

Putting the
prevention
of violence against
women

into practice:

How to Change the story

**Our
WATCH**
End violence against
Women And Their Children

Our Watch 2017

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Acknowledgement of Country: Our Watch acknowledges the traditional owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past and present, and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and knowledges.

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Building on a history of Australian women's leadership in primary prevention

Good prevention strategies already exist across Australia and signs of progress are emerging. This Handbook builds on the valuable work by individuals and organisations in many sectors. Our Watch would like to acknowledge the numerous women and women's organisations across Australia that pioneered the work in the prevention of violence against women, in particular our colleagues in the women's health, gender equality, family violence and sexual assault sectors. We would also like to acknowledge the important leadership and work of women in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities in working to end violence against women across Australia. Their collective leadership, commitment, efforts and advocacy – which are underpinned by a feminist, social justice and human rights approach – have put the primary prevention of violence against women at the forefront of the national agenda in ending violence against women. This has provided an important basis upon which this work can continue.

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Section 8: Developing a media and communications plan

In this section you will find:

- the key elements of an effective communications plan and how to get started
- key tips for developing your key messages and deciding which communications methods to use
- advice on preparing for and responding to backlash.

Communication is the way to spread the word about your work and connect with others to help build momentum. A media and communications plan will help you to prepare effective and consistent key messages about your work and the prevention of violence against women, target them to the most relevant people and ensure that you use the most appropriate channel to deliver your message. A plan is useful, regardless of whether communications form a small part of your project or are the main activity that you are undertaking.

How you implement your prevention work is likely to change over time and involve lots of different groups of people at each stage. A communications plan to support this program should be dynamic and participatory. See Appendix 4 for a communications plan template.

Objectives – What are you trying to achieve? Be clear and strategic.

At the start of planning, outline your key communications objectives (no more than five). What are you trying to achieve? They should be short, easy to understand, achievable and measurable.

These objectives should guide all subsequent planning and implementation. Having clear objectives will ensure that time and resources are well directed.

Examples of possible objectives:

- Generate 100 successful enrolments in the new gender equity training program for workplaces.
- Let 200 relevant stakeholders know that the new gender equality resource is ready.
- Produce two articles for the website and achieve 500 page views.

Target audiences – Select your audience carefully. Tailor your approach.

It is tempting to try to reach everyone when promoting a new piece of work but this may not be realistic from a time, resources or media interest point of view. Select a primary target audience and be sensitive to their needs, interests and habits. This target audience should be aligned with the key stakeholders you have already identified for your prevention work (see Section 7 and Appendix 1 for further information to support you to identify these key stakeholders). From there you can start to map out how you will communicate your key messages to relevant groups. Please note, not all objectives have to relate to all groups.

Examples of possible target audiences are:

- staff and leaders in your own organisation or in partner organisations
- staff in your key settings or participating in program activities (for example, workplaces, schools, broader community)
- prevention of violence against women stakeholders and practitioners
- researchers and academics in gender and violence against women.

Key messages – What are you trying to say?

Draft up to 10 phrases based on your key objectives. Spell out what needs to be said to each target audience. Key messages need to be clear, brief, appropriate and easily understood by each target audience. Write out the key facts or concepts that will help achieve your objectives.

Examples of possible key messages:

- Violence against women and their children is a complex social problem, but one that can be prevented.
- While there is no single cause of violence against women, current evidence tells us that it is more likely to occur where gender inequality is ingrained in social, cultural and organisational structures and practices.
- Workplaces have great influence over people's lives and communities, and have an opportunity to help drive the cultural change needed to prevent violence against women and their children.
- Everyone has a role in preventing violence against women by challenging gender stereotypes and calling out sexism.
- We can all start by challenging the attitudes that make violence against women more likely to happen.

Methods – how-tos and tips.

A media and communications plan can have many different elements depending on the objectives, target audience, time, resources and budget. The below covers some of the most widely used communications methods. Please note, you may not need to do all of these things to implement a successful communications plan.



Media releases

A media release is a good way to notify journalists about your work. The aim of a media release is that a journalist will pick up the story and write an article about it. Before you write a media release make sure there is something newsworthy about it. Are you announcing something new? Will there be public interest in it? Here are tips for writing and publishing a media release:

- A media release should be no more than one page in length.
- Write a descriptive and engaging title, for example 'Nine in 10 Australian girls not treated equally to boys: survey reveals sexism still rife', not 'New research on views of young people'.
- Put the most important information at the start of the media release and include supporting facts and information below this.
- Include engaging quotes from key people for journalists to use. If these people are available for further interviews, include this information and liaise with the journalist to arrange it.
- Include your contact name and number if a journalist wants to follow up for more information. Be prepared to take their calls.
- Encourage best practice reporting on violence against women by including the following information at the end of your media release: “*If you cover this story, or any story regarding violence against women and children, please include the following tagline: “If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>. In an emergency, call 000. For more information about a service in your state or local area download the DAISY App in the App Store or Google Play”.
- To publish a media release and to ensure it goes to relevant journalists, it is worth considering purchasing media intelligence and monitoring software. These products give you the ability to search for relevant journalists to contact and also media monitoring to help analyse your media engagement by mentions, reach and its estimated value. Without this software you will need to create your own media distribution list and send the media release via email.
- Always remember that you cannot control what a journalist/editor decides to say about your work. Do your research and approach journalists who are interested in your area of work and have written about it in the past.

Social media

Social media refers to platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn that let users create and share content and participate in an online dialogue with anyone else on the platform. Social media can be a great way to communicate with people interested in your cause. It is fast, easy to use and can help build lots of interest and momentum.

Doing social media well requires a strategy. Before you do any social media activity, make sure that it serves your overarching objectives. What key messages are you trying to communicate? Are you using the right key messages for each of your target audiences? Are your target audiences on social media? Each platform has a unique style, language and etiquette. To make your content ring true for the platform, you should research the differences between platforms and conform to their protocols. For example, Twitter is a fast-paced news-based platform so posts should be short, topical, informative and witty.

Here are some tips for doing social media:

- Even though an individual will be posting on social media and responding to comments, remember that you are representing an organisation or workplace. The ‘voice’ of the organisation’s social media page should be consistent, professional and comply with the platform’s terms of use.
- Social media is a two-way street. If you post something on social media, people are likely to respond. Be prepared to read their comments and reply if necessary.
- Read comments and responses carefully. Respond in an empathetic and respectful manner.

- Because violence against women is so prevalent in the community, many people on social media will have experienced it. Be sensitive to this and include a ‘trigger warning’ on any posts that people may find distressing.
- Talking about violence against women on social media can sometimes result in women disclosing violence on your organisation’s social media page. It is important to be prepared for this and to prioritise the safety of the person posting, yourself and others exposed to the exchange. Do not offer counselling or advice if you are not qualified to do so. Instead, refer the person to appropriate services like <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>. Remove posts that identify people or situations and explain to the person why you are doing this. Consider taking the conversation off the main page and to private messages (see Section 5 for more information about responding to face to face disclosures of violence).
- Posting content that promotes gender equality is likely to result in some backlash from the general public. Prepare for this backlash by drafting appropriate messages in advance. Please see the section on ‘Dealing with backlash’ for more information below.
- Many social media platforms offer sponsored posts as a way to increase engagement. Consider allocating some budget to ‘boost’ posts so they perform better and target the most relevant audience.

Preventing violence against women and using social media is a big topic. This handbook only touches on some of the issues that you should consider when preparing and implementing social media as part of a communications plan. If you are interested in more information, please read [Our Watch’s approach to preventing violence against women and social media: Navigating moderation and community management](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/social-media), <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/social-media>.

E-newsletters

An e-newsletter is usually called an electronic direct mail or eDM. The upside is it is a quick and easy way to communicate with a large group of people. The downside is that most people get many eDMs and cutting through this noise can be difficult.

Here are some tips for producing a good eDM:

- Write a descriptive and engaging email subject line to encourage more people to open it. For example use “End violence against women with new workplaces training course”, not “Our Watch newsletter”.
- Keep the copy concise and favour short, sharp sentences rather than long blocks of unbroken text. Many people scan rather than read emails so make sure they will see all the different topics covered by breaking up the text.
- Some email platforms block images so make sure the content in your eDM can be understood if the images do not load properly. Avoid putting messages in images. Only use plain text for copy.
- Use engaging images but keep the file size small so the email doesn’t take too long to load.
- Email spam filters will block eDMs that contain certain words so avoid using sales jargon. For example, try to avoid words like ‘winner’, ‘free’, ‘urgent’, ‘please read’ etc.
- In Australia, there are strict rules about sending eDMs. The *Spam Act 2003* states that for all commercial electronic messages sent by a business or organisation, meeting the consent requirement is mandatory. There are two types of consent — express and inferred. Before you send an eDM, familiarise yourself with the [Spam Act 2003](http://www.acma.gov.au/Industry/Marketers/Anti-Spam/Ensuring-you-dont-spam/key-elements-of-the-spam-act-ensuring-you-dont-spam-i-acma), <http://www.acma.gov.au/Industry/Marketers/Anti-Spam/Ensuring-you-dont-spam/key-elements-of-the-spam-act-ensuring-you-dont-spam-i-acma>. Please note that you cannot send an unsolicited eDM to gain consent.

Events

Having an event can be a good way to engage with a very targeted audience and to celebrate an important achievement. However, events are generally expensive, time-consuming to organise and there are no guarantees that people will attend and it may not achieve your intended purpose. Here are some tips for producing a successful event:

- Be clear about your purpose and audience for the event – is the aim to raise awareness, advocate or gain support for your program or further work?
 - » Consider linking the event to broader campaigns to prevent violence against women, such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence Campaign (see Section 6 for more information on this international campaign).
 - » Carefully consider who you will invite to speak at your event and include women as speakers, leaders and/or experts. Work towards shifting gender inequality by elevating women’s voices and experiences.
- Ensure your event communicates your key messages. This also includes briefing speakers about your key messages to ensure their messages are consistent and coordinated.
- Ensure that family violence and sexual assault support service information, such as <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>, is available. This information could be included in flyers, slides, speech notes, emails or in bathrooms at the event.
- Confirm budget and resources before you start planning an event.
- Invite guests early and follow up with reminders as the date approaches. If RSVPs are low, consider calling key guests personally to encourage them to attend.
- Make sure the venue and presentation are accessible with disabled access, enough space for people who use wheelchairs, chairs for people who may prefer to sit, disabled toilets and an inclusive presentation style.
- Evaluating the success of an event doesn’t have to be an intensive task and could include the following:
 - » notes taken by a dedicated note taker
 - » recording the number of attendees
 - » verbal feedback from participants
 - » a simple process for participants to vote on how relevant, interesting or enjoyable they found the event.
- Debrief with those involved in planning and delivering the event on elements such as what stood out, what worked well and what could be improved next time.
- Nurture the relationship with attendees by asking them to sign up for more information and follow up after the event with an EDM.

Accessibility, diversity and communications

Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services or environments for people who experience disabilities. Making your communications inclusive and accessible should be a key priority when implementing your prevention work. Your goal is to ensure that everyone, including people with a disability, can access content in a meaningful way.

Accessibility and diversity should be built into a communications plan from the start to ensure that you produce your best work and that it reaches the largest audience. Consider the needs of everyone when creating all communications components, represent the diversity of Australian society and always strive to tell your story in the simplest way possible.

There are many ways to make your communications plan more accessible and diverse, here are some dos and don'ts to help you get started.

Do:

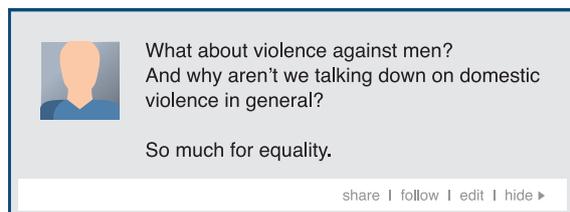
- be inclusive and respectful – select imagery and graphics that represent diversity in age, ability, culture, ethnicity, gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. For example, include images of people who use wheelchairs or assistive technology (see Section 5 for more information on ensuring your work is inclusive and accessible)
- make your content easy to read and understand for people who wear glasses or have a vision impairment by using larger font size or better colour contrast
- if you are hosting an event, ensure the venue has good disabled access, including access to toilets and emergency exits. Do you require an AUSLAN interpreter for speeches and presentations?
- if you are producing a video, [prepare a version with captions, https://mediaaccess.org.au/about/what-is-captioning](https://mediaaccess.org.au/about/what-is-captioning) for hearing-impaired users and an [“audio-description” version, https://mediaaccess.org.au/about/what-is-media-access/what-is-audio-description](https://mediaaccess.org.au/about/what-is-media-access/what-is-audio-description) for vision-impaired users.

Don't:

- use gender stereotypes, for example don't always use images of women caring for babies and men wearing business suits
- use stereotypes about violence against women, for example don't always use images of women with bruised faces. Violence against women can take many forms including some that are not visible such as psychological or financial abuse.

Dealing with backlash

Example of backlash on a Facebook post:



Challenging the culture, behaviours and attitudes that lead to violence against women will result in some backlash. Backlash, or resistance to personal and social change, is a normal and expected part of the change process. Being prepared for this is an important part of a communications plan for implementing your prevention work. Develop your own messaging to address backlash before you implement your communications plan.

One of the most common ways to experience backlash is on social media. For example, you may post something on Facebook regarding the prevention of violence against women and find that someone responds in a hostile way asking about violence against men.

Preparing for this potential criticism could involve a number of different elements including:

- producing a social media response register with draft messages that can be used when you start posting content
- producing a more detailed explanation of the differences between men and women's experiences of violence on a web page and directing people to this link if they require more information (see Section 2 for information on the prevalence of violence against women and men in Australia).

Here is a potential Facebook response to the 'what about men?' question taken from [Our Watch's approach to preventing violence against women and social media: Navigating moderation and community management](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/social-media), <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/social-media>.

'We definitely agree that all violence is wrong, regardless of the sex of the victim or perpetrator. But there are distinct patterns in the perpetration and impact of violence that point to gender being a key factor. The overwhelming majority of acts of domestic violence and sexual assault are perpetrated by men against women and this violence is likely to have more severe impacts on female than male victims. This doesn't negate the experiences of male victims. But it does point to the need for an approach that looks honestly at what the research is telling us and addresses the gendered dynamics of violence - this is what Our Watch seeks to do. Thanks for joining the conversation. Here is some more information: <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures>.'

Here is the more detailed explanation of how men and women experience violence differently taken from the Our Watch [Facts and figures](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures), <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures> page of the website:

'What about violence against men? All violence is wrong, regardless of the sex of the victim or perpetrator. But there are distinct gendered patterns in the perpetration and impact of violence. For example, both women and men are more likely to experience violence at the hands of men, with around 95% of all victims of violence in Australia reporting a male perpetrator.¹

While men are more likely to experience violence by other men in public places, women are more likely to experience violence from men they know, often in the home.²

The overwhelming majority of acts of domestic violence and sexual assault are perpetrated by men against women and this violence is likely to have more severe impacts on female than male victims.³

Recognising the gendered patterns of violence doesn't negate the experiences of male victims. But it does point to the need for an approach that looks honestly at what the research is telling us, and addresses the gendered dynamics of violence – this is what Our Watch seeks to do.'

You can read more about backlash in [Change the story](#).

¹ In 2012, 17% of all women and 5% of men had experienced violence by a partner since the age of 15. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013), Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) Personal Safety, Australia 2012, Cat. No. 4906.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Canberra. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>

² Ibid.

³ Around 95% of all victims of violence (both male and female) reported experiencing acts of violence – physical or sexual assault, or threats – from a male perpetrator. ABS, (2013), see note 4. Survey extrapolated to population figures on the basis of 3.8% of all women surveyed reporting having experienced physical or sexual violence from a non-partner in the past 12 months (and approximately 9 million women over the age of 18 in Australia).

Issues management and risk assessment – why prepare for the worst?

As part of a communications plan it is sensible to prepare for issues that may interfere with achieving your objectives.

Before you launch your program, brainstorm potential unfavourable outcomes and plan for how to address them. This will help with decision-making and responding to a difficult situation in an appropriate manner.

To begin, anticipate negative issues that could arise and assess them based on likelihood and the impact on the project or organisation. From there, devise appropriate solutions and assign it to a person or team to implement.

Examples of possible issues management:

Issue	Likelihood	Impact	Solution	Person or team responsible for implementing
No mainstream media coverage	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send an e-newsletter to relevant stakeholders announcing the new program. Post an announcement on the organisation’s Facebook and Twitter pages. Prepare an email for staff to personalise and circulate among their professional networks. Approach smaller publications/channels like relevant industry e-newsletters, websites and social media pages asking them to share your announcement. 	Project lead

Further considerations when making a communications plan

Developing and implementing a communications plan can contribute to the overall success of a program but it requires time and resources. Take the following points into account as you prepare your communications plan:

- **Budget** – how much can you spend producing each component of your communications plan? Communications services like graphic design, printing and venue-hire are expensive. Account for costs before committing to delivering each communications component. It is also important to consider staffing and resourcing. Copyediting, proofreading and sourcing imagery can be time-consuming. Ensure that the final result will be worth the effort required to produce it.
- **Timeline** – how much time do you have to prepare and implement your communications plan? Take into account the time needed to consult with relevant stakeholders, working groups etc. and factor this into your final deadlines.
- **Evaluation** – how do you plan to measure the success of your communications plan? There are many ways to do this depending on the methods chosen to deliver your key messages. For example most digital platforms like websites, social media and e-newsletters have tracking available to see how many people interact with your messages. Allocate some time to collect and interpret this data to help you refine your next communications plan.
- **Accountability** – who will be responsible for your communications plan? Ensure that staff members know who is responsible for each component and nominate a senior staff member to oversee the entire project.
- A communication strategy should be a living document and revised at least annually. Regularly review your key messages and target audiences throughout the life of your program. This allows you to revise key messages based on your evaluation, feedback from target audiences and respond to any changes in the program context or in the broader social, environmental and political context.

Appendices

Appendix 4: Communications plan template

	Example
Target audience – who are we talking to?	Sector stakeholders
Key message – what do we want to say?	<p>We have a new gender equity training program aimed at human resource (HR) managers.</p> <p>Workplaces have great influence over people’s lives and communities, and have an opportunity to help drive the cultural change needed to prevent violence against women and their children.</p> <p>HR managers in particular have an important role to play in preventing violence against women.</p>
Method – how are we going to say it?	<p>E-newsletter</p> <p>Sponsored Twitter and LinkedIn posts</p> <p>In-person information session</p>
Person/team responsible – who will implement this?	Project lead
Date due – when does it need to be ready?	<p>Key information developed by d/m/y</p> <p>Campaign begins d/m/y</p>
Budget – what will this cost? Include time and money	<p>\$100 to purchase imagery. Five hours to draft, design and send the e-newsletter.</p> <p>\$500 to sponsor social media posts. One hour to write the posts and 10 minutes twice a day to check the comments and reply.</p> <p>\$1100 to hire a venue and provide refreshments. One day per week over a month to plan the event.</p>

Endnotes

Endnotes

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² Star Observer, *LGBTI Community services and organisations*, <http://www.starobserver.com.au/lgbti-community-services-and-organisations>

³ The National LGBTI Health Alliance, <http://lgbtihealth.org.au/>

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¹³ Queensland Government, *Queensland says: not now, not ever. Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-2026*, <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/gateway/campaigns/end-violence/dfv-prevention-strategy.pdf>

¹⁴ Queensland Government, *Queensland Women's Strategy 2016-21*, <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/womens-strategy>

¹⁵ Government of South Australia (Office for Women), *A Right to Safety: The next phase of South Australia's Women's Safety Strategy 2011-2022*, http://officeforwomen.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/5140/A-Right-to-Safety.pdf

¹⁶ Government of South Australia (Office for Women), *Achieving Women's Equality: South Australia's Women's Policy*, http://www.officeforwomen.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/28087/DCSI-911-OFW-AWE-Policy-A4-Booklet_WEB_FA2.pdf

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