

# Changing the conversation

## March 2015

### Introduction

On Tuesday 23 December 2014, the Victorian Government announced Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. The Royal Commission has been tasked with investigating the whole family violence support system and justice system, through a wide-ranging terms of reference released earlier this year.

There is a long-overdue momentum building around the issue of family violence and it is timely to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of community organisations, particularly women's health organisations, in addressing this issue and supporting women affected by family violence. Three of the many projects underway in the region are explored on pages 2-3 of this edition of the bulletin.

This edition also highlights a new Language Services Guide developed by the Centre for Ethnicity and Health. The guide encourages organisations to aim for continuous improvement in language services such as interpreters, translations, and bilingual staff. This can be found on page 4, along with an important update on Heat Health Alerts.



Finally, the Department of Health and Human Services was established on 1 January 2015. The new department brings together the former Department of Health, Department of Human Services and Sport and Recreation Victoria. Work on the transition arrangements for the new department is proceeding quickly, and we will keep you up to date with changes as they occur. You will find an overview of the recent changes to Victorian Government departments on page 4.

**Steve Ballard, Regional Director**

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## Royal Commission into Family Violence

The Governor of Victoria appointed a Chair and two Deputy Chairs to the Royal Commission into Family Violence on Sunday 22 February 2015. Justice Marcia Neave will chair the Royal Commission, with Patricia Faulkner, Chair of Jesuit Social Services and Tony Nicolson, Executive Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, serving as Deputy Commissioners.

The terms of reference task the Royal Commission with:

- finding the most effective ways to prevent family violence
- improving early intervention to identify and protect those at risk
- supporting victims
- making perpetrators accountable

- improving the way the government and society work together.

The commission is due to provide its report and recommendations to the government by Monday, 29 February 2016.

Family violence has profound effects on families and is the leading cause of death and disability in Victorian women under 45. In Australia a woman is killed by her current or former partner every week. There were 65,393 family incidents reported to Victoria Police in 2013-14 which is a rise of 83 per cent since 2009-10. Family violence costs our economy over \$3 billion every year.

The Terms of Reference can be viewed at the Commission's website [www.rcfv.com.au](http://www.rcfv.com.au).

## cohealth & Our Watch

Victoria's largest community health organisation, cohealth, is embarking on a 12-month pilot to address violence against women and children who belong to Brimbank and Wyndham's Indian communities. This community has been selected out of many established and newly arrived CALD communities living in Melbourne's high-growth north and western corridors that face isolation from services and have shown increased presentation at court on family violence matters.

The Our Watch-funded project will build the capacity of Indian community leaders, faith leaders and community members to plan and conduct their own prevention activities. The same participatory community consultation process that is embedded in cohealth's standard practice will be the key driver of the project's content and direction.

This project will develop close partnerships with a range of individuals, groups and associations from



Indian community members engaged in cohealth's 'Family Strengthening Training', July 2014

the Indian community, as well as relevant family violence organisations.

"The Indian community has already demonstrated strong readiness to participate in prevention efforts and there are many community-led prevention activities already underway", shared project leader, Alice Henderson. "Community are central to this project and will be meaningfully engaged at all stages."

This project will engage and empower community members and their leaders to undertake the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children within their community. This project will support people by engaging them in culturally relevant and appropriate education focusing on respectful relationships, family violence and relevant services. The project will support community members and leaders to plan, conduct and implement primary prevention activities in their community, which aim to challenge beliefs, behaviours and attitudes that lead to violence against women and children.

The pilot will provide a model for other established CALD groups and inform other state and national efforts to combat family violence.

For more information contact Alice Henderson, cohealth, (03) 8398 4148, [Alice.Henderson@cohealth.org.au](mailto:Alice.Henderson@cohealth.org.au)

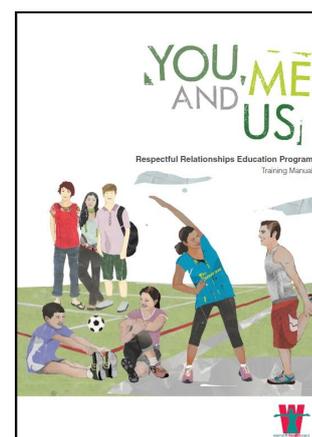
## Women's Health West: You, Me and Us

Women's Health West's (WHW) You, Me and Us program has trained and supported 47 culturally and linguistically diverse young women aged 18 to 24 to co-deliver respectful relationships education sessions with WHW health promotion workers. These sessions have been delivered to almost 3,000 young people aged 10 to 13 and 18 to 24 years in higher educational institutions, sporting clubs, youth organisations and primary schools in Melbourne's western region. To support the efficacy and sustainability of the project, WHW provide professional development training to adult leaders in participating schools and organisations.

Professor Sue Dyson, an expert in evaluating gender equitable respectful relationship programs, developed the project's rigorous evaluation

framework and tools. The respectful relationship education session evaluations with young people aged 10 to 13 found notable increases in their awareness and knowledge of what constitutes a respectful and disrespectful relationship and in their ability to reject and challenge gender stereotypes and gender inequity. The evaluations with young people aged 18 to 24 found increases in awareness and knowledge about the prevalence of violence against women, understanding violence-supportive attitudes, and bystander action. Adult leaders who

*(Continued on page 3)*



participated in the professional development training, showed increased knowledge about the prevalence of, and factors that cause, violence against women, and about gender inequity in Australia. Impact and outcome evaluations conducted with peer educators indicated that You, Me and Us increased their knowledge and ability to facilitate the delivery of respectful relationships education, supported them to become primary prevention advocates within their communities and influenced their future employment and education opportunities.

You, Me and Us is the only Victorian program, and one of three national programs to work with young people aged 10 to 13. Unfortunately the Australian Government Department of Social Services' funding for this successful three year project concluded in November 2014. The project manual, comprehensive literature review of best-practice in respectful relationship education and a raft of evaluation tools are available at [whwest.org.au/health-promotion/sexual-health/you-me-us/](http://whwest.org.au/health-promotion/sexual-health/you-me-us/)



*At the launch of You, Me and Us*

## Primary Care Partnerships: Identifying and responding to family violence

Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) in the North Metro and West Metro region are looking at ways to provide a more streamlined and coordinated service system response to women and children experiencing family violence.

PCPs promote the use of the Service Coordination Tool Templates (SCTT), a suite of templates developed to facilitate and support service coordination. In 2012 the *Single Page Screener for Health and Social Needs* was introduced as part of the SCTT suite of templates and included a question for clients designed to identify issues of family violence.

A 2014 PCP needs assessment survey of member agencies indicated that a number of staff felt they lacked the necessary skills and confidence required when screening, assessing, responding, referring and developing a safety plan for victims of violence who access their services. The survey also highlighted the need to improve initial response services in mainstream organisations and improve family violence screening practice.

Through the Identifying and Responding to Family Violence project, the PCPs will

- support the rollout of the SCTT 2012 single page screener and improve family violence screening practice and initial responses
- develop a resource for PCP member agencies that will assist staff at all levels to identify and respond to family violence and make effective referrals, so the client is seen in the right place, at the right time, and so clients do not have to repeat their story.



### Family violence publications and resources

A thorough collection of resources, tools and publications relating to family violence can be found on the following sites:

- [Northern Integrated Family Violence Services](#)
- [Women's Health in the North](#)
- [Women's Health West](#)

### The Lancet

In November 2014, the Lancet published a series on violence against women and girls. This series is available to read free on [TheLancet.com](http://TheLancet.com) (log-in required).

The five papers in this series cover the evidence base for interventions, discuss the vital role of the health sector in care and prevention, show the need for men and women to be involved in effective programs, provide practical lessons on prevention programming, and present a call for action with five key recommendations and indicators to track progress.

### Rosie Batty on why passion must lead to change on family violence

Australian of the Year Rosie Batty [writes in the Saturday Paper](#) on the changes needed to combat family violence.

## Heat Health Alerts: Direct Subscription

Heat Health Alerts issued by the Chief Health Officer are now available via direct subscription from the following website:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/heatwaves-alert.htm>

Direct subscription has a number of advantages including:

- Subscriber choice in determining which weather districts are included in their subscription profile
- Timely receipt of alerts direct from the issuing source
- Choices in organising subscriptions within community service organisations to ensure staff or managers receive the alerts most relevant to them.

North Metro Health and West Metro Health are undertaking a review of the Heat Health Alert communication to Funded Agencies and SRS and as an initial step are encouraging direct subscription to this service for a more streamlined approach.

Further information about the review will be communicated directly with agencies in the coming weeks.

## Submitting content

If you would like to contribute to the next edition in June please contact

[amy.shields@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:amy.shields@dhhs.vic.gov.au)

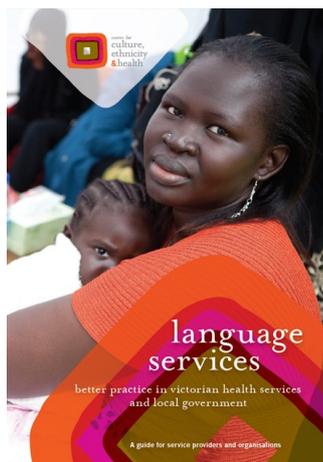
Content will need to be submitted by 31 May.

## Language Services Guide



### The Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health develops new language services resources

The *Language Services Guide* and information sheets are designed to support and encourage all agencies, no matter how established or confident they are in their practices, to aim for continuous improvement in their provision of language services. Almost a decade has passed since CEH released the *Language Services Guide* and an update with new examples of language service initiatives is timely and necessary. With Victoria becoming a more linguistically diverse State, the need for such a guide is greater than ever.



The Guide showcases examples, in the form of case studies contributed from organisations across Victoria, of ways to approach and implement language services. The language services information sheets have proven very popular in the past and these have been updated in response to sector demand and developments in language service policy. These information sheets provide useful information on how to effectively engage with language services.

CEH's language services resources are available online [here](#).

## Machinery of government changes

### The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

On 1 January 2015, the Victorian Government established the Department of Health & Human Services, bringing together the former Department of Health, Department of Human Services and Sport and Recreation Victoria. The department has been established to develop and deliver policies, programs and services that support and enhance the wellbeing of all Victorians. We take a broad view of the causes of ill health, the drivers of good health, the social and economic context in which people live, and of the incidence and experience of vulnerability. This will allow us to place people at the heart of policy-making, service design and delivery. The new department presents a valuable opportunity to build a new organisation with a unified

vision and mission, to discover new ways of working together and to enhance the wellbeing of Victorians.

### Other departmental changes:

- The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development renamed the Department of Education and Training
- The Department of Justice renamed the Department of Justice and Regulation
- The Department of Transport Planning and Local Infrastructure have been incorporated into three new departments:
  - Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources
  - Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
  - Department of Health and Human Services