

WOMEN'S HEALTH IN THE SOUTH EAST

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## BACKGROUND PAPER

A resource to prepare for the development of the new regional strategy for the promotion of Gender Equity & Prevention of Gendered Violence: 2021-2025

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PREPARED BY

Women's Health in the South East, June 2021

# Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the current Federal, Victorian and regional context and developments in the sector of the primary prevention of violence against women and gendered violence, to inform decision making for the building of the new regional strategy in the Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR).

## **The United Nations defines violence against women as**

*“any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Violence against women is sometimes called gender-based violence and the terms can sometimes be used interchangeably as it has been widely acknowledged that most gender-based violence is inflicted on women and girls, by men.”*

There are calls in certain areas of the prevention sector, for the term gender-based violence to be used, as it takes a focus on a wider range of gendered and sexualised violence, such as violence against gay, lesbian, transgendered and intersex people. The regional strategy works to take an intersectional lens, to preventing family violence and gendered violence in all in forms, but with a specific and strategic focus on the prevention of violence against women. For that reason, the proposed primary term for the new strategy, is to keep to the prevention of violence against women (PVAW), with family violence and gendered-based violence to be used as secondary or interchangeable terms where appropriate.



Work to prevent violence against women or gendered violence, and help build communities that are safe, strong and equal, is being coordinated across Victoria through nine regional partnerships. These partnerships are led by Women's Health Services. The partnership provides an infrastructure, to collectively strengthen and align primary prevention work in our region and coordinate leadership against a set of regionally agreed outcomes – these outcomes align with the statewide Victorian Free From Violence Strategy's goal to change the social norms, structures and practices that condone family violence and all forms of violence against women.

'Preventing Violence Together (PVT) – Strategy for the Southern Metropolitan Region: 2016 -2021 was launched in April 2016. It is the first strategy for the prevention of violence against women in the Southern Metropolitan region (SMR). The strategy is led by Women's Health in the South East (WHISE) and is implemented together with partners to the strategy. Annual action plans have been developed collaboratively with the partnership, to guide implementation and future planning.

As this current Preventing Violence Together (PVT) Strategy comes to an end in June 2021, it is time for WHISE and partner organisations in the region to work together collectively, to reflect on the most significant developments of the last four years in our region, evaluate our successes and challenges, and build promising and innovative strategic practice into our new regional strategy.

Over the course of the next six months, WHISE will be leading a consultation process, to develop the region's next four-year regional strategy. The purpose of this briefing document is to;

- provide an overview of the current context of work to prevent family violence/ gendered violence/violence against women
- outline what has been achieved with the first strategy
- inform decision making for the region's new strategy



# PVT Background



The role and purpose of the first and current PVT strategy, was to explain the causes of violence against women and make a case for collective action in the region. The strategy was designed to align with the Our Watch 'Change the Story' framework, to ensure the approach was coordinated, integrated and evidence-based.

The current strategy, Preventing Violence Together (PVT), applies a regional approach to preventing violence against women (PVAW) or gendered violence. It is the result of a consultative process with initially 28 (now 38) organisations in the

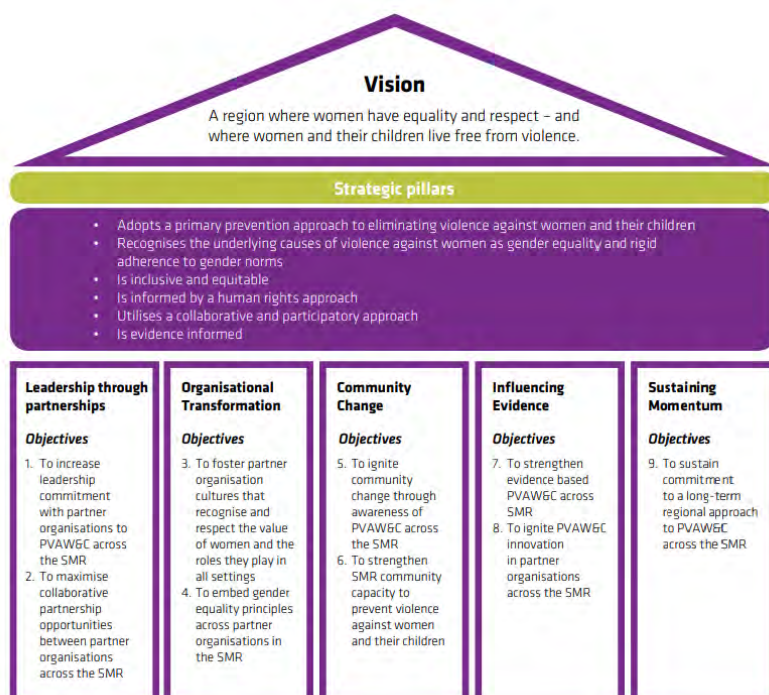
Southern Metropolitan Region, who recognise that successful primary prevention initiatives are implemented across sectors and settings, using mutually reinforcing strategies.

The strategy was built to enable all partner organisations to benefit from strategic and collective coordination and collaboration and to achieve a mutually reinforcing effect towards PVAW in the region.



# Preventing Violence Together (PVT) 2016 – 2021 Framework

In the development phase of the regional PVAW strategy, participating organisations worked together to articulate the five strategic pillars and associated objectives that would underpin the strategy. At the time of development, the strategic pillars were designed to reflect best practice in primary prevention work, to promote innovation within the region and to be reflective and responsive to the needs of organisations and the community in the Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR). The strategic pillars were designed to complement and reinforce one another, and to provide the strategic focus for work across the region, outline the objectives and guide action in each of the five areas.



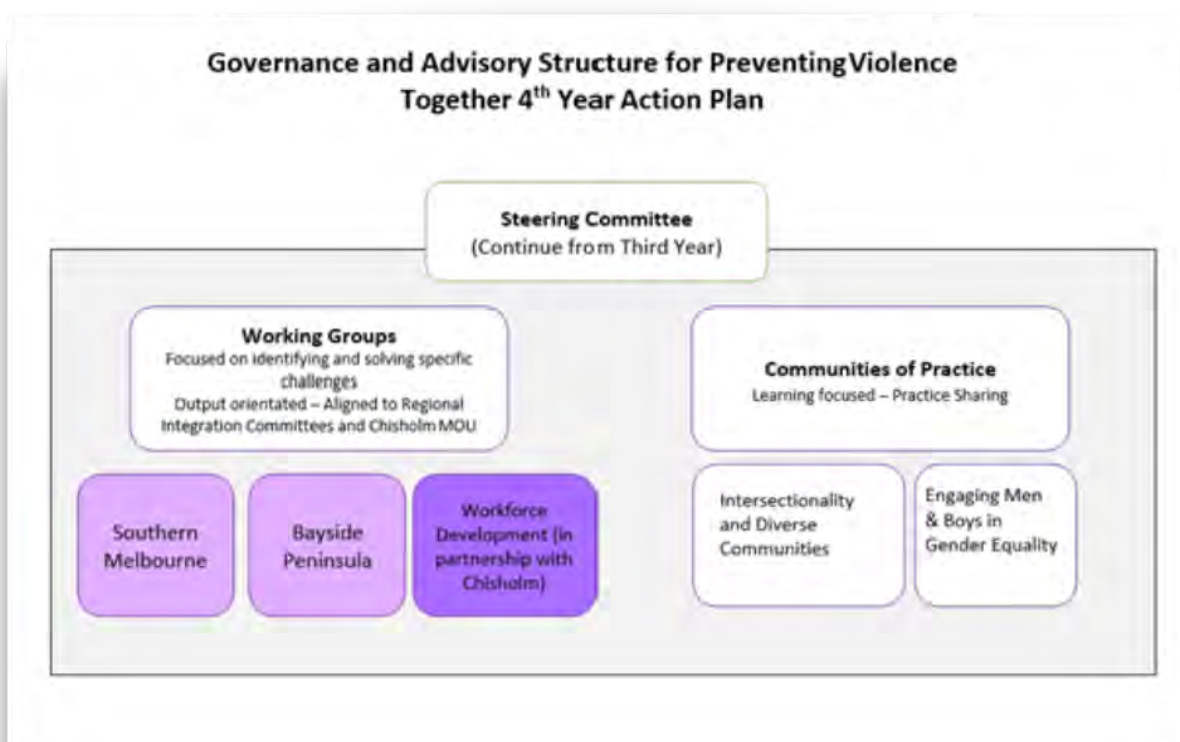
# The Current Regional Strategy

Women's Health in the South East (WHISE) is the lead agency for the regional strategy for the prevention of violence against women called Preventing Violence Together. The region consists of 10 local government areas, it is a large and very diverse region.

Regional health data by local government area is captured by WHISE and collated into regional snapshots, to provide data and guidance around taking a gendered lens to inform planning work.

Each year the collective action in our region is decided upon at an annual WHISE 'Think Tank', then written up into an action plan. The current action plan is the Year Four Action Plan ending in June 2021.

## Preventing Violence Together (PVT) Governance Structure



The regional strategy is overseen by the Steering Committee, comprising of eight senior representatives from many of the represented partner organisations. Collective primary prevention action is taken by two regional primary prevention working groups (Southern Melbourne & Bayside Peninsula) who work in partnership to:

1. Coordinate and support primary prevention activity across the region and focus on tailoring specific primary prevention strategies for the region that meet the needs of the region
2. Learn from trends and relevant data from response sector organisations
3. Ensure that the specific intersectional and diverse needs of the region are identified and acted upon
4. Build knowledge and understanding of primary prevention activities across LGA's and community organisations engaged in primary prevention

In addition, WHISE coordinates two Communities of Practice (CoP). Attendees are partners and practitioners in the region, with a remit for or interest in primary prevention and or gender equality. The focus of the CoPs is decided in consultation with partners and content is often led by partners. For the period 2019-2021, the focus has been on:

- Intersectionality and Diverse Communities
- Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality

## Policy Context

Since the creation of Preventing Violence Together (PVT) in 2016, a substantial body of work at the national, state and local levels of government and non-government has occurred. Below is a mapping of the key strategies, plans, policies and resources, which have informed the advancement of work to prevent violence against women. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but to provide a comprehensive overview of how the work has progressed within the context and remit of the work partners to the regional strategy have undertaken over the last four years.

# The Current Regional Strategy: PVT's evolution over the past four years

WHISE undertook an initial desk top review of evidence collected over the last few years of the first strategy, to take a prima facie analysis on the strategies delivery against the outcomes framework. Broadly, the evidence (as reported to the Victorian Government every year) shows a majority of the items and outcomes have been delivered to if, mainly, at a process level.

Our analysis has also determined that since the development of the first strategy, the practice, behaviours and systems of our partners and community when it comes to prevention of violence against women have evolved and progressed significantly.

## The first strategy has:

- Brought together over 38 partner organisations' from across government, education, health and community services to prevent violence against women and improve the broader gender equality focus.
- Built the capability and capacity of our partners to understand the evidence-base on what works to prevent violence against women.
- Built the capability and capacity of partners to take an intersectional approach to prevention work and to engage men and boys in gender equality and the prevention of violence against women (Communities of Practice - Intersectionality and Diverse Communities and, Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality).
- Developed a suite of resources and tools including the regional snapshots, and created a toolkit on gender equity and prevention of violence against women in workplaces.
- Provided guidance and built capabilities of partners around the importance of planning with an intersectional gendered lens.
- Rolled out with partners a number of campaigns on prevention of violence against women including 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, and International Women's Day.
- Expanded the engagement and support of the prevention of violence and gender equality workforce.
- Established a Critical Friends Network to support the effective implementation of the Respectful Relationships Initiative across the 284 schools within the region.
- Strengthened and align primary prevention capacity building and training in our region (e.g. Bystander Action).



# State Context

In Victoria, a substantial body of work has occurred since the Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2015. There is ongoing work to implement 227 recommendations (166 are implemented to date). The policy landscape has changed significantly, with the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023 now outlining specific women's health priorities, new entities established, including Respect Victoria and Family Safety Victoria, and a new legislation enacted (the Gender Equality Act 2020). The new regional strategy will need to consider this changing landscape, filling in the gaps and avoiding any duplication of effort.

## Victorian Government Strategies

- Safe and Strong (2016): A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy
- Free From Violence (2017): Victoria's Strategy to Prevent Family Violence
- Ending Family Violence (2016): Victoria's 10-Year Plan for Change

## Victorian Government PVAW & GE Primary Prevention Organisations/Initiatives

- Respect Victoria: State government's primary prevention agency
- Family Safety Victoria: The agency leading the implementation of many of the governments family violence reforms (10-year industry plan / Capability Framework/ Everybody Matters Framework, including MARAM Framework, Men's Behaviour Change)
- Dept Education & Training: Respectful Relationships Initiative: Whole of school primary prevention initiative in primary and secondary State and Catholic schools.
- Commission For Gender Equality in the Public Sector: Provides education and supports implementation of the Victorian Gender Equality Act (2020), which requires the Victorian public sector, local councils and universities to take positive and measured action towards achieving workplace gender equality.
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) is the peak body for local government in Victoria. Since the creation of the current PVT strategy, MAV provides leadership in the prevention of violence against women work across local government alongside GENVIC, DV Vic and DVRCV, VLGA and Women's Health Services.

## Victorian Agreements and Plans

- Dhelk Dja – Safe Our Way: Aboriginal-led Victorian agreement which is built upon the principle of self-determination, to ensure Aboriginal people and communities are free from violence.
- Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023: The third plan for the state outlines ten health priority and focus areas to direct Local Government planning for the upcoming four year period. Preventing all forms of violence is identified as one of the ten areas with a vision to ensure;
  - women, men, girls and boys are treated equally with respect and dignity
  - All parts of the community are engaged in practical and creative ways to learn about respectful, safe and equitable relationships
  - Women and children are resourced, supported and empowered to make decisions regarding their safety and wellbeing
  - All Victorians feel safe and empowered to take a stand against family violence

## Victorian Non-Government PVAW & GE primary prevention organisations/ initiatives

### Gender Equity Victoria

(GEN VIC) is the Victorian peak body for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women. GEN VIC acts as the peak body for the women's health sector and plays a strong advocacy role on behalf of women's health services.

### Regional Prevention Partnerships – Women's Health Services

Nine regional prevention Partnerships are strategically coordinated across Victoria to deliver primary prevention and local collective action work around the prevention of violence against women and embedding gender equity values into regional networks. During 2020/2021

many of the women's health services including WHISE are reviewing and updating their strategies and partnerships. Current strategies can be accessed [here](#).

### Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV)

Victoria's specialist family violence registered training organisation and Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic – peak body for specialist family violence sector) are underway to merge into one entity in 2020/2021 with a primary focus around extend their reach and engagement with members and stakeholders whilst building the capability of current and emerging workforces to prevent and respond to family violence.

# National Context

## Federal Government

At a federal level there has also been considerable research evidence, planning and commitment to prevention of gender based violence as outlined;

- National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022: The first national plan that recognised that violence against women and their children is a complex problem that requires a long-term plan for action. This plan strongly mirrors Change The Story, the national prevention framework which is currently under update and review. Our Watch are National Plan Partners and will be actively involved in the development of the Second National Plan, providing its specific expertise on prevention and drawing on learnings from the implementation of the first National Plan. Consultation is currently open until 31st of July 2021
- National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030
- National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (2019).
- National Preventative Health Strategy (currently under development).



## Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)

Respect @ Work: National Inquiry (2020): The Australian Human Rights Commission heard that the current system for addressing workplace sexual harassment in Australia is complex and confusing for victims and employers to understand and navigate. It also places a heavy burden on individuals to make a complaint.

On this last report, it is worth noting that the AHRC proposes the new approach be aligned to the intersectional gendered drivers of violence and calls on all employers look to the evidence on effective primary prevention, including a whole of community and intersectional approach, encouraging bystander action, and engaging men and boys in prevention and bystander action.

# Current Knowledge and Frameworks

Over the course of the life of our first regional strategy, the guiding knowledge-base has evolved and of course this has informed how the work of the partnership has changed.

We outline some of this research below to illustrate how the evidence and policy base has grown and developed since 2016, and has of course been held as the evidence-base to guide the work of the regional strategy.

## Our Watch

- How to Change the story (2017): Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice
- Primary prevention of family violence against people from LGBTI communities (2017): An analysis of existing research
- [Changing the Picture \(2018\)](#): The national resource on the main drivers, actions and principles for preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.
- [Counting on Change \(2018\)](#): A guide for policy-makers, researchers, and other stakeholders on measuring population-level progress towards the prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.
- [Tracking Progress in Prevention \(2020\)](#): A National monitoring report on progress towards primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.
- [Men in Focus \(2019\)](#): This review unpacks the current research around masculinities and violence against women. It explores how best to engage and address men to challenge these patterns engaging men in the prevention of violence against women.
- Prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities (2020): A review of the literature.
- Pornography, young people and preventing violence against women (2020): A background paper
- Counting on change (2020): A guide to prevention monitoring.
- Change the Story – Version 2 – in development due for public release later this year. [Our Watch – LGBTIQ – \(2017\)](#). A comprehensive literature review exploring the primary prevention of family violence against people from lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse and intersex (LGBTIQ) communities.



## Other Knowledge-base/Research

- [National Community Attitudes towards violence against women Survey \(NCAS\), ANROWS \(2017\)](#). This survey measures how Australians understand violence against women, their attitudes towards it, what influences their attitudes, and if there has been a change over time. Attitudes to gender equality and people's preparedness to intervene when witnessing violence or its precursors are also measured. The next NCAS survey is due to go into field this year again in 2021 with results to be published in 2022.
- [Intersectionality Matters: A new resource for preventing violence against women](#)
- [Pride in Prevention \(2020\) –A guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities](#). This guide summarises the current available evidence on the drivers of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities and provides recommendations for priority interventions to address them.
- [The Men's Project & Flood, M. \(2018\) The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in Australia. Jesuit Social Services: Melbourne](#): A study on being a young man in Australia is the first comprehensive study that focuses on the attitudes to manhood and the behaviours of 1000 young Australian men aged 18 to 30.
- [Masculinities and Health – VicHealth \(2020\)](#), a review conducted by Vic Health exploring what health promotion methodologies are being used to promote and educate people about healthy and positive masculinities in the Victorian (and wider national and international) context. It includes what evaluation is being undertaken to measure attitudinal and sustained behavioural change and assess the evidence for effective strategies; and to engage with and learn from the wider academic research literature pertaining to healthy masculinity/ies.

## Workplace Frameworks - WGEA / WER

Our Watch and the Workplace Equality and Respect Agency (WGEA) have workplace programs to promote the embedding of gender equality in the workplace, which is a significant opportunity to strengthen the drivers of inequality that can lead to violence against women. The WGEA offers an [Employer of Choice for Gender Equality](#) for organisations to benchmark and work towards a gender equal workplace.

The newer Our Watch – [Workplace Equality and Respect](#) model is a whole organisation approach to gender equality with programs, toolkits and training resources available for all workplaces to access.



# The Current Context

## Federal Parliament Commitment

The Federal Budget was handed down on Tuesday 11th May 2021 and provided significant investment towards promoting women's safety from violence, economic security, and incentives to provide for more women to enter the workforce.

The Women's Budget Statement can be accessed [here](#). GEN VIC have also put together a scorecard which reviews if the Federal Budget delivered a gender equal recovery. Access this [here](#).

The National Foundation for Australian Women has also reviewed with a gendered lens the family violence investment by Federal government, which can be found [here](#) along with a review of the Respect@Work inquiry which may be accessed [here](#).

## Victorian State Budget Commitment

In the week following the federal budget the state budget was handed down on Thursday 20th May. As our community and economy navigate the pandemic, and with the awareness both in Victoria and nationally about the importance of gender equality, WHISE is pleased to see the government responding to the sector's call for:

- Increased funding for Women's Health Services;
- Establishment of additional hubs for sexual and reproductive health;
- A gender responsive budgeting unit within Treasury;
- Creation of 47,000 gender equal jobs in the care economy (mental health, early childhood, COVID-19 healthcare and teaching); and
- Prioritised funding for women's economic participation.

Some key highlights from the budget include a gender responsive budgeting unit – an important step towards gender equality; improving women's economic security with gender equal job creation, and the continued support to respond to domestic and family violence including housing support for victim survivors. A key focus of the funding is around reform of the mental health system and ways women's health and wellbeing outcomes can be further addressed and supported.



## COVID-19 – Gender and Recovery

The global COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed the way we work and live. Despite Australia having control over the virus and local outbreaks to date, the lockdowns and social and economic effects of the pandemic (particularly in Victoria) have highlighted and illustrated the unequal distribution of domestic labour and care by women. Health and social data presents the way in which Victorian women have felt the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic on their mental health, economic participation and family violence (GenVic 2020).

The pandemic also highlighted further and exacerbated existing inequalities between and among women, men and gender-diverse people. In recognising these inequalities and the effects on women, the sector including Women's Health Services are in an opportune position to redefine and reshape the recovery along with taking important learnings from the pandemic forward into the future. Through this acknowledgement of the unequal distribution of domestic and care labour we are a step closer to identifying the inequity and challenging the rigid gender stereotypes that are a major driver of violence against women.





# The New Strategy

WHISE recognises that the expertise in primary prevention has grown exponentially within the region and beyond in recent years. As the lead women's health primary prevention agency in our region, we are surrounded by many partners who hold high levels of expertise in the prevention of family violence.

On behalf of the partnership, WHISE will be coordinating an interactive and proactive consultation period on the next strategy over the coming months.

We look forward to hearing more about what you think is working, is not working and collectively continuing to build a strong regional alignment of strategic PVAW & GE work.

Over the last two years of the current strategy, our partners have expressed interest in and commitment to engaging men and boys in the prevention of violence against women, both at the community and workforce level.

Equally, partners have demonstrated a strong commitment in their work to embed an intersectional lens into primary prevention work in the region.



# Opportunities/areas of potential focus for the new strategy:

In this section of the document, WHISE proposes the following opportunities as possible areas of strategic focus and alignment, for the new strategy. They are based on emerging evidence, policy and current and emerging partner focus.

This information is to assist you in telling us through the consultation process over the course of the next 6 months, where you see strategic importance. Below we map out suggested areas of strategic focus, along with questions for you to consider/areas to workshop and unpack together, as part of an upcoming consultation period, which will include an initial survey, and then focus groups and a Think Tank.

WHISE can naturally see a strong relationship between the PVAW/GE strategy and the regional Sexual and Reproductive Health strategy. There is an opportunity to align work in the region of the two strategies, for example coercive control, consent and reproductive coercion.

## 1. A gendered lens for all health priority areas

WHISE also acknowledges the huge potential to work collectively, to ensure all health promotion work has a gendered lens applied to it. We see an opportunity in our region, to ensure all health and well-being plans, integrated health plans apply a gendered analysis and consider and respond to the health, safety and wellbeing of all women.

A practical example of the application of this lens in healthy eating as a priority area, would be recognising that women's relationship with food is impacted by gender expectations, as well as biological factors relating to sex.

WHISE see a strong role for the regional strategy, to be that of working collectively to ensure all health planning recognises and takes strategic action to apply an intersectional gendered lens. For example when looking to increase food access, the economic disadvantage women face due to their gender (due to the gender pay gap/unpaid care/traditional gender roles) should be considered and equitable action taken.

Q- How can we as a region strengthen and share our organisation's capacity and capability to ensure an intersectional gendered lens is embedded across all health priority areas?

## 2. Intersectionality and self-determination

A best practice approach to the prevention of violence done through an intersectional lens, to unpack the varied, different and compounding ways women and men can experience disadvantage, discrimination and violence. There is no question that a key area of strategic focus, for the new strategy will be working to consistently strengthen our capacity and capabilities in applying an intersectional gendered lens across all planning, activities and work across the region.

We envisage that our partner organisations will agree that we need to collectively move beyond an approach which seeks to engage those with intersectional identities/ those who experience disadvantage and instead hold central to focus, colonialism and the accountability of the mainstream system, and its attitudinal, societal and systemic power inequities.

A best-practice approach to intersectional work must commence with Australia's colonial history and the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. At the Communities of Practice on Intersectionality and Diverse Communities last year called Aboriginal Self-determination: A safer future, the key learning was Non-Aboriginal organisations need to invest in building cultural safety into workplace practice, promote healing, prioritise strengthening culture and work as allies to be effective in efforts to prevent violence.

Q- How as a region are we moving beyond a good understanding of the theory of intersectionality and moving to embed it into everything that we do? How can we build on successes so far and share learnings?

Q – To what degree is the regional PVAW/ GE workforce reflective of our community? What can we do to work towards our workforce being diverse and inclusive?

Q – Does the strategy have a role to play in promoting the importance of Non-Aboriginal organisations working with Aboriginal organisations to build cultural awareness and competency?

### **3. Men as part of the solution - Engaging men and boys in Gender Equality**

Many partner organisations are energised to do work to evolve masculine culture and identity. Looking specifically at how to have conversations with men and boys in a safe and productive way seems to be a key areas of focus and one which we see is an opportunity for capability and capacity building. This includes work could include empowering positive male role models and male champions of change within the region.

Q -Are partners looking for ways to build capability and capacity within their own organisations and existing settings to engage men and boys e.g. sporting clubs, neighbourhood houses?

Q - Are there ways we can weave this work through existing settings and the work we are already doing? for e.g. an L-P driver mentoring program between older and younger men, Dad's playgroups, sporting clubs?

Q - Do we want to look at new ways of doing this such as supporting positive child and adolescent development through positive parenting with a particular focus on men and boys?

Q – What can we do to ensure that we attract more men to the workforce? How do we ensure they represent an intersectional cohort of the community?

We acknowledge work with men and boys around gender equality is a growing yet very nuanced skill and one which it seems the sector is desperately crying out for.

Currently The Men's Project hold a lot of expertise and research in this space. Many partners in our region have engaged them for either webinars or have applied for grants to run their Modelling For Equality and Respect Program (MORE). Through previous engagement, partners seem to want to be positioned to build their capacity to take on some of this work internally to engage men and boys.

Q – Are there ways and initiatives we would like to take to explore this work more broadly as a region?

Q –Is there interest in this work with parents, men and boys in strengthening the strategies focus on the role pornography plays in promoting and even eroticising violence against women.

Q – There is an awareness at WHISE around the risks associated with unskilled providers coming into this space to deliver this work and causing undue harm. Are partners interesting in collectively exploring solutions to this issue?

## 4. A broader & more diverse partnership

We see there are many opportunities to build PVAW/GE capacity within our region by extending our partnership to include 'non-traditional' partners, so for example Fire Rescue Vic. Equally we see that it is pivotal that have representation from diverse organisations and diverse identities, We would very much like to see strong representation from practitioners who identify as men, as First Nations people, as CALD and as LGBTIQ+ community.

Q – To encourage men to champion the change we want to hear your thoughts and ideas on ways we can broaden the partnership to support the region over the next 4 years?

Q – Are there certain sectors or non-traditional partnerships and opportunities we should explore as a region?

Q – Are partners keen to support and continue partnerships such as the one with Department of Education (DET) in support of the Respectful Relationships curriculum through the Critical Friends Network (CFN).

Q – Do partners see a role for the partnership in facilitating cultural safety and practice training and leveraging of partnerships particularly in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's health?

## 5. Respecting older women and prevention of Elder Abuse

The Elder Abuse Prevention Networks have been created in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The Victorian Government funded the establishment of 10 elder abuse networks to collaborate at a community level and focus on the prevention of elder abuse. In our region we have both the Southern Melbourne Elder Abuse Prevention Network and Frankston Mornington Primary Prevention Elder Abuse Network. Over the last two years WHISE staff have sat on both of these groups, as well as shared updates on key areas of work, at the WHISE run regional working groups. How do you see the role of the regional strategy supporting respect for older women and elder abuse prevention moving forward?

Q - How can the regional strategy build the capacity of organisations in our region, to understand elder abuse and conduct primary prevention initiatives?

Q - Are there inter-generational programs happening within our region, that work to connect older adults with their communities - e.g. children and older adults?

Q - is there interest in expanding our capacity in the prevention of Elder Abuse as a region or is it more in the area of capacity building - e.g. Bystander Action?

## 6. Mental Health

We understand the gendered impact of mental health and that women experience higher rates of anxiety and depression. There is an acknowledgment mental health outcomes for women are closely linked to self-determination and the social determinants of health.

We see a significant overlay with mental health and all three of our key portfolios; the prevention of violence, the promotion of gender equality and sexual and reproductive health.

As a primary prevention agency, WHISE sees a focus for the future strategy to on be that of preventing the onset of mental health conditions by reducing exposure to risk factors and/or increasing their exposure to protective factors for these conditions. Prevalence is influenced heavily by social position (Carbone, 2020). Those at the low end of the social gradient experience more risk factors. This gradient is the result of differences in people's social position as a result of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, disability, geographic location, education, employment, income, and housing. Gender inequality, rigidity around gender and the social expectations of gender are significant risk factors for poor mental health outcomes for all genders, as well increased risk of all forms of violence.

Q - How can we work together in our region to increase the protective factors?



# Areas of potential future focus to improve mental health and wellbeing

## Parenting interventions

There is strong and consistent evidence from systematic reviews that programs that promote protective factors such as good parental mental health, positive parenting, a focus on Dad's and parenting, and positive family climate can prevent child and adolescent emotional and behavioural conditions.

## Programs to engage men and boys in gender equality / encourage help seeking behaviour

The findings from Unpacking [The Man Box \(2020\)](#), demonstrate clearly that young Australian men's belief in rigid masculine stereotypes has a stronger impact on whether they will use violence, sexually harass women, or experience mental ill-health themselves, than other factors including their education levels, where they live or their cultural heritage.

## Settings-based interventions

There is also very strong and consistent evidence from systematic reviews that personal skills building programs that draw on positive psychology strategies and are delivered through schools, universities, workplaces and online can increase protective factors. Primary prevention programs addressing gendered violence like the respectful relationship program that targeting adolescents before victimisation or perpetration occur are equally important for mental health prevention.

Q - We want to hear from you on how we can work collectively to address risk factors and build in protective factors for good mental health for women and girls in our region?



## 7. Climate change/gendered recovery

A key area of focus outlined in the latest Victorian Population Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023 is that of climate change. There is significant evidence on the importance of taking a gendered lens to the effects of climate change and emergency management and recovery planning and ways to mitigate identified risks for women. This is particularly relevant as we recover and move forward from the recent bush fires in our state, as well of course from the pandemic. A practical example of this work through Gender and Disaster's GAD POD is around promoting an understanding of the role played by gender in survivor responses to natural disaster and embedding these insights into emergency management practice, ensuring women's voices are heard in recovery and recovery planning.

Q – Do practitioners in the region have an understanding of the role played by gender in survivor responses to natural disaster, and how to embed these insights into emergency management and recovery practice?

Q Is there an interest or need to build capability in our region, into how to incorporate a gender lens into emergency management and recovery planning, using GAD POD as a key resource?

## 8. Development of a shared evaluation framework

Through the process of consultation, we see an important role in developing a shared and meaningful evaluation framework we can use collectively and collect evidence of impact for the work within the region. We see that at the strategy level this may sit more as a qualitative level and allow for shared further process and impact evaluation measures at an annual action plan level. What are your thoughts?

Q – What does the partnership think is the best shared evaluation framework for our work? Something such as the Most Significant Change model is something we would like to explore further in consultation.

# Proposed timeline for consultation

The second strategy and the action plan for year one, will be developed in consultation with the PVT Steering Committee, PVT partners and stakeholders. Key steps and a proposed timeline are outlined below.

Activity	When
Focus Groups Interviews with Stakeholders	Mid July 2021 (2 week window)
Stakeholder Planning Forum “Think Tank”	Early Sep 2021
Draft Strategy Shared for Feedback	Early Sep 2021 (2 week window)
Strategy and Year One Action Plan finalised	Mid Sept 2021
Strategy launch and promotion	Late Oct 2021

## Discussion / Next Steps

This second regional strategy is an opportunity to continue to work together and build on our shared understanding and lift collective impact action and advocacy to get to a place where the promotion of gender equality and prevention of gendered violence becomes everyone's business.

We see an opportunity at WHISE to continue to build the application of an intersectional gender lens, across diverse workforces, social and planning structures within which we all operate. The Gender Equality Act 2020 and the requirements that fall under it, will provide additional momentum in the broader workforce, taking positive steps towards achieving systemic and social change towards gender equality.

The consultation process in the development of the new strategy as outlined above will tease out the direction for this collective action heading into the next four-year period. WHISE values the collective knowledge within the region to help shape and strengthen the next regional strategy.

We thank you for all your hard work in promoting gender equality and working to prevent violence against women over the last four years of the current strategy. We are excited to hear where to from here in our collective and strategic direction.

