PREVENTING
VIOLENCE
TOGETHER
UNITED

Working Together to Prevent Violence
Against Women in the West

# Royal Commission into Family Violence

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# Submission from the *Preventing Violence Together* Partnership

May 2015

Commissioner the Honourable Marcia Neave AO (Chair)

Deputy Commissioner Patricia Faulkner AO

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**Recommendations**

1. Fund and resource regional partnerships focused on the primary prevention of violence against women, to maximise State Government efforts to prevent violence against women and support the delivery of effective and tailored prevention strategies at the local level.
2. Establish a state-wide peak body that has responsibility for coordination of primary prevention efforts across sectors in Victoria, to ensure a strategic, consistent and coordinated policy and approach to primary prevention across the State.
3. The State government must develop a stand-alone primary prevention action-plan for Victoria that sets out the government's long-term commitment to preventing violence against women. This plan must be long-term, adequately funded, evidence-based, targeted towards redressing the determinants of violence against women, and represent a whole-of-government commitment to preventing violence against women.
4. The Victorian Government must increase funding for the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria that specifically redresses the determinants of violence against women related to gender inequality, as identified in the evidence-base.
5. Support the sharing of data across a range of services to provide a more comprehensive insight into the prevalence of men's violence against women in Victoria.
6. Continue to fund critical data sets such as the *Australian Census of Population and Housing* and the *VicHealth Community Attitudes Survey*, to provide insight into gender equity measures and attitudes towards violence against women in Victoria. As well as address data collection gaps in regards to gender equity, such as population level gender equity statistics, to guide Victoria's progress in preventing men's violence against women.
7. Ensure primary prevention of family violence within Aboriginal communities is evidence-based and led by Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organisations, as per recommendations outlined on pp.19-22.
8. Ensure primary prevention action is inclusive and responsive to the different needs of various population groups in recognition of intersecting power inequalities that create greater risk of violence.


**Definitions[1]**

- *Primary prevention* – Strategies that work to redress the key driers of violence against women, in order to prevent it from happening in the first place. Often referred to as 'preventing violence before it occurs'.
- *Sex* – Physical characteristics such as hormones, chromosome and anatomy.
- *Gender* – The socially constructed roles, norms, attributes and expectations that shape our understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman within a given society.
- *Gender roles* – Socially and culturally prescribed behaviours, actions and attributes that are assigned to women/girls and men/boys.
- *Gender stereotypes* – Descriptive notions and generalisations about the traits that women/girls and men/boys are assumed to possess.
- *Gender equality* – The realisation of equal and measurable outcomes for women, men and gender diverse people. This includes equal opportunities, status, rights and benefits.
- *Gender equity* – The process of being fair to women, men and gender diverse people with the aim of achieving equal outcomes for all. It involves recognising diversity and disadvantage and directing resources towards those most in need.

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[1] Women's Health West (2014) *Guide to gender equity, upstream health promotion and the social determinants of health (draft)*, Footscray: WHW

## 1.0    Introduction

Men's violence against women is a critical problem for Victoria. The Preventing Violence Together (PVT) Partnership welcomes the Victorian government's prioritisation of family violence and the establishment of the Royal Commission to explore the problem in-depth.

This submission is provided on behalf of the Prevention Violence Together Partnership, a partnership of 18 organisations that work across the Western metropolitan region of Melbourne.  The focus of this partnership is to prevent men's violence against women before it occurs, through reducing its key drivers; namely, gender inequality. This submission outlines the work currently being implemented by the PVT Partnership in the western region and makes recommendations on a model that can support the prevention of men's violence against women and maintain Victoria's status as a leader in the prevention of men's violence against women.

Please note: this submission uses the terminology of 'men's violence against women' instead of family or domestic violence in recognition of the gendered nature of family violence and the overwhelming use of violence by men towards women. The use of this terminology also places the emphasis on a community wide, systematic response that focuses on gender inequality as the root driver of men's violence against women.

## 2.0    Prevalence and Impact of Men's Violence Against Women

As noted within the Royal Commission's Issues Paper, the prevalence of violence against women in Australia is widespread and the impact of this violence is significant.  In addition to the figures outlined within the Issues Paper, a range of other sources highlight the breadth and prevalence of men's violence against women in Australia, including:

- Each week a woman dies at the hands of her current or former partner[2]
- Of women aged 15 and older:
  - 29% have experienced physical assault
  - 17% have experienced sexual assault[3]
  - 25% have experienced emotional abuse[4]
  - 24% of women have also experienced unwanted sexual touching.[5]
- Women in Australia are three times more likely to experience violence at the hands of their partners than men[6]
- In Victoria during 2014, there were 68,988 reported incidents of family violence. Women represented 75.4% of those persons affected by family violence that were reported[7].

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[2] Dearden, J, & Jones, W (2008). *Homicide in Australia: 2006 – 07 National Homicide Monitoring Program Annual Report*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra

[3] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006). *Personal Safety Survey.*  Cat. No. 4906.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra

[4] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012). *Australian Social Trends.*  Cat. No. 4102.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra

[5] *Ibid*

[6] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012). *Personal Safety Survey.*  Cat. No. 4906.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra

[7] Crime Statistics Agency (2015), Victorian Government: Melbourne, available at: http://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/

The effect of violence on women and the community more broadly is significant and costs Victoria an estimated $3.4 billion per year[8]. Effects range from acute physical and mental health problems through to increased need for health and support services. More detailed effects of the impacts of men's violence against women include:

- Male partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness for women aged 15 to 44 years, more so than obesity, high cholesterol and high blood pressure[9]
- Children who witness family violence are found to be at higher risk of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, as well as loneliness, pervasive fear and low self-esteem.[10] Witnessing violence is also found to place children at high risk of impaired social learning and effective functioning[11]
- Violence affects women's ability to attain and keep stable employment; affecting their long terms income and financial security, as well as Victoria's productivity and therefore economy
- Women currently comprise 66% of clients accessing Victoria government-funded homelessness services, and, of women with children seeking access to supported accommodation, 55% have experienced violence.[12]

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**Key message: Family violence is committed overwhelmingly by men towards women, with significant impacts for the women affected and for the Victorian community more broadly, costing Victorians $3.4 billion annually.**

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### 3.0    Western Metropolitan Region and Men's Violence Against Women

The Western metropolitan region is a rapidly growing region of Victoria, with the population increasing by 39% between 2001 and 2011. Comparatively, Victoria's population grew by 15% over the same period, with the second fastest growing region being the Southern metropolitan region at 19%.[13]

In particular, the western region is characterised by:

- Significant disadvantage, with all Local Government Areas (LGAs) (with the exception of Melbourne and Moonee Valley) ranking in the top 15 most disadvantaged areas of metropolitan Melbourne.
- Rapid growth in outer LGAs such as Wyndham and Melton, entrenched disadvantage in Brimbank, and gentrification in Moonee Valley and Maribyrnong LGAs.
- High levels of cultural diversity, with more than 50% of residents in Brimbank speaking a language other than English at home.
- Lower than metropolitan Melbourne average perceptions of community safety
- Higher reliance on welfare when compared to metropolitan Melbourne[14]

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[8] Office of Women's Policy (2009). *A right to respect: Victoria's plan to prevent violence against women 2010-2020.* Victorian Government: Melbourne.
[9] VicHealth (2004). *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence.* Victorian Health Promotion Foundation: Melbourne.
[10] Laing, L. (2000). *Children, young people and domestic violence: Issue Paper 2.* Australian Domestic & Family Violence Review
[11] Flood, M. & Fergus, L. (2008). *An assault on our future: The impact of violence on young people and their relationships.* White Ribbon Foundation: Sydney.
[12] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011). *Government-funded specialist homelessness services: SAAP national data collection annual report 2009-10: Victoria.* Cat No. HOU 241, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.
[13] HealthWest Partnership (2015). *Population Health Data Book.* HealthWest Partnership: Footscray.
[14] *ibid*

### 3.1 Men's violence against women in the western region

Reported rates of family violence incidents have been increasing across the region since 2007 and are slightly lower than the Victorian and North and West region average incidents per 100,000 people. In 2011-12, the average number of family violence incidents was 861 per 100,000 people, however there was significant variation within the region, with rates as high as 1,166 per 100,000 people in Melton and as low as 652 incidents per 100,000 people in Moonee Valley. However, these figures should be interpreted with caution, as only *reported* incidents are captured and are therefore likely to be a significant underestimate of the true prevalence of family violence in the western region.[15]

Data on reported family violence incidents from 2012-13 suggests that fewer charges are laid when incidents are reported in the western region compared to the Victorian average, with 36% of reports resulting in charges compared with 42% across Victoria. The western region has a higher number of Intervention Violence Orders (IVO) when compared to Victoria, with an average of 24% of reported violence incidents resulting in an IVO application, compared to 17% state-wide. While it should be noted that this data includes reports where both men and women have experienced violence, more than 80% of those who reported family violence were women.[16]

### 3.2 Gender inequity across the western region

Data suggests that there are significant gender inequities across the Western metropolitan region. The link between gender inequity and men's violence against women is explored in more detail at Section 4. As demonstrated through six key areas outlined below, women in the western region experience significant gender inequities:

#### 3.2.1 Income

Women in the western region report a lower individual weekly income than their male counterparts. In particular, 21% of female residents reported having an individual weekly income of less than $300, compared to 15% of male residents. Additionally, 12% of females and 8% of males reported that they had nil or negative individual weekly income. At the other end of the spectrum, 16 per cent of male residents in the western region reported an individual income of $1,500 a week or more (compared to only 7 per cent of female residents). This clearly highlights significant income gaps between females and males in the western region.[17]

#### 3.2.2 Employment, unpaid work and childcare responsibilities

For the western region, men are more likely than women to be in full time employment (49% compared to 29%). Conversely, women were more likely to be in part-time employment, with 21% per cent of women report working part-time, compared to 11% of men. Notably for the western region, a quarter of men and over a quarter of women reported that they were not in the labour force at all.

Women were more likely than men to report undertaking five or more hours of unpaid domestic work a week (52% of women compared to 30% of men). In particular, women were far more likely than men to report undertaking 30 hours or more of unpaid domestic work per week. Men were more likely than women to report undertaking less than 5 hours of unpaid domestic

[15] Women's Health West (2013). *Women in Melbourne's West: Sex disaggregated data and gender analysis for service and program planning.* Women's Health West: Footscray.
[16] HealthWest Partnership (2015). *Population Health Data Book.* HealthWest Partnership: Footscray.
[17] Women's Health West (2013). *Women in Melbourne's West: Sex disaggregated data and gender analysis for service and program planning.* Women's Health West: Footscray

labour or no domestic work at all. In addition, a substantially higher proportion of women than men reported undertaking unpaid childcare across all seven of the municipalities in the western region.[18]

### 3.2.3 Social connection, social participation and perceptions of safety

Less than half of the female residents reported participation in citizen engagement activities in the municipalities of Melton (44%), Brimbank (33%) and Wyndham (49%). Across all municipalities, men were more likely than women to report feeling safe or very safe when home alone during or at night. For example, in 2011, only 22.7 per cent of all adult females in Brimbank felt 'safe' or 'very safe' walking alone at night in their local area, compared to 63.9 per cent of males[19]. These findings demonstrate that women and men experience safety and the use of public spaces, community facilities and infrastructure, differently. The way in which community spaces, services and infrastructure are designed presents significant implications for women's community participation and experiences of safety. Poorly maintained infrastructure (such as poor lighting, low levels of natural surveillance, cracked footpaths and graffiti) can greatly influence how women both perceive and experience safety in their local area.[20]

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**Key message: The Western metropolitan region is a rapidly growing and diverse area with pockets of significant disadvantage. Reported family violence incidents in the Western metropolitan region are on average and in some cases higher than the Victorian average.**

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**Key message: Gender inequity is a significant concern for the western region. Women in the western region experience significant disadvantage, such as lower workforce participation and levels of income, which result in inequitable outcomes when compared to men.**

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## 4.0    Violence against women is preventable

### 4.1    Redressing the drivers/determinants of men's violence against women

Men's violence against women is not inevitable, it is preventable.  A significant emerging body of evidence suggests that is possible to not just reduce men's violence against women, but to prevent it before it occurs. It is now recognised internationally that by identifying the factors that increase the likelihood of men's VAW (violence against women) occurring, it is possible to predict its occurrence, and to understand how to prevent it.

The prevention of men's violence against women requires acknowledgment that this violence is gender-based, and that gender is essential to understanding the causes and consequences of men's violence, and indeed, how to prevent it. This acknowledgment also recognises that men's violence against women is not the result of one single factor, but a complex interaction of personal, situational and socio-cultural factors; particularly in relation to gender inequality. The evidence base identifies the unequal distribution of power and resources between men

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[18] *ibid*
[19] Women's Health West (2013). *Women in Melbourne's West: Sex disaggregated data and gender analysis for service and program planning.* Women's Health West: Footscray
[20] Women's Health West (2013). *Women in Melbourne's West: Sex disaggregated data and gender analysis for service and program planning.* Women's Health West: Footscray

and women, and an adherence to rigidly defined gender roles and stereotypes, as the drivers most significantly linked to the perpetration of men's violence against women[21].

Research conducted by UNIFEM demonstrated that countries where a higher level of gender equality has been achieved, have lower levels of violence against women.  As illustrated in Figure 1 below, societies that value women's participation and representation, and have few power differentials between women and men, have lower levels of violence against women[22].
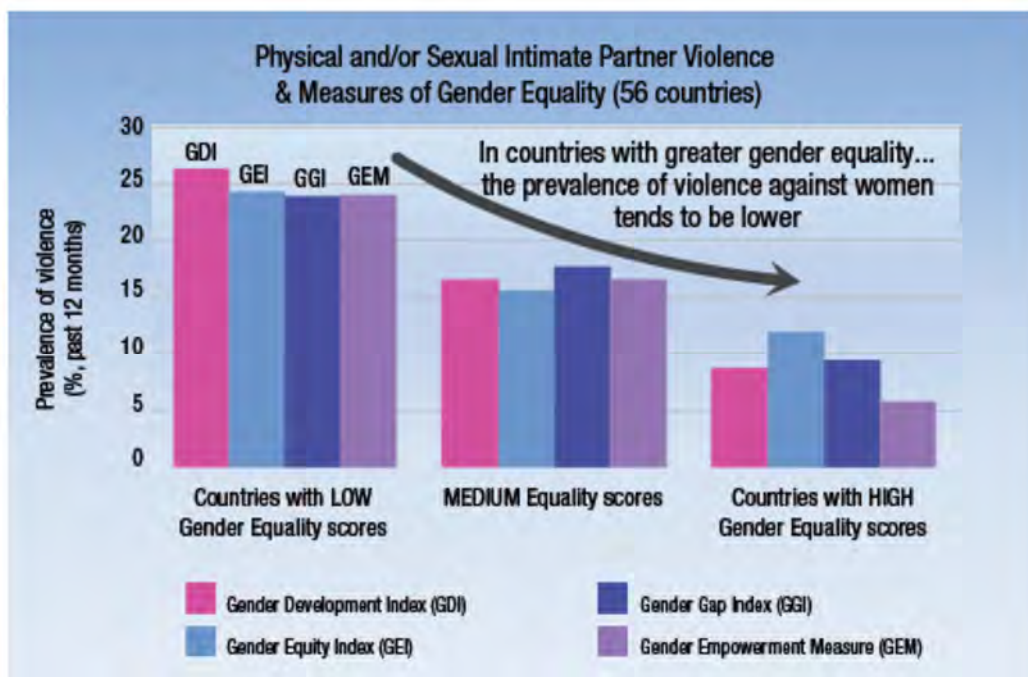


Figure 1: *Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence & Measures of Gender Equality[23]*

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**Key message: Violence against women is not inevitable, it is preventable.**

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**Key message: The evidence base identifies the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women, and an adherence to rigidly defined gender roles and stereotypes, as the drivers significantly linked to the perpetration of men's violence against women.**

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**Recommendation: Men's violence against women is not inevitable, it is preventable. The Victorian Government must increase funding and resources for the primary prevention of violence against women if Victoria is to reduce and eliminate violence against women**

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[21] VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, VicHealth, Melbourne, Australia.
[22] Fergus, L, 2012, *UN Women Expert Group Meeting, Prevention of violence against women and girls: Background paper*, UN Women, Thailand.
[23] UNIFEM (2010) *Investing in Gender Equality: Ending Violence against Women and Girls,* available at: *http://www.unwomen.org/en/digitallibrary/ publications/2010/1/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-unifem-strategyand-information-kit*

**Recommendation: The Victorian Government must increase funding for the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria that specifically redresses the determinants of violence against women related to gender inequality, as identified in the evidence-base.**

### 4.2    An ecological approach to preventing violence against women

The literature highlights the need to take an ecological approach to understanding and preventing men's violence against women. As illustrated in Figure 2, an ecological approach recognises the origins of gender-based violence as multifaceted and grounded in inter-related levels of influence; including personal, situational and sociocultural factors.
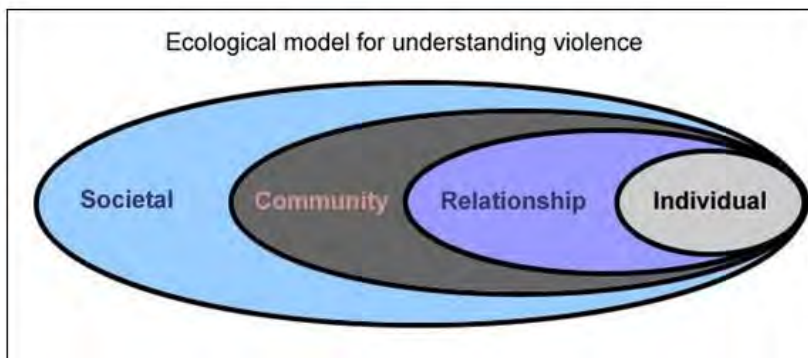


**Source:** Heise et al., 1999; Krug et al., 2002; CDC, 2004

*Figure 2: Heise's Ecological Model for understanding violence against women[24]*

While there are differences in the specific risk factors identified by experts who use an ecological model, most identify gender inequality and gender socialisation that results in rigid gender roles and stereotypes as significant underlying factors in the perpetration of men's violence against women[25]. Importantly, an ecological approach highlights the need to redress determinants and contributing factors across many different levels of society and settings, to effectively redress the problem of men's violence against women[26].

While action to prevent violence against women needs to occur at all levels of the ecological model, a greater focus at the societal level is required to create the long-term societal chance sought in ending violence against women. Much of the current focus of prevention work is aimed at the relationship and individual level, meaning that gender inequality drivers that create an environment for violence against women to exist at the community and societal levels, are left unaddressed.

**Recommendation: Resourcing strategic action at the societal level is required by the Victorian Government to redress structural and cultural gender inequality, in order to maintain Victoria's reputation as a leader in the prevention of men's violence against women.**

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[24] Heise, L, 1998, 'Violence Against Women: An Integrated, Ecological Framework', *Violence Against Women*, Vol 4, pp.262-290.

[25] VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, VicHealth, Melbourne, Australia.

[26] Heise, L, 1998, 'Violence Against Women: An Integrated, Ecological Framework', *Violence Against Women*, Vol 4, pp.262-290.

## 5. A promising model for preventing violence against women – a regional partnership approach

*Preventing Violence Tog*ether (PVT) is the regional agreement, partnership and action plan to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in the western region of Melbourne (available here: http://whwest.org.au/resource/preventing-violence-together-the-western-region-prevention-of-violence-against-women/). First launched in 2010, *PVT* was Victoria's first collaboratively-developed, regional action plan and partnership dedicated specifically to the primary prevention of violence against women. In seeking to end men's violence against women, the *Preventing Violence Together* regional partnership demonstrates a promising model to advance the primary prevention of men's violence against women in Victoria.

### 5.1 Governance structure and membership

Lead by the regional women's health service, Women's Health West, the partnership is comprised of 18 partner organisations from local government, community health, family violence services, sexual assault services, women's health, Victoria Police, Department of Justice and Regulation and Indigenous services. The 18 partner organisations to *Preventing Violence Together* include:

| | |
|---|---|
| Brimbank City Council | Maribyrnong City Council |
| City of Melbourne | Melton City Council |
| Cohealth | Moonee Valley City Council |
| Department of Justice and Regulation | Victoria Police |
| Djerriwarrh Health Services | West CASA |
| HealthWest Partnership | West Metro Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group |
| Hobsons Bay City Council | Western Integrated Family Violence Committee |
| Inner North West PCP | Women's Health West |
| ISIS Primary Care | Wyndham City Council |

All 18 partners play a critical and unique role in preventing violence against women, bringing expertise and reach across a range of settings. For example, local governments are important partners in prevention through their roles as civic leaders, managers of public environments and providers of recreational and community services. This has resulted in a partnership that works across sectors and implements multifaceted strategies that target individuals, communities and workplaces, and institutions and systems.

The PVT partnership is overseen by three governance mechanisms: the Executive Governance Group, the Implementation Committee and the Expert Advisory Group. The Executive Governance Group, composed of representation from Senior Management and Chief Executive Officer from all 18 partner organisations, oversees the strategic direction of the partnership ensures the prevention of violence against women remains a priority for the western region.

The Implementation Committee is composed of project officer and coordinator representatives from partner agencies, and is designed to support PVT signatory agencies to implement prevention of violence against women initiatives within their organisation and with communities. The Expert Advisory Group provides guidance to the partnership and is

composed of experts, practitioners and academics in the areas of prevention of violence against women and promotion of gender equity.

*5.2 Vision, objectives and action areas of the PVT regional partnership*
The remit of the PVT regional partnership and action plan is the primary prevention of men's violence against women. The vision of PVT is for the creation of communities, cultures and organisations in the western region that are non-violent, non-discriminatory, gender equitable and promote respectful relationships. To achieve this vision, the regional action plan comprises prevention strategies that sit within seven key action areas:

| Action Area | Objective |
|---|---|
| Partnerships and structures | Establish effective partnerships across government and non-government organisations and accountable leadership structures for sustainable prevention |
| Community leadership | Strengthen community leadership to drive change to prevent violence against women |
| Capacity and tools | Build capacity and tools for organisational change and workforce development |
| Communications, advocacy and champions | Implement multiphase communications campaigns and programs, engage champions and undertake media advocacy to promote equity and non-violence |
| Skills, attitudes and social norms | Develop and strengthen systems and programs that build respectful relationships skills and influence social norms, attitudes and behaviours |
| Research and evaluation | Undertake research, evaluation and monitoring of policy and programs to ensure continuous improvement |
| Embedding | Improve policy, regulation and legislation to embed prevention of violence and gender equity |

The prevention strategies to support these objectives are based on the VicHealth framework to prevent violence against women and work to redress gender inequity, advance gender equality and prevent violence against women before it occurs.

**5.3    Promising practice – the benefits of a regional approach to preventing violence against women**
*5.3.1    Responding to local needs and context to prevent violence against women*
As previously outlined in Section 3, the western region is home to two of Melbourne's four designated 'growth corridors' with gentrified inner areas alongside middle areas with public housing and entrenched socio-economic disadvantage. There is also significant diversity with 29 per cent of Melbourne's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, a large and diverse migrant and refugee population and a higher than state-average population of women living with a disability[27]. Such a diverse western region community presents important considerations for our work to prevent violence against women.

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[27] Women's Health West, 2013, *Women's Health West Integrated Health Promotion Plan 2013-2017*, Women's Health West, Footscray, Victoria.

Primary prevention responses to men's violence emphasise the importance of responding to local perspectives and stakeholders[28], and building on existing knowledge, strengths and resources in the local environment[29]. Given the enormous diversity across the state of Victoria, a regional approach helps to support the design of prevention efforts that are tailored to the local context.

### 5.3.2   Building organisational and workforce capacity to prevent violence against women

The primary prevention of violence against women is a relatively new area of practice. As such, significant and targeted capacity building, informed by the emerging evidence base, is essential if we are to truly reduce and end violence against women in Victoria. Indeed, building 'primary prevention capacity' is an important priority identified in the first action plan of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*[30].

It is the experience of the PVT Partnership that a regional partnership approach provides a key mechanism for building local knowledge, skills and resources in the prevention of violence against women. In particular, over the last three years, the PVT partnership has implemented a range of strategies to build the capacity of partner agencies to prevent violence against women. Through the United project, funded by the Victorian Department of Justice, the PVT partnership has implemented the following capacity building activities:

- Developed an online PVT Resource Hub, containing up-to-date research, resources and tools to support the implementation of prevention of violence against women and gender equity strategies (accessible here: http://pvawhub.whwest.org.au/)
- Developed capacity building training sessions on a range of prevention of violence against women topics, including: undertaking gender audits; partnering with Aboriginal communities to prevent family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; women's leadership in the workplace; and engaging men in the prevention of men's violence against women.
- Developed and implemented a Prevention of Men's Violence Against Women Training Program with partner agency staff, across numerous partner agencies
- Developed a 'Guidelines for Undertaking Gender Audits Tool' and 'Preventing Violence Against Women and Promoting Gender Equity Organisational Policy Template'

### 5.3.3   Strengthening political will to prevent violence against women

The work of preventing violence against women is long-term. Indeed, evidence from VicHealth and the World Health Organisation indicates that in order to achieve the enormous social, cultural, and attitudinal change required to effectively prevent violence against women, primary prevention work must be long-term and sustained[31]. Building the political will and commitment of leaders to take and sustain primary prevention action, is therefore essential.

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[28] Walden, I & Wall, L, 2014, *Reflecting on primary prevention of violence against women: The public health approach*, Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
[29] VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, VicHealth, Melbourne, Australia.
[30] Australian Government, 2011, *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022, Commonwealth Government, Canberra.*
[31] VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, VicHealth, Melbourne, Australia.

It is the experience of the PVT Partnership that a regional partnership for the primary prevention of violence against women is an effective mechanism for helping to build this political will of partner agencies at the local level to prevent violence against women. Our latest partnership evaluation report demonstrated that a regional partnership helps to strengthen this political will and commitment to prevent violence against women through:

▪ Supporting accountability
▪ Placing and keeping violence against women on the agenda
▪ Strengthening organisational commitment[32]

The PVT Partnership has continued to undertake activities to strengthen and sustain the political will of partner organisations to prevent violence against women. Three key partnership activities over the past year include:

▪ A partnership forum titled '*Leading Gender Equity*' was held 24th March 2015
    o Key audience was Executives/leaders in PVT *United* partner agencies
    o Attended by 57 staff (including Executive leaders) from partner agencies
    o Focused on building political will of Executive leaders and building their capacity to progress gender equity in their organisation in order to prevent violence against women
▪ A partnership communications campaign '16 Partners, 16 Actions, 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Gender-based Violence' was undertaken in November-December 2014
    o Executives and leaders from all partner agencies participated in the campaign
    o Campaign received media coverage including nine newspaper articles
▪ Nearly all of the PVT partners have developed organisational prevention of violence against women and/or promotion of gender equity strategies/plans/position statements.

It is the position of the PVT Partnership that the State Government's capacity to prevent violence against women in Victoria is enhanced, strengthened and indeed maximised through a regional partnership model, as demonstrated through the PVT Partnership and its strong political will to prevent violence against women in the western region.

### 5.3.4    Undertaking a partnership and inter-sectoral approach to prevention

Section 3 notes that it is not possible to end violence against women with disparate initiatives, short-term funding and one-off projects.  Cross-sector partnerships have been noted as integral in order for primary prevention efforts to be effective and comprehensive[33]; recognising that the structures, cultures and attitudes that drive violence against women are deeply and widely entrenched in society and thus require comprehensive action across all sectors.

The PVT Partnership demonstrates a coordinated, partnership approach to prevention in the western region spanning across various sectors, including local government, community and women's health, Aboriginal services, specialist family violence and sexual assault services, police and justice. It is the experience of the PVT Partnership that a regional partnership approach is central to maximising local efforts to prevent violence against women. Working

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[32] Preventing Violence Together Partnership, 2014, *PVT Partnership Evaluation Survey*, Preventing Violence Together, Western Region of Melbourne, Victoria.
[33] VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, VicHealth, Melbourne, Australia.

collaboratively through a regional inter-sectoral partnership has allowed partners to share prevention of violence against women expertise, skills, resources and networks. Our latest partnership evaluation survey revealed that 92 per cent of respondents agreed that partners are willing to share ideas, resources, influence and power, in order to fulfil the shared goal of the partnership to prevent violence against women[34].

The PVT partnership has undertaken various discrete collaborations over the past year that demonstrate an effective partnership approach to prevention, including:
- Establishing a 'Gender Equity for Community Health Services Working Group', composed of representation from six partner organisations, in order to develop gender equity resources specifically for community health services in the west
- Planning a 2015 regional PVT partnership forum on 'Intersectionality and prevention of violence against women'
- Collaboration between Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Wyndham Councils on the 'Gender Equitable, Safe and Inclusive Communities' place-based project

Given funding limitations, the regional partnership work of PVT has been particularly targeted towards building the capacity of all western region local governments and community health services. It is essential that funding to regional partnerships is increased and continued in order to expand efforts to engaging other sectors in prevention of violence against women and gender equity strategies at the local level, including housing, local media, businesses, sports clubs, police, arts organisations and schools.

### 5.3.5 Advancing State Government efforts at the local level

Importantly, the PVT Partnership and Regional Action Plan serves as a mechanism to formalise and strengthen links with state and national plans to prevent violence against women. The PVT Regional Action Plan strategically aligns with the State and National plans to redress family violence and violence against women. In doing so, a regional partnership model helps to support a consistent and strategic approach to preventing violence against women across Victoria at the local level.

The evidence-base highlights the importance of community mobilisation at the local level for the prevention of violence against women, particularly in its potential to:
- Increase the collective efficacy of communities to take action in response to violence
- Harness local leadership and resources
- Be tailored to the needs of specific communities, a particular consideration in addressing violence in marginalised communities requiring targeted approaches[35]

As demonstrated through PVT, a regional partnership model provides a primary mechanism to maximise the impact of the State Government's commitment and efforts to prevent violence against women and promote gender equity across Victoria. Regional partnerships work to reduce costs to government by decreasing duplication, leveraging the strengths and capacity of each partner organisation, and forging links between agencies to create seamless service

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[34] Preventing Violence Together Partnership, 2014, *PVT Partnership Evaluation Survey*, Preventing Violence Together, Western Region of Melbourne, Victoria.
[35] VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, VicHealth, Melbourne, Australia.

integration[36]. It is essential that funding is increased to ensure that regional partnerships can advance the direction and efforts of the State Government at the local level, in order to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

> **Key message: A regional partnership model, as demonstrated through the Preventing Violence Together Partnership, is an example of an inter-sectoral approach that has decreased duplication and enhanced partner capacity to prevent men's violence against women at the local level.**

> **Key recommendation: Increase funding for regional partnerships focused on the primary prevention of violence against women, to maximise State Government efforts to prevent violence against women, and support the delivery of effective and tailored prevention strategies at the local level.**

## 6. Establishing a culture of non-violence and gender equity - key areas for action
### *6.1 Develop and resource a state-wide primary prevention plan for Victoria*
The expertise, knowledge and skills required to undertake primary prevention of violence against women are unique and significantly different from those required to respond to violence against women and their children once it has occurred. At present, Victoria does not have a plan specifically dedicated to primary prevention, which acknowledges the unique skills, knowledge and approaches required to advance gender equity and prevent violence against women before it occurs.

As such, the State government must develop a primary prevention action-plan for Victoria that sets out the government's long-term commitment to preventing violence against women in Victoria. This plan must be long-term, adequately funded, evidence-based, targeted towards redressing the determinants of violence against women, and represent a whole-of-government commitment to preventing violence against women in Victoria.

> **Key recommendation: Develop a state government primary prevention action plan for Victoria that sets out the government's long-term commitment to preventing violence against women. This action plan must be resourced and funded accordingly. This will provide an authorising environment that leads primary prevention across sectors and setting.**

### 6.2 *Establish a state-wide peak body for the prevention of men's violence against women*
Victoria has long been a leader in the prevention of violence against women, with a range of actions occurring at the state-wide level, as well as action at a regional level. A range of organisations have played and continue to play a leadership role at the state level in the area of preventing violence against women, including VicHealth and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). Additionally, Women's Health Services have been resourced via a range of Victorian government departments to develop and lead regional partnerships to prevent violence against women across Victoria. The Women's Health Association of Victoria (WHAV)

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[36] Women's Health West, 2014, *Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia*, Women's Health West, Footscray, Australia.

provides state-wide oversight of this work, supporting Women's Health Services to lead regional partnerships and an inter-sectoral approach to prevention.

Despite this leadership demonstrated in particular sectors, there is currently no peak body that provides a coordinated Victorian state-wide and inter-sectoral approach to the primary prevention of men's violence against women. Although Our Watch has a leadership role at a national level, the scope of Our Watch does not allow it to specifically respond to the Victorian context.

Victoria currently operates a model for coordination and integration of family violence system reforms and response services, which could be replicated for primary prevention. Regional committees, overseen by Regional Integration Coordinators, were established as part of the service system reforms in 2007. In the Western metropolitan region, the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee has played an important role in providing a central coordinating point for regional action and ensuring integrated and cross-sectoral alignment of efforts to respond to family violence.

With primary prevention regional implementation partnerships currently being developed across Victoria, this work would be enhanced with funding to establish Regional Prevention Coordinators to drive this work, and a state-wide peak body, to ensure a consistent and strategic approach at the state level. For this peak primary prevention body, gender equity and prevention of violence against women would need to be core business, and long-standing experience and expertise in gender equity and primary prevention would be essential. It is important to highlight that the skills required to undertake and lead primary prevention work varies significantly from that required for responding to family violence.

> **Recommendation: Establish a state-wide peak body for the primary prevention of violence against women. This body will ensure a strategic, coordinated, comprehensive and inter-sectoral approach to prevention across Victoria.**

*6.3 Improved access to data on family violence incidence and prevalence*

Victoria Police family violence crime statistics are an important mechanism for publicly accessible data on reported family violence across regions in Victoria. However, as these statistics are only based on reported family violence incidents, it is largely acknowledged that this data is undoubtedly a gross underestimate of the true prevalence of family violence across the state.

It has been the experience of many PVT partners that in light of the many competing health, social and criminal problems, the importance of providing family violence data that demonstrates the scale of the problem and the need for action, has been essential to progressing prevention strategies. At present, publicly accessible data is mostly restricted to the Victoria Police crime statistics data; which, as previously discussed, is a gross underestimate of the problem. It is therefore essential that population level statistics from other key data sources are also made publicly accessible (with appropriate anonymity and confidentiality measures in place), to provide a more comprehensive and accurate insight into the prevalence of family violence across Victoria. This might include population level family

violence related data from family violence service-providers, homelessness services, drug and alcohol services, and hospital services, in particular, accident and emergency statistics.

> **Key message: Support sharing of data across a range of services to provide a more comprehensive insight into the prevalence of men's violence against women in Victoria.**

### *6.4 Resourcing evaluation and data on the determinants of violence against women*

It is essential that the work to prevent men's violence against women is informed by an evidence-based theory of change, with appropriate evaluation measures and indicators accordingly. As outlined by Our Watch, an appropriate theory of change for the prevention of violence against women includes the premise that the long-term and sustainable change sought to end men's violence against women will only be achieved through redressing the root causes of the problem, namely the unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men and an adherence to rigid gender roles and stereotypes[37]. Accordingly, evaluation measures and indicators of success for the primary prevention of violence against women must be focused on redressing the key drivers of violence against women.

### *6.4.1 Data collection measures that must be continued*

It is essential that the government continues to fund the conduct and dissemination of research on a range of gender equity measures across Victoria and indeed Australia, to help inform and monitor our collective prevention efforts. This includes, but is not limited to:

- *The Australian Census of Population and Housing*
  At present, the Australian Population Census provides data on a range of important gender equity areas, including: English language proficiency and literacy; income levels; education; paid work; unemployment; unpaid work including unpaid domestic work, caring work for family members and the elderly. It is essential that this research continues, including the provision of sex-disaggregated data in all areas, to inform gender equity strategies in Victoria.
- *Research produced by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency*
  The Workplace Gender Equality Agency produces research on a range of important gender equity areas including paid parental leave, the gender pay gap, and women in leadership. While this data is accessible at the national and state-level, ensuring this data is available at the regional level would enhance regional efforts to prevent violence against women and promote gender equity.
- *The VicHealth Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey*
  Conducted in 2009 and 2013, this national survey produced by VicHealth is a key measure of how Australia and indeed Victoria is tracking in their attitudes towards violence against women. The findings provide valuable insight that informs primary prevention strategies, including identifying encouraging results where gains are being made, and areas of concern which require strategic action. Importantly, the evidence base highlights that attitudinal change is most likely to occur when strategic action is taken across all levels of society to redressing the key drivers of violence against women[38]

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[37] Our Watch, 2014, *Policy Brief 2: An emerging theory of change*, Our Watch, Victoria.
[38] VicHealth, 2014, *2013 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey – Research Summary*, VicHealth, Carlton, Victoria.

### 6.4.2 Gaps in data collection that must be redressed

The PVT Partnership welcomed the introduction of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* as an important step in progressing gender equality in the workplace, at the national and state level. However, it is of great concern that the reporting requirements for the Act are restricted only to higher education providers and private sector employers with 100 or more employees. It is essential that the Victorian state government, Local governments and Federal government demonstrates genuine leadership and commitment to the promotion of gender equity in the workplace, which includes a commitment to work on progressing gender equity internally, as part of the whole of society approach required to truly end violence against women. We strongly urge the Victorian government to advocate to the Australian government to change the workplace reporting requirements to include local, state and federal governments, and to decrease the numbers of employees a workplace needs to have to be accountable to the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*.

Additionally, much of the existing primary prevention research and data collection in Australia has concentrated on identifying risk and protective factors at the individual level, for example individual attitudes towards gender equality and violence against women[39]. While this is essential, there remains a paucity of data collection and analysis that specifically explores institutional and cultural support for gender inequity across various domains of Australian society, such as media, sports, education and the judiciary. Collection, analysis and public distribution of data on women's participation in leadership and decision-making across all of these sectors at the state and national level, is required in order to contribute to a more comprehensive insight into the State's progress towards gender equity and the prevention of men's violence against women.

> **Recommendation: Continue to fund critical data sets such as the Census and the VicHealth Community Attitudes Survey and address gaps in data collection, such as population level gender equity statistics to measure Victoria's progress in prevention men's violence against women**

### 6.5 Preventing family violence within Aboriginal communities

The West Metro Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group (IFV RAG) supports, informs and facilitates the ongoing implementation of the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Strategy at a regional level in the west of Melbourne. The West Metro IFV RAG is one of the 18 members of the PVT Partnership.

It is widely recognised that experiences of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are compounded and complicated by over a century of dispossession of land, racial discrimination, and institutionalised violence[40]. As outlined in the North & West Metropolitan Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Plan 2012-2015:

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[39] Fergus, L, 2012, *UN Women Expert Group Meeting, Prevention of violence against women and girls: Background paper*, UN Women, Thailand.

[40] Department of Planning and Community Development (2008) *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 year plan*, Victorian Government: Melbourne

*The prevalence of Family Violence within our communities can be directly related to the loss of land, culture, identity, self-respect, self-worth and the breakdown of traditional roles within communities[41].*

Recommendations for the prevention of family violence within Aboriginal communities in the western region are outlined below. These recommendations have been developed by: West Metro IFV RAG members from Community, Wayapa Wuurrk, and the Aboriginal Centre for Males (VACSAL); and associate members from Women's Health West and Relationships Australia (Victoria). The recommendations are in reference to the principles defined in the State Government's *Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework[42].*

*Principle:     Valuing Aboriginal Culture*
**Key recommendations:**
▪ Cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural competency is an ongoing process; you cannot be competent in another person's culture, and learning is an ongoing process.
▪ An *Aboriginal Cultural Audit* should be developed and implemented with all family violence services and partner agencies in the western region. The IFVRAG should be funded and resourced to lead this work with Community members. The Cultural Audit should include all aspects of cultural engagement, and be a whole-of-organisation audit including Governance structures.
▪ Cultural engagement training for staff should be developed and implemented across all family violence services and partner agencies in the western region. This should include training for Governance structures including the Executive, Board members and Leadership Teams.
▪ Stronger accountability of funding for Aboriginal focused initiatives that is placed within mainstream services is required.
▪ A whole-of-government commitment is required to continue to resource and fund IFVRAG's to continue regional work to prevent family violence within Aboriginal communities.

*Principle: Family violence is not part of Aboriginal Culture*
**Key recommendations:**
▪ Family violence should not be a part of any culture – including Anglo Australian culture.
▪ It is essential to recognise the history and continuing impacts of colonisation and its role in family violence within Aboriginal communities.
▪ There is an enormous need to combat stereotypes and myths about Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal culture across services and communities in the western region, particularly myths and stereotypes in relation to the use of violence and alcohol.
▪ Emphasis needs to be placed on returning to Aboriginal cultural roots which promote respectful relationships between women and men.

*Principle: Healing approach to family violence in Aboriginal communities*
**Key recommendations:**

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[41] North & West Metropolitan Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group, 2008, *North & West Metropolitan Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Plan 2012-2015,* Victorian State government.
[42] Department of Human Service, 2012, *Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework*, State Government.

- Long-term policy commitment and funding for work is required to combat centuries of trauma, dispossession and colonisation experienced, and continuing to be experienced, by Aboriginal communities.
- A need for increased spaces specifically for Aboriginal meeting places/gatherings in the western region, to support prevention of family violence.
- A holistic approach to working with families affected by family violence is essential, including keeping families connected where possible while also supporting safety.

*Principle: Respond to, and prevent, family violence*
**Key recommendations:**
- Need for greater awareness raising on what family violence is (i.e. that it includes spiritual, cultural, physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological, social and economic abuse).
- Community education and awareness raising must be culturally appropriate.
- Increased activities are required to support respectful relationships between women and men, specifically focused on working with Aboriginal young people and children.
- Increased funding is required for the West Metro IFVRAG to lead respectful relationships, community education and awareness raising activities with Aboriginal communities in the western region.
- Community education and awareness raising activities to prevent family violence should include an emphasis on respecting Aboriginal LORE (Land, Origin, Respect and Elders).

*Principle: Recognise the complex nature of family violence within Aboriginal communities*
**Key recommendations:**
- Recognition that family violence within Aboriginal communities includes spiritual, cultural, physical, sexual, emotional, social and economic abuse, that can occur within families, extended families, kinship networks and communities.
- Need to recognise that family violence within Aboriginal communities can also include Lateral violence, elder abuse and abuse of power or authority over others.

*Principle: Empowering Aboriginal communities*
**Key recommendations:**
- It is essential to recognise and value local knowledge and expertise from within Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organisations.
- Initiatives to address family violence within Aboriginal communities must be led by Aboriginal communities and organisations, drawing on local knowledge and expertise.

*Principle: Local solutions to local problems*
**Key recommendations:**
- The West Metro IFV RAG is unique and includes Community members, Aboriginal organisations and non-Aboriginal services. Additionally, the West Metro Aboriginal community is made up of traditional families and many diverse mobs from across Victoria and Australia. The Western region therefore requires local strategies and solutions tailored to the local context, in order to prevent family violence in the west.

*Principle: Work in partnerships*
**Key recommendations:**
- Partnerships are vital to the work to prevent family violence within Aboriginal communities.

- Important to ensure partnerships are inclusive of non-Aboriginal services, while also ensuring the appropriate levels of engagement of non-Aboriginal services are maintained. Partnerships to prevent family violence within Aboriginal communities must be led by Aboriginal communities and organisations.
- Importance of transparency and accountability in partnerships work to prevent family violence within Aboriginal communities.

*Principle: Adequate resources*

**Key recommendations:**
- Increased funding and resources for the West Metro IFV RAG is needed to support the long-term work required to prevent family violence within Aboriginal communities in the western region.
- It is essential that all levels of Government work collaboratively to address family violence within Aboriginal communities and ensure accountability to Aboriginal communities and services.

6.6 *Strengthening an intersectional approach to preventing violence against women*

If violence against women in Victoria and Australia is to be prevented and in time, eliminated, it is essential that an intersectional approach is undertaken. Recent international research on primary prevention programming reported that the use of an intersectional approach to prevention and gender-power relations were one of the key principles in the most effective efforts to prevent violence against women[43]. Undoubtedly, primary prevention strategies need to be inclusive and responsive to the different needs of various population groups; particularly, populations and communities that due to intersecting power inequalities are at greater risk of violence and its impacts once it has occurred.

The importance of an intersectional approach is a priority for the PVT Partnership and the western region; many women in the western region experience intersectional discrimination as the consequence of multiple compounding forms of discrimination and inequalities in power, due to their race, ethnicity, religion, ability, sexuality or socio-economic status. The PVT Partnership calls for greater funding that resources regional partnerships to partner with specialist organisations and communities to ensure that regional primary prevention efforts include a combination of both universal and selective interventions to redress violence against women[44].

Current data and reports from specialist services highlight the following key population groups experience higher rates of violence and inequity, and that require tailored prevention efforts:

- *Violence against women with disabilities*

It is well established that women with physical and cognitive disabilities experience higher rates of violence than those without disabilities[45]; women with disabilities are 40% more likely

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[43] Michau, L, Horn, J, Bank, A, Dutt, M and Zimmerman, C, 2014, 'Prevention of violence against women and girls: lessons from practice', *The Lancet*, United Kingdom.

[44] VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, VicHealth, Melbourne, Australia.

[45] VicHealth, 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, VicHealth, Melbourne, Australia

to be the victims of domestic violence than women without disabilities and more than 70% of women with disabilities have been victims of violent sexual encounters at some time in their lives[46]. The PVT Partnership support Women with Disabilities Victoria's position statement which highlights the need for active participation of women with disabilities in primary prevention efforts, and the need for violence against women with disabilities to be understood in the context of the intersections between gender and disability, power and marginalisation[47].

▪ *Violence against women from migrant and refugee backgrounds*

Although violence against women occurs among all social locations including ethnicity, culture, socio-and economic status, women who are socially marginalised due to factors such as ethnicity and culture are more vulnerable to violence and less likely to have the resources to report and escape situations of violence. Intersectional experiences of marginalisation, low socio-economic status and disadvantage mean that some CALD communities are significantly exposed to the determinants of violence against women, such as low access to social and economic resources and systems of support. As such, women from CALD communities are at heightened vulnerability to ongoing violence and the impacts of violence[48]. The PVT Partnership calls for explicit funding to support regional partnerships to collaborate and partner with multicultural agencies and communities, to support the development and implementation of culturally relevant, appropriate and tailored approaches to the prevention of violence against women in the western region.

▪ *Violence against women in same-sex relationships*

There is a lack of recognition of the violence that is perpetrated against lesbian, bi-sexual, queer and transgender women in intimate relationships. This is of great concern, given that Victorian statistics suggest that 41 per cent of women in same-sex relationships experience intimate partner violence[49]. The PVT Partnership calls for greater funding to support primary prevention strategies that specifically redress the violence experienced by lesbian, bi-sexual, queer and transgender women.

> **Recommendation: Ensure primary prevention action is inclusive and responsive to the different needs of various population groups in recognition of intersecting power inequalities that create greater risk of violence and its impacts**

*6.7 Ongoing resourcing for regional partnerships to prevent violence against women*

It is well established that preventing violence against women requires specific expertise and long-term commitment; ongoing resources for regional prevention efforts are essential to ensure the change sought in ending violence against women is progressed and sustained over time.

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[46] Frohmader, C, 2014, Fact sheet: Violence against people with disabilities in institutions and residential settings, Women with Disabilities Australia, Australia.

[47] Women with Disabilities Victoria, 2014, *Position statement: Violence against women with disabilities*, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria.

[48] Flood, M. 2013, Engaging Men from Diverse Backgrounds in Preventing Men's Violence Against Women, *Stand Up! National Conference on Eliminating All Forms of Violence Against CaLD Women*, April 29-30, Canberra.

[49] Pitts M, Smith, M, Mitchell, A & Patel, S, 2007, Private Lives: A report on the health and wellbeing of GLBTI Australians. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. Melbourne.

In the State Government's *Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children 2012-2015*, the importance of regional action plans in their remit to develop and implement coordinated and cohesive regional action that engages communities and organisations in preventing violence against women, has been acknowledged[50]. As demonstrated through the work of the PVT Partnership as outlined in section 1.3, regional, inter-sectoral partnerships dedicated specifically to primary prevention are an effective key mechanism for driving state government commitments and prevention strategies at the local level.

At this present time, the work of the PVT regional partnership is resourced through partner organisations having selected the prevention of violence against women as a priority for action within their Integrated Health Promotion, Municipal Public Health Plans and Council Plans. As such, this funding is limited, short-term, and forced to compete with other health and social priority areas requiring redress in the western region.

The only specific funding the PVT Partnership has to develop and implement regional prevention work is through a competitive grant successfully awarded through the Department of Justice's 'Reducing Violence Against Women and Their Children' (RVAWC) funding scheme. However, it is of momentous concern that this funding will end in November 2015; providing limited resources to build upon and progress the prevention efforts and gains made over the past three years in promoting gender equity and preventing violence against women in the west. It is therefore essential that the State Government provide ongoing funding to resource regional partnerships to build upon prevention work already underway, if we are to achieve the long-term change required in order to truly prevent, reduce and eventually eliminate violence against women in Victoria.

> **Recommendation: Increase funding and resources to regional partnerships focused on primary prevention to support the effective delivery and implementation of state-wide commitment and efforts to redress violence against women at the local level.**

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[50] Victorian Government, 2012, *Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence against Women and Children: Everyone has a Responsibility to Act*, Victorian Government, Melbourne