Inner East Local Government
Prevention of Violence Against Women Project:
Research Findings

By Laura Wood, Project Officer Prevention of Violence Against Women
If we are serious about wanting to prevent violence against women, we must recognise the necessity of an ongoing commitment to doing so. Until we live in a society where gender equality is realised and seen as the norm, we will not reach a society where women live free from violence.

To prevent violence against women before it occurs, means to mainstream ideas about promoting respectful relationships, breaking down rigid ideas about what it means to be male or female and promoting gender equality. These ideas involve systemic cultural shifts within communities and organisations. The four inner east local governments have shown great leadership and promising practice in the Prevention of Violence Against Women Project. The local government sites recognise the critical role of local government in the prevention space and their potential reach and impact in local communities. The innovative project has provided an impressive platform for future work. It is vital the momentum continues to build and the commitment remains, if local government want to play a legitimate and effective role in the prevention of men’s violence against women.

*Laura Wood, Project Officer Prevention of Violence Against Women*
Please reference the Inner East Local Government Prevention of Violence Against Women Project 2011-2012 when utilising information from this report.

The authors, contributors and partner agencies can accept no liability for errors or omissions in this report.

For further information, please contact:
City of Monash
293 Springvale Rd,
Glen Waverley,
VIC 3150

Nicole Bruges (formerly Nicole Meinig) City of Monash
nicoleb@monash.vic.gov.au
+61 3 9518 3542
Contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................................................... i

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................................................... ii

Project Aims ....................................................................................................................................................... ii

Project Outcomes ............................................................................................................................................... ii

Key Learnings .................................................................................................................................................... iii

Key Recommendations ....................................................................................................................................... iv

1. Introduction ...................................................................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Project Approach ......................................................................................................................................... 1

1.2 Background ................................................................................................................................................ 2

1.3 Project Partners ........................................................................................................................................ 3

2. Vision, Goal and Objectives ........................................................................................................................... 4

3. Methodology ................................................................................................................................................... 5

3.1 Project Development .................................................................................................................................... 5

3.2 Implementation .......................................................................................................................................... 5

3.3 Evaluation .................................................................................................................................................. 5

4. Key Project Achievements .............................................................................................................................. 7

4.1 Planned Actions and Outcomes .................................................................................................................. 7

4.2 Inspired Actions and Outcomes ................................................................................................................ 9

5. Project Themes ................................................................................................................................................ 13

5.1 Creating Awareness and Understanding ................................................................................................ 13

Violence against women - understanding the spectrum and entirety of the definition ........................................ 14

An extreme repercussion of gender inequality is violence against women ...................................................... 14

Gendered nature of violence against women - recognising the broader societal patterns of men’s violence against women ......................................................................................................................... 16

Engaging women and men as change agents .................................................................................................. 17

Recommendations- Part 1 ................................................................................................................................ 19

5.2 Creating Strategic Alliances and Leadership ............................................................................................... 19

Creating Strategic Alliances: Links to multiple sectors .................................................................................. 19

The Prevention of Violence Against Women Committee: Sectors coming together to eradicate violence against women ........................................................................................................................................... 20

VicHealth Partnership Survey .......................................................................................................................... 21

Working Within Local Government: Strategic Alliances .................................................................................... 22

Who said that? Recognising the importance of the message sender ............................................................... 23

What impacted the effectiveness of project initiative implementation at Council sites? ............................... 24
Acknowledgments

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Inner East Prevention of Violence Against Women Committee

Elizabeth Hargreaves  Inner East Primary Care Partnership (Funding Body)
Nicole Meinig  City of Monash (Project Lead Agency)
Erin Davis/ Denise Roberts  Eastern Metropolitan Region Family Violence Partnership
Jill Exon  Women’s Health East
Fran James  MonashLink Community Health Service
Katherine Kucharski  City of Whitehorse
Ros Winkler  City of Boroondara
Vicki Martinez/ Anissa Gracie  Manningham City Council
Executive Summary

The ‘Inner East Local Government Prevention of Against Women (PVAW) Project’ is a 15-month (April 2010- June 2012) eight partner project based in four local government Councils in Melbourne’s inner east metropolitan region. Local government is a setting closely attuned to the activities of the community and therefore well placed to drive initiatives aimed at addressing the underlying causes of violence against women; in particular the unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men and adherence to rigidly defined gender norms.

Project Aims

The project aimed to build the knowledge, skills and abilities of local government staff to prevent violence against women. The project also aimed to embed and drive cultural change with a capacity building focus by incorporating an awareness and understanding of the key determinants of violence against women into local government policy, planning, strategy, projects, programs and service delivery. The focus of the project was to:

- Increase understanding and awareness
- Build leadership and strategic alliances
- Document and disseminate the successes and challenges and share the findings.

Project Outcomes

The work plan outlined specific tasks to support local government learning about the issue and how they could prevent violence against women, but these tasks really acted as catalysts for change-as triggers which prompted action from individuals within the local government settings to prevent violence against women independently in their own work. The flow-on effects from project tasks proved promising and pivotal to the success of the project”.

Project Officer, Prevention of Violence Against Women

The idea of responding to the prevention of violence against women is a very new space for local government. Due to this, the project actions were largely geared towards raising awareness and understanding. Initiatives included but were not limited to:

- A pre-project survey to understand local government staff’s understanding and awareness towards violence against women
- Introduction to the prevention of violence against women presentations to Executive Management Teams or equivalent and various departments
- A large scale prevention of violence against women event

Through exposure to one or more of the project actions, a domino effect was created with ‘inspired actions’ of Council officers. Such workers were not directly involved in the project, but became direct contributors to project outcomes, actively preventing violence against women through their work at Council. The ‘inspired actions’ (which totalled a longer list than the planned
actions) led by Council workers and Councillors not directly involved in the project, included but were not limited to:

- Professional development seminars for men on men’s responsibility in the prevention of violence against women;
- A Mayor Round Table event with key local stakeholders which supported the development of a joint Eastern Local Government submission for the new Preventing Violence Against Women and Women and their Children state government action plan;
- White Ribbon Events led by men. Funds raised were donated to a local support service for survivor victims of sexual assault;
- Internal funding being allocated at one of the sites to continue the work.

The planned project actions proved successful tools for raising awareness and impacting individuals to the degree where they were motivated to take action.

“The Project has made a huge difference to my knowledge of violence against women and to my role at Council in terms of what I can do to plan PVAW into my work plans”.

Council Officer – Manningham City Council Staff Survey

Key Learnings

- Working in partnership has enormous potential to grow, foster and spread important messages by multiplying resources, supports and engagement opportunities; partnerships come with complexities and many potential pitfalls and must be treated with respect and consideration.
- The partnership approach has been crucial in contributing to the sustainability of the Project’s actions.
  1. The establishment of a formalised partnership may have motivated the level of commitment maintained between partners throughout the life of the project (due to the initial commitment made to the project).
  2. Through external funding, agencies were further motivated to provide in-kind support which led to additional project outputs.
  3. The partnership approach whilst extracting expertise from various sectors, placed a sense of accountability on agencies which supported commitment to action.
- The project saw the application of one approach which required adaptations and tailored responses (human resourcing and timeframes varied greatly across sites) to meet the needs of four, at times distinct Council settings.
- The project was successful in planning for and engaging leaders, however harnessing and directing this energy through additional resourcing would have been advantageous for building on the work.
Planning a strategy to work with and navigate internal ‘gate keepers’ is fundamental to the effectiveness of project initiatives. Relationship-building skills and finding common ground are essential for project success.

Factoring in stronger methods of project sustainability post-project would be of great value.

**Key Recommendations**

1. Continue raising awareness and providing educational opportunities to Council staff on the prevention of violence against women through engagement of experts from the family violence, women’s health and community health sectors. Provide reflective learning opportunities and ensure awareness and training:
   a. Supports an understanding of a connection between gender (in)equality and violence against women.
   b. Acknowledges the gendered nature of violence against women.
   c. Builds the capacity of staff to apply a gendered lens (recognising the differences in needs and realities for women and men) over organisational policies, practices and service provision.

2. Build on partnerships and create new partnerships with experts from the family violence, women’s health and community health sectors. Ensure clear objectives for the partnership. Also seek advice from those in local government who are working towards the prevention of violence against women.

3. Adopt tailored approaches when engaging different groups in the prevention of violence against women, including women and men.

4. Adopt multiple mutually reinforcing approaches which respond to different learning styles. Approaches need to be tailored to different areas, including but not limited to service delivery, education and policy.

5. Establish strategic links with decision makers across the organisation.

6. Engage leaders (senior management and individuals who possess leadership qualities) to champion and utilise their power and influence to promote, and drive the prevention of violence against women forward.

7. Ensure a dedicated person coordinates the Prevention of Violence Against Women work and is housed within Council.

8. Seek and prioritise adequate and sustained resourcing for the Prevention of Violence Against Women (project development, implementation and evaluation).

9. Ensure adequate resources and time are allocated to project and partnership development and governance establishment. This can take considerable time, however essential to ensure a robust project.
1. Introduction

“Local government can take a leading role in providing leadership in ‘resourcing’, ‘mainstreaming’ and ‘coordinating’ violence prevention strategies across the spectrum of government services, drawing upon the experience and wisdom of these existing services. It can be a central point for representing the priority of eradicating violence against women in our communities” (Hayes, 2006).

The ‘Inner East Local Government Prevention of Against Women (PVAW) Project’ is a 15-month (April 2010 - June 2012) eight partner project based in four local government Councils in Melbourne’s inner east metropolitan region. Local government is a setting closely attuned to the activities of the community and therefore well-placed to drive initiatives aimed at addressing the determinants of violence against women; in particular the unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men and adherence to rigidly defined gender norms.

This report aims to accomplish the following goals:

- Review and validate the milestones and success of the project.
- Confirm risks and recommendations.
- Outline tasks and activities to sustain the work.
- Identify project highlights and promising practices for future projects.

1.1 Project Approach

The project adopted a Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women approach. As outlined by VicHealth (2007), primary prevention strategies seek to prevent violence before it occurs. Strategies that do not have a particular focus on violence against women but address its underlying causes (such as gender and power inequality between women and men) act as primary prevention strategies.

This primary prevention project aims to drive and embed organisational and cultural change within the four Councils to adopt strategies, projects, programs, policies, plans and service delivery that address the determinants of violence against women by supporting equal and respectful relationships and promoting gender equality. A project officer was employed to undertake this collaborative project on behalf of all four Councils.

The ‘Inner East Local Government Prevention of Against Women (PVAW) Project’ aligns with National and State government initiatives and expert opinion. The project adopts VicHealth’s (2007) Framework to guide primary prevention of violence against women, an ecological model for understanding violence. This action plan adopts New South Wales Health’s Capacity Building Framework through its implementation. The project also draws upon change management

1.2 Background

The United Nations Population Fund (2005) identifies gender based violence as the most prevalent and socially tolerated of human rights violations. Violence against women is alarmingly widespread in Australian society. ABS data (2006) indicates that one in three women will experience violence. Research demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of violence against women are men (ABS, 2006). Violence cuts across culture, age, and social and economic status; impeding the right of women to participate fully in society. Due to an array of reasons including social stigmas, violence and the extent to which it is perpetrated is often under reported, therefore making the true extent difficult to determine.

“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture, or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace.”
Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-

Violence against women is a prevalent problem with serious health, social, cultural and economic ramifications (VicHealth, 2007). Women who have been exposed to violence are placed at a greater risk of developing a range of health problems including stress, anxiety, depression, pain syndromes, phobias and medical symptoms (WHO, 2000). Domestic violence contributes to more ill health and premature death for women aged 15 to 44 in Victoria than any other single factor, including high blood pressure, tobacco and body weight (VicHealth, 2004). National and international evidence demonstrates that violence against women is not only predictable, but also preventable. Addressing violence against women is a moral imperative, but also makes sound scientific, economic, political and social sense (WHO 2004).
### 1.3 Project Partners

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<tr>
<th>Project Steering Committee's role and responsibilities</th>
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<td>• Steer and support project activities.</td>
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<td>• Inform and participate in the development of the Project work plan.</td>
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<td>• Monitor progress of project against agreed timelines, deliverables and budget</td>
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<tr>
<th>Project Supervision &amp; Professional Support of Project Worker role and responsibilities</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Mentoring &amp; Professional Support of Project Officer (provided at regular meetings)</td>
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- **Inner East Primary Care Partnership**
  - Project Sponsor, Professional Support of Project Worker, Steering Committee

- **City of Monash**
  - Project lead agency Steering Committee, Steering Committee

- **City of Boroondara**
  - Steering Committee

- **Manningham City Council**
  - Steering Committee

- **City of Whitehorse**
  - Steering Committee

- **Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership**
  - Project & Professional Support of Project Worker, Steering Committee

- **Women’s Health East**
  - Project & Professional Support of Project Worker, Steering Committee

- **MonashLink**
  - Steering Committee
2. Vision, Goal and Objectives

“We wanted local government officers to understand the issue - what is violence against women, who are the perpetrators, what is the prevalence and root causes. The work plan outlined specific tasks to support this learning, but these tasks really acted as catalysts for change - as triggers which prompted action from individuals within the local government settings. The flow-on effects from project tasks proved promising and pivotal to the success of the project”.

*Project Officer, Prevention of Violence Against Women*

**Project Vision:**

“To create a community in which women live free from violence and gender equity is valued and realised”.

**Project Goal:**

To work within a local government setting in collaboration with key partners to establish a commitment to developing a policy framework and resources to support the prevention of violence against women by June 2012 (Project length April 2011- June 2012).

*Approach: The project aims to embed and drive cultural change with a capacity building focus by incorporating an awareness and understanding of the key determinants of violence against women into local government policy, planning, strategy, projects, programs and service delivery.*

**Project Objectives:**

- To increase awareness and understanding of violence against women among Councillors, Senior Management and Council Officers by June 30th 2012.
- To build leadership and strategic alliances that supports the prevention of violence against women through strategies and initiatives across the inner east municipality local government offices by June 2012.
- To document and disseminate the successes and challenges of the primary prevention initiatives implemented within the Inner East local government areas and share findings within the area and beyond by project completion in June 30th 2011.

(Please see Appendix B for the project’s Workplan).
3. Methodology

3.1 Project Development
Local government was chosen as the setting for this project as it is closely attuned to the activities of the community and therefore well-placed to drive initiatives aimed at addressing the social determinants of violence against women.
Please see Appendix C for a case study on the development of the Inner East Prevention of Violence Against Women Project.

Developing the partnership and governance
Stakeholder engagement was one of the most time consuming and challenging aspects of initiating this project and was integral to the success of getting this project established. Engagement and communication strategies were undertaken across levels of management within Council as well as between local government and community agencies; who did not have a history of working together in the area of preventing violence against women. Each of the sites has significantly different structures and core business.

3.2 Implementation
A Project Officer was employed to lead and coordinate this work across the four Councils (and be housed) with the position being located within the agreed project ‘lead’ agency - Monash City Council. These project governance decisions were endorsed by the Inner East Primary Care Partnership Executive Committee and by the broader regional Integrated Health Promotion network and partner agencies, supported by the Regional Department of Health Office.

The Project Officer reported to a committee representing eight agencies involved in the project. A Terms of Reference was developed by the Project Officer. The committee met monthly for the first six months, then bi-monthly during the latter half of the implementation phase. Prior to the Preventing Violence Against Women event, a sub-committee was formed out of the committee who met weekly to support the Project Officer.

3.3 Evaluation
The findings in this report cover the activities, initiatives, processes and impacts of the Inner East Local Government Preventing Violence Against Women Project from April 2011- March 2012.

As the work is relatively new to local government, an Action Research approach was adopted as this allowed initiatives to be reviewed, built on or explored organically. Listed below are the tools which supported the evaluation process:
• Reflective journaling to capture the project officers experiences;
- Qualitative data from presentations, events and reports;
- Quantitative data from presentations, events and reports;
- Staff surveys across the inner east local government sites;
- Reflective Interview with the project steering committee (eight individuals representing the eight agencies involved in the project) facilitated by the project’s engaged facilitator Dr. Tracy Castelino;
- Local Media Watch;
- Photographs from events and evaluation notes.
4. Key Project Achievements

“The purpose of the project was to put the prevention of violence against women on the agenda and build the capacity of local government staff to prevent violence against women in their work. This project has provided a platform to influence key stakeholders both internally and externally to continue to undertake this work into the future”.

Coordinator, Local Council in the Inner East

4.1 Planned Actions and Outcomes

The action plan outlined a number of planned tasks. Success was achieved in a number of exciting areas:

- **Development of the ‘Preventing Violence Against Women: Project Report’**.
  
  A useful tool which provides a background and context and an understanding of local government’s role in the prevention of violence against women. See Appendix A for full copy.

- **Development of the Prevention of Violence Against Women Work plan**.
  
  Completed in consultation with the projects steering committee. See Appendix B.

- **Development and implementation of a Prevention of Violence Against Women Presentation to the Executive Management Team’s across the four sites. (CEO, Directors, Managers, etc)**.
  
  See Appendix D for presentation handout.

- **Development and implementation of a pre project Prevention of Violence Against Women Survey which was rolled out across the four sites to better understand staff’s understanding and attitudes towards violence against women**.
  
  See Appendix E example copy of survey and Appendix F for survey results.

- **Development and implementation of a Prevention of Violence Against Women Presentations to Council Departments**.
  
  The presentations were conducted with various Council departments across the four sites and acted as an introduction to the idea of responding to the prevention of violence against women. See Appendix G for additional information on the presentations. See Appendix D for presentation handout.

- **Large Scale Inner East Local Government Prevention of Violence Against Women Event**.
  
  The event aimed to raise awareness and understanding of the prevention of violence against women. The event aimed to inspire Council staff to take action, for councils to
see that they, as individuals and organisations, can actively engage in the prevention of violence against women. See Appendix H for information regarding event aims and attendees and other event information.

- **Sharing of project success and challenges:**
  Presentation at the Municipal Association of Victoria’s Prevention of Violence Against Women State Conference, invitations to speak at the Population Health Congress Conference in Adelaide and the Office for Women’s Policy Local Government Prevention of Violence Against Women meetings, etc.

- **Whole of committee evaluation day.**
  The eight agencies involved in the project came together and participated in a reflective style discussion which assisted to extract and dissect evaluation findings.

- **Adoption of the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool**
  The eight agencies participated in a pre and post project survey which assisted to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership. See Appendix I for a summary partnership finding results.
4.2 Inspired Actions and Outcomes

“We as a local council, now have a much greater capacity to drive the prevention of violence against women. We now not only understand the key determinants, but we also have the knowledge and partnerships to continue to move forward with this work”.

Coordinator, Local Council in the Inner East

Impacts of planned project actions

A number of other project outcomes were triggered by the above project processes and tasks which contributed to the prevention of violence against women. The project demonstrated how individuals who participated in project initiatives (perhaps only in one initiative, eg. the event, saw a prevention of violence against women presentation, etc) could be motivated to take action to prevent violence against women. These individuals acted as change agents who played a significant role in project outcomes. It is worth noting that these change agents were removed from the immediate project’s working group, which highlights the success of building awareness and momentum for engagement and action around the issue.

“The presentation to senior management set the scene for interest and support for action that has continued and led to various actions…”

Ros Winkler, Community Safety Drug and Alcohol Officer, City of Boroondara

Much activity was stimulated after the prevention of violence against women inner east local government event. Some of which included:

- **The City of Monash Mayor’s Preventing Violence Against Women Round Table.**
  
  The roundtable event involved various community stakeholders including the four inner east Councils, police, family violence service providers, women’s health, community and legal sectors to discuss steps forward in the prevention of violence against women.

- **Inner East Local Government submission to the State Government for the new Prevention of Violence Against Women Plan.**

“The Mayor participated in the “Inner East Local Government Leaders Taking a Stand to Prevent Violence Against Women Event” (November 2011). She was so inspired that it has lead to further prevention work in the City of Monash with the most recent Preventing Violence Against Women Round Table (March 2012) and facilitating a joint inner east council submission to the State Government Prevention of Violence Against Women Action Plan Joint Submission”.

Nicole Meinig, Coordinator Health Promotion
• A senior male manager from the City of Boroondara arranged for Professor Bob Pease to undertake workshops which explored masculinity and men’s role in preventing violence against women. Manningham City Council and Monash City Council are planning to conduct a similar program with male staff.

  *This occurred after the Manager attended the Inner East Prevention of Violence Against Women event*

• Whitehorse City Council adopted a new model of parental leave in its 2012 Enterprise Bargaining Agreement.

  *This awards equal leave to males and females on the birth or adoption of a child. i.e. 18 weeks ‘Primary carers leave’ instead of 16 weeks maternity and 2 weeks paternity leave. This provides an incentive for males to act as the primary care giver and seeks to challenge traditional gender roles.*

• One of the key actions in Manningham City Council’s 2012 -2013 Council Plan is to develop a Prevention of Violence Against Women Action Plan by June 2013 to build on project initiatives.

• The Boroondara Drug Network invited Danny Blay, Executive Officer, No To Violence, to present at a Council staff and public event.

• The Project complemented the work of the Boroondara Family Violence Network (facilitated by Camcare Community Services) and the Manningham Family Violence Reference Group (facilitated by Doncare Community Services).

  “The Manager of Infrastructure Services arranged a presentation by Bob Pease to depot staff, The Boroondara Bulletin ran an item on PVAW, the Boroondara Drug Network ran a presentation to council staff and community by Danny Blay, of No to Violence, a staff action group is ongoing”.

  *Ros Winkler, Community Safety Drug and Alcohol Officer, City of Boroondara*

• Development of an internal prevention of violence against women working group at Whitehorse City Council.

• White Ribbon Fundraising Event led by a male manager and his male colleagues at the City of Monash.

  *The event raised over $500 for a local service provider- the Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (ECASA).*
• White Ribbon event, themed “Promoting Respectful Relationships” at Manningham City Council in 2011.

• Internal funding allocated at the City of Monash for the prevention of violence against women post-project.

• Information sessions regarding the Project were conducted at Manningham City Council staff briefings and the Senior Officers Forum. Project information was also provided to all Council staff via Council’s E-Bulletin.

• Multiple joint funding submissions proposed to continue the Prevention of Violence Against Women within Councils (outcomes yet to be known).

• Support in the development of the City of Monash’s Staff Prevention of Violence Against Women Guidance notes which supports staff to apply for family violence leave.

• Program resources are being utilised by other Prevention of Violence Against Women projects such as the Office for Women’s Policy cluster roles (which work across multiple Councils similar to this project).

• Prevention of Violence Against Women activities were included in the Boroondara, Monash, Manningham and Whitehorse’s Health Promotion & Community Safety initiatives.

• A planned Prevention of Violence Against Women presentation for the City of Boroondara’s Liquor Accord

• Eastern Region Family Violence Cards which detail family violence services within the Eastern region are widely available across Councils, including some Councils induction packs

“Anecdotally I have heard that there has been an increase in staff requests for the family violence cards from a Council since the start of the project. This means awareness is being raised”.

Project Officer, Prevention of Violence Against Women

• Increased capacity, ability and recognition of local government and project partners to conduct prevention of violence against women initiatives:
  1. More effective local-level actions by partners (presenting at local networks, developed abstracts for conferences).
2. More effective engagement by partners in the state policy arena (a joint submission to the *State Government Violence Against Women Action Plan*).
3. Recognition of capacity and credibility of members by key actors (MAV, Office of Women’s Policy, local councillors).
4. Increased public recognition of partner members as spokespersons for the issue (requests for information about the Project and training).
5. Increased public support for primary prevention approaches (newspaper articles regarding the program and support from multiple agencies to support prevention of violence against women Council led initiatives).
6. Partnership members have developed their knowledge and understanding of violence against women through collective learning and analysis.
7. Preventing Violence Against Women Partnership group created visibility of the issue within each partner organisation and the importance of collaborative prevention work (Inner East Prevention of Violence Against Women Event, 120 participants from 4 councils and community organisations).
8. Engaged male colleagues/staff around the importance of men’s leadership in responding to preventing violence against women, eg. Male led White Ribbon Events.
5. Project Themes

“When it comes to integrated violence prevention the local government scale is most appropriate at involving and coordinating relevant actors, ensuring equity across smaller areas and neighborhoods that comprise the community, and promotion civic awareness and engagement to the issue”
Dr. Whitzman, (2008) Chief Investigator, Gender, Local Governance and Violence Prevention Project

Project tasks were undertaken with the following themes for action underpinning them:

- Create Awareness and Understanding
- Creating Strategic Alliances and Leadership
- Building a Culture Which is Receptive to Change

5.1 Creating Awareness and Understanding

Similar to the Victoria-wide results from VicHealth’s 2009 Community Attitudes survey, the majority of inner east local government staff are:

- Less likely to recognise emotional, social and economic abuse as violence against women.
- Unclear of the root causes of violence against women
- Aware that 1 in 3 women, will experience violence in their lifetime. However, a significant number of survey respondents thought the prevalence of violence against women was far lower, for example, either 1 in 8, 1 in 30, or 1 in 100.

Creating awareness and understanding of violence against women is the crucial first step in the prevention of violence against women. Program initiatives were purposefully designed and selected to act as mutually reinforcing triggers which attempted to cater for differing learning styles. The pre-project survey, introduction to the prevention of violence against women department presentations and Council staff awareness-raising events raised the profile of the issue and acted to build on one another and validate ideas through consistent messaging.

“The partnership project has had a major impact on levels of awareness, interest and commitment to preventing violence against women among many people working for the City of Boroondara”.

Ros Winkler, Community Safety, Drug and Alcohol Officer
Violence against women - understanding the spectrum and entirety of the definition

Violence against women may be defined as:

“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual; or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (UN, 2003).

Violence is understood on a “...continuum of economic, psychological and emotional abuse through to physical and sexual violence” (VicHealth, 2007).

Similar to the results of VicHealth’s 2006 Community Attitudes survey, compared with physical and sexual threats, the inner east local government staff survey respondents were less likely to recognise emotional, social and economic abuse as violence against women. 7% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed; and 6% were unsure whether controlling a partner by denying them money is a serious form of family violence. This is despite research which demonstrates that domestic violence is characterised by a pattern of physical and other controlling behaviours. A lack of understanding about what constitutes violence against women has serious implications for how willingly women and others affected by these non-physical forms of domestic violence will access support and how accurately we map and estimate the extent of violence against women.

What did Council officers say about the Inner East Local Government Prevention of Violence Against Women event in November 2011?

- 100% of respondents stated that the event had raised their awareness of the 16 Days of Activism to prevent Violence Against Women
- 98% of respondents found the event content to be 7/10 or higher
- 100% of event attendees rated the speakers as 7/10 or higher

An extreme repercussion of gender inequality is violence against women

“I was unaware of how common it was and the number of cases of domestic violence in Manningham”

*Council Officer, Manningham City Council- Staff Survey.*
Whilst there was a willingness to prevent violence against women amongst Council staff, there was a consistent and overwhelming disconnect between gender equality and violence against women. For example, during the pre-project survey, 70% of survey respondents stated that within their role at Council, they had a role in the prevention of violence against women. The majority of these respondents identified their role in preventing violence against women at Council as responding once violence has occurred, for example, supporting women who are responding to violence, directing women to services, stopping fighting, etc.

“Any sightings or suspicions I would report it without hesitation”

Almost no respondents focussed their ideas on altering or challenging men’s behaviour or attitudes towards gender roles and stereotypes and gender equality - the determinants of violence against women. In contrast to the majority of staff, some Council officers believed that preventing violence against women was not within their role at work.

“We don’t deal with these sorts of issues within our department”.

“This is state government’s job, not local government”.

Other project data validates that these responses signify uncertainty about the root causes of violence against women and Council’s potential reach in the community when such determinants are addressed through services, policy, projects and strategies. The responses are revealing and demonstrate opportunity to educate Council staff on their ability and potential reach within the community to prevent violence against women before it actually occurs. Such an approach - will work towards the eradication of violence against of women, not purely responding to it once it has occurred.

Project initiatives supported individual and collective learning which drew links between gender inequality and violence.

“When you were talking about gender equality and female representation...well when you look around the room now [managers meeting], there aren’t many women here”.

*Male Manager from a Managers Meeting at one of the four sites*

“I think we are now seeing the bigger picture and understanding the determinants to violence against women and the gender inequality. The project really makes you think, even on a personal level”.

Council Officer
Through knowledge and comprehension, engagement in the issue can lead to meaningful action. There is clear potential for local government to be a site for preventing violence against women, before it occurs. For example:

- Events during the 16 days of Activism to Prevent Violence Against Women, White Ribbon Campaigns,
- Training and education internally
- Training relating to the ‘Bystander Approach’, eg. the positive role that bystanders can make in challenging violence supportive behaviours and attitudes
- Being a leader in the community by joining with the state and national government on working towards the elimination of violence against women.

**Gendered nature of violence against women - recognising the broader societal patterns of men’s violence against women**

Whilst many council officers made comments after project initiatives, recognising that violence against women was about:

- *Power and control*
- *Gender inequality*
- *A broad range of actions - which are not always overtly visible, eg. Emotional, social and financial abuse*
- *That 1 in 3 Australian women will experience violence in their life time*
- *Most violence perpetrated against women occurs in the home’s private space*

These comments were contrasted by:

- *Men experience violence too*
- *Women can be violent too*
- *Men find it harder to speak out about violence*

The initial comments located violence against women within a broader social and political context of power and control. Such comments are supported by research demonstrating that most violence of all forms is committed by males and that gender-based violence by intention or effect, serves to maintain this power and control (United Nations Population Fund, 2009). The latter comments are reflective of individual stories and personal anecdotes and, whilst they may be valid in individual experiences, do not reflect the wider societal patterns of gender-based violence.

In Australia’s largest survey on personal safety, 82 per cent of people who had been physically assaulted, and 99 per cent of people who had been sexually assaulted, were assaulted by a male perpetrator (Personal Safety Data, 2006a). While men are usually assaulted by male strangers, violence against women is largely committed by males known to them, including family members and intimate partners (EVAS, 2012). Overall 31 per cent of women who experienced physical
violence in the past 12 months were assaulted by a current or previous partner, compared to 4.4 per cent of men.

As acknowledged by Amnesty International Australia:

“the taboos on speaking about violence, naming the gendered distribution of victimisation and offending and recognising its prevalence must be broken at all levels in societies and communities.”

Research from the project and nationally, demonstrates a need to ensure future training for Council officers acknowledges that the overwhelming majority of females who experience violence, experience it being perpetrated by a male.

Engaging women and men as change agents

National and international evidence demonstrates that both women and men need to be engaged if meaningful and sustained social change is going to occur (VicHealth, 2007). The gendered nature of the Inner East Local Government Prevention of Violence Against Women event in November 2011 was noted by event attendees and organisers.

It was recognised by an event attendee that it was great to have the men in the room actively participating in discussions:

“Great to see men at the table, keen to address the issue at the root - they were keen to have Bob [Professor Bob Pease] speak in male-dominated departments”.

Event Support from the Family Violence, Women’s Health or Community Sector

Another attendee expressed concerns for the recognition of men’s attendance in the room:

“…I also feel a little uncomfortable if the men that attend are thanked, simply for attending. This was only very subtle, but still”.

Event Attendee

These comments reflect some of the concerns in international research involving men being glorified or seen as ‘good men’ that are ‘helping out the women’ for being a part of something that they should be doing anyway (Katz, 2006). Men’s presence in the prevention of violence against women should be seen as the norm, not an action of ‘good men’ (Katz, 2006).
Recognising that research and experts indicate that men’s engagement in the prevention of violence against women is often motivated by an emotional engagement in the issue, it is vital to ensure this emotional engagement is supported and guided (Pease, 2011). For example, due to an introduction to the prevention of violence against women presentation conducted at one of the sites, a male manager independently organised a White Ribbon Free Dress Day to raise money for a local service provider supporting women responding to sexual assault. Through conversations and information sharing, the male manager was able to send out information to all Council staff detailing the history and men’s role in the White Ribbon Campaign. As with other communication regarding the prevention of violence against women, details of family violence and sexual assault referral agencies were always provided to Council staff.

“The White Ribbon Campaign is an initiative created by men for men to take responsibility for men’s violence against women. The campaign originated in 1989 in Montreal, Canada after Marc Lepin murdered 14 women in a university classroom. It was men at that same university who then decided to take a stand to end violence against women and they started White Ribbon Day, which has grown into a global campaign. Those men decided to link White Ribbon Day (now recognized on November 25th) with the already existing United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women....”

Exert from Male Managers Email to all staff at one Council site.

This project found that when attempting to reach men, it was important to design key messages regarding men and masculinity strategically to avoid defensiveness and backlash. Non-punitive, non-blaming and non-shaming approaches are effective strategies. Men can take a leadership role in actively speaking about ways of respecting women and gender equality and challenging sexist ideals (VicHealth, 2007). An emphasis was made on the power of the by-stander in a number of project initiatives.

As supported in national and international research, men play a crucial role in the prevention of men’s violence against women. It is not enough for a man to say “I’m not violent to my partner”, he must interject and challenge sexist comments or behaviors which act to build violence supportive attitudes. This is the responsibility of all men. (Katz, 2008).
Recommendations - Part 1

- Continue raising awareness and providing educational opportunities to Council staff on the prevention of violence against women through engagement of experts from the family violence, women’s health and community health sectors. Provide reflective learning opportunities and ensure awareness and training:
  
  - Supports an understanding of a connection between gender (in)equality and violence against women.
  - Acknowledges the gendered nature of violence against women.
  - Builds the capacity of staff to apply a gendered lens (recognising the differences in needs and realities for women and men) over organisational policies, practices and service provision.

- Adopts tailored approaches when engaging different groups in the prevention of violence against women, including women and men.

- Adopts multiple mutually reinforcing approaches which respond to different learning styles. Approaches need to be tailored to different areas, including but not limited to service delivery, education and policy.

5.2 Creating Strategic Alliances and Leadership

“It is really evident that the executive management, including our Mayor, support our role in PVAW [preventing violence against women] by encouraging and supporting Council to apply for funding submissions to ensure we keep the PVAW at the forefront of our work”.

Nicole Meinig, Coordinator Health Promotion, City of Monash

Creating Strategic Alliances: Links to multiple sectors

Developing strategic alliances was a pivotal and purposeful approach adopted by the inner east local government project. As identified in best practice, continued dialogue with various sectors including the family violence, women’s health and community health sector were evident throughout the project life to ensure their expertise and experience were extracted and applied within a local government setting. For example:

- Eight agencies from various sectors oversaw the project
- A Prevention of Violence Against Women expert was engaged to support the project worker
- An academic was engaged at multiple events
• 16 workers from the family violence, women’s health, community health and legal sector supported discussions at a Council Prevention of Violence Against Women event

• Local government prevention of violence against women workers from Councils including Maribyrnong and Darebin provided invaluable advice and ideas from their experiences

• VicHealth and the Office for Women’s Policy provided advice and support.

“Participating in the project has heightened my awareness of issues facing families when they are affected by violence against women. This initiative has provided the opportunity to network with other Councils and organisations to strengthen the awareness across a broad sector.”

*Council Officer – Manningham City Council- Staff Survey.*

**The Prevention of Violence Against Women Committee: Sectors coming together to eradicate violence against women**

“The power of the collective brought validity, authority, trust, respect and buy in to the work and project”.

*Project Officer: Prevention of Violence Against Women.*

**Partnership Highlights:**

• The project saw the formalisation of a partnership between eight agencies (four local governments, Women’s Health East, Primary Care Partnership, MonashLink and the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership) who collectively have not worked together.

• As outlined in best practice, the skills and knowledge brought from the family violence, women’s health and community health sector brought a strategic depth and sophistication to project discussions and actions. For example, discussions regarding the appropriateness of associating the White Ribbon Campaign (given the origins and focus on men’s action) with a Prevention of Violence Against Women event led by nine women. The family violence, women’s health and community health sector play a crucial role in mentoring, supporting and working with individuals and organisations, whatever stage they are at in their prevention of violence against women journeys.

• Engaging highly regarded experts from the family violence sector can assist to build support and links with the family violence sector.

• The partnership has also allowed a greater understanding and appreciation between and within sectors which may lead to the continuation of this work and act as a platform for future work.
“The partnership project has had a major impact on levels of awareness, interest and commitment to preventing violence against women among many people working for the City of Boroondara”.

*Ros Winkler, Community Safety, Drug and Alcohol Officer, City of Boroondara*

“The PVAW [preventing violence against women] Project has provided a focus that has enabled an opportunity to engage with other Council Officers, encouraging further development of PVAW initiatives within Council and the community”

*Anissa Gracie, Community Safety Officer - Manningham City Council*

**Challenges:**

- Whilst working in partnership has enormous potential to grow, foster and spread important messages by multiplying resources, support and engagement opportunities; partnerships come with complexities and many potential pitfalls and must be treated with respect and consideration. Some challenges experienced during the project related to:
  1. Varying agency agendas
  2. Differences in organisational processes
  3. Challenges regarding decision making and varying viewpoints or approaches. Due to this, clarification was sought regarding the Project Officer’s authority in final decision making.
  4. Extended timeliness due to multiple parties involved in decision making processes.

“The Inner East Prevention of Violence Against Women project has proven a successful partnership project, where the benefits and value added from working with multiple agencies has most definitely outweighed the challenges.”

*Project Officer: Prevention of Violence Against Women.*

**VicHealth Partnership Survey**

(Please see Appendix I for further analysis)

The Inner East Local Government Prevention of Violence Against Women Project adopted the VicHealth partnership Analysis Tool at the start of the project (August 2011) and also at the conclusion of the project (April 2012). The VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool (2011) has supported the project’s steering committee to:

- develop a clearer understanding of the range of purposes of collaborations
- reflect on the partnerships they have established
focus on ways to strengthen new and existing partnerships by engaging in discussion about issues and ways forward.

Survey Results

The survey results demonstrate positive changes over the project whereby steering committee members reported an increase in agreement or perceived need regarding:

- The choice of partners was correct
- Planning and Collaborative Action
- Implementing Collaborative Action
- Minimising the barriers to partnerships
- Reflecting on and continuing the partnership

Considerations

A weakness of the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool is that it does not apply a gender lens. Whilst not highlighted by the Partnership Analysis tool, it should be noted that the Prevention of Violence Against Women Steering Committee is comprised entirely of women. Given the gendered natured of violence against women this is interesting to note.

Recommendation

Commitment to the prevention of violence against women and the partnership involving the eight agencies (particularly in its current form) means staff and organisational resources are required.

Working Within Local Government: Strategic Alliances

“Understand or connect with someone who has knowledge of how to navigate through local government’s structures and decision making processes”.

*Project Officer, Prevention of Violence Against Women*

Strategic alliances were developed with respected individuals or networks and those in positions of organisational power within the Council sites. For example, the Project Officer conducted an Introduction to the Prevention of Violence Against Women presentation to the executive management teams (or equivalent- CEO, Directors, Managers, etc) and spoke of how previous similar work in local government attributed success to internal leadership support. Opportunistic conversations in hallways, meetings and events with Mayor’s, senior leaders, policy writers and officers in particular areas, planted ideas, supported the spread of information and assisted to build ‘allies’ for future activity.
**Multiple organisational levels need to be engaged**

A top-down bottom-up approach was adopted to:

- Establish strategic links with leaders within organisations to promote the work, reinforce its importance and drive it forward
- Support and engage Council officers to engage and take ownership and steer prevention of violence against women initiatives

Presence of senior leaders and Councillors was also noted by Council staff at the Inner East Local Government Prevention of Violence Against Women event in November 2011.

> “Great to have leaders here and putting ideas forward”.

**Council Officer**

> “It has been a great experience to be involved in the project and have management see the importance and role Local Government can play in the PVAW”.

**Council Officer**

All levels of Council need to be engaged and actively part of the solution in the prevention of violence against women.

**Who said that? Recognising the importance of the message sender.**

> “Survivor Advocates of family violence or sexual assault can have a powerful role as community educators and role models in the prevention of violence against women”.

**Project Officer Prevention of Violence Against Women**

Drawing upon the strategic alliances established, the Project Officer utilised leaders (both organisationally senior and unofficial) as established ‘respected voices’ to convey and urge support for project key messages and initiatives. Such individuals had the potential to positively impact how project information was received. Hearing women’s voices, for example Survivor Advocates of family violence, was a crucial aspect and gave a human face to the issue. Organisational leaders from within Council who spoke of preventing violence against women provided a clear sense of Council’s priority towards the issue. Examples of leader’s voices being utilised included:

- Survivor Advocate of family violence presented at the Inner East Preventing Violence Against Women event
- The CEO of Whitehorse and Monash, and Managers at Boroondara and Manningham sending out the pre project survey via email encouraging all staff to participate in the project
• Directors sending out emails of support for the project after the Prevention of Violence Against Women presentation and asking managers to invite the Project Officer to present at their department meetings.

• A male manager of one of the sites being a contact point to provide feedback on some male only Prevention of Violence Against Women training

Different elements of key messages were emphasised to create ‘buy in’ from particular audiences. For example, when speaking with Human Resource and Organisational Development officers there was a focus on the impacts on occupational health and safety, staff morale and productivity; when speaking to officers in the community development area, there was a focus on equality, community engagement and participation. There was an appreciation of the audiences work focus and the boundaries they work within.

The use of leader’s voices proved successful on a number of occasions, for example, increased survey respondents for the project survey. Such involvement in the project supported leaders to build a sense of ownership and involvement in the project.

“Identify respected experts within fields practiced within Council. Utilise such experts who apply a gender lens as voices which support gender equality”.

*Project Officer, Prevention of Violence Against Women*

**What impacted the effectiveness of project initiative implementation at Council sites?**

“Councils can be competitive in nature, this can be channeled in a way which supports the progress of this work with partner Councils”.

*Project Officer, Prevention of Violence Against Women.*

• **An understanding of how to navigate through local government structures** - success of the project was impacted by an understanding and recognition of the project’s local government context.

• **‘Champions’ or allies** - individuals who demonstrated leadership in supporting the prevention of violence against women. Such individuals often dictated the extent of the success and speed of initiative implementation; such individuals were not consistently found across sites.

• **Management styles and cultures within Councils** - differences in organisational cultures and management styles impacted the speed and effectiveness of implementation. For
example, the level of authority project officers/ coordinators hold, hierarchy structures and how they are enforced in decision making processes, etc.

- **Timing** - individual, team and organisational workloads dictated how much focus and within what timeframes project initiatives could be implemented. For example, due to other organisational surveys taking place, there was a delay in survey rollout at one of the sites.

**Building on the momentum**

Project initiatives often acted as triggers which sparked interest and prompted further interest or resourcing. For example, invitations to speak to additional departments, support the development of gender equitable policies. The scope of the program (3 days per week across 4 local governments) presented as a challenge at times as not all opportunities could be supported. This presented as a concern as interest was being activated, however couldn’t always be guided. On the whole, most Project interest was able to be supported.

**Recommendations - Part 2**

- Establish strategic links with decision makers across the organisation.
- Engage leaders (senior manager and individuals who possess leadership qualities) to champion and utilise their power and influence to promote, and drive the prevention of violence against women forward.
- Build on partnerships and create new partnerships with experts from the family violence, women’s health and community health sector. Ensure clear objectives for the partnership. Also seek advice from those in local government working towards the prevention of violence against women.
5.3 Building a Culture which is Receptive to Change

What did the people in local government tell us?

Thanks for all the effort to stop the abuse I have experienced at times during my life.

*Council Officer*

- The majority of local government officers want to learn more about how they can prevent violence against women in their roles at Council.

Keep going [with the prevention of violence against women work] and keep it up!

*Event Attendee*

- Responding to the prevention of violence against women is a very new area for local government. The majority of local government staff were unaware of the statistics, prevalence and gendered nature of violence against women.

“I found the passion and commitment promising and positive. Staff were open and eager to learn and contribute”.

*Feedback from the Family Violence, Women’s Health or Community Sector at the Inner East Local Government Event in November 2011*

- Council officers expressed a desire for more men to be involved in the prevention of violence against women.

“More male attendance would have been better”.

*Event Attendee.*

- Council officers recognised the importance of having organisational leaders committed to the issue.

“Great to have leaders attending”.

*Event Attendee.*

- Council officers developed positive and promising strategies which support the prevention of violence against women (see Appendix I for a list of suggestions made by Council officers).
The family violence, women’s health, community health and legal sector should continue support future projects, events and learning in this space.

**Risk Management**

Project quality and issue management was supported by ensuring robust project governance and communication mechanisms were in place. These frameworks ensured project tasks and standards of project management were implemented effectively and efficiently and monitored against the agreed plan.

Terms of Reference clearly articulated roles and responsibilities such as decision making processes and authority. Issues resulting in variances to the plan were identified and management strategies agreed and documented at Project Steering Committee Meetings.

Minutes of project related meetings act as records of issues, strategies for ‘action’, time frames and responsibilities and are necessary to assist in guiding the performance of the project worker and partners more broadly.

A number of actions were adopted to ensure quality and minimise risk:

- **Training and up-skilling of Project Officer**
  
  There was recognition that training was necessary to ensure a positive representation of issues relating to the prevention of violence against women. Such training assisted to ensure that actions did not inadvertently contribute to myths or misunderstandings about women responding to violence against women. Relevant training included: the VicHealth Prevention of Violence Against Women short course and ‘Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Assault’.

- **Engagement of an academic and support of project steering committee in major project decision.**

- **Working within the project’s scope**: The scope of this project across 4 large metropolitan local government areas was broad. This presented challenges for the limited hours available to the Project Officer. Attending key meetings, running training sessions and engaging all stakeholders across the catchment required flexibility between all partners, the employer and Project Officer regarding days of work to cater to partners’ needs and competing priorities effectively.
Recommendations- Part 3

- Ensure a dedicated person coordinates the Prevention of Violence Against Women work and is housed within Council.

- Seek and prioritise adequate and sustained resourcing for the Prevention of Violence Against Women (project development, implementation and evaluation).

- Ensure adequate resources and time is allocated to project development and governance establishment. This can take considerable time, however essential to ensure a robust project.
6. Project Enablers and Barriers

6.1 Project Enablers

A number of actions supported and triggered project successes, some of which included:

- The Project Officer being able to navigate through the processes and procedures of local government (which vary across sites).
- Successful relationship and trust building (with project partners and internally within the Councils).
- The support of senior leaders and unofficial leaders throughout the project life, for example, director-level support at project sign off.
- Recognition that awareness and understanding of the Prevention of Violence Against Women need to occur prior to engagement, action can follow after.

“To get cultural change within an organisation, the organisation needs to understand what preventing violence against women is about”.

*Nicole Meinig, Coordinator Health Promotion, City of Monash*

- Utilising respected experts within fields practiced within Council. Utilise such experts who apply a gender lens as voices which support gender equality.
- Acknowledgment that local government staff need to identify a connection between their work and the prevention of violence against women.
- Whilst working as the Project Officer: Prevention of Violence Against Women (three days per week), the Project Officer worked at the City of Monash as a Recreation Programs Officer on the other two days of her working week. The multi department arrangement better supported the project officer to embed ideas about gender equality through discussions with a wider range of colleagues and working hours. Through the Project Officer’s attendance at sport and recreation related events, project and policy discussions, she was able to influence agendas relating to women in sport.
- Recognition that local governments have different priorities, processes, ideas and organisational cultures in terms of decision making.
- Tailoring responses so they are locally relevant (this is essential for changing organisational norms).

“We aimed to have the Preventing Violence Against Women Presentations conducted at department meetings, however one site preferred a presentation open to all staff at a lunch event, not within departments. We had to adapt to gain internal carriage”.

*Nicole Meinig, Coordinator Health Promotion, City of Monash*
• Extracting expertise from the family violence, women’s health and community health sector and applying that within a local government context.
• The willing support of and contribution of expertise by other Melbourne municipalities PVAW workers such as Darebin and Maribyrnong. The broader sector continue to share the findings from their own projects and experiences, provide advice, consult, make recommendations and share their own resources freely during the course of the project to date.
• Working with survivor advocates of family violence to ensure women’s voices and stories are heard and a human face is given to the issue.
• Supporting interest and enthusiasm and building on momentum and existing energy.
• Fostering participation and ownership.

6.2 Project Barriers
There were a range of challenges within the project, some of which included:

**The Scope of the project**
A Project Officer was employed to work across four Council sites, three days per week for 15 months. The Project Officer was based at the City of Monash two days per week and rotated across the other three sites (visiting the City of Boroondara, Manningham City Council and City of Whitehorse one day every three weeks). Whilst the Project Officer was well supported by designated Council officers within each of the four Councils and workers from the family violence, women’s health and community health sector, there were still substantial human resourcing issues which required flexibility by all partners (including the Project Officer) and impacted the workplan and timeframes.

"The scope of the project was challenging, so one of our priorities was to define exactly what we wanted to do. This took extra time at the beginning, but that helped later on”.

_Redacted Name, Local Council in the Inner East._

**Flexibility of the Project Officer**
The Project Officer was extremely flexible in regards to work hours. Such flexibility should not be relied upon in future projects as project outcomes may vary. Adequate resourcing must be made available to enable prevention of violence against women work to proceed. This work is most frequently undertaken by women, inadequate resourcing entrenches inequality, by relying on the commitment and passion of workers to fill gaps and undervalues what is often seen as female work.

**Challenging Project Scope= Maximum Support**
Whilst the scope acted as a challenge for the Project Officer and partners, the project’s effectiveness relied heavily on the support of Council officers from the committee, whose
participation in project initiatives acted to build their awareness and ability to prevent violence against women in their own right.

**Numerous opportunities not fully realised**

“The project threw up some great ideas that were outside the scope of the project but will be considered down the track. Some involve funding so this is a consideration”.

*Coordinator, Local Council in the Inner East.*

Due to the project scope, a number of tangible opportunities were not fully realised. Missed opportunities for action include requests by local government staff and leaders to:

1. Write a proposal for a study on girls and women’s participation in physical activity within one of the Council sites
2. Conduct Introduction to the Prevention of Violence Against Women presentations at additional departments, neighborhood houses and a male dominated trade night
3. Support the development of an open space strategy
5. Training for human resource and organisational development staff on the prevention of violence against women including training on responding to disclosures

There were concerns about the impact of raising awareness and building momentum, but not having the capacity to support, guide and nurture future action.

**Guiding interest within the project’s resources**

Whilst the project was successful in harnessing the energy of leadership to prevent violence against women, resourcing and plans on how to best guide this energy could have been improved. Also (time permitting) this energy and interest could have been channeled to inform future methods and options for project sustainability.

**Providing support to four sites with differing needs**

Whilst differences in internal Council policy and procedure were recognised in project planning, the extent of such differences and the amount of time needed for implementation was underestimated. Some sites required more support and thus this presented challenging when attempting to invest equal amounts of time across the four sites. Whilst more timely, tailored approaches were required to gain internal carriage.
What we found as we went along was that it was more time consuming than we thought. That was because we were effectively delivering the same program in four different ways because every council has its own processes. What we know now is that the Project Officer needs more hours to deal with these complexities and respond to new ideas as they come up.

*Coordinator, Local Council in the Inner East.*

Whilst local governments have similarities, there are significant differences across Councillor agendas, management structures, the level of advancement in preventing violence against women and managerial styles. For example, decision making powers of officer level staff, micromanagement cultures and communication processes. Such differences validated the notion that a ‘one size project plan’ does not fit all.

*Project officer, prevention of Violence Against Women*

**Decision Making Authority**

Whilst unnecessary at some sites, the project may have been advantaged if the Project Officer had more senior decision making ability within Council to support work output and reduce time in decision making processes. Also, at times, particularly in the initial project stages, there was uncertainty regarding roles and responsibilities between the Project Officer and partners.

“She defining roles and responsibilities for a complex project like this was vital”.

*Coordinator, Local Council in the Inner East.*

**Project Evaluation**

The project plan and agreements delegated resource and responsibility to local government for conducting impact evaluation of the project. However, as this activity was less familiar to the staff involved, additional Integrated Health Promotion practitioner hours had to be allocated to support the quality of the impact evaluation plan that was not accounted for in the original plan.
7. Key Learnings

There were a number of significant learnings made over the 15-month project. Some of which included:

- Working in partnership has enormous potential to grow, foster and spread important messages by multiplying resources, support and engagement opportunities; partnerships come with complexities and many potential pitfalls and must be treated with respect and consideration.
- The partnership approach has been crucial in contributing to the sustainability of Project actions.
  1. The establishment of a formalised partnership may have motivated the level of commitment maintained between partners throughout the life of the project (due to the initial commitment made to the project).
  2. Through external funding, agencies were further motivated to provide in-kind support which led to additional project outputs.
  3. The partnership approach whilst extracting expertise from various sectors, placed a sense of accountability on agencies which supported commitment to action.
- The Project saw the application of one approach which required adaptations and tailored responses (human resourcing and timeframes varied across sites) to meet the needs of four at times distinct Council settings.
- The Project was successful in planning for and engaging leaders; however harnessing and directing this energy through additional resourcing would have been advantageous for building on the work.
- Developing a strategy to work with and navigate internal ‘gate keepers’ is fundamental to the effectiveness of project initiatives. Relationship building skills and finding common ground were essential for project success.
- Factoring in stronger methods of project sustainability post-project would be of great value.
# 8. Recommendations and Suggested Action for Future Work in Local Government

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<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
<th>IDEAS FOR ACTION</th>
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| **1)** Continue raising awareness and providing educational opportunities to Council staff on the prevention of violence against women through engagement of experts from the family violence, women’s health and community health sectors. Provide reflective learning opportunities and ensure awareness and training: | • Provide information such as definitions, statistics, prevalence, gender of the majority of perpetrators, causes and how local government staff can impact and prevent violence against women in their work  
• Seek reflective learning opportunities, for example, staff training.  
• Implement training that builds staff capacity to apply a gender lens over organizational policies, practices and service provision (including planning and service provision). |
| o Supports an understanding of a connection between gender (in)equality and violence against women. | |
| o Acknowledges the gendered nature of violence against women. | |
| o Builds the capacity of staff to apply a gendered lens (recognising the differences in needs and realities for women and men) over organisational policies, practices and service provision. | |
| **2)** Build on partnerships and create new partnerships with experts from the family violence, women’s health and community health sector. Ensure clear objectives for the partnership. Also seek advice from those in local government who are working towards the prevention of violence against women. | • Seek guidance, advice and partnerships with the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership.  
• Seek ongoing partnerships with Women’s Health East for consultation and future training options.  
• Seek advice from Councils such as Maribyrnong, the Office for Women’s Cluster project officers, VicHealth. |
| **3)** Adopt tailored approaches when engaging different groups in the prevention of violence against women, including women and men. | • Engage academics such as professor Bob Pease to undertake professional development seminars training with male-dominated departments regarding men’s responsibility in the prevention of violence against women.  
• Engage the family violence and women’s health sector to provide training. |
| **4)** Adopt multiple mutually reinforcing approaches which respond to different | • Adopt varied innovative initiatives which engage different learning styles, for |
learning styles. Approaches need to be tailored to different areas, including but not limited to service delivery, education and policy.

- Advocate for the Prevention of Violence Against Women within policy documents such as the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and Council Plans. Consistent messaging within the inner east or regional within plans would be favorable.

5) Establish strategic links with decision makers across the organisation.

- Present at Executive Management Meetings informing senior leaders of clear objectives and what their support could mean in the Prevention of Violence Against Women

6) Engage leaders (senior managers and individuals who possess leadership qualities) to champion and utilise their power and influence to promote, and drive the prevention of violence against women forward.

- Develop guidelines that inform and direct those who want to become Prevention of violence Against Women ‘champions’ within the inner east municipalities (for example, a statement of values and information to support learning and self reflection).
- Develop a strategy for training leaders on gender and the Prevention of Violence Against Women (this will require ongoing support and partnerships with the Violence and Women’s Health sector)

7) Ensure a dedicated person coordinates the Prevention of Violence Against Women work and is housed within Council.

- Advocate for a dedicated person to coordinate the Prevention of Violence Against Women work and have them housed within Council.

8) Seek and prioritise adequate and sustained resourcing for the Prevention of Violence Against Women (project development, implementation and evaluation).

- Ensure a dedicated person leads the Prevention of Violence Against Women initiatives.
- Work is housed within Council (this is critical to create ownership, trust with staff within Council sites and ‘buy in’ for the project.

9) Ensure adequate resources and time are allocated to project and partnership development and governance establishment. This can take considerable time, however essential to ensure a robust project.

- Identify key stakeholders (family violence, women’s health, community health, Council, etc) and their roles and responsibilities. Supporting documents may include service agreements, terms of reference and/ or a Memorandum of Understanding between agencies.
9. Going Forward in the Inner East Local Governments

The Inner East Local Government Prevention of Violence Against Women Steering Committee has proven a successful partnership, supporting individuals and groups to promote the prevention of violence against women in a local government setting. The collaborative project successfully utilised expertise from various sectors and promoted appreciation and understanding between sectors. The Steering Committee has built and strengthened partnerships which will pave strong foundations for future work.

The Project Officer has listed some specific recommendations for continuing the prevention of violence against women work, after the allocated project funding period (April 2011- June 2012):

- Ongoing commitment and resources from the four inner east local governments to sustain the ongoing work to prevent violence against women.

- The Inner East Prevention of Violence Against Women Steering Committee should meet quarterly to share experience, ideas, promising practice and build on knowledge and ability to prevent violence against women.

- Council representatives from the Prevention of Violence Against Women Committee should participate in two professional development sessions relating to the prevention of violence against women per year.

- Continue to build on existing partnerships and create new alliances with the family violence, women’s health and community health sector. For example, participation in networks such as the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership and the Municipal Association of Victoria’s Preventing Violence Against Women network.

- Continue to advocate internally for resources to work and prioritise the prevention of violence against women.

- Council representatives from the committee should advocate for the prevention of violence against women to be included in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans.

- Explore opportunity to apply learnings and successes from other projects to the inner east region.

- Conduct annual Inner East Prevention of Violence Against Women Events for Council staff (similar format to the projects event).

- Ensure the Project report and resources are shared amongst the Inner East Councils, the Inner East Primary Care agencies, the state government, VicHealth, networks such as the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership and the Municipal Association of Victoria Prevention of Violence Against Women Network and beyond (include acknowledgment of authors and project).
## Appendices List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>PDF Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Department or Executive Management Presentation Handout</td>
<td>Hand out at Department Presentations.pdf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Example Prevention of Violence Against Women Survey for the Inner East Local Government Sites</td>
<td>Pre Project Example Survey.pdf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>Prevention of Violence Against Women Survey Aims and Results</td>
<td>Prevention of Violence Against Women Pre Project Survey Aims and Results.pdf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>Department Presentation Information and Feedback</td>
<td>Prevention of Violence Against Women Inner East Local Government Department Presentations.pdf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other event resources and findings:**

- Prevention of Violence Against Women Inner East Local Government Event_Invitation.pdf
- Prevention of Violence Against Women Inner East Local Government Event_EVENT SUPPORT EVALUATION_KEY FINDINGS.pdf
- Prevention of Violence Against Women Inner East Local Government Event_ATTENDEE FEEDBACK TRENDS.pdf
- Prevention of Violence Against Women Inner East Local Government Event_POSTCARDS.pdf
- Prevention of Violence Against Women Inner East Local Government Event_POSTCARDS KEY FINDINGS (EVALUATION TOOL).pdf
- Prevention of Violence Against Women Inner East Local Government Event_WORKSHOP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS KEY FINDINGS.pdf

| Appendix I | Promising local government strategies for preventing violence against women (developed at the large scale event) | Prevention of Violence Against Women Inner East Local Government Event_Local Government Ideas for Action.pdf |
References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2006, 2005 Personal safety survey, Cat. no. 4906.0, author, Canberra


Hayes, T., (2006) Gender, Local Governance and Violence Prevention: Learning from International Good Practice to Develop a Victorian Model, Making the Links: Gender Violence Prevention & Local Governance Project, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, University of Melbourne


