

# Five Year Strategic Plan

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September 2014

# Strategic plan



Our  
**WATCH**

End violence against  
Women And Their Children

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# Foreword from our Chair

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**Violence against women and their children has been minimised, excused and often ignored. Public discussion has grown, but so have the disclosures and the deaths. In Australia, one woman is killed almost every week, most often by an intimate or former partner.**

It is known by many names and manifests in many forms: family and domestic violence, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, harassment, dating violence, unwanted kissing and sexual touching, rape, threats against children and femicide.

No matter what form it takes, it is well-recognised that one effect of this behaviour is to control through fear, and to place the safety and well-being of women and children at risk.

The long history of dedicated work by the women's movement, both individuals and organisations, to prevent violence against women and their children, has most recently been given public expression through our government's commitment to the twelve year *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women And Their Children (2010-2022)*.

For this aspiration to become a reality it has to also be held by the wider community and civil society.

Our Watch has been established for just this purpose; to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that underpin and create violence against women and children.

Our vision is an Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence.

Our mandate is to stop violence before it happens.

In our first year, we engaged carefully with a wide range of stakeholders,<sup>1</sup> as well as talking to many experienced professionals and individuals. We will continue to work closely with a range of partners to ensure the diversity of our communities are involved and heard.

Our work derives from the National Plan and this five year Strategy gives expression to many of the activities in the Second Action Plan 2013–2016 – Moving Ahead and more.<sup>2</sup>

We will break new ground, acting as a catalyst for change and new responses, stimulating public understanding and appetite, and growing community engagement and specialist skills and knowledge.

Our work will always be based on sound research and strong and diverse partnerships.

We have reviewed the evidence about what it takes to make a difference. We have crafted a theory or model to effect change and we are ready for sustained and effective action.

Ending violence against women and children is a national priority and community responsibility.

Together we can work to end violence against women and their children. It's time to speak out and take action on Our Watch.

**Natasha Stott Despoja, AM**

**Chair**

# We will **break** new ground, acting as a **catalyst** for **change**

**Our Watch aims to reach the largest possible number of people with quality, sustained and meaningful interventions that encourage shifts in the way people think about and behave in relation to gender and violence by:**

- Improving the public's awareness of what forms violence can present in a woman's life.
- Offering national leadership to prevent all forms of violence against women and children.
- Through community engagement, public discussion and support of practitioners, grow the primary prevention movement and its impact across the country.

# Executive Summary

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No matter what it is called and how it is understood, violence against women and their children remains a daily reality and lived experience of many. It not only results in trauma and tragedy, but a continuing need to deal with its consequences, some of which are fatal.

**A woman dies at the hands of a current or former partner almost every week in this country.**

**Since the age of 15, one woman in every three has experienced physical violence.<sup>3</sup>**

**Similarly, almost one in every five has experienced sexual violence.<sup>3</sup>**

**Women in Australia are at least three times more likely than men to experience violence at the hands of an intimate partner.<sup>3</sup>**

**Add to this the fact that almost half of the women who had experienced violence by an ex-partner stated children had seen or heard the violence.<sup>4</sup>**

These statistics are not new. Behind them are the personal and collective stories of women and their children who cannot realise their full potential as individuals, as citizens, as contributing members of society. This violence negatively impacts the relationships we have at individual, family, organisational and community levels.

The effect of violence on people's lives is far reaching and often results in subsequent health problems, including mental health issues. Intimate partner violence has been found to be a leading contributor to ill-health and premature death in women,<sup>5</sup> more than any other of the well-known risk factors.<sup>6</sup>

For children the impact on their safety, development and wellbeing is traumatic, long-term, yet mostly unseen and underestimated.

Violence against women and their children costs the community through the pain and suffering experienced by survivors and premature mortality. Economic impacts extend to victims and survivors trying to stay safe and employed and are also borne by employers and businesses.<sup>7</sup>

Violence affects men as well as women. Yet data shows that violence against women is likely to be different in terms of the form the violence takes, its severity and impacts. Men are more likely to experience violence by other men and in a public space, while the vast majority of acts of domestic violence and sexual assault are perpetrated by men against women.

Underpinning these facts is the gendered nature of the violence we seek to stop, that is, violence primarily perpetrated by men against women. Our mandate is violence directed at women and their children.

The opportunity for women and their children – no matter what community they live in or identify with – to live without the fear or reality of violence is a strong driving force for change across Australia.

Changing the prevalence of violence against women and their children should make a sustained positive impact not only for our friends, families and communities, but for future generations.

Our Watch is committed to preventing violence against women and their children by enabling the community to speak out and take action.

Over the next five years, we aim to see more people across the Australian community rejecting violence against women and their children, and taking positive action to stop this violence before it happens.

# Everyone

## has the right to life, liberty and security of person

*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

**The emotional and personal costs of violence against women cannot be measured: the effects reach all levels of society.**

**Violence not only affects the victim themselves, but the children who are exposed to it, their extended families, their friends, their work colleagues and ultimately the broader community.**

**Too many young people in Australia have witnessed acts of physical domestic violence against a parent.**

*National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*

**The term violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.**

*The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*

## ‘Safe Dates’ and School Based Primary Prevention

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An innovative primary prevention program, Safe Dates, aims to prevent ‘dating violence’ before it occurs by educating high school students in years eight and nine at a time when they are starting to form romantic and intimate relationships.

Developed by adolescent behaviour experts in the United States, the initiative works by raising awareness among teenagers about what constitutes a healthy or violent dating relationship, and the causes and consequences of violence.

The evidence-based education program equips students with the skills and resources they need to have safe, equal and respectful intimate relationships. Safe Dates teaches students skills such as effective communication and conflict resolution, and gives them the tools they need to help a friend who may be experiencing violence in a relationship.

Designed to fit within a health education, family life or general life skills curriculum, Safe Dates has proven successful as a dating violence prevention and intervention tool for male and female students.

**While many well conceptualised school based violence prevention programs are being implemented in Australia, ‘Safe Dates’ – a US program – is the first to be longitudinally evaluated to prove effectiveness over time.**

**Using engaging and interactive methods, Safe Dates teaches students to recognise the difference between caring, supportive relationships and controlling, manipulative or violent relationships.**

The program includes 10-session curriculum for use by schools and involves parents and carers by providing them with resources about the topics covered in Safe Dates to encourage discussion at home.

Each 50-minute session targets attitudes and behaviour associated with dating violence. They include games, class discussions, writing exercises and role plays to help students identify what violence in relationships looks like and develop skills to speak to friends who are violent or support friends who are experiencing violence.

The program also features a 45-minute play about dating violence, which was written by high-school drama students. After the performance, actors lead discussions about issues presented in the play.

A poster competition on the theme of dating violence prevention reinforces the concepts learned in the curriculum, while community activities include the provision of specialist services for adolescents in violent relationships and professional development for service providers.



First implemented in 2006, Safe Dates is the first school based prevention program longitudinally evaluated using a randomised controlled trial.

During a rigorous study of outcomes in 14 United States schools, the program was found to be effective in both preventing violence and reducing perpetration among teens already using violence in their dating relationships. Adolescents participating in the program reported less acceptance of dating violence, stronger communication and anger management skills, less gender stereotyping and greater awareness of community services for dating violence.

The first evaluation showed students who went through the Safe Dates program reported significantly less violence – both as perpetrators and victims – than students who had not. A second evaluation a year later showed the program was effective in preventing psychological, physical, and sexual violence perpetration against dating partners and had a positive impact on norms around violence, gender stereotyping, conflict resolution skills, and awareness of the issue of intimate partner violence.

Researchers studied the same group of students four years after implementation and found Safe Dates participants reported 56 per cent to 92 per cent less physical, serious physical, and sexual dating violence victimisation and perpetration than students who did not participate.

While few Australian school based prevention programs have been longitudinally evaluated, students and teachers also report positive experiences after participating in school based violence prevention programs.

Teachers particularly note improved relationships with students and an increase in students' knowledge and skills about the issue of violence against women. Students also report increased levels of understanding around the issue of violence against women and recognise that these programs build empathy, awareness and encourage self-reflection.

*Reference: Foshee VA, Bauman KE, Ennett ST, Linder GF, Benefield T, Suchindran C (2004), Assessing the long-term effects of the Safe Dates program and a booster in preventing and reducing adolescent dating violence victimisation and perpetration*



# Change is Possible



Violence against women and their children is a complex and deeply entrenched social problem, not only in Australia but across the world. The World Health Organisation identified it as the leading public health issue for the international community to address.<sup>8</sup>

There are no easy solutions or quick fixes. A sustained reduction in, and ultimately prevention of, violence against women and their children, requires significant social changes at all levels.

# What Does Change Look Like?

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## Our Vision

**An Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence.**

## Our Purpose

**To provide national leadership to prevent all forms of violence against women and their children.**

## Our Objective

**To change attitudes, behaviours, social norms and practices that underpin and create violence against women and their children.**

International research tells us that by taking an evidence-based, collaborative and long-term approach, violence against women and their children can be prevented. In the words of the World Health Organisation, this is “not an article of faith, but a statement of fact.”<sup>9</sup>

We want our work to lead to a shift in the social norms, institutional practices and individual and community attitudes contributing to violence against women and their children. This program for change is grounded in an understanding that these efforts, along with others, will lead to a reduction in violence.

The way society thinks about and works to prevent violence against women and their children requires shared understanding and aspiration as well as informed leadership and influence. Our Watch’s vision, purpose, objective, values and strengths are aligned to this mandate and underpin our strategic program.

# Our Values

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**We seek to develop an organisational culture that reflects what we value.**

**We want that culture to reflect:**

## **Respect**

We respect the long standing work of the many women and women's organisations that laid the foundations for our cause. We also respect the story of the women and their children who have experienced violence and we commit to giving them a voice in our work.

## **Passion**

We have the passion to make a positive difference to the lives of women, their children and to our society as a whole.

## **Openness and Collaboration**

We want to bring together those across the country who share our vision, combining activity and effort, with the whole being greater than the sum of the parts.

## **Evidence**

Our practice will be grounded in evidence (local and international), underpinned by evaluation and contribute to the growing pool of knowledge about primary prevention.

## **Accountability**

We will be accountable to our funders and partners, and the communities and the individuals with whom we work.

**Respect  
Passion  
Openness and  
Collaboration  
Evidence  
Accountability**

# Our Strengths

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**Our Watch brings significant strengths to the Australian effort for prevention.**

## **A national mandate**

As a national organisation we can foster ‘umbrella’ or ‘overarching’ programs and initiatives that support and reinforce regional and local initiatives. Our organisation will have the profile, diversity, breadth of experience, expertise and the passion to make this possible.

## **A broad program of change**

We have the knowledge, expertise, capacity and reach to create a broad program of change. Our program will be national, multi-layered and mutually reinforcing. Individual initiatives, focussed at the whole of population level, in certain settings or with specific communities, will draw on a shared body of knowledge and our theory of change. The model of engagement is both top down and bottom up.

## **A willingness to operate as a backbone and as intermediary organisation**

We will not work in isolation or in competition with the many agencies already operating in this space. We are committed to acting as a backbone, working collaboratively to build partnerships across the nation. We will inspire change, mobilise effort and help other organisations to connect and share knowledge.

We are open to opportunities and partnerships across governments, communities, learning institutions and business. We will be an intermediary, facilitating the adaption of emerging and best practice models for local circumstances with a systemic capacity building focus, creating opportunities for others to scale these initiatives.<sup>10</sup>

## **An ability to sustain the effort**

Our structure and funding means we can sustain our efforts over the long-term and be a central source of knowledge, tools and applied learning across Australia. We want to minimise the loss of knowledge caused by stop/start initiatives and fragmented individual efforts. We will encourage communities of practice and the sharing of lessons learned over the long-term to sustain a consistent and informed effort.

## **Government backing**

We started our first year with the backing of the Commonwealth and Victorian governments and the Northern Territory and South Australia governments from the beginning of our second year. Government backing provides a strong endorsement of our purpose and a stable and secure funding base on which to build. We intend to strengthen this by attracting membership from all state and territory governments. We will continue to work closely with governments, recognising their commitment to the prevention of violence against women and their children.

## **An outcomes driven approach**

We have a strong outcome driven program to promote gender equality and reduce violence against women and their children in all communities over a short-term (five year) and longer-term (20 year) period. We will test our work, and regularly report, against those outcomes.

The standard  
you walk past  
is the standard  
you **accept**



# A Model for Change

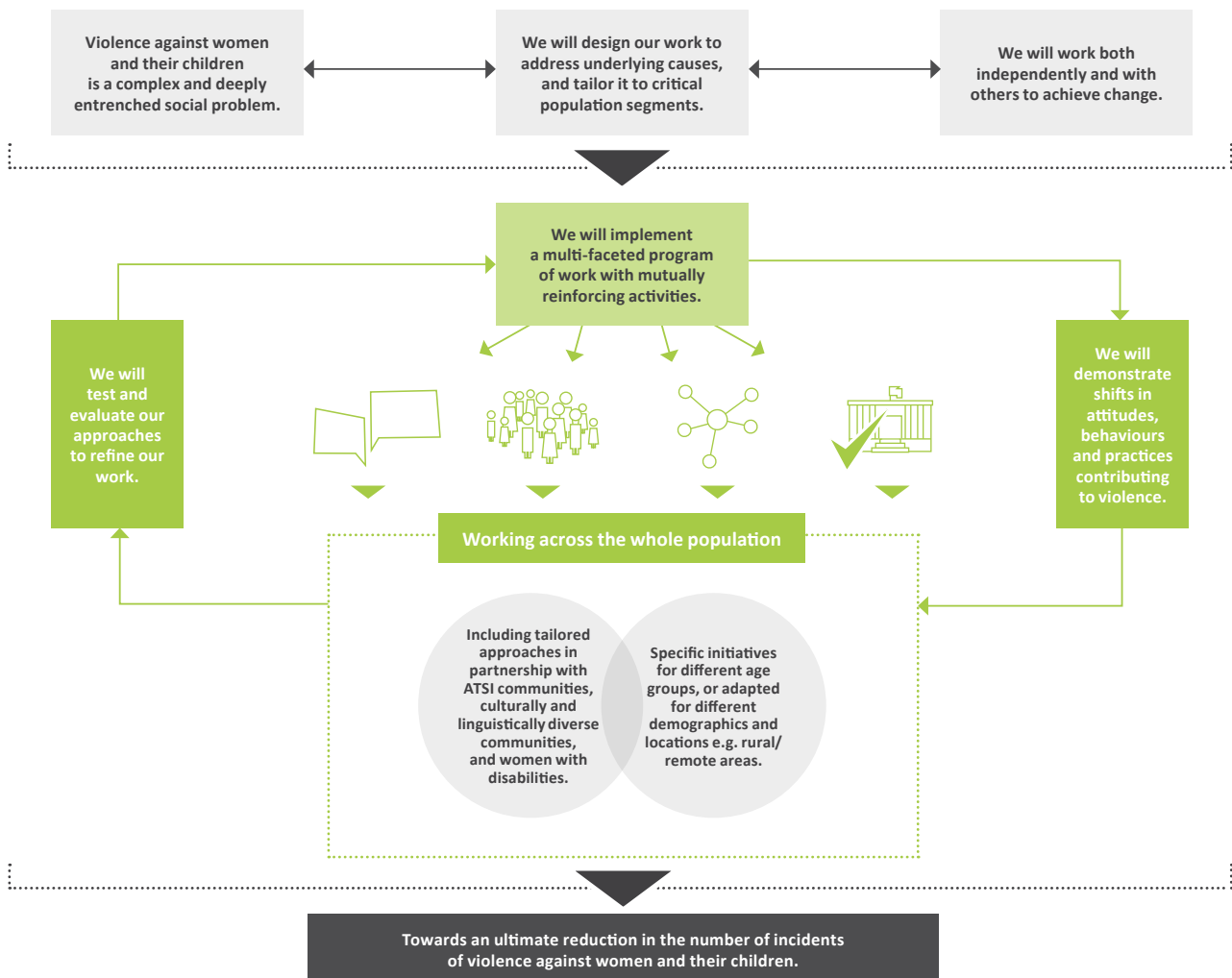
Violence against women and their children can indeed be eliminated and “is not an intractable social problem or an inevitable part of the human condition”, but rather “the product of complex, yet modifiable social and environmental factors”

World Health Organisation (2013) *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*

Our model of change is what guides our work. It makes clear the steps we will take in our long term journey to achieve an Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence.

The approach is consistent with Our Watch’s values of respect, passion, openness, collaboration, evidence and accountability, and highlights the part we will play in changing the culture and conditions that allow violence against women and their children to continue.

## The Our Watch Method of Work



# Our Model in more detail

Australia needs to move beyond small-scale initiatives and take a coordinated national approach. We will foster this national approach, partnering with workplaces, schools, clubs, community groups, organisations and governments to change attitudes and behaviours in everyday settings where people live, learn, work and play.

## We will work independently and with others to achieve change

Notwithstanding the need for leadership and capacity to drive efforts, a single organisation cannot achieve the complex social change required to prevent violence against women and their children. Multiple entities have different and complementary roles, and all need to play their part if we are to address the complexities of this deeply entrenched issue.

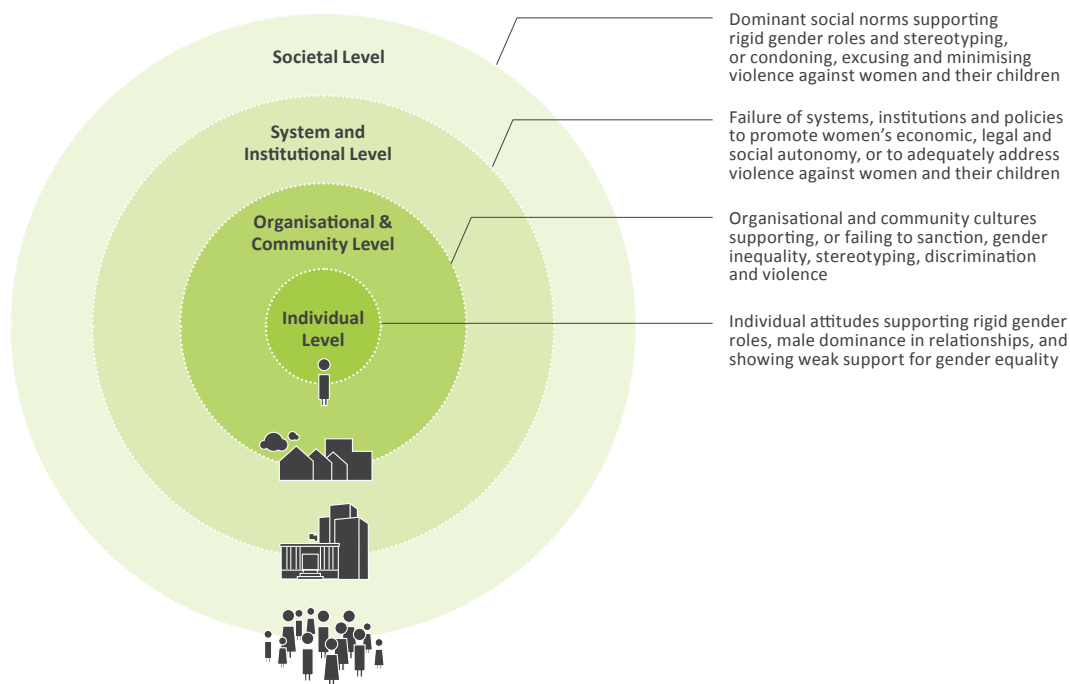
## We will design our work to address underlying causes

To achieve change, we need to address the core drivers of the problem of violence against women and their children. Change comes about when these underlying determinants, outlined below, are actively challenged and changed.

Importantly, research has shown that other factors such as alcohol and drug use or childhood exposure to violence are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for violence to occur. While these may be identified as risk or contributing factors, they become significant only where they intersect with norms and social practices relating to gender roles, identities and stereotypes.

International evidence also suggests that efforts to shift deeply entrenched attitudes and social norms are likely to be met with resistance, particularly from individuals or groups whose behaviour is challenged. We need to understand such resistance as an inevitable part of a change process, and constructively manage the dynamic.

## A Socio-Ecological Understanding of the Drivers of Violence against Women and their Children



# Our Model in more detail

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**Our change strategy aims to reach the largest possible number of people with quality, sustained and meaningful interventions that encourage shifts in the way people think about and behave in relation to gender and violence.**

## **We will tailor our work to diverse communities and groups**

For some individuals and communities the likelihood and impact of violence against women and their children can be made worse by existing discrimination and disadvantage associated with factors such as age, race, religion, disability, sexual identity and orientation, geographic location and socio-economic circumstance. When coupled with gender inequality, sex discrimination and stereotyping, the intersection of these factors can compound the experiences and impacts of violence.

Violence against women and their children occurs across the entirety of Australian society. Some communities are less likely to be reached by whole-of-population strategies and have limited access to services or key settings and have specific needs that 'general' strategies do not address. Prevention can only be effective for these communities when it is tailored to address their specific context, their culture and community strengths and the risks they encounter.

The Second Action Plan has as its second priority, understanding diverse experiences of violence. Accordingly, we also acknowledge the broader diversity of the Australian community and will work with each cultural community in a consultative and respectful manner. The specific needs and issues affecting women with a disability are similarly recognised.

We acknowledge in particular Australia's First People, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and commit to working in a culturally aware and respectful way at all times. We recognise the impact of colonisation and dispossession and the part this plays in understanding violence against women and their children in these communities.

Work to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children cannot be separated from efforts to address racism, dispossession and the intergenerational impact of colonisation and its associated policies. Integrated and culturally competent strategies that incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, values and experience will be critical to our work.

We will also prioritise working with children and young people – particularly young men and boys aged 12-34 – and tailor engagement that is meaningful, accessible and relevant.

## **We will implement a multi-faceted, long-term program of work with activities that reinforce each other**

International evidence emphasises that large-scale shifts in complex social problems means engaging people across the many environments where they live, learn, work and play. It is not enough to implement one-off initiatives, no matter how well conceptualised.

The impact of initiatives is 'dampened' when they occur in isolation, and when broader community and social level practices and norms do not support their messaging. The effectiveness of a prevention initiative is reinforced and strengthened when it is carried out with initiatives occurring in other settings. For example, when a school based program is accompanied by a social media campaign, community initiative or sports based program.



More and more  
people will  
feel confident  
to **step up**

in the face of  
**attitudes that  
support violent  
behaviours  
and say that they  
do not agree**

**We will test and evaluate our approaches to refine our work**

To understand what works, what does not, and why, we will design and conduct evaluation of our work. We will work closely with Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and ensure that evaluation findings will refine and build evidence-based models to guide future work. We will also emphasise, involve and action research methodologies designed to build the capacity of stakeholders.

**We will demonstrate shifts in attitudes, behaviours and practices contributing to violence against women and their children**

We are confident that by designing and delivering well conceptualised, quality initiatives based on previous and new learnings, we will see changes against the underlying causes of violence against women and their children. We will evaluate and monitor shifts in attitudes or beliefs around gender and violence, changes in organisational or institutional practices and/or increases in skills that promote gender equitable and non-violent social norms (e.g. proactive bystander intervention in cases of sexism or sexual harassment).<sup>12</sup>

**This will lead to an ultimate reduction in the prevalence of violence against women and their children**

The international evidence base is now strong on which attitudes, behaviours and practices contribute to violence against women and their children. We can be confident that shifts in such factors will in turn lead to a reduction in levels of violence. As individual and community attitudes towards violence and gender become more respectful and equitable, and as our organisations and institutions promote and encourage respectful relationships and gender equality, societal tolerance of violence against women and their children will decrease. Fewer people will find excuses for perpetrators or engage in victim blaming or minimise violence.

## Baby Makes 3

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**A key achievement of the program has been engaging men, overcoming their resistance and gaining their support for gender equality.**

The transition to parenthood can be a time of great joy. Yet it is also a time of major lifestyle change as women and men transition into new roles as mothers and fathers and experience the stress, difficulties and expectations associated with looking after a new baby.

Pregnancy and the early years of motherhood are periods when women are at greater risk of experiencing their first assault during pregnancy, or experience an increase in the form or intensity of violence.<sup>11</sup>

New parents in Victoria are benefiting from an innovative primary prevention program designed to support them to build more equal and healthy relationships as they adjust to the birth of their first child.

*Baby Makes 3* has assisted hundreds of first time parents to adapt to their new lives by helping them explore changes in their relationship after the birth of a baby.

The initiative seeks to prevent violence before it occurs by promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women during this transition to parenthood. It addresses the gendered inequalities in work and caring responsibilities that arise after the birth of a child and provides practical strategies to deal with them.

This includes helping parents to negotiate the responsibilities and duties of parenting, and understand society's expectations about the role of mothers and fathers in a child's life. *Baby Makes 3* also helps parents speak with each other about the choices they make in their partnership around work, caring and domestic responsibilities.

The *Baby Makes 3* program includes a three week discussion based program for new parents covering topics relevant to the lifestyle and relationship changes that follow the birth of their first child. In addition to the *Baby Makes 3* program, one-off group discussion nights are held at selected sites for first time fathers at maternal and child health fathers' nights, promoting positive father involvement in new families.

As well as increasing the capacity of parents to have more gender equitable relationships and share domestic and caring responsibilities more equally, the program aims to increase the capacity of health professionals to provide practical strategies for promoting gender equality during the transition to parenthood. Professional development workshops for maternal and child health nurses focus on practical strategies for promoting gender equality.



Funded by VicHealth, *Baby Makes 3* launched in 2009 with a partnership between Whitehorse Community Health Service and the City of Whitehorse Maternal and Child Health Service, a key service for engaging first time parents.

The program was offered to mothers and fathers attending a new parent group, and their experience evaluated using qualitative and quantitative methods, including questionnaires, interviews and focus groups.

The evaluation found *Baby Makes 3* to be a successful and effective means of promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women.

Despite couples professing minimal support for traditional gender roles, the evaluation found the balance of couples' relationships, in terms of who does what, became very traditional after a birth. Yet couples reported being generally unaware of how these gender roles could be affecting their relationship.

Participating in *Baby Makes 3* led to a significant shift in couples' attitudes, characterised by greater understanding of their partner's role and greater support for gender equality in new families. Some couples changed the way they structured their parenting and relationship roles to create greater equality.

Those who completed the *Baby Makes 3* program said it was fun, helpful and informative, while giving a chance for new parents to meet others experiencing similar challenges.

A key achievement of the program has been engaging men, overcoming their resistance and gaining their support for gender equality.

But the main achievement was developing and implementing the *Baby Makes 3* model, a three-week group program exploring issues of gender equality from the perspective of first time parents, supported by organisational and workforce development within a local government maternal and child health setting.

The program is easily transferable and is currently being delivered within 15 municipalities in Victoria as an extension of existing new parent programs. With necessary resources and support, the program is easy to integrate into existing maternal and child health and early childhood and family services where it makes a valuable contribution to primary prevention of violence against women.

*Reference: Whitehorse Community Health Service and Vic Health (2011) Sharing the evidence: Respect, Responsibility and Equality Baby Makes 3*

# A Strategic Program

**Our strategic program is designed to deliver five year and 20 year outcomes.**

**Four key competencies, derived from our strengths, drive our program:**

1. A deep understanding of primary prevention and what is required to motivate people to change attitudes and behaviours. The development of the national primary prevention framework, will solidify and enhance this expertise.<sup>13</sup>
2. Highly developed skills in applying and using evidence to underpin our work. We will use our model of change to guide our activities and maintain a strong and accessible evaluative approach to ensure we continue to learn from our engagement and retain and promote knowledge.
3. The ability to collaborate, foster partnerships and engage communities. We will genuinely engage organisations and communities to 'co-produce' solutions as people, communities and networks hold the tacit knowledge needed to come up with the best solutions for their situation.
4. The capacity to maintain a multi-layered and mutually reinforcing approach at national and community levels. We have the infrastructure, resources and funding to have a real impact by working with our partners to sustain our effort across key settings.

**Over the five years to 2019 we will focus our strategic program on four mutually reinforcing areas of work:**

1. Lead a sustained and constructive public conversation.
2. Design and deliver innovative programs that engage and educate individuals and the community.
3. Enable organisations, networks and communities to effect change.
4. Influence public policy, systems and institutions.

Within these four areas of work, we will undertake a number of activities targeted to the five year and 20 year outcomes. We will balance both long-term goals and shorter-term priorities, demonstrating early on that change is possible, whilst always building for the longer-term.

Activities will not necessarily have a uniform effect across all population groups. The matrix of factors contributing to violence against women and their children can differ from group to group. We will therefore tailor activities, recognising the distinctiveness of different groups and the mix of contributing factors that underpin attitudes and behaviours. We will maintain our focus on primary prevention, although in some cases, where warranted, we may link our work with early intervention and secondary prevention initiatives.<sup>14</sup>

We will align with and augment the work of the Second Action Plan 2013-2016 and subsequent action plans.

# Prioritising our Activities

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**In selecting activities to focus on in our first five years, we will be guided by the following criteria:**

- Alignment with our five year outcomes.
- Activities where we can have the greatest impact on changing attitudes and behaviours.
- Activities that enable partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and women with disabilities.
- Population groups or cohorts that research demonstrates are key to broader change.
- Settings that are likely to reach the greatest number of people in the above population groups, including workplaces, schools and local government or local council areas.
- The development of enabling tools or practices that our evidence-base demonstrates has the most impact for partner organisations.
- The extent of effective work already achieved in the specific area.
- Activities where we have a contracted responsibility.

**Through these activities, we seek to achieve the following outcomes in 20 years:**

- All Australian communities reject violence against women and their children.
- More Australians are active in preventing violence against women and their children.
- There has been a significant and measurable reduction in the levels of violence perpetrated against women and their children.
- Public conversations in Australia overwhelmingly support gender equality and understand the link between gender inequality and violence against women and their children.
- More men and women are empowered to promote gender equality.
- Women have greater levels of participation and representation across all levels of all types of organisations.
- Sectors work collaboratively to implement a shared best practice program to prevent violence against women and their children.
- Effective responses to discrimination and violence against women and their children are the norm in organisations, networks and communities across Australia.
- Governments at all levels implement, evaluate and renew policies – and strengthen systems and public institutions – to promote gender equality and prevent and respond to violence against women.

# Work Areas and Five Year Outcomes



**Lead a sustained and constructive public conversation**

We will develop a reputation as a solid source of information, evidence and commentary on the issue of preventing violence against women and their children. We will develop projects that improve public awareness and understanding of primary prevention approaches and the gender norms underpinning violence against women.



**Design and deliver innovative programs that engage and educate individuals and the community**

We will undertake innovative approaches to attitudinal and behavioural change, including education, advertising and social media campaigns that engage the community and drive changes in individual and community attitudes and behaviour. The approach will be evidence based and both whole of population and tailored to specific communities and population groups.



**Enable organisations, networks and communities to effect change**

We will build a platform of best practice in primary prevention, with a suite of resources that can enable organisations to embed gender equality and respectful relationships into their organisations, not as 'add-on' programs, but as part of the fabric of organisational culture.

Key priorities will be educational bodies (early childhood through to secondary), workplaces, local government and sporting organisations.



**Influence public policy, systems and institutions**

We will actively engage public policy, systems and institutions regarding men's violence against women and their children and gender inequality.

## Five Year Outcomes

- Our Watch is a well known and respected contributor and conduit for constructive public conversations about the causes, drivers and solutions to violence against women and their children.
- There is a strong community movement and leadership that helps drive prevention.
- There is evidence of improved accuracy in reporting by national and local media, greater media awareness of the drivers of violence against women and the role the media plays in shaping gender norms.
- More people across the Australian community support gender equality, reject gender stereotypes and adopt positive bystander actions.
- More people in specific communities and population groups engaged with our work support gender equality, reject gender stereotypes and adopt positive bystander actions.
- More young people have the skills to identify and build respectful and equitable relations.
- Tailored and evidence-based prevention tools, resources, models and standards are developed and being applied in priority settings and with specific communities and population groups.
- More organisations, networks and communities have embedded prevention practices which meet agreed standards into their core operations.
- There are strong communities of prevention practice within and across sectors and jurisdictions.
- Expert and valued input has been made to legislative, policy and program debate and reform at state and national levels.
- There is an internationally informed and nationally consistent understanding of and approach to prevention of violence against women and their children which is actively supported by policy makers and funders.
- There is national whole of population evidence of progress based on a shared national data set.

# Building a Trusted and Expert National Organisation

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To deliver our strategic plan, Our Watch will establish itself as a national and internationally recognised source of expertise. Locally, Our Watch will be acknowledged as the 'go to' expert on changing gender norms and the attitudes and behaviours that underpin violence against women and their children.

**We seek the following outcomes for our organisation over the next five years:**

- Sufficient resources have been raised from all jurisdictions and corporate and philanthropic partners to support our programs.
- All initiatives have been evaluated, reports are available and the approach to prevention of violence against women and their children has been continually refined.
- Our Watch is recognised by international organisations as a catalyst for change and thought leader with regard to primary prevention of violence against women and their children.

**Fewer people  
will find  
excuses  
for perpetrators  
or engage in  
victim blaming or  
minimise violence**

## Strong Leadership Drives Change in the Australian Defence Force

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In 2011, the then Australian Minister for Defence asked the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, on behalf of the Australian Human Rights Commission, to lead a review into the treatment of women in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and its training institute, the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA).

The review was one of several ordered by the government that year into violence against women in the ADF and followed a series of high-profile incidents involving the sexual assault of defence women by their male colleagues.

The outpouring of anger and disgust that resulted from those incidents triggered a chain of events that has led to the beginning of institutional reform.

Commissioner Broderick is reviewing the effectiveness of cultural change strategies and initiatives required to improve leadership opportunities for women in the Australian Defence Force.

Among the most potent tools was the strong leadership shown by the chief of the Australian Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, who was quick and unequivocal in his condemnation of abuse and violence in Army ranks.

Lieutenant General Morrison's action – and the global reaction it inspired – suggests leadership can be an important primary prevention tool.

**The army has to be an inclusive organisation in which every soldier – man and woman – has the ability to reach their full potential and is encouraged to do so.**

In a powerful YouTube message posted by the Australian Army, Lieutenant General Morrison said the army had to be an inclusive organisation in which every soldier – man and woman – had the ability to reach their full potential and was encouraged to do so.

“Those who think it is OK to behave in a way that demeans or exploits their colleagues have no place in this army... if that does not suit you, then get out,” Lieutenant General Morrison said. “I will be ruthless in ridding the army of people who cannot live up to its values and I need every one of you to support me in achieving this. The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.”

The three minute video, which has been watched more than 1.5 million times, was applauded around the world, and British Foreign Secretary William Hague invited Lieutenant General Morrison to the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2014.

Lieutenant General Morrison's unprecedented message condemning the culture of sexual violence in the defence forces was heard around the world, but also within the ADF where institutional reform is underway.

In 2014, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick released an audit, which assessed the ADF's progress against the recommendations made as part of her initial review into the treatment of women in the ADF. Overall, the audit found the ADF had made significant progress and was to be commended for its efforts.





The review's recommendations recognised that a more diverse military was not only critical to ensuring greater equality among members, but went to the heart of its future capability, she said. The recommendations tested established beliefs and customs, as well as organisational practices, which had created barriers to gender diversity.

In a Commissioner's message accompanying the Review of the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force, Audit Report, 2014, Ms Broderick acknowledged that change would require diligence, persistence and steadfast resolve.

"Tangible progress is evident by the swift establishment of the Sexual Misconduct and Prevention Response Office, as well as in the creation of a restricted reporting regime – two of the most significant recommendations of the review. These recommendations were designed to ensure that there is a centralised, safe, supportive and if necessary, confidential resource within the ADF for complainants to disclose sexual misconduct and assault."

The report also provided an update on the progress of the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) in implementing the recommendations from a review into the treatment of women at ADFA. Ms Broderick found senior leaders at ADFA were committed to cultural change and have worked with a view to embedding reforms.

"In implementing the review's recommendations, the ADF is on a strong path towards building an inclusive and diverse organisation – one which will strengthen and sustain operational effectiveness and allow all its members to thrive," she said in her message.

Ms Broderick also acknowledged the contribution made by strong leaders, and in particular the efforts of General David Hurley, Chief of the Defence Force, in supporting the review and audit.

"General Hurley steadfastly pushed forward with cultural change no matter how difficult or unpopular the reforms were. His leadership has been instrumental in championing cultural change over the last three years."

*Reference: Australian Human Rights Commission, Audit Report (2014), Review in to the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force, Audit Report*

# Inspiring Change through Action



We recognise the considerable challenges to effecting lasting change to the attitudes and behaviours that underpin violence against women and their children.

The change trajectory is long term and not linear, so we will work to five and 20 year horizons.

Each year we will publish a statement of annual priorities describing our work program.

To enable progress to be measured, and to capture evidence of best practice, we will develop an evaluation framework, using available data and information. We will also work with data agencies to enhance the effectiveness of existing data collection in tracking the outcomes of our work.

The evaluation framework and progress updates will be used as part of the ongoing evidence base that we build into our activities to deliver continuous improvement.

In the third year of this strategy, before the end of 2017, we will publish a statement on progress in Australia, designed as both an accountability and an advocacy tool. We will use the results of national surveys<sup>15</sup> to demonstrate and comment on progress.

Before the end of our first strategic cycle in 2019, in the interests of public accountability and to inform the priorities of the next strategic plan, we will publish an evaluation of the effectiveness of our program and activities measured against our strategic outcomes.

There is no doubt that the challenge of achieving our vision is immense, however there is a growing international body of evidence telling us change is possible. We commit to making every effort to work towards a future where women and their children live free from all forms of violence.

Our action is the strategic program we have outlined and which evidence suggests will change the attitudes underpinning violence against women and their children to make it possible to stop this violence before it starts.

Respecting and building upon the good work already done by governments, civil society organisations, communities and individuals, we have an opportunity to effect far-reaching change and to make a measurable difference in the lives of many Australians.

We will build and sustain a compelling, collaborative national body capable of being that catalyst.

# End Notes

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- 1 Westwood Spice (2013) *The Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children Report of the National Consultations*
- 2 The Department of Social Services (2014) *Second Action Plan 2013–2016 – Moving Ahead – of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 – 2022* (the Second Action Plan)
- 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Safety Survey 2012: Table C.*
- 4 Ibid: Table 28.
- 5 In Victorian women aged under 45 based on a study by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, *The health costs of violence; measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence* (2010 reprint) p. 8.
- 6 Including high blood pressure, obesity and smoking.
- 7 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2009) *The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children*
- 8 World Health Organisation (2002) *World report on violence and health*
- 9 World Health Organisation (2010) *Violence Prevention: The Evidence*
- 10 See Franks, R (2010) 'Role of the Intermediary Organisation in Promoting and Disseminating Mental Health Best Practices for Children and Youth: The Connecticut Centre for Effective Practice,' in Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in Youth, Fall
- 11 Walsh D, 2008, *The hidden experience of violence during pregnancy: a study of 400 pregnant Australian women*, Australian Journal of Primary Health, vol. 14, no. 1
- 12 World Health Organisation (2010) *Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence: Taking Action and Generating Evidence*, section 3.2.
- 13 This project will be undertaken in partnership with ANROWS and VicHealth over 2014 and 2015.
- 14 Understanding that it is not, at times, possible to make a clear distinction between levels of prevention, early intervention and secondary prevention are taken to mean working with people who are at risk of being victimised or perpetrating violence or taking action on the early signs of violence.
- 15 Such as Australian Bureau of Statistics surveys on personal safety and related topics and the *National Community Attitudes Survey* funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.

