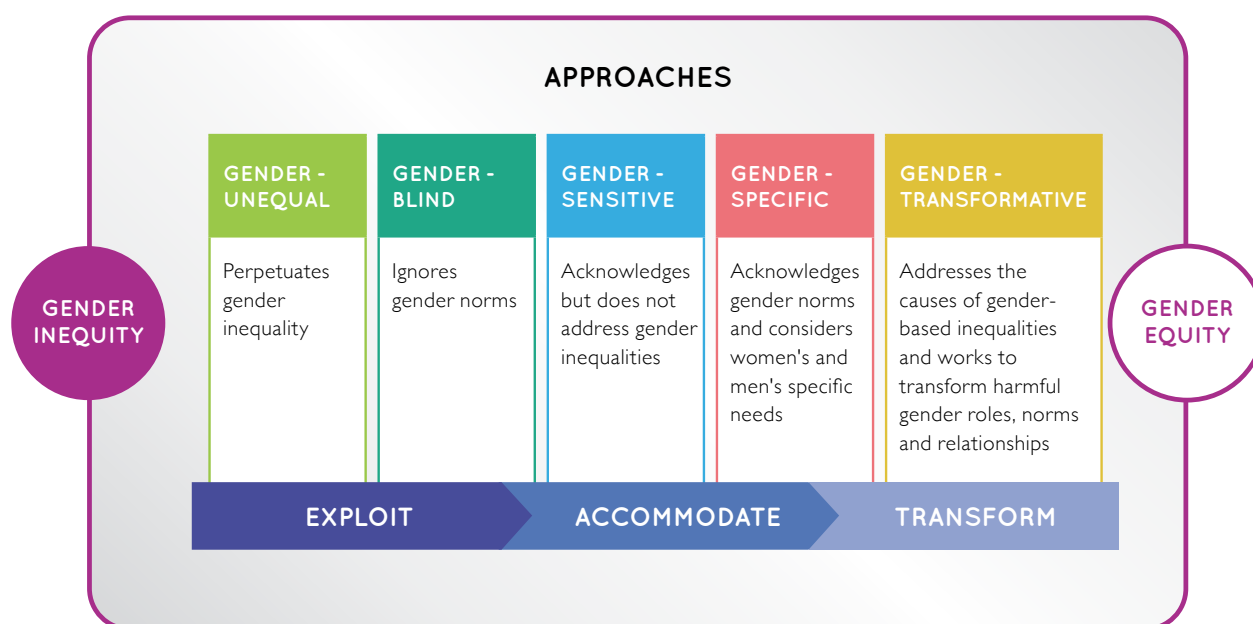   (Chen, 2017)

APPROACHES

GENDER - UNEQUAL	GENDER - BLIND	GENDER - SENSITIVE	GENDER - SPECIFIC	GENDER - TRANSFORMATIVE
Perpetuates gender inequality	Ignores gender norms	Acknowledges but does not address gender inequalities	Acknowledges gender norms and considers women's and men's specific needs	Addresses the causes of gender-based inequalities and works to transform harmful gender roles, norms and relationships

GENDER INEQUITY → EXPLOIT → ACCOMMODATE → TRANSFORM → GENDER EQUITY

Figure 4: Gender Responsive Assessment Scale (Greaves et al., 2014)

5.2 What is a Gender-Responsive Approach?

A gender-responsive approach considers and addresses norms, practices and structures that reinforce gender equality, so as to respond to the influence and impact of gender and strive for gender transformative practice and change.

Gender transformative practice works to alter gender inequality by proactively and intentionally challenging underlying norms, practices and structures that reinforce it. This work promotes equality and embraces diversity across gender roles, norms and relations by identifying how inequality is functioning in a particular situation and taking steps towards improving the conditions. It is a relative concept, and changes over time and in different contexts. Therefore, gender transformation is always possible, even in the most progressive situation.

The Gender Responsive Assessment Scale (Figure 4) is useful to identifying the dynamics of gender in how your communication output is created and received. You might apply the scale formally at first by considering the different approaches, and with experience, move to a more reflexive and intuitive approach.

In practice, apply this understanding to how your communications outputs **exploit, accommodate** or **transform** gendered norms, practices and structure. This will help you enhance your gender impact assessment and refine the approach that you and your organisation will want to take. In clarifying your intention, some questions to consider are:

? **Do I aim to address only the needs created by current gender inequalities without addressing the underlying cause of the problem?**

? **Do I aim to address the current needs while also aiming to transform the gender norms, practices and structures that created the inequality?**

(Varley & Rich, 2019)

Let's apply this thinking to the example of addressing violence towards women on an education campus:

EXPLOIT:

Providing messaging to the student body that recommends women protect their own safety by limiting travel after dark. This simultaneously blames the victim, fails to hold the perpetrator accountable and endorses the myths that men's violence against women is inevitable and that men are inherently violent.

ACCOMMODATE:

Publicising that the education institution's response is to improve lighting in public places and increase security on campus to make students feel safer. This approach responds to gender but does not address the underlying issue of men's violence.

TRANSFORM:

Increasing safety measures on campus and promoting a gender equality campaign that addresses the gendered drivers of violence against women, for example, active bystander education. This approach provides an immediate response and addresses the underlying factors.

RESOURCES

To support your application of a gender-responsive approach:

1. *Towards Gender Transformative Change: A Guide for Practitioners* *whv.org.au/resources/whv-publications/ towards-gender-transformative-change- guide-practitioners* (Varley & Rich, 2019)

DON'T

Assume that gender has no impact.

DO

Use the Gender Impact Assessment and/or Gender Responsive Assessment Scale to consider how people of different genders experience and are impacted by your output.

DO

Consider how you can challenge the gender norms, practices and structures that create and perpetuate inequality.

DO

Challenge binary ways of thinking as these can suggest a hierarchy and don't allow for fluidity.

DO

Think beyond homogenised identity by considering how gender intersects with ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age, socio-economic status etc.

6. PLANNING AND STRATEGY

Planning ahead to incorporate the prevention of violence against women in your communications across the year will support your team to take a proactive approach and will be a useful tool for reporting and evaluation.

6.1 Aligning Communications Plans with Gender Equality Strategies

Many government, health and community organisations in Victoria have policies, plans or strategies to promote gender equity and prevent violence against women. If this is something your organisation has already established, then one of the most effective actions you can take is to align your communications strategy or plan with the gender equity and preventing violence against women plan. Some organisations will also have staff roles dedicated to these issues and/or internal working groups, for example, gender equity working group, which would benefit from a connection to the communications team.

In the absence of an organisational plan for gender equity and preventing violence against women, you can apply a gender impact assessment to your communications strategy or plan, and consider aligning to the following Victorian legislation and government strategies:

- *Victorian Gender Equality Act* (Gender Equality Act, 2020)

- *Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women* (Victorian Government, 2017)

- *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* (Victorian Government, 2016).

DO

Bring your audience along by keeping them informed about achievement of key milestones in your organisation's gender equity and preventing violence against women plan, projects or programs.

DO

Collaborate with your organisation's gender equity working groups and draw upon them for their expertise.

DO

Design key performance indicators or targets to be included in organisational communications strategies or action plan, ensuring that gender equality messaging is regular and consistent. For example, three social media posts a month that specifically address violence against women; 90% of all social media posts to show equal representation of women and men; six staff newsletters a year that report on gender equity work.

6.2 Proactive Communications to Prevent Violence Against Women

There are many opportunities to incorporate gender equity and preventing violence against women messages across your communications.

Position Statements

A clear position statement on gender equity and the prevention of violence against women is essential. It relays an organisation's stance on these issues to community and other stakeholders. You can develop these with the leadership group, in line with organisational policy and strategy, and with input from internal or external content experts. You can also create them in response to news, incidents or events. Position statements may aim to:

- clarify the issue
- clarify the impact
- provide an analysis
- provide an organisational stance
- provide solutions or responses.

Communications Planning Templates

You may already have a communications planning template, form or similar, for when staff, partners or stakeholders submit content for you to share in your channels. Within this, you might include an entry that specifically addresses preventing violence against women and gender equity. This might include evaluating where it lies on the Gender Responsive Assessment Scale (see 5.2) or an assessment of which essential actions to prevent violence against women it addresses (see 3.0).

Days of Observance and Campaigns

There is a range of international and national days and campaigns that draw attention to gender equity and violence against women. Developing scheduled posts that mark these days and link to campaigns or community events that promote them is an opportunity to educate the community. This is also an engaging and easy way to create content, as campaign resources are usually readily available. Women's Health In the North and Respect Victoria provides resources for campaigns such as 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence and Week Without Violence. See Appendix 1 for a list of days of observance and campaigns.

Awards and recognition of best practice achievements

Applying a gender responsive approach to communications takes time, care and effort. It is important to acknowledge and recognise high-quality work. Create a library of high-quality work for your team to reference as best practice. Recognise monthly, quarterly, biannually or annually how quotas in representation have been fulfilled and celebrate any improvement.

It is rarely possible to see the specific downstream impacts of gender responsive communications. Your work is an integral part of your organisation's efforts towards gender equality.

External awards that you might nominate for are the _Our Watch Award for excellence in reporting on violence against women and children_, _Communication Excellence Awards through the Institute of Public Administration Australia (Victoria)_ and _Mumbrella Awards._

Engaging victim-survivor advocates

Increasing the visibility of violence against women in our communities is essential to changing community attitudes and behaviours as well as creating systemic change.

The advocacy of Rosie Batty, named Australian of the Year in 2015, assisted in the reversal of national funding cuts to the legal assistance sector that supports women experiencing family violence (Women's Health East et al., 2016).

Women's Health East have a media advocacy program, 'Speaking Out' that enables women who have experienced violence to undertake advocacy and share their stories with the public through the media and other community advocacy engagements. They have further created an implementation guide in collaboration with Our Watch (Women's Health East et al., 2016).

Promote support services

All of your communications about violence against women or family violence should have referral information for support services. A list of general services is provided on page 4, however, this should be complemented with local services and adapted to the topic. At a minimum, include one link or phone number, for example, Safe Steps 24/7 Family Violence Response Phone Line.

DO

Plan proactively with your colleagues to anticipate events and opportunities to consistently and effectively promote gender equality and prevent violence against women.

RESOURCES

To engage victim-survivor advocates:

1. *Speaking Out Program: Advocacy to end Family Violence and Sexual Assault*
    whe.org.au/what-we-do/prevention-of-violence-against-women/speaking-out-program-media-advocate-program-family-violence-sexual-assault/
    Women's Health East, 2020)

2. *Voices for Change: A Media Advocacy Program for the Prevention of Violence Against Women*
    media.ourwatch.org.au/resource/voices-for-change-a-media-advocacy-program-for-the-prevention-of-violence-against-women-implementation-guide/
    (Women's Health East et al., 2016)

6.3 Key Messages

When planning ahead for communications about violence against women, it may help to form some key messages that you can aim to include across different channels over the year. While each organisation will need to form its own key messages, below are some examples.

- Violence against women is a prevalent and serious human rights abuse that causes significant harm to individuals, families, communities and society.

- [Organisation name] is committed to creating a safe, equal and respectful workplace and community, where women and girls are valued and free from gender discrimination.

- In Australia, one in three women have experienced physical violence and one in five have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). On average, one woman a week is killed by her partner or former partner (Bricknell, 2019).

- Other forms of discrimination intersect with gender inequality to increase the prevalence and severity of violence against women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, refugee and migrant women, and LGBTIQ people (Our Watch et al., 2015).

- International and national research concludes that to prevent violence against women before it occurs we must take action to increase gender equity (Our Watch et al., 2015).

- Everyone has a role to play in preventing violence against women by promoting gender equity and challenging sexism and discrimination.

RESOURCES

To find shareable content on gender equity and preventing violence against women:

1. Follow the Facebook pages and Twitter accounts of *WHIN, Women's Health Victoria, ANROWS, Our Watch, Gender Equity Victoria, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, WIRE, Respect Victoria, Queerspace and Djirra.*

2. Subscribe to *Women's Health Victoria Health News Daily* mailout *whv.org.au/get-involved/subscribe.*

6.4 Professional Development for Staff

Everyone has different experiences and understandings of gender, gender inequality and violence against women. Having a shared language can assist teams to apply gender impact assessments and create gender-responsive communications.

A key component of new staff inductions – especially communications staff – should be information on gender equity and the prevention of violence against women. This might involve free online training through Gender Equity Victoria's Action PVAW website, or face-to-face training through Women's Health In the North or other training bodies such as Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.

RESOURCES

Prevention of violence against women eLearning:

1. *Introduction to Preventing Violence against Women eLearning Module and Learner's Toolkit actionpvaw.org.au/training-portal/ introduction-to-pvaw-emodule-and-self-guided-orientation-toolkit* (Gender Equity Victoria, 2017)

7. LANGUAGE

Language is at the heart of any culture and is an intrinsic part of how societies assign value and justice. As a communications professional you will be aware how choice of words can unconsciously reveal biases, stereotypes and norms, and can alternatively engage or alienate.

Deliberate and intentional use of language has the power to tackle the gendered drivers of violence against women as well as being inclusive of different groups and increasing equity across communities. Applying a gender lens in the choice of words, whether plain language is used, or use of translation can expand the effectiveness of the message in reaching target audiences.

7.1 Writing about Incidents of Violence against Women

When referring to specific instances of violence against women it can be challenging to respectfully and accurately describe individuals, relationships and acts. This lack of confidence and practice sometimes prevents or limits communication and reporting about this important community issue.

If you are directly quoting a woman, it's crucial to listen to her respectfully, use the terms she prefers, reflect the tense she uses when describing herself or the crime. She might refer to herself as a victim or survivor, or victim/survivor, or something else (Deathe & Rich, 2015). If it's appropriate and safe to do so it's recommended to clarify how she wants to be referred to.

If you are speaking more generally, it is appropriate to use the term 'victim-survivor'. The term 'victim-survivor' reflects a strength-based approach that centres women's voices. When referring to the person responsible for the violence, the appropriate terms are 'perpetrator' or if referring generally to men's violence against women 'men who choose to use violence'.

Victim blaming has numerous negative impacts. Victim-survivors may not be provided with empathy and support, have less access to interventions, experience poorer health outcomes and worse redress through courts. It also disregards what drives violence against women and children.

DO

name the violence. It is critical that the type of violence is named. e.g. 'men's violence against women/and their children', 'intimate partner violence' 'family violence', 'assault', 'sexual assault', 'elder abuse', 'child abuse', 'rape' or 'murder' (Our Watch, 2019).

DON'T

attribute the violence to where the victim-survivor had been, the time of day, what she was wearing or drinking.

DON'T

use terms that minimise or trivialise the violence for example, 'domestic dispute', 'violent/volatile relationship' (relationships are not abusive, people are) or terms that minimise the responsibility of the perpetrator for example, 'violence came out of the blue', 'things got out of hand' (Deathe & Rich, 2015).

DO

include referrals to family violence or relevant services (see page 4).

Figure 5. An example Facebook post that addresses an incident of a man's violence against a woman and the issue of violence against women more generally.

7.2 Evidence-Based Language

When writing or presenting about violence against women it should be framed within the context of gender inequality driving violence against women. More specifically, it should consider and/or refer to the gendered drivers of violence against women (page 12).

✗ DON'T

perpetuate harmful myths that connect violence to mental health, culture, stress, finances, as being 'fuelled' by alcohol and other drugs, as a result of carer-stress or describe a perpetrator as 'just snapping' (see Table 1).

✗ DON'T

use language that inadvertently blames the victim or justifies what happened to them. No one deserves violence, regardless of whether they were intoxicated, walking alone, out late at night, seeing other people, or what they were wearing. Refrain from centring women moderating their own safety as a strategy for preventing violence – the perpetrator is the only individual responsible for the violence they commit.

RESOURCES

Reporting or speaking about violence against women:

1. *Speaking publicly about preventing men's violence against women: Curly questions and language considerations* https://whwest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Speaking-on-PVAW-Resource_KH_WEB.pdf (Deathe & Rich, 2015)

2. *How to report on violence against women and their children* media.ourwatch.org.au/media-home/reporting-violence-against-women/guidelines-for-reporting-violence-against-women/ (Our Watch, 2019)

7.3 Respectful and Inclusive Language in Referring to People of all Genders and Sexualities

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer/questioning (LGBTIQ) communities have historically (and in many contexts continue to be) marginalised, disrespected or not acknowledged.

You can help dismantle prejudice and discrimination by creating and supporting communications environments that are inclusive and respectful. Respectful and inclusive communications starts with an understanding of sex, gender and sexuality.

Sex, Gender, Gender Identity and Sexuality

If these are unfamiliar terms, refer to the glossary in Appendix 3 or *LGBTIQ Inclusive Language Guide* (State Government of Victoria & Victorian Government, 2020).

Normativity and discrimination

A person's gender expression doesn't infer their sex characteristics or their sexuality, or vice versa. Nor is being LGBTIQ a lifestyle choice. Historically in many cultures, sex, gender and sexuality have been conflated.

The dominant assumptions (Figure 6) are that all people are born with the sex of either female or male (bottom layer), and they identify with the binary sex assigned to them at birth as woman or man i.e. cis-gender (middle layer). The assumption that all people have this experience is termed cis-
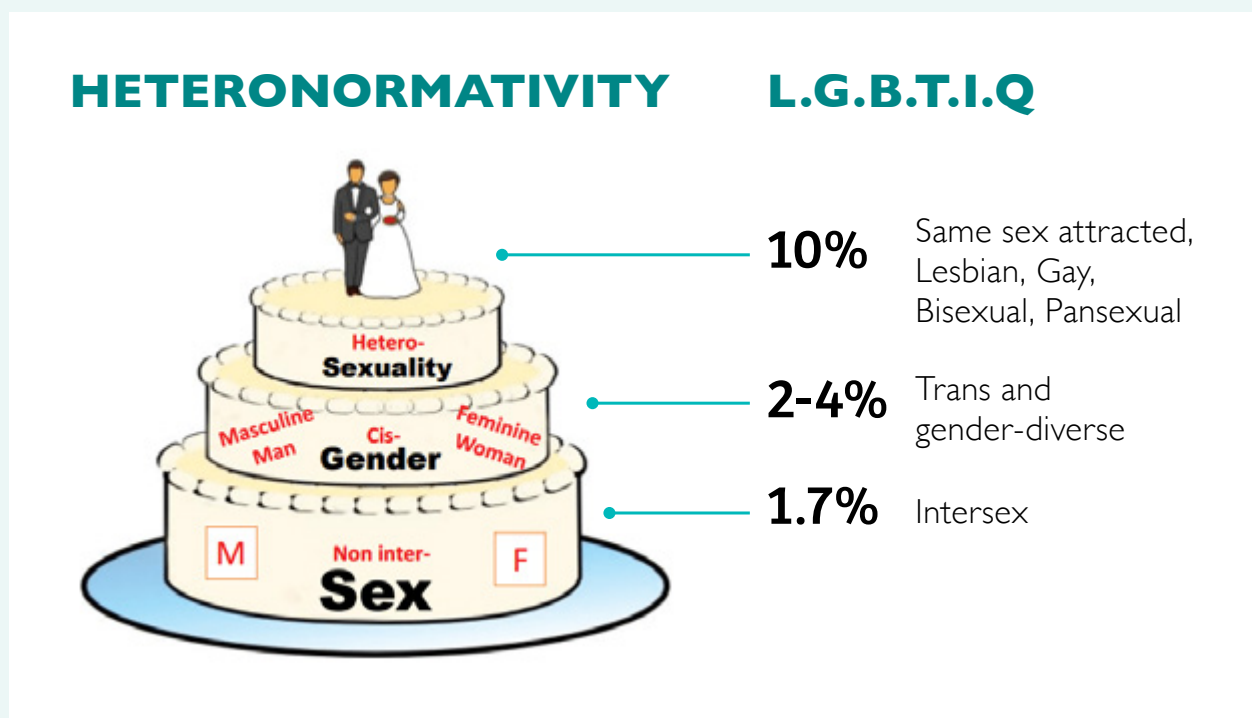

HETERONORMATIVITY   **L.G.B.T.I.Q**

10%   Same sex attracted, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual

2-4%   Trans and gender-diverse

1.7%   Intersex

Figure 6. The Wedding Cake Model with normative layers and Australian data on sex, gender and sexuality (Leonard, 2005)

normativity. This false assumption can result in the exclusion of the 1.7% of the population who are intersex (their sex is neither female nor male) and the 2-4% of people who identify with a gender different to the sex assigned to them at birth.

The dominant assumption extends to assuming cis-normativity and also that all people are heterosexual i.e attracted to the 'opposite' gender in the binary (top layer). However, 10% of the population are same-sex attracted, bisexual or pansexual.

Hetero-normative assumptions and biases about what constitutes family and relationships has meant that family violence against LGBTIQ people can be invisible in the mainstream or deemed as less serious. The large proportion of research, policy and practice to address gender-based violence to date has assumed a hetero-normative model, thus ignoring the experiences of LGBTIQ communities and failing to meet their needs.

Research has shown that intimate partner violence occurs in LGBTIQ populations at similar levels as within the heterosexual population (Campo & Tayton, 2015). People in these communities also experience high levels of other forms of gender-based violence, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia which may compound their experience of family violence (Campo & Tayton, 2015).

When addressing family violence, gender-based violence and gender inequality in your communications, there is a risk of perpetuating cis-normativity and hetero-normativity, and inadvertently excluding LGBTIQ communities.

DO

question and reflect on your own biases and assumptions.

DO

analyse communications to determine if they are cis-normative and/or hetero-normative. They might purposely include certain groups or inadvertently exclude certain groups.

DO

consider the compounding structural and societal barriers that LGBTIQ communities might face in accessing support services, police, judicial systems and health systems.

DON'T

assume someone's gender. Ask people 'what are your pronouns?' and offer your own.

> **LGBTIQ people were more likely to be sexually harassed in the workplace over the last five years than heterosexual-identifying people (52% and 31% respectively).**
>
> *(Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018a; GHLV)*

7.4 Being Inclusive Versus being 'Gender-Blind'

It might seem easier to be inclusive of everyone by not referring to gender and sexuality at all, for example referring to 'people who experience intimate partner violence'. However, making women and women's experience of violence invisible ignores the impact of gender (see 5.2), the high rates of violence against women and LGBTIQ people and male perpetration.

Removing reference to women erases women's lived experience and voices, and obscures attempts to address gender inequality.

There is no single correct term when referring to violence against women, gender-based violence, and family violence. This will differ depending on the issue being addressed, the objective, the target audience, and the type of communications.

DON'T

simply replace the term 'women' and use 'people' in an effort to be inclusive, as this obscures the high rates of violence experienced by women, and contributes to perpetuating gender inequality.

DO

acknowledge that family violence is gendered, with the majority of family violence perpetrated by men against women and children. Also acknowledge that LGBTIQ communities experience high rates of family violence.

DO

name and tailor to your audience. It is unlikely that you can be inclusive of everyone in one social media post, but it is possible to be inclusive across your range of communications.

DO

include specific family violence response services that support LGBTIQ communities, for example, _WithRespect,_ alongside mainstream services referral pathways such as _The Orange Door_ at the end of communications about family violence or gender-based violence (see page 4 for a list of services).

8. CONTENT SOURCES

You are likely to field content from various sources. It is not likely that all content is gender-responsive. However, a strong personal understanding of the influence and impact of gender can change how you interpret and create content and how you share it via your channels.

8.1 Applying a Gender Analysis to Content and Data

There is a vast amount of evidence-based research, data and public policy available to inform communications on violence against women and gender equity. See Appendix 2 for a list of key websites.

When seeking content or sharing content (from inside or outside your organisation) it's important that you apply a gender analysis to the information, especially when using external content about violence against women, family violence or gender equity, as there can be myths or inaccurate information conveyed.

You should consider if you can trust the source of any content. At the minimum, ask yourself:

? Is it reputable? Does it use evidence-based information?

? Does it use gender-disaggregated data? (see 8.2)

? What is the intent or aim of the information?

? Which groups or audiences are targeted and why? Who might be excluded?

? Does it condone violence against women, use gendered stereotypes, perpetuate men's control of decision-making, or disrespect towards women?

If you are unsure, you could seek an opinion from an internal or external expert, for example, if you have a staff member responsible for gender equity or preventing violence against women, or a women's health service such as Women's Health In the North.

If you have concerns about the content, it may be suitable to offer feedback to the person who provided it. By asking content source providers (whether internal staff or external contacts) to be more equitable and consider the impact of gender, it strengthens the creation of a culture of respect and safety. However, when raising concerns, you should also consider your own safety and formulate an approach that opens up an opportunity for a respectful dialogue.

✔ DO

try to be curious, kind and respectful when asking questions of those providing you content. Linking to organisational plans, position statements, or public policy can be useful in explaining your feedback.

✔ DO

be careful to check that information provided about violence against women or family violence is from a reputable and evidence-based source.

8.2 Gender-Disaggregated Data

Gender-disaggregated data refers to data that can be separated by participants' gender, allowing an analysis of how women, men and people of all genders are impacted.

Disaggregated data collected by organisations will help to reveal who has currently or previously been included or excluded in communications and events and who also might benefit from being reached and included in the future.

For example, gender-disaggregated data might reveal that your organisation's services are accessed by high numbers of young men, but few young women. This could inform a communications strategy to reach more young women in through promotional material.

Gender-disaggregated data might also reveal inequalities experienced by people who identify as trans or gender-diverse, and thus inform specific engagement strategies.

✔ DO

ask for gender-disaggregated data. If it's not available ask why. This sends the message that this information is important to your team and organisation, and encourages content sources to collect information with gender in mind.

RESOURCES

To access comprehensive sex and gender-disaggregated data on violence against women, gender equality, sexual reproductive health and other issues:

1. *Women's Health Atlas victorianwomenshealthatlas.net.au/* (Women's Health Victoria, 2020) – data available by state and local government area

2. *Men and Women Overview www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/ population-groups/men-women/ overview* (Australian Institue of Health and Welfare, 2018)

3. *National Community Attitudes Survey https://www.anrows.org.au/research-program/ncas/* (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, 2019b)

9. REPRESENTATION

It is important to appreciate, celebrate and represent the diversity of our community through images, voices and stories. However the voices and experiences represented in communications may be biased. Leadership roles have traditionally been held by men, and often in quoting staff or community members, the voices heard are the ones who have had these opportunities.

A review of communication outputs to examine voices and images by gender and by cultural and linguistic diversity might reveal biases towards groups or assumptions about certain groups. Representation in communications can unintentionally reinforce the gendered drivers of violence against women. Conversely, a considered approach to diverse representation can promote gender equity. It might be helpful to choose targets for diversity in images shared that correlate to diversity of the communities you serve.

> **"** *If you can't see it, you can't be it.*

9.1 Recognising and Challenging Gender Stereotypes

Communications may inadvertently be gender exploitative and perpetuate gender inequality by reinforcing unbalanced gender norms, roles and relations. In telling a story, you might fall back on using stereotypes and present men in traditional masculine roles and activities, such as sports and leadership, or women in traditional feminine roles and activities, such as caring duties.

There is opportunity to be gender-responsive when considering depiction of roles such as caring or leadership roles, or how different occupations are depicted. Communications can challenge gender stereotypes to shift community attitudes and encourage participation in domains that have traditionally been occupied associated with a particular gender.

Sometimes, you might need to be gender-specific to appeal to certain groups with specific needs, for example, women with newborn babies needing maternal child health services information. At other times you might aim to be gender-transformative by shifting traditional gender expectations, to include groups that may otherwise have not traditionally participated, for example, depicting fathers and children at library story-time.

✕ DON'T

take shortcuts that rely on gender stereotypes to tell a story. Challenge gender stereotypes when you can.

✔ DO

audit your stock photos and update them to include positive images of women and men, including non-stereotypical images in community settings and workplaces.

✔ DO

brief your photographers on applying a gender lens. Explain how it is important to your organisation to use photos that show people of all genders challenging gender stereotypes.

9.2 Including Under-Represented Groups

It is crucial that when you take action to include more images of women and girls in your publications, these images represent diversity. Historically, 'increasing women's representation' has often resulted in the increased representation of white, middle-class, able-bodied women. Women are not a homogeneous group and publications should represent women from all walks of life.

When seeking to represent the diversity of the community, be mindful of including groups that have often been excluded or under-represented. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those from refugee and migrant communities, people with disabilities, and people of diverse gender and sexual identities.

Figure 7. Illustration from Merri Health's Facebook page.

DO

build a library of images that represent the community. When building an image library, it is crucial that consent is given by anyone featuring in the images for the image to be reproduced.

DO

ask permission to take photos every time. Respect refusals of photography. There may be community protocols that prohibit photography and filming.

DO

use illustrations that represent different community members or illustrations that are culturally ambiguous. This can be a safe and creative way of promoting inclusion and can be used across different outputs (Figure 7).

DO

feature and credit the art of local artists.

DO

broaden the perceived 'mainstream'. Normalise the participation of different communities across your services, not just in targeted communications e.g. depict same-sex couple families in communications related to all kinds of community activities not just communications about LGBTIQ issues or events.

10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As a platform for highlighting community issues, your communication channels likely lead to some heated debates. Communications staff can play a key role in moderating respectful community dialogues and responding to backlash. This is especially relevant for social media, but can also include community consultations, media debates or other traditional communications.

10.1 Considering Safety

When it comes to communicating potentially controversial content, it might seem that the safest thing to do is avoid it all together. The risk of this approach is that it can erase important community dialogues and issues or fail to respond to community concerns. Consider first how this content aligns with any existing gender equity or preventing violence against women policies or plans, or analyse it using the gender impact assessment (see 5.1). This will help you decide whether posting this content is important and justify your choice.

The information you provide through your communication channels can start or contribute to community dialogues. When discussing the issues of gender equity and violence against women it's important to consider community safety as well as the safety of staff in the timing of such content.

Content that includes images or descriptions of violence may be re-traumatising for people who have experienced violence. Additionally, community dialogues that are not carefully moderated may put people at risk of verbal abuse or aggression.

A community management approach to moderation cultivates a healthy online culture through positive engagement, removing harmful contributions, preventing discussions from being derailed, responding to urgent situations and providing referrals to relevant services and resources.

DON'T simply avoid all potentially controversial content. Topics that are 'controversial' are often part of important community dialogues. The social change required to prevent violence against women and promote gender equity will inevitably generate some resistance and backlash. Use it as an opportunity for community engagement.

DO consider the timing of content if you predict that moderation might be required. In these instances, ensure that staff can attend to social media channels or questions.

DO consider whether content may have the potential to 'trigger' or re-traumatise someone who has experienced violence. For example, images of violence or death, or graphic descriptions of violence. Using this content may not be in the best interests of the community. If there is an important reason for using the content, include a 'trigger warning' or find another way to convey the message.

DO Prepare staff for responding to disclosures of violence. It is important that communications staff provide appropriate referral information (see page 4) via a safe channel (not public) and do not attempt to 'counsel' or advise the person on their situation.

10.2 Managing Resistance and Backlash

The terms 'backlash' and 'resistance' are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to any form of resistance towards progressing social change, however many practitioners refer to backlash as the more polarised end of resistance. Resistance usually comes from people who are advantaged by the status quo. In efforts to progress gender equality, resistance is more likely seen from men but can also come from women. Those resisting are likely motivated to protect existing structures and social norms (VicHealth, 2018).

Resistance might passively attempt to maintain the status quo by minimising or co-opting change efforts, or actively opposing change efforts to restore the unequal gender order (VicHealth, 2018).

DON'T

expect to change the hearts and minds of the 'entrenched opposition'. Focus on those who are curious or unconvinced.

DO

use the resources listed on this page to develop specific strategies and detailed responses to common resistance to gender equity efforts.

DO

consider some standard responses that acknowledge the experience of the commenter and respond. You might respond to say you will take their feedback on board, or respectfully affirm the position of the original communication output and support it with data (see 2.0).

DO

prepare for managing community dialogues sensitively by building skills in responding to backlash and creating protocols for moderating and responding to community responses.

DO

encourage dialogue and learning by encouraging audiences to self-moderate or by moderators providing direct information. Moderators might remind audiences to keep their responses respectful and constructive to keep the online space feeling safe and positive.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Days of Observance and Campaigns

Days, weeks, or events that draw attention to gender equality, preventing violence against women and LGBTIQ rights

Date	Subject
February 6	**International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Cutting** A day to promote the elimination of female genital cutting by calling for coordinated and systematic efforts with a focus on human rights, gender equality, sexual education and attention to the needs of women and girls who have experienced the practice.
February 11	**International day of Women and Girls in Science** A day to challenge barriers to participation for women and girls' in science e.g. gender stereotypes, and to celebrate women scientists.
February 12 – 19	**Ochre Ribbon Week** A campaign aimed at raising awareness of the devastating impacts of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and calls for action to end the violence.
February 20	**World Day of Social Justice** International day that encourages people to link social justice and poverty eradication. It also promotes full employment, gender equity and social integration. It has an annual theme.
March 8	**International Women's Day** A global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender equality. It has an annual theme.
March 31	**International Trans Day of Visibility** An annual international celebration of trans pride and awareness, recognising trans and gender-diverse experiences and achievements.
May 17	**International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia** A day of fostering inclusion, celebrating diversity and providing education to counter homophobia, interphobia and transphobia.
June 15	**Elder Abuse Awareness Day** A day that highlights elder abuse as a manifestation of ageism and inequality.

Appendix 1: Days of Observance and Campaigns

August 28	**(Un)Equal Pay Day** Marks the additional number of days women must work from the end of the last financial year to earn the same amount as men. This date is decided on current ABS data so please check the WGEA's website.
September 7-11	**Women's Health Week** A campaign of events and online activities centred on improving women's health.
October 11	**International Day of the Girl Child** The day aims to highlight and address the needs and challenges girls face, while promoting girls' empowerment and the fulfillment of their human rights. It has an annual theme.
Third week in October	**Week Without Violence** Annual global campaign to prevent violence against women. WHIN provides resources and support – see *our website* for more information.
Last Friday in October	**Reclaim/Take Back the Night** A global women's protest against men's sexual violence. In some countries it is known as Take Back the Night.
November	**Movember** A movement for men's health and an opportunity to talk to men about healthy masculinities.
November 25 – December 10	**16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence** An international campaign that runs from International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the United nations Human Rights Day – linking violence against women and human rights. It has an annual theme. WHIN provides resources and support – see *our website* for our toolkit and more information. *Respect Victoria* also offer a suite of resources.
November 25	**International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women** A global day of raising awareness about violence against women and inspiring prevention.
December 9	**Marriage Equality** Anniversary of the Marriage Act being reformed to not restrict marriage by sex or gender in Australia.
December 10	**United Nations Human Rights Day** Marks the date in 1948 when the United Nations adopted the Universal declaration of Human Rights. It has an annual theme.

Appendix 2: Key Organisation Websites

The following organisations provide a range of reliable, evidence-based resources and information related to preventing violence against women and promoting gender equity.

Women's Health In the North *www.whin.org.au/*

Our Watch *ourwatch.org.au/*

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety *anrows.org.au/*

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation *vichealth.vic.gov.au/*

Respect Victoria *respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/*

Gender Equity Victoria *genvic.org.au/*

Gender Equity Victoria's Resource Library *www.actionpvaw.org.au*

Women's Health Victoria *whv.org.au/*

Women with Disabilities Victoria *wdv.org.au/*

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria *dvrcv.org.au/*

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health *www.mcwh.com.au/*

Djirra *djirra.org.au/*

WithRespect *www.withrespect.org.au/*

Rainbow Health Victoria *www.rainbowhealthvic.org.au/*

Free From Violence (Victorian Government) *vic.gov.au/free-violence-victorias-strategy-prevent-family-violence*

Gender Equality and Women's Leadership (Victorian Government) *vic.gov.au/gender-equality-and-womens-leadership*

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission *humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au*

Appendix 3: Glossary

Agender – This refers to an individual who does not identify as possessing/experiencing gender (Women's Health East, 2019).

Backlash – The resistance, hostility or aggression from some groups that undermine gender equality or violence prevention strategies. Backlash can include attempts to discredit arguments about gender inequality or the gendered nature of violence, and efforts to preserve existing gender norms and hierarchies (Victorian Government, 2017).

Cis-gender – A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth (Women's Health East, 2019).

Cis-normativity – The assumption that all people identify with the binary sex assigned to them at birth.

Diversity – The ways in which individuals and groups can differ from each other by way of attributes such as gender, ability, Aboriginality, religion and belief, culture, language, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, geography and age. They can have a significant impact on health needs, interests and outcomes. Some, such as cultural background, are fixed, and others, such as socio-economic status, may change. Identity, circumstances and opportunities can be influenced by a combination of these attributes, and people often give priority to different aspects of their identities. This may also change over time. It is important to keep in mind the specific conditions experienced by marginalised groups of women and men (Victorian Government, 2011).

Discrimination – Discrimination is treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic such as national or ethnic origin; sex, gender, pregnancy or marital status; age; disability; religion; sexual orientation; trade union activity; or some other characteristic specified under anti-discrimination or human rights legislation Information on personal characteristics protected by law can be found on the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission website at *humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au*

Domestic violence – Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic setting between people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. These acts include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse fearful. See also family violence (Victorian Government, 2017).

Family violence – Family violence is a broad term referring to violence between family members as well as violence between intimate partners. This includes, for example, elder abuse and adolescent violence against parents. Family violence includes violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful (Our Watch et al., 2015). Family violence is a fundamental violation of human rights and is unacceptable in any form, any community or any culture.

Gender – The socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women, men, boys and girls. These perceived differences between genders are socially, and not biologically, determined and are based on learned behaviour. As such, concepts of gender will differ within and between cultures, and change over time in response to cultural, religious, educational, historical and economic factors. Though gender has traditionally been understood as a fixed binary concept (masculine/feminine) in male-dominated culture, it can better be understood as a spectrum, recognising people who identify as transgender or gender diverse.

Gender analysis – Gender analysis identifies, analyses and informs action to address inequalities that arise from the different roles of women and men, or the unequal power relationships between them, and the consequences of these inequalities on their lives, their health and wellbeing (World Health Organization, 2002). It can be

used to ensure that men and women are not disadvantaged by a policy, program or project, to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of activities, or to identify priority areas for action to promote equality between women and men (Hunt, 2004).

Gender-based violence – Violence that is disproportionately directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1992).

Gender blind data – Data that ignores, or deliberately does not address, gender and the gender-based differences which apply. Relying on gender blind data has the potential to perpetuate existing inequalities between the sexes).

Gender equality – the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men and trans and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men and trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender (State of Victoria, 2016b).

Gender-disaggregated data – Data that is collected and presented separately on females and males to reflect differences. Such data needs to recognise sub-groups of women and men, enabling cross-classification for ethnicity, culture, age or sexual orientation.

Gender discrimination – The situation in which people are treated differently because of their gender, rather than on the basis of their individual skills or capabilities.

Gender-diverse – Refers to people who do not identify as a woman or a man. In the same way that sexual orientation and gender expression are not binaries, gender identity is not a binary either. It is important to challenge our thinking beyond the binary constructs of male and female. Some people may identify as agender (having no

gender), bi-gender (both a woman and a man) or non-binary (neither woman nor man). There is a diverse range of non-binary gender identities such as genderqueer, gender neutral, gender fluid and third-gendered. It is important to be aware that language in this space is still evolving and people may have their own preferred gender identities (Victorian Government, 2017).

Gender equality – The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, trans (and gender diverse) and intersex people. Equality does not mean that everyone will become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender (Victorian Government, 2017).

Gender equity – Entails the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities on the basis of gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and power related to their gender, and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender-related imbalances (Victorian Government, 2017).

Gender identity – Refers to a person's innate, deeply felt psychological identification of their gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's designated sex at birth (Women's Health East, 2019). Many people are considered to be cis-gender, where their sex and gender are the same. However, many people also identify differently to the sex that was assigned to them at birth and may consider themselves transgender, gender non-binary, agender (without gender) or gender diverse.

Gender inequality – The unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunity and value afforded to men and women in a society, due to prevailing gendered norms and structures (Victorian Government, 2017).

Gender-responsive approach – An approach that takes gender into account, acknowledging the different experiences expectations, pressures, inequalities, and needs of women, men, and gender-diverse people (Victorian Government, 2011).

Gender-disaggregated / gender-sensitive data – Information generated through the use of sex-disaggregated data and through applying a gender analysis or a gender lens. It informs program and policy design by recognising the different experiences of women, men, transgender and intersex people and provides an analysis and explanation of the differences in the data. It is the opposite of gender blind data as gender is recognised and taken into account (Women's Health Victoria, 2013).

Gender transformative – Gender transformative practice involves critically examining, challenging and transforming the gendered norms, practices and structures that create and maintain gender inequality, and strengthening actions that support gender equality (Varley & Rich, 2019).

Gendered norms – Gendered norms consist of a set of dominant beliefs and rules of conduct which are determined by a society or social group in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from boys and girls, men and women (Our Watch et al., 2015).

Hetero-normativity – Refers to a general perspective that sees heterosexual experiences as the only, or central, view of the world, and assumes a linear relationship between sex, gender and sexuality (Women's Health East, 2019).

Intersectionality – Intersectionality is a way of seeing or analysing the dynamics of power and social inequality in our society. It is the recognition that inequalities are never the result of any single or distinct factor such as race, class or gender, but are an the outcome of different social locations, power relations and experiences (Chen, 2017; Hankivsky, 2014).

Intimate partner violence – Any behaviour by a man or a woman within an intimate relationship (including current or past marriages, cohabitating or non-cohabitating couples) that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to those in the relationship. This is the most common form of violence against women (Our Watch et al., 2015).

Misgendering – When someone refers to an individual by the wrong gender. For instance, using the wrong pronouns – accidentally or on purpose – or expressing other social behaviours which imply a person's gender incorrectly (Women's Health East, 2019).

Prevention of violence against women – Primary prevention of violence against women is a public health approach that aims to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. It is advocated as an effective means of working towards the elimination of all forms of violence against women (Australian Women's Health Network, 2014). Activities or interventions can be delivered to the whole population (universal) or targeted to particular groups that are at higher risk of using or experiencing violence in the future (VicHealth, 2007).

Sex – This refers to the biological presentation of an individual in reference to reproductive anatomy, chromosomes and hormones. People may assigned female, male, intersex or an indeterminate sex. Individuals may identify with the sex they were assigned at birth, or a different sex or gender.

Sex-disaggregated data – Data that is collected and presented separately on females and males to reflect differences. Such data needs to recognise sub-groups of women, men and intersex people, enabling cross-classification for ethnicity, culture, age or sexual orientation.

Sexism – Discrimination based on gender and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination (Australian Women's Health Network, 2014). The legal definition of 'sex discrimination' is when a person is treated less favourably than a person of the opposite sex would be treated in the same or similar circumstances (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014)

Sexual harassment – Unwelcome sexual behaviour, which could be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or written. For example, comments about a person's private life or the way they look, sexually suggestive behaviour, jokes, comments or emails, or repeated requests to go out (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2020).

Sexual assault – Sexual assault is any sexual behaviour that makes a person feel frightened or threatened. It is sexual activity to which the person does not consent or is incapable of giving consent due to intimidation, youth or incapacity. Sexual assault can take various forms, some of which are criminal offences, including: touching or kissing; being made to look at pornographic photos; voyeurism; rape; incest; and stalking (Centre Against Sexual Assault - CASA House, 2020).

Sexuality – Sexuality or sexual orientation refers to an individual's romantic and/or sexual attraction to others. Sexualities include heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, lesbian, pansexual, gay, queer (Victorian Government, 2020).

Transgender – Transgender (or trans) is a gender identity where a person's gender does not exclusively align with the one they were assigned at birth. Trans is sometimes used as an umbrella term, but not everyone uses it to describe themselves. For example, a man who was assigned female at birth might refer to himself as 'a trans man', 'a man with a trans history' or just 'a man'. Align with the term that someone uses to describe themselves (Victorian Government, 2020).

Unconscious bias – The beliefs and values gained from family, culture and a lifetime of experiences that heavily influence how we view and evaluate both others and ourselves. These thought patterns, assumptions and interpretations – or biases – we have built up over time help us to process information quickly and efficiently. However, they can cause us to make decisions that are not objective and that can devalue or exclude people (Chu, 2014).

Unconscious bias is one of many factors that contribute to continued discrimination against qualified and capable women and minority groups in organisations. Unconscious bias is the product of unconscious knowledge and unconscious processes, typically operating together to produce biased responses (Genat et al., 2012).

Violence against women – Any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life. This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience (including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/spiritual, financial, and others) that are gender-based (Our Watch et al., 2015).

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> " You are critical in in shaping and projecting the voice of your organisation. Your work facilitates communication between service providers and end users, and raises awareness of key issues of community health, safety and wellbeing.

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