

RESPECT

«احترام» · Xushmad · الإحترام · Saygi

A Guide for Muslim Faith Leaders
and Communities





Darebin City Council values our community diversity as an important civic asset and has a long standing commitment to supporting greater social cohesion within our local communities, including our Muslim community.

This has included the establishment of the Darebin Interfaith Council in 2005, signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Council and The Preston Mosque in 2009, "Salam Alaykum: Darebin's Muslims Reaching-Out" Project and the Northern Interfaith Respectful Relationship Project funded by VicHealth which developed the Promoting Equal and Respectful Relationships in Faith Communities Manual and Tool Kit.

This resource is an abridged, easy to use version of the Manual and Tool Kit, specifically for the Muslim community. It has been developed following a request from The Victorian Board of Imams for a guide to assist them in their work to prevent violence against women and to build respectful relations within the Muslim community. This resource uses the content and expertise from the original Manual and Tool Kit, which has been adapted by Women's Health In the North.

Respect – A Muslim Leader's Guide to Promote Equal And Respectful Relationships aims to be a practical, accessible resource to empower you and your community to work together in raising the awareness of violence against women and to build your capacity to prevent this violence before it occurs. Working together to prevent violence against women helps create an ultimately safer community for us all.

Please note: All attempts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the details contained in this guide at the time of publication (2016). This resource has been designed for users in Melbourne, Australia, and so the information contained is specific to this location.

Violence against women and girls is now recognised as one of the leading public health and human rights issues of our time. Because of the scale and complexity of the problem, unique strategies and approaches are needed to effectively reduce and prevent violence against women. This resource provides a starting point for faith communities to work to eliminate violence against women.

One of the sad realities of our world is the violence committed by humans to each other, and all violence, whether against women, children or men is harmful and wrong. Violence takes place in both public spaces and in the home. Women in Australia are more likely to be the victims of physical or sexual violence in their home at the hands of a current or former male partner than from a stranger. Since the age of 15, 1 in 5 Australian women has experienced sexual violence, 1 in 3 Australian women has experienced physical violence and 1 in 4 Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.

This resource is designed for Muslim faith leaders to work with their communities to prevent violence against women and girls before it occurs through encouraging equal and respectful relationships.

A Muslim faith leader is a person within their community who is influential, may lead Islamic rituals or offer religious advice. A leader may be an Imam, a teacher, a school or a community member. Whoever they are, as a respected member of the community they can have a role in organising community education on this issue and facilitating action.

Within every faith community there will be women, men and children already affected by violence. When we speak about these issues, and when we begin to promote respectful relationships, we provide an opportunity for these members

to address the issues that are causing so much pain in their lives. While this resource focuses on actions to prevent violence against women, it also provides information on ways to safely and appropriately respond to disclosures of family violence. Information on creating a safe space and responding to violence against women can be found on page 31 of this resource.

This resource provides an introduction for faith communities to examine their own values and understanding of violence against women and start the journey of change to a healthier life for all community members. It is important that each faith community engages with this work at a level that acknowledges where they are starting from and seek guidance and resources to help them achieve their goals. It is very important that religious faith leaders take additional steps to educate themselves on how best to address this issue.





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Section 1

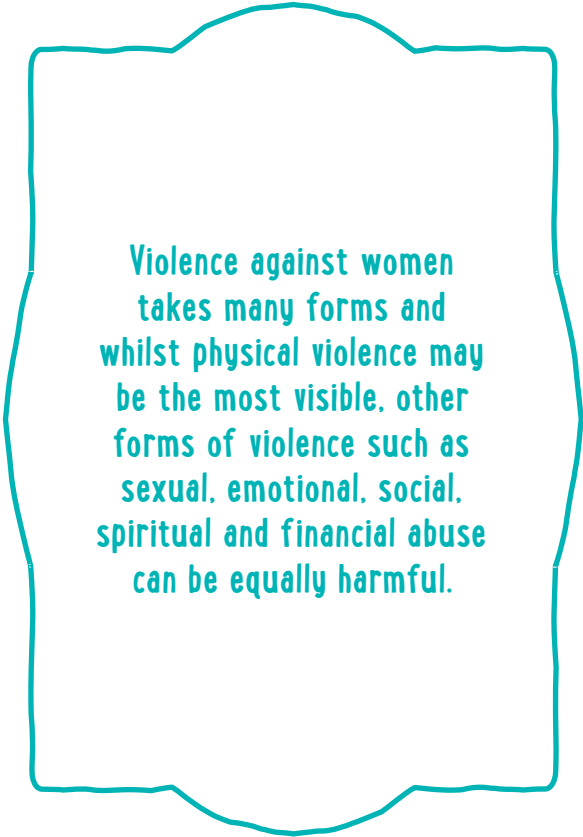


What is violence against women?

Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that is specifically directed against a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It is any act of 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.

Family violence is a broad term referring to violence between family members as well as violence between intimate partners or ex-partners. It is not a single incident of violence but is ongoing behaviour that gradually undermines the victim's confidence and ability to leave the violent person. The severity and frequency of violence often escalates over time. Exposing children to the violence or the effects of violence is also included as a form of family violence within the law. Family violence is a gendered crime and is most commonly experienced by women.

Intimate partner violence is 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.



Violence against women takes many forms and whilst physical violence may be the most visible, other forms of violence such as sexual, emotional, social, spiritual and financial abuse can be equally harmful.

SOCIAL ABUSE is described as using someone's social life to control them or make them feel bad about themselves. This can include isolating a person from family, friends and other social circles.



EMOTIONAL AND VERBAL ABUSE are behaviours and actions that cause mental harm. This includes making someone feel bad about themselves, using threats or put-downs, name calling, threatening to hurt or kill, telling someone they are useless, or purposely making them feel bad about themselves.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE includes behaviours and actions that cause a person to feel in danger, powerless and trapped. Women experience multiple and different inequalities, such as those based on culture, ethnicity, age, sexuality and disability and will therefore also experience violence in different ways as well. Racial violence and abuse that is commonly experienced by Muslim women may include daily forms of racism and incivility, such as being ridiculed and insulted, verbal abuse including intimidating and threatening behaviour, acts of discrimination and physical violence, including having hijab removed and being spat on.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE is described as using religious or spiritual beliefs to justify violence or denying a person to practice particular religious beliefs. It includes using the partner's religious or spiritual beliefs to manipulate them, or using religious leaders to dissuade women from seeking support because 'it is against the religion to go outside the community'.

SEXUAL ABUSE is unwanted and forced sexual activity or harassment. This can include using force to have sex, using demands or tricks to make someone do sexual things, or making someone feel bad about themselves and their sexuality.



FINANCIAL ABUSE is behaviours and actions that control a person's finances and do not allow them to be economically independent. Money can be used as a way of taking power over someone. This can include keeping control of all money matters, stopping someone from getting a job, gambling or selling personal things without permission.



PHYSICAL ABUSE is physical acts that hurt or scare whether they cause visible or non-visible injury. This can include holding, shoving, pushing, restraining, torturing, driving a car dangerously in order to scare, punching, biting, threatening, kicking, burning, throwing or smashing personal objects, punching holes in walls or doors, hurting or killing pets, breaking things or using a weapon.

Violence against women in Islam



Any form of emotional, physical, psychological abuse and the improper treatment of women is prohibited and not accepted in Islam. Islam clearly disallows family violence and any form of oppression or abuse. All women and men are protected under Islamic law.

Violence against women is now recognised as one of the leading human rights issues of our time, with global research indicating that it is prevalent in every community and every culture. It has an enormous impact on women and their children, eroding their mental, physical, emotional and financial wellbeing.

Violence against women works powerfully against the concept of a healthy membership and undermines the strength of our faith communities.

It limits the capacity of female members to effectively contribute to the life of the community and damages the social cohesion necessary to form a strong, unified team.

**“The Believers, men and women,
are protectors of one another”
(Qur’an 9:71)**

Violence against women has a devastating impact on individual women, their families, communities, workplaces and society as a whole. This violence causes long term health issues for women and girls as well as service system overload and enormous cost to the economy.

Improving the health of women involves changing the factors that lead to this violence. Promoting respectful and equal relationships is one way we can all make a difference to the health of women and girls in our society. Doing so will also create healthier conditions for men and boys as well.

The impact of violence against women

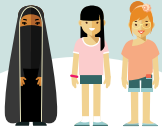
A WOMAN IS KILLED IN AUSTRALIA ALMOST EVERY WEEK BY A PARTNER OR FORMER PARTNER.



INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MORE ILL-HEALTH AND PREMATURE DEATH IN VICTORIAN WOMEN UNDER 45 THAN ANY OTHER WELL-KNOWN RISK FACTOR, INCLUDING HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, OBESITY AND SMOKING.

WOMEN AND GIRLS CONSTITUTE THE MAJORITY OF REPORTED VICTIMS OF FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE TO VICTORIA POLICE.

77% OF REPORTED FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIMS AND 89% OF REPORTED RAPE VICTIMS ARE WOMEN AND GIRLS.



ONE IN THREE

Australian women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15.



ONE IN FOUR

Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.



ONE IN FOUR

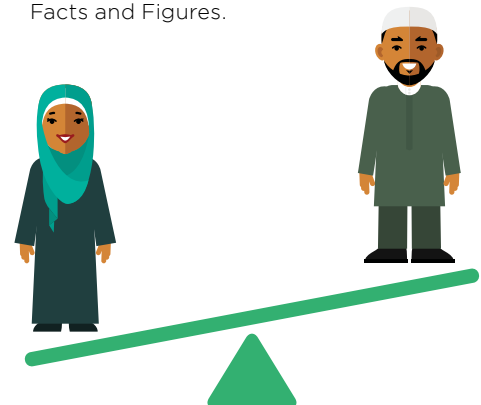
Australian women has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN COST THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY \$21.7 BILLION A YEAR.



FOR EVERY WOMAN WHOSE EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE CAN BE PREVENTED, \$20,766 CAN BE SAVED.

SOURCE: OurWatch 2015, Facts and Figures.



Australia's attitudes towards violence against women

27% think that men make better political leaders than women.



12% believe domestic violence can be excused if the violent person is under a lot of stress.

64% believe violence is because men can't control their anger.

19% think men should be in control in relationships and be the head of the household.

51% think most women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to. Even though this is the time when a woman is most in danger.

PEOPLE WHO AGREE WITH THESE STATEMENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO EXCUSE, TRIVIALISE OR JUSTIFY VIOLENCE TOWARDS WOMEN - OR TO THINK THE VICTIM IS PARTLY TO BLAME.



**ONE
IN FIVE**

Australian women has experienced sexual violence.

8 OUT OF 10

WOMEN AGED 18 TO 24 WERE HARASSED ON THE STREET IN THE PAST YEAR.

There is no excuse that makes violence acceptable.

WHILE WE CONTINUE TO SEE WOMEN AS LESS EQUAL THAN MEN, DISRESPECT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WILL CONTINUE TO HAPPEN.

SOURCE: VicHealth 2014, Australian's attitudes to violences against women: findings from the National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS).

Section 2

Why does violence against women occur and what can be done to end it?

Violence against women occurs in all socio-economic, age and cultural groups. There are many complex reasons why it occurs and research tells us that factors associated with gender inequality are the most consistent predictors of violence against women.

More specifically, the factors that drive violence against women have been identified as:

The condoning of violence against women

For example, the idea that it is excusable for men to use violence in certain circumstances, that they cannot always be held responsible, or that some kinds of violence (such as sexual harassment) are not serious.

Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence

For example, the idea that men should be the head of the household and decide how money is spent.

Rigid gender roles and identities

For example, the idea that women and men and girls and boys should act in certain ways or fulfill certain roles.

Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

For example, the way some groups of men 'bond' or seek to prove their 'manhood' or 'masculinity' through actions that are disrespectful, hostile or aggressive towards women.

Research has shown that permission or justification for violence against women is learned and reinforced through social, institutional, community and/or family environments. Work to end violence against women must therefore also take place in these settings. If we can change these factors at all levels of society, we can begin to minimise, or even eliminate altogether, violence against women. This is not a quick fix. It will require a strong and lengthy commitment from all sections of the community – but it can be done.

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

Gender inequity and violence against women manifests itself in many ways in society. Here are some examples of how the drivers of violence against women impact on women and our community:

- Women being forced into becoming a second or third wife
- Forced and early marriage
- Marriage without knowledge that the husband has other wives
- Denial of a marriage contract or marriage contract not being recognised
- Denial of inheritance
- Denial of access to mahr (dowry)
- Forcing a woman to abort unwanted children especially female fetuses
- Female genital cutting



“The relationship between gender inequality and violence against women is complex, as gender inequality is both a cause and result of violence against women. While progressing gender equality will reduce violence against women in the future, violence and abuse also act as a barrier to achieving gender equality as it has serious impacts on women’s health and wellbeing.”

Just because men perpetrate most of the violence that women experience does not mean that most men are violent, or that men should not be part of the work of ending this violence. Indeed, it is hard to see how we will ever prevent violence against women unless men take responsibility for themselves and the men around them. Encouraging men to reflect deeply on what it means to be men and, where necessary, to making significant changes to long-held attitudes and patterns of behaviour, is a vital way that faith communities can be involved in preventing violence against women.



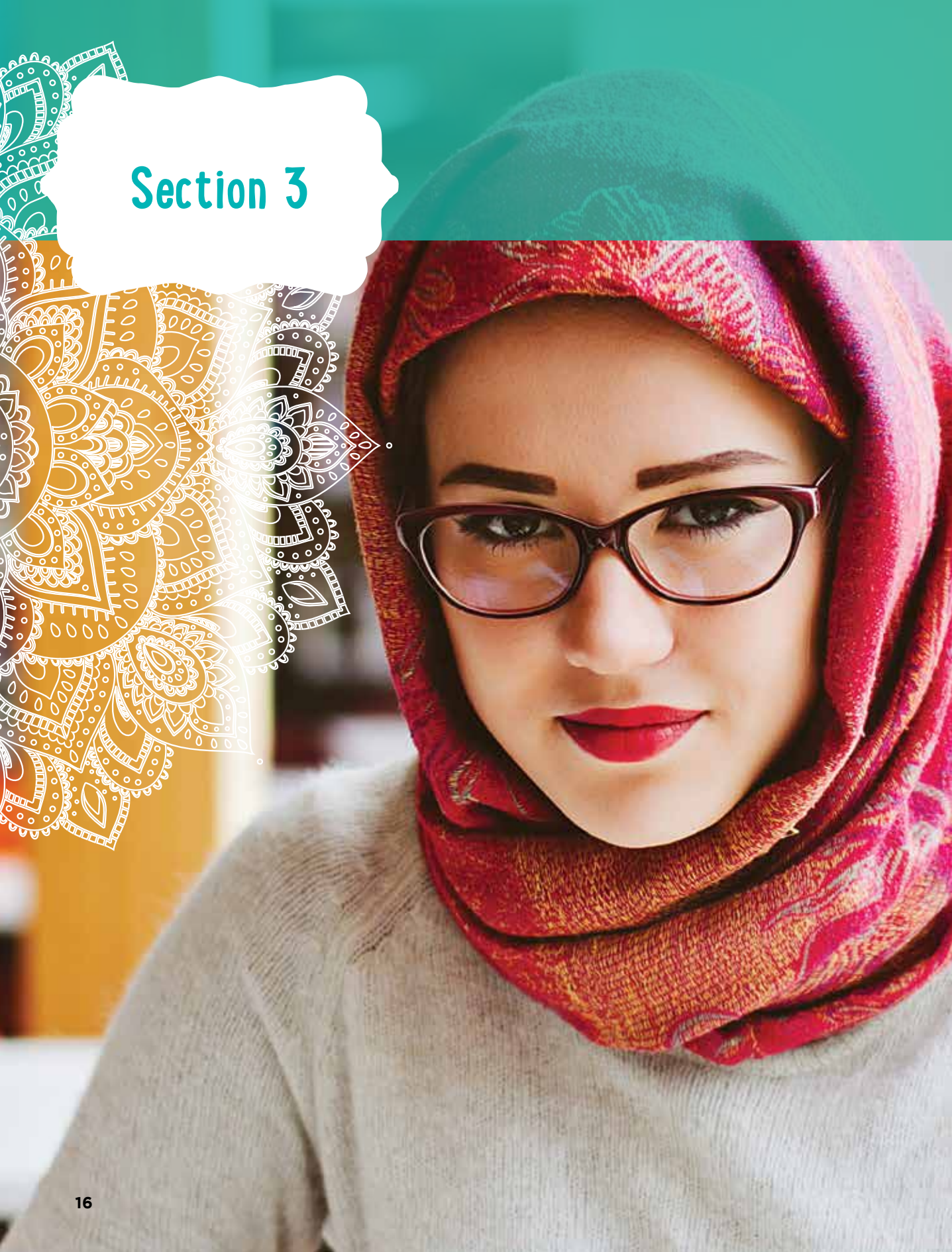
Prevention of violence against women activities must be developed in equal partnership with women from relevant communities and/or settings and with women's organisations who specialise in prevention of violence against women, and be informed and guided by established knowledge and experience in violence against women.

It is often said that our western society is rejecting religion and that faith communities are losing their social significance. Yet surveys suggest that most people continue to search for a spiritual essence in their lives, a deeper sense of well-being, and a sense of meaning and belonging. Faith communities have a deep reservoir of wisdom about this spirituality, but

can sometimes struggle to share it with a broader audience in a way that speaks to them. Being advocates in the community for creating equal and respectful relationships is a significant way that faith communities can share the wisdom of spirituality in a relevant and inspiring way.

Gender equality will be achieved when women and men are of equal value in our society and have the same rights, choices and opportunities. While Australia is making progress in advancing gender equality, many women still experience discrimination, are given fewer opportunities and have more restricted choices than men.

Section 3



Steps that you can take to address violence against women

This section provides practical steps that can be taken by faith communities to prevent violence against women before it occurs. Before we begin to look at ways to take action, this section provides information about the essential knowledge required to working together to prevent violence against women and promote gender equity.

Until recently, our response to violence against women was to care for the women affected, campaign for justice in our legal systems, improve access to support, raise awareness, and encourage men to take responsibility for their actions. These actions are vital but they only address the symptoms and outcomes of violence against women, they do not address the deeper reasons why this violence occurs.

Addressing the drivers of violence against women is critical. For violence against women to truly be eradicated from our community, we need to achieve gender equality.

Violence against women occurs when there is gender inequality. Action to prevent violence against women must work towards achieving gender equality and address the specific gendered drivers. These actions must:

- challenge the condoning of violence against women
- promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships

- challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships

When new initiatives are about complex and significant change, it can be difficult to know how to translate good ideas into great actions, but it can be done! Have a clear action plan, listing what you want to achieve, how you are going to achieve it, the resources you will need, and who else will be involved. Violence against women is not going to change overnight, but if each of us is committed to a prevention-focused strategy – no matter how small – together we can make a difference.

This section provides faith communities with practical ways to be part of initiatives that promote equal and respectful relationships between women and men, and ultimately aim to eliminate violence against women. Every community will be at different stages of their journey to promoting equal and respectful relationships; however there are always opportunities for faith leaders and communities to be part of action to end violence against women.



Even though communities will be at different stages, we all have a role to play in addressing this issue and one or many of the following approaches will make a difference. All of the actions and steps that your community can take to address violence against women focus on addressing the underlying causes of this violence – gender inequality. These actions and opportunities to engage in this work have been separated into **five sections**:

1. Promoting Equal and Respectful Relationships

This section provides examples of how to promote equal and respectful relationships by highlighting what inequality and equality look like, and by promoting the basis of what makes a healthy relationship.

2. Creating awareness and challenging attitudes

This section provides examples of how faith communities can create awareness about violence against women and challenge attitudes that contribute to gender inequality. For example, this can occur through bulletin boards and newsletters, within khutbah (sermons) and addresses and in everyday conversations.

3. Improving women's independence and leadership

This section highlights the opportunities for faith communities to improve women's independence and leadership. It includes examples of ways to strengthen women's economic security, independence and decision making by providing financial literacy and leadership training and information sessions.

4. Engaging in campaigns that promote gender equity and ending violence against women

This section highlights key campaigns which faith communities can be part of to promote gender equity and eliminate violence against women, including the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and the Week Without Violence.

5. Working in partnership – with organisations and with your own community

This section provides ideas about how to work together with women's organisations, your local council, and your faith community to promote equal and respectful relationships.



The spiritual search is a search to connect – to connect with the divine presence, to connect with a larger vision and purpose, and to connect with other people of faith. Connecting requires respect and safety, and when these are lacking, the spiritual dimensions of people's lives are affected.

When we embrace the principles of preventing violence against women, all our members – women and men – will benefit, because these principles are the same ones that create a stronger environment for spiritual growth.

1. Promoting equal and respectful relationships

Focusing attention on the skills, behaviours and attitudes that are essential to healthy relationships is an important way that faith communities can promote respectful relations and gender equality.

Faith communities are great places to talk about equal and respectful relationships. The strength of any faith community is dependent on the health of its members. A healthy membership is one where everyone feels energised. They feel connected to each other and the vision and goals of the community.

Because of their personal experiences, many people are familiar with what an unhealthy relationship looks like, but less familiar with the opposite – a healthy relationship.

Respectful relationships education is

an important prevention activity with particular relevance for young people. Faith communities are often well placed to work with children and young people through Saturday Islamic School, Friday night youth group or other gathering spaces to promote respect and gender equality.

A commitment to promoting respectful relationships and preventing violence against women is a commitment to growing a stronger, healthier and more vital faith community – one that has a deep sense of integrity, and which people are excited to belong to.

Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations among women and men, boys and girls by providing examples of what equality looks like. As a faith leader, this can be done by modelling equal and respectful relations with your community, having conversation about equality, and challenging male attitudes that are hostile or disrespectful towards women.

What does equality between women and men look like?

- Women and men are equally valued in their decision-making in private and public life
- Women and men are equally represented in leadership roles in private life and society
- Women and men are of equal value in our society and have the same rights, choices and opportunities
- Women don't experience violence and discrimination

The following list provides a brief description of a healthy relationship and can be used to assist faith communities in understanding and discussing the nature of healthy relationships:

WHAT MAKES A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

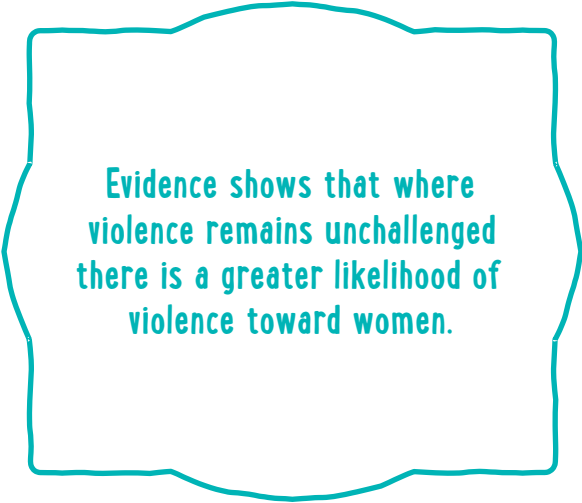
- you make decisions together
- it's okay to disagree with each other
- you both have other friendships, family and activities in your life
- you feel comfortable and safe with your partner
- there is mutual respect
- communication is open and honest
- intimacy is pleasant for both
- There is NO abuse or violence
- The work of running a household is negotiated and shared

2. Creating awareness and challenging attitudes

In environments where rigid gender roles are commonly accepted, or even encouraged, there is an increased risk of violence against women. Changing our attitudes towards gender and the roles of women and men is therefore an important element of preventing violence against women.

Violence, and the threat of it, is most often used to exert power and control over others. Evidence shows that where violence remains unchallenged there is a greater likelihood of violence toward women. Preventing violence means challenging the place of violence and power in our lives, particularly in the lives of men.

Encouraging men to reflect deeply on what it means to be men and, where necessary, to making significant changes to long-held attitudes and patterns of behaviour, is a vital way that faith communities can be involved in preventing violence against women.



Evidence shows that where violence remains unchallenged there is a greater likelihood of violence toward women.

When we talk publicly about violence against women, it's possible it will empower a member of your faith community to speak to you or another leader about their own experiences of family violence. Faith leaders should be prepared for this, see page 31 for some hints on responding to disclosures.

Undertaking training on gender equity and preventing violence against women

Because most of us are involved in relationships and experience what it means to be male or female on a daily basis, we can easily assume that we understand the issues involved in preventing violence against women. However, this is not necessarily the case as evidenced by a growing amount of new knowledge, research and practice emerging in the field of primary prevention of violence against women. It is therefore important that any faith personnel becoming involved in this area, such as a Member Support /Pastoral Care Officer undertake some training.

Women's Health In the North provides professional development on gender equity and the prevention of violence against women in Melbourne's northern suburbs – contact details available on page 36 of this resource.



Reflecting on gender and gender roles within your faith community

We know that one of the key gendered drivers of violence against women are rigid approaches to gender roles. Faith communities have often had a particular approach to this issue based on ideas about the gendered nature of God and the ordering of creation.

Reflecting on your own assumptions about gender can be a good place to start this work. Here are some questions to ask yourself and your community:

- Are men treated differently to women in our faith community?
- Does our faith community actively ensure that women's opinions are sought when making decisions?
- Are women allowed and encouraged to make a contribution to the theological teaching in our faith community?
- Does our faith community have different expectations about how women should behave compared to men?

Fact sheets/newsletter inserts

Most faith communities have a bulletin board, as well as a regular newsletter or pamphlet. These are great platforms for providing information about the issues surrounding violence against women, and what can be done to prevent it. By providing a series of facts sheets or newsletter inserts, more detailed information can be presented over time than could be as a once-off.

Making use of khutbah (sermons), other public addresses, and halaqah (religious study circles)

Worship is at the heart of most faith communities. What happens at worship sets the tone and ethos of the faith community. This can sometimes provide an opportunity to promote messages about respectful relationships, equality and saying no to violence.

Because of the authority of the leader within the faith community, these teaching occasions carry a significant influence and impact, so it is vital that the content of that message in relation to prevention of violence against women is clear and unambiguous. This includes acknowledging that violence is never acceptable, and that women should never be blamed for the violence they receive. Care should be taken, not just with teaching directly on the topic of preventing violence against women, but also on related topics such as marriage, family, culture and violence, masculinity and femininity, and human rights.

3. Improving women's independence and leadership

Faith communities provide an important opportunity for women to connect with each other and be supported.

Faith communities can build on this opportunity by providing education and information sessions on a range of topics to empower women in both private and public life. Strengthening women's economic security, independence and decision making can be achieved by providing financial literacy and leadership training and information sessions.

Encouraging women in leadership

As with other areas of life, women and girls can significantly contribute to all areas of the life of faith. To ensure faith communities have access to the widest range of skills, experience and opinions, it is important that women and girls are well represented in leadership positions.

Women and girls already have many of the skills required to be leaders including, a willingness to dedicate time and energy to make a difference, a passion for their faith and a commitment to making improvements.

Increasing the involvement of women in leadership and decision making in your faith community is also required to achieve greater equality between women and men. Some practical ways that women can be given more opportunities for leadership and decision making in the community are:

- Actively recruiting women and girls to management committee positions.
- Survey your membership to find out about women's skills and if they'd be interested in taking on a leadership role.
- Using a column in your newsletter to encourage the women and girls to get involved.
- Putting women and girls forward to undertake training opportunities, including accredited ones offered by your faith community.
- Ensuring women are represented on faith committees and boards.
- Making sure all community committees have an equal number of women and men. Ensure that women and men are able to contribute equally to discussions.
- Giving women an opportunity to take on senior roles in education.
(PER 2016)



Mentoring for women and girls

All people involved in faith communities – regardless of gender – can benefit from having a mentor. However, the specific barriers women can face in pursuing leadership positions in faith communities are different for men. For example, women are still generally responsible for childcare and can have less time available to juggle home, work and leadership responsibilities. Sometimes community members may hold obstructive views about women in leadership. For these reasons, mentoring is particularly important in increasing women’s self-confidence, assisting in establishing networks and supporting leadership development.

Examples of mentoring opportunities:

- Offer both informal and formal mentoring. Formal mentoring can appear daunting and imply time commitments that might not be achievable. Don’t underestimate the value of mentors simply catching up for a quick coffee or keeping in phone contact with their mentees.
- Support women to develop and join networks. Consider establishing a women’s group or foundation to help women connect with, and learn from, other women who are in leadership positions.

4. Engaging in campaigns that promote gender equity and ending violence against women

Recognising and celebrating campaigns that aim to prevent violence against women are a great way for faith communities to lead community initiatives.

Faith communities can hold events, join in community events, and have conversations about these campaigns with other community members. Key international campaigns that are celebrated in Australia and are a great initiative for faith communities to be part of, include the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and the Week Without Violence.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (16 Days Campaign) is a global campaign dedicated to ending gender-based violence and raising awareness about the impact of violence against women.

The 16 Days Campaign starts on the International day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 25) and ends on the International Human Rights Day (December 10) to emphasise that violence against women is a violation of human rights.

The Campaign encourages women and men to take the lead in their communities and networks by speaking out about gender violence, challenging the attitudes that allow violence to continue in our society and calling on governments to respond to and prevent violence against women. The campaign provides faith communities with an opportunity to focus their prevention efforts and link in with a broader campaign.

Week Without Violence

Week Without Violence was started by the YWCA in the 1990s and has since spread to over 100 countries around the world, where it's celebrated in the third week of October each year. It is a social marketing campaign that raises awareness by calling for a week without violence against women.

Around the world, different activities are held, with an emphasis on women's experience of violence, the impact that it has on their lives, and the impact on children and families. The Week Without Violence is also an opportunity to celebrate the resilience of women who survive domestic violence and to promote organisations that seek to support women and their health. These organisations include women's health networks, domestic violence networks, sexual assault support centres, women's refuges and women's support networks.



5. Working in partnership – with organisations and with your own community

One way to increase the scope and reach of prevention activities is to form partnerships with other local organisations. Action that is lead and driven by the community will be more effective.

Partnerships can lend a greater breadth of expertise to the activities, plus they can give extra promotional force and credibility, which is particularly useful if you are seeking funding.

There are many organisations in the community that could be engaged as partners in the prevention of violence against women. Don't be afraid to think outside the box! As a starting point, consider the following:

- **Other local faith communities or networks:** a good place to begin is with the other faith communities or networks in your area. Prevention of violence against women is a powerful issue which you could do some shared activity around.
- **Regional Women's Health Services:** no matter where in Victoria you are located, the Regional Women's Health Service will be working to prevent violence against women. This is a core priority for all women's health services. These services are valuable resources as they will have a wealth of knowledge about where to start, who to connect in with and what resources and information are available.
- **Local government:** many local governments are now becoming actively involved in the prevention of violence against women. Visit www.lgpvaw.net.au for details.
- **Service groups:** including Rotary and Lions, are often keen to partner with other local groups for specific projects. Soroptimists is a lesser known but important women's service group that has a particular focus on issues concerning women. Find out more at www.soroptimist.org.
- **Welfare agencies:** including Anglicare and Good Shepherd have local offices which can be approached to develop local partnerships around specific projects.
- **Schools:** Schools are often looking for practical projects that tie in with their educational programs.

Ideas and reflections for promoting equal and respectful relationships with your faith community

Ask yourself, do you and your faith community:

Provide information on why the involvement of faith communities is important for encouraging respectful relationships?

Celebrate and recognise campaigns that promote gender equity and ending violence against women?

Already talk about and change attitudes about violence?



Sign up to relevant newsletters from organisations working in family violence prevention?

Provide information about violence against women, including impact on women and children, cost to the community, types of violence.

Provide information and model healthy relationships between women and men?

Provide information on what is already happening in the community to prevent violence against women and promote equal and respectful relationships?



Undertake training provided by women's organisations to better understand the link between gender inequality and violence against women?



Have a public declaration to say NO to violence against women?

Provide information on the way power inequality operates within relationships?

Highlight or challenge what your faith tradition teaches about gender and inequality?



Engage with local women's groups, or volunteer with local women's refuges/safe houses?

Ensure leadership is informed on responding to disclosures and has up to date information on the services that support women?

Provide information on the role of men in the prevention of violence against women?

Promote and/or discourage gender equality?

Encourage women in, or interested in, leadership positions?

Develop programs and opportunities for mentoring women and girls?

What role do the men in our faith community want to play in preventing violence against women?

Encourage your members to do training on prevention of violence against women?



All invited to strive for greater equality between women and men through our commitment to the human rights principles which pave the way to peace and prosperity.

Faith communities cannot ignore this challenge or be slow to 'skill up'; or we will become more and more alienated from the lives of the very people we want to welcome into our communities.

Section 4



Creating a safe space for responding to violence against women

This section provides information about how to safely and respectfully respond to disclosures of family violence. While it is important to offer a place to talk about the victim’s safety and provide support, it is vital that you provide women with information about family violence services and counselling.

Ask them, “Do you feel safe” or “Are you in immediate danger”. If someone is in immediate danger, or has been physically or sexually assaulted, threatened or stalked, the person can call the police on 000 (triple zero).

You can provide information about local family violence services. The Northern Region Family Violence Help Cards are available in 15 community languages.

These Help Cards inform community members, victims and perpetrators that family violence is a crime and provide information about support services that are available in Melbourne’s northern metropolitan region. You can order these cards by contacting Women’s Health In the North – details on page 36 of this resource.

Northern Region Family Violence Help Cards



Here are some essential things to consider when a woman or child discloses family violence:

- Offer to find a safe space to talk, in private.
- Ask her if she'd like someone else present when you speak with her.
- Listen to what she has to say and remind her that the violence is unacceptable and that she deserves to live free from violence.
- Believe what she tells you. Her description of the abuse is probably only the tip of the iceberg.
- Give priority to her immediate safety.
- Empower her to make her own decisions.
- Support and respect her choices. Even if she initially chooses to return to the abuser, it is her choice. She has the most information about how to survive. However, if there are children involved their safety must come first – refer to the Family Violence Help Cards for more information on this.
- Give her information in her own language about relevant support agencies and, if appropriate, offer to contact the agency on her behalf. Do so in her presence or offer a safe and private place from which she can contact the relevant agency.
- Do not offer counselling – refer her to those who are trained in this area (phone numbers of family violence support services are included on the next page).
- Reassure her that this is not her fault, she doesn't deserve this treatment and it is not God's will for her.
- Let her know that what the abuser has done is wrong and completely unacceptable.
- Always act confidentially.



Family violence support services

1800-RESPECT

A national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service that offers information, advice and support to victims of family violence and their family members, friends and work colleagues.

1800 737 732

www.1800respect.org.au

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

A 24/7 family violence response service for Victoria that provide support for women and children.

1800 015 188

www.safesteps.org.au

inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

Provides information, support and counselling for women in their own language.

1800 755 988

www.intouch.asn.au

Men's Referral Service

Provides confidential telephone counselling, information and referrals to help men stop using violence.

1800 065 973

www.mrs.org.au

Section 5



Additional Resources and Information

This section provides an overview of the additional resources and information that will support faith leaders and communities to access organisations skilled in preventing violence against women and tips for locating faith-specific resources that promote equal and respectful relationships. For more information, visit www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Interfaith or contact Darebin City Council on 8470 8888.

Tips for locating faith resources that promote equal and respectful relationships:

- Look for resources that have been written by women.
- For resources written by both male and female authors, try and find out what else they have written so you can assess their general perspective.
- Lean towards resources that are contemporary, and developed in the last ten years. Older resources that are regularly cited by recent authors are an important exception.
- Find official documents of significant organisations, such as universities, peak faith bodies or national and international bodies such as the United Nations.
- Locate resources that have been published by progressive and pro-women faith organisations.
- Look for resources that offer a careful analysis of both sides of a topic rather than a one-sided opinion.
- Track down resources where the authors are prepared to offer a reflection of their own faith tradition.
- Find resources that explore new and contextual ways of understanding sacred texts.
- Although the internet is a bounty of resources, take care to assess the integrity of what you are reading.
- Contact your local women's health service or local Council for advice on where to find resources.

Women's organisations

In Victoria, and locally, women's organisations work from a women-centred and feminist philosophy. These organisations can support you and your efforts to address violence against women, through resources, videos and training. As a starting point, the following websites will support your work in this space.

Women's Health In the North

Aims to strengthen women's health and wellbeing, with a strategic focus on preventing violence against women, sexual and reproductive rights, economic participation and, more recently, the impact of climate change on women.

9484 1666

www.whin.org.au

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health

A women's health organisation which is committed to improving the health of immigrant and refugee women around Australia.

9418 0999

www.mcwh.com.au

Women's Legal Service Victoria

A not for profit organisation providing free and confidential legal information, advice, referrals and representation to women in Victoria. They specialise in issues arising from relationship breakdown and violence against women.

9642 0877

www.womenslegal.org.au

Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights

Works to advance the rights and status of Muslim women in Australia. They have published a number of excellent resources on Islam and violence against women, and run training programs for service providers working with Muslim women.

9481 3000

www.ausmuslimwomenscentre.org.au

Victorian Women's Trust

Advocates for the rights of women and girls. The Victorian Women's Trust offers grants to projects that improve conditions for women and girls.

9642 0422

www.vwt.org.au

YWCA Victoria

Supports women with housing and accommodation, provides advocacy for the rights of women and girls, and offers mentoring programs for young women.

8341 8700

www.ywca.net





Organisations for the prevention of violence against women

In Australia, there are a number of organisations that can support communities to lead preventing violence against women activities. These organisations provide information, resources and some offer training relating to family violence, violence against women and gender equity. As a starting point, the following websites will support your work in this space.

Our Watch

A national organisation that has been established to drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children.

www.ourwatch.org.au

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

Aims to prevent family violence and promote respectful relationships by leading debate, promoting social changes, and strengthening the community and service system response to violence against women and their children, from primary prevention to recovery.

9486 9866

www.dvrcv.org.au

No To Violence

A Victorian state-wide body of organisations and individuals working with men to end their violence and abuse against family members.

9487 4500

www.ntv.org.au

White Ribbon

A national, male led Campaign to end men's violence against women.

www.whiteribbon.org.au



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Darebin City Council 2011, *Promoting equal and respectful relationships in faith communities: a manual and tool kit working together to prevent violence against women before it occurs*, Northern Interfaith Respectful Relationships Project, Melbourne.

Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, *Power and control wheel*, Duluth Model.

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Our Watch, ANROWS, & VicHealth 2015, *Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch, Melbourne.

VicHealth 2014, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women. Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

VicHealth 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

Further details about the purpose of this resource and information to support you to be a leading faith community that promotes equal and respectful relationships among women and men, including a complete list of references, can be found at www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Interfaith or by calling Darebin City Council on 8470 8888.

RESPECT is a resource for Muslim faith leaders and communities to take action to prevent violence against women and promote equal and respectful relationships. For more information, visit www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Interfaith

الإحترام هو وسيلة يستند إليها القادة المسلمون والجاليات المسلمة لمنع العنف ضد النساء وتعزيز العلاقات المتكافئة والقائمة على الإحترام. للمزيد من المعلومات، يُرجى زيارة www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Interfaith

Saygı, Müslüman inanç önderleri ve toplulukların kadınlara karşı şiddeti önlemek ve eşit, saygılı ilişkileri desteklemek üzere harekete geçmek için kullanabilecekleri bir kaynaktır. Daha fazla bilgi için www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Interfaith adresini ziyaret edin

«احترام» منبعی برای رهبران اسلامی و جوامع محلی است تا با استفاده از آن برای جلوگیری از خشونت بر علیه زنان و ارتقای روابط برابر و پایه گذاری شده بر مبنای احترام اقدام نمایند. جهت کسب اطلاعات بیشتر به این وب سایت مراجعه کنید www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Interfaith

Xushmaddu waa keydka macluumaadka bulshooyinka iyo hogaamiyayaasha diinta Muslimka iyo inay tallaabo ka qaadaan kana hortagayaan qalalaasaha dumarka iyo inay kor u qaadaan xiriirada xushmadda iyo sinnaanta badan leh. Wixii macluumaad dheeraad ah, gal www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Interfaith

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National Relay Service

TTY dial 133 677 or
Speak & Listen
1300 555 727
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