

MAV PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROJECT

This leadership statement represents a major component of the work undertaken by the MAV to build the capacity of councils to prevent violence against women, and to foster leadership on this issue within councils and across the local government sector.

The MAV Prevention of Violence against Women Project has been funded by the Victorian Government and includes:

- > resourcing a local government prevention of violence against women network
- > a gender equity section of the MAV website
- > listing relevant professional development forums for councils
- > establishing of a leadership group consisting of senior level champions who have committed to progress leadership on the prevention of violence against women in the local government sector.

For further information about this project or work Victorian councils are undertaking in the prevention of violence against women, contact the MAV on 9667 3333 or www.mav.vic.gov.au

REFERENCES:

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Promoting Gender Equity

MAV PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN LEADERSHIP STATEMENT

Victorian councils leading progress in the prevention of violence against women

An increasing number of Victorian councils are supporting or are directly involved in preventing violence against women actively. Much of this work is guided by the current research showing that the key determinant of violence against women is the persisting inequalities between men and women.

As the peak body for Victorian local government, the MAV pledges to support councils to undertake this work and to provide leadership on the prevention of violence against women.

MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA
Level 12, 60 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
GPO Box 4326, Melbourne 3001
Telephone: 03 9667 3333
Email: inquiry@mav.vic.gov.au
Website: www.mav.vic.gov.au



MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

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POLICY CONTEXT

Violence against women affects approximately one in three women over their lifetime¹ in Australia. The health, social and economic costs of violence against women are profound.

Compared with other risk factors, intimate partner violence is the top ranking contributor to preventable disease and premature death among Victorian women aged 15 - 44².

The social impacts of violence are closely associated with family homelessness, housing issues, drug and alcohol issues and can seriously undermine the mental and physical health of infants, children and young people.

Reported incidents of violence against women cost the Australia's economy approximately \$13.6 billion in 2009, according to a study commissioned by the Australian Government³.

Research shows that the key determinant of violence against women is the persisting inequities between men and women.

The approach in Victoria has been informed by the seminal work of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) which advocates primary prevention activity in redressing the unequal distribution of power between men and women⁴. This involves understanding societal and individual norms which privilege one gender over the other.

For many years, Victorian councils have taken an essential role in responding to violence against women through the provision of direct services.

More recently, an increasing number of councils have engaged in activities and programs aimed at preventing violence against women, particularly given their role in creating healthy and safe communities.

Local government has been an early leader in this approach to violence prevention and will continue to model and promote equal and respectful relationships between men and women.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006.

² VicHealth, 2006.

³ KPMG, 2009.

⁴ VicHealth, 2007.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The MWV commits to provide leadership in preventing violence against women through:

Advocacy to other levels of government to increase the resources in clarifying, enhancing and implementing legislation and influencing social norms for more equal relationships between men and women.

Building capacity within this organisation and the sector to understand the prevalence, seriousness and preventable nature of the problem and the roles that local government can play in addressing gender equity and promoting respectful relationships.

Promoting local government's role, achievements and best practice in preventing violence against women to the sector and other levels of government. In addition, championing 'whole of community' approaches to raising awareness and responding to opportunities to promote respectful relationships.

Supporting local councils in their community leadership role by facilitating the provision of resources including advice, expertise, networks and policy support.

STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

1> Build relationships

Build informal relationships and formal partnerships to make the most of the broad range of council activities and networks to influence community attitudes. Pursue various opportunities through working with schools, sporting groups, businesses, other councils and tiers of governments.

2> Stimulate and nurture leadership

Develop leadership at all levels and departments, to build expertise and capacity for reinforcing gender equity messages and behaviours.

3> Raise the profile of primary prevention

Communicating the causes of violence against women and the barriers to equality requires tailoring messages appropriate to the audience, both within council and with the community.

4> Share the learning

Talking about the successes and challenges assists in refining your efforts, can lead to further opportunities, and deepen understanding and ownership of the issue.

5> Develop the workforce

Build the knowledge and skills of a broad cross-section of your council to achieve organisation-wide capability and support for gender equality.

6> Normalise workplace discussion about gender equity

Initiate and promote conversations about the causes of violence against women, to help people understand the role we all have in addressing the problem.

7> Influence and adapt council business

Putting primary prevention and gender equity into mainstream council operations and practice promotes and supports respect and equity in the community. Continue to fine tune and examine your plans, policies and programs to embed real and lasting change.

These seven strategies are abridged versions from the Respect and Equity: Preventing Violence Against Women Guide for Local Government developed by Maribyrnong City Council on behalf of VicHealth⁴.

⁴ Maribyrnong City Council and VicHealth, 2013.