

## Grampians Community of Practice for the Prevention of Violence against Women

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### **Discussion Paper:** Session 7

How to engage men and women, girls and boys in primary prevention work



A Community of Practice is an effective way for people to share experiences, identify common challenges, solve problems and learn, thereby maximising opportunities to improve evidence-based practice in real time. The Grampians Community of Practice for the Prevention of Violence against Women (GCoP-PVAW) aims to assist people to access resources to improve their practice; translate research into relevant and accessible knowledge; facilitate the exchange of skills and knowledge; and provide opportunities for people to support each other to develop working relationships and share problem solving strategies with one another.

In February 2017, Women's Health Grampians (WHG) held its eighth GCoP-PVAW Forum for Community of Respect and Equality (CoRE) Alliance Members on the primary prevention of violence against women. The theme of the session "How to engage men and women, girls and boys in primary prevention work" focussed on engagement strategies to involve diverse groups in society to be spokespeople for preventing violence against women, particularly men and boys.

The purpose of this paper is to outline key learnings and provide a catalyst for future action around the topic of engagement.

## Engaging men and boys

Keynote Speaker: Dr Michael Salter, University of Western Sydney

To describe Dr Michael Salter's presentation on engaging men and boys in a few short words; honest, informative, empowering, thought-provoking and insightful. These sentiments were echoed by all participants attending the session. As a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Western Sydney University and an expert on the intersections between attitudes, culture and violence, Dr Salter covered primary prevention; the causes of violence against women; why we should engage boys and men in prevention; best practice examples of prevention; and lessons learnt from working with NRL players and an ATSI governing body.



### Why is it important to engage men and boys in prevention work?

Simply, men and boys are the primary perpetrators of violence against women, failing to engage men and boys in this work and educating these groups on the gendered nature of violence compromises our capacity to solve the issue.

Men tend to hold positions of power and control, whether in a public context (i.e. political or company leaders etc.) or private setting (i.e. men as the bread-winner in a typical household). Their role in decision-making has implications for women; therefore it makes sense to engage men to be part of the solution in this work.

**Change the Story** identified particular stages in the life-course that are important transition points for addressing the drivers of violence against. Childhood, adolescence, and young people represent moments in our life when gender roles, identities and stereotypes are formed, if we can develop values of respect, equality, and safety among these groups, we can prevent a trajectory towards violence.

### What are key considerations when engaging men and boys in PVAW/Gender Equity?

Often being an advocate for women's rights and preventing violence against women is met with resistance, particularly from men. The main theme to emerge from Michael's presentation was the 'framing of messages' and how this can incite resistance.

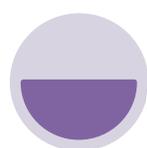
When we engage men and boys to talk about this issue, often men feel they are being blamed for an act they would never conceive to commit. The majority of men in society are not violent, yet we tend to talk to men as if they are the minority of abusive men guilty of this criminal conduct. This mentality is divisive and may be the reason why men respond with a level of disinterest or resistance to PVAW. Practitioners should open any discussion with men and boys remiss from portraying them as potential perpetrators and:

1. **Acknowledge the majority of men in society are not violent**, yet reiterate when men are violent it follows a gendered pattern and this is why we need to have these conversations.
2. **Acknowledge that men and boys have long been advocates for women's rights** and wellbeing (i.e. encouraging daughters to be anything in life, supporting partners who have been raped or abused, or stepping in between an abusive father and a powerless mother).

3. **Emphasise that men and boys have nothing to gain from being a perpetrator** of violence towards women. Committing violence against women (and men) results in fractured families, job insecurity, incarceration, etc. There is no benefit for men in being violent.
4. **Avoid reinforcing unhelpful masculine stereotypes** when encouraging men and boys to be spokespeople for PVAW. The commonly used tagline “*real men* do not hit women” embodies negative messages around masculinity. For non-abusive men, this statement may encourage positive connotations such as benevolence; however it still reinforces an ‘ideal’ male stereotype. On the other hand, abusive men are generally deeply ashamed of their behaviour, therefore reinforcing that they are not ‘*real men*’ is likely to alienate them and not encourage transformative change.

### What are the obstacles and opportunities within the Grampians region?

Dr Salter asked participants to reflect on the obstacles and opportunities that exist within our region. Brain storming points from the table discussions have been captured below:



## Obstacles

- Gender norms - not inclusive
- We’ve done gender equity
- Tokenistic tick-a-box
- Begrudging leadership
- ♂ feeling blamed
- Language: negativity, shame, be careful
- Different messages at home
- Media losing ground
- Under resourced
- Not allowing for innovation



## Opportunities

- Empower ♂ to be PVAW advocates
- ♂ Leadership, strong natural ambassadors
- Reframe language: how Gender Equality (GE) benefits ♂
- Support ♀ rather than give up ♂ privilege
- Build on our regions commitment
- Community of Practice, Partnerships
- Great range of resources available
- Royal Commission Funding & Recommendations
- Primary Prevention Funding
- Evaluation
- Education
- Schools: captive audience
- Discussions led by students followed by parents

## Panel Discussion

Speakers: Deb Milera - Child and Family Services, Greg Anders - Golden Plains Shire, Brett Edgington - Ballarat Regional Trades & Union Council and Fran Quigley - Ballarat Community Health



### Insights for engaging people in PVAW

This list highlights the main considerations the panel identified as solutions to engaging people in PVAW. You can use these ideas to add light to progressing PVAW/GE initiatives and working effectively in the PVAW field.

1. **Diverse engagement** – while engaging men and boys is an important piece of the puzzle towards stopping VAW, everyone in society regardless of their demographic group or setting has a role to play.
2. **Framing messages** – beginning difficult conversations with boys and girls around PVAW is important, but we need to avoid framing boys as potential perpetrators and girls as potential victims.
3. **Language** – the concepts around VAW such as *gender inequality*, *privilege*, and *entitlement* often come across as very academic. This can be off putting. Try to simplify the way you speak about VAW, or tailor your language to your audience.
4. **Courage** – when engaging diverse groups we need to muster a sense of bravery to invite the community to talk about this issue, an issue that is often sensitive, complex and hidden.
5. **Peer influence** – we cannot deny the impact leaders and peers have on facilitating behaviour change, when speaking with others in the community about VAW we need leaders who will begin this conversation.
6. **Remove assumptions** – leaders cast a large shadow and have an important role to play in PVAW, however you should not assume who the leaders, role models or advocates might be. Identifying who these leaders is important.
7. **Innovation** – we need to think outside the box when trying to engage the community in PVAW. If we want Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to be involved in PVAW then we need to provide an appropriate space and opportunity for those particular experiences and viewpoints to be heard.
8. **Relationship building** – the issue of VAW is confronting, before we begin work in this area we need to establish rapport and trust to ensure partners or participants are more receptive to the work. It is also important to meet people where they are at, gauging their level of knowledge, understanding and experience.

9. **Beyond respectful relationships** – respectful relationship education creates a baseline for how we treat others; how much more could be gained if we could teach the value of relationships beyond respect. We need young people to understand and aspire to meaningful mutually beneficial relationships.
10. **Ensure accountability** – we have to encourage organisations to commit to more than one-off events that are limited in their capacity to change behaviour and mindsets, instead advocate for long-lasting structural and attitudinal changes that can be fostered in organisations.

## Sector Update

Marianne Hendron, CEO, WHG

Marianne provided a detailed summary of state-wide strategic initiatives underway within the sector:

- **Royal Commission into Family Violence Ministerial Prevention Taskforce** – this taskforce has spent the past 6 months developing the Victorian Prevention Strategy which will sit alongside the ‘10 Year Plan to End Family Violence’. It is expected to be launched in late March and will guide our work going forward with a Prevention entity or commission overseeing activities and funding.
- **CoRE update** – since the launch in May 2016, a total of 55 members have signed onto the CoRE plan to take regional action to end violence against women. For a full list of members go to: <http://whg.org.au/priorities-programs/communities-respect-equality#core-alliance-members>. We hope this membership will increase over the year. The Alliance has developed an action plan and several resources to support members taking action.
- **Victorian Government Community Partnerships for Primary Prevention Grants** – Two submissions were made under the CoRE Alliance banner for additional capacity to work with the rural business sector at the Wimmera end of the region and in the Central Highlands catchment to engage and support CALD communities and sport/recreation groups and clubs.

## Regional Update

Dee Micevski, Health Promotion Regional Consultant Central Highlands, WHG

Dee provided a local update on resources, events, and initiatives relevant to CoRE Alliance members across the Grampians region. Most notable were the following:

- **CoRE Resources** – WHG updated the *‘Local Stories Booklet’* which showcases local organisations that have been proactive in implementing PVAW/GE projects. The booklet outlines the catalyst for their involvement; the challenges, barriers and enablers they have faced along the way; and the work undertaken. The *‘Taking Action Guide’* details five actions areas that have the most impact on stopping gender-based violence. This is a great resource for those who want ideas on activities they could do as part of CoRE.
- **WHG International Women’s Day** – WHG and WRISC held a film event to celebrate International Women’s Day on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017. This year the movie ‘Hidden Figures’ was selected, which tells the story of three African-American women who helped NASA orbit the planet. The movie highlights the inequities women face, particularly those of greater disadvantage, and how they overcame this. Proceeds of this event went to WRISC.

- **International Women’s Day (Horsham)** – Horsham Rural City Council celebrated IWD with a lunch at Horsham Town Hall on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017. Along with music from a group of local musicians, four dynamic speakers spoke on the theme #BeBoldforChange. Speakers included; Kate Dooley, a local woman working in Brussels in the area of international climate change policy, local pharmacist, Bec Burns, train driver, Stacy Whitehorse and dynamic older woman Maureen O’Day.
- **WHG CALD Project** – in partnership with City of Ballarat, WHG ran a sequence of workshops with culturally and linguistically diverse populations and indigenous groups to raise awareness of violence against women. These workshops were extremely well received and had an enormous impact on those who attended.
- **OurWatch Community Toolkit** – this is a step by step guide for practitioners on how to get PVAW and GE initiatives off the ground, the key considerations to be aware of when getting support from the community, and how to assess community readiness for PVAW orientated work. A useful, practical guide for those beginning in this space.
- **Family Violence Data** – The Crime Statistics Agency produces quarterly datasets for family violence in Victoria. WHG has summarised this data for the 11 municipalities in the Grampians region. Contact WHG for this resource.
- **Melton Women Making it Happen** – with the support of Djerriwarrh Health Services and Melton Council, leaders in the Melton community wanted to stand up against gender-based violence, raise awareness of the issue, and foster a society that challenges violence-supportive attitudes and beliefs. The group, called ‘Melton Women Making it Happen’ regularly meet to discuss how to continue to promote this issue. The most recent event was the ‘IWD Walk with Her’ to create a safer, respectful and equal community. [More information available here.](#)
- **Hepburn Health Services ‘You the Man’** – will be holding this theatre-based production which aims to break the cycle of relationship violence, giving young people the skills to identify and stand up against inappropriate behaviour. This event was supported by a donation from the Creswick Lions Club.



## Acknowledgements

Women's Health Grampians would like to thank our guest speakers; Dr Michael Salter, Deb Milera, Greg Anders, Brett Edgington and Fran Quigley; and also the facilitator for the day, Kath Deakin. Many thanks to our participants:

### Government, Justice & Legal

Central Highlands Community Legal Centre  
Department of Education and Training  
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning  
Victoria Police

### Local Government

Ararat Rural City Council  
Golden Plains Shire Council  
Horsham Rural City Council  
West Wimmera Shire Council

### Community & Health Services

Ballarat Community Health  
Ballarat Regional Trades and Labour Council  
Barwon CASA  
Child and Family Services  
Djerriwarrh Health Services  
Grampians Pyrenees PCP  
Hepburn Health Service  
Uniting Care Ballarat  
Wimmera Family Violence Unit  
Wimmera Health Care Group  
Wimmera Uniting Care  
Women's Health Grampians

For further information on this Community of Practice including film, audio recordings and presentation slides, please visit Women's Health Grampians website: [www.whg.org.au](http://www.whg.org.au)



### About Women's Health Grampians

Established in 1991, Women's Health Grampians (WHG) is one of 11 women's health services operating in Victoria, funded by the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services. It covers 11 local government areas across the Grampians region, extending in a wedge from Bacchus Marsh to the South Australian border. WHG aims to drive and support systemic change that will impact positively on the lives of women in the Grampians region. WHG has two priority areas: sexual and reproductive health and the prevention of violence against women (PVAW).

WHG adopts a population based, primary prevention approach to reduce and prevent violence against women. WHG seeks to address the social and cultural factors underlying violence against women: that is, gender inequities and attitudes and beliefs that support gender inequality, sexism and discrimination. Working in this area for over eight years, WHG has gained significant knowledge and experience, particularly in terms of region specific issues, primary prevention, local-level engagement and a 'whole of community approach'.

**Please contact Women's Health Grampians for more information on the Community of Practice**

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