7.2.1 FREE FROM VIOLENCE COMMITMENT STATEMENT

Responsible Manager:	Fee Harrison, Manager Community Strengthening
Responsible Director:	Tanya Scicluna, Director Community Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorses the Free From Violence Commitment Statement:

Monash Council believes that everyone should feel safe, respected, and celebrated, regardless of our differences.

We are committed to the prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women. We have zero tolerance for any type of gendered violence.

We support gender equality, diversity, and inclusion, and believe that we all have a role to prevent violence before it begins.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the Monash Free From Violence Commitment Statement. This statement will be used on internal and external communications.

COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

A healthy, safe and connected community.

A community where all people have the opportunity to experience enhanced levels of social, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

A Council with good governance, strong leadership and community involvement in decision making.

A Council that provides good governance and leadership for the benefit of our community through community engagement, advocacy, decision making and action.

BACKGROUND

Monash Council successfully delivered the Free From Violence program between 2022 and 2025. This Victorian Government funded project involved a whole-of-council approach to the prevention of family violence, all forms of violence against women, and gender-based violence.

The Free From Violence project aimed to ensure that Monash Council promotes gender equality and the prevention of violence in everything we do.

As one of the outputs of the project, a Free From Violence Sustainability Plan was developed, to ensure that this critical work did not end when the funding did.

One of the actions in that plan was to develop a Free From Violence Commitment Statement, which is the subject of this report. This is also an action in the Monash Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029.

DISCUSSION

Family violence and all forms of violence against women remain a pervasive harm in communities across Australia. Monash Council, like all local governments, is well-placed to play a significant role in the primary prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women This is due to council's influence as a workplace, service provider, connector, and leader and decision-maker. Some areas of Council also have a role in early intervention and response.

Monash Council has a long history of committing to this work. Councillors have spoken publicly on the issue in the past and passed Notices of Motion in relation to this matter. Councillors and staff have committed to training and capacity building for themselves and community and provided investment into the Free From Violence program and other initiatives.

This Free From Violence Commitment Statement links all this work and advocacy together and ensures that it continues to be a focus for Monash Council and the broader community.

The statement and accompanying actions and definitions are proposed as follows:

Free From Violence Commitment Statement

Monash Council believes that everyone should feel safe, respected, and celebrated, regardless of our differences.

We are committed to the prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women. We have zero tolerance for any type of gendered violence.

We support gender equality, diversity, and inclusion, and believe that we all have a role to prevent violence before it begins.

Free From Violence Ongoing Actions

As a Council, we:

- Recognise that family violence and all forms of violence against women can happen to anyone, no matter their background. Some people who experience other forms of discrimination and disadvantage may be at greater risk.
- Acknowledge that prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women is everyone's responsibility and we all have a role to play.
- Raise awareness in our workplace and community of family violence and all forms of violence against women, including the link with gender inequality.
- Ensure our policies, programs and services consider people in our community who may be experiencing family violence.
- Lead by example and set expectations around behaviour and supports for our staff.
- Provide ongoing training for Councillors, staff, and community to build capacity in gender equality and prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women.
- Provide information about support services whenever we discuss family violence and all forms of violence against women. We will include specialised services for our priority population groups who may have different needs or considerations, which includes First

Nations people, multicultural communities, people with disability and carers, young people and children, older people, and LGBTIQA+ communities.

Important Terms

Family violence - defined in the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, it is: any behaviour that is sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive, coercive or threatening. It can also include any behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of the behaviours described previously.

Gender based violence – any form of violence targeting a person on the basis of their gender or gender presentation.

Violence against women – defined by the *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*: any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or private life.

The statement is also available in Attachment 1.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to this report.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This statement is in line with several Council's strategic documents including:

- Council Plan 2025-2029
- Monash Health and Wellbeing Plan (2025-2029)
- Gender Equity Framework
- LGBTIQA+ Action Plan (2023-2027)

CONSULTATION

Internal consultation occurred with officers across all Council departments. Consultation also occurred with the Disability Advisory Committee, Gender Equity Advisory Committee, LGBTIQA+ Advisory Committee, Monash Youth Committee, Multicultural Advisory Committee and Positive Ageing Reference Group.

The feedback received has helped to create a stronger and clearer statement.

Overall, there was broad support for the Free From Violence Commitment Statement. There was feedback that it is a strong statement, and a shared view that it is important for Council to play a leadership role in this space.

While in general people felt that the statement was clear and easy to understand, some suggested changes were offered on the draft to ensure clarity around particular words and definitions.

Common themes included wording around priority cohorts, council and community, definitions of violence, and inclusion of statistics. These are summarised below and full list of feedback and responses and actions are in the table.

Full details of the feedback received, and responses/changes made is available in Attachment 2.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Family violence and all forms of violence against women remain a pervasive social harm.

Unfortunately, we know that:

- 95% of men and 94% of women who experienced violence since the age of 15 did so at the hands of a male perpetrator.
- Almost 1 in 4 women, and almost 1 in 14 men, have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15.
- Almost 1 in 5 women, and almost 1 in 20 men, have experienced sexual assault since the age of 15.
- 3 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have experienced physical or sexual violence from a male intimate partner.
- Almost 2 in 5 women with disabilities have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15.
- More than 2 in 5 LGBTIQA+ people reported ever being in an intimate relationship where they were abused in some way by their partner/s.

This statement reflects the work that Monash Council already does and will continue to do, as primary prevention and response to family violence remain critical.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

In the preamble of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, the Parliament of Victoria recognises that "that family violence is a fundamental violation of human rights and is unacceptable in any form." Therefore, Council's commitment to being Free From Violence through this statement is promoting human rights.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A Gender Impact Assessment was not completed because this statement is not a policy, program, or service. However, the Free From Violence Commitment Statement is explicitly focused on gender equality and the link between gender inequality and violence against women and all forms of family violence. The statement recognises the way that intersectional disadvantage and discrimination interacts with violence.

CONCLUSION

Monash Council has a longstanding commitment to the prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women. This Free From Violence Commitment Statement brings together past, present, and future work, and is a public statement of leadership on the issue.

ATTACHMENT LIST

1. Attachment 1 - FFV Commitment Statement [**7.2.1.1** - 2 pages]
2. Attachment 2 - Free From Violence Commitment Statement Consultation Summary [**7.2.1.2** - 7 pages]

OFFICIAL

CITY OF MONASH

Free From Violence Commitment

Free From Violence Commitment Statement

Monash Council believes that everyone should feel safe, respected, and celebrated, regardless of our differences.

We are committed to the prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women. We have zero tolerance for any type of gendered violence.

We support gender equality, diversity, and inclusion, and believe that we all have a role to prevent violence before it begins.

Free From Violence Ongoing Actions

As a Council, we:

- Recognise that family violence and all forms of violence against women can happen to anyone, no matter their background. Some people who experience other forms of discrimination and disadvantage may be at greater risk.
- Acknowledge that prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women is everyone's responsibility and we all have a role to play.
- Raise awareness in our workplace and community of family violence and all forms of violence against women, including the link with gender inequality.
- Ensure our policies, programs and services consider people in our community who may be experiencing family violence.
- Lead by example and set expectations around behaviour and supports for our staff.
- Provide ongoing training for Councillors, staff, and community to build capacity in gender equality and prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women.
- Provide information about support services whenever we discuss family violence and all forms of violence against women. We will include specialised services for our priority population groups who may have different needs or considerations, which includes First Nations people, multicultural communities, people with disability and carers, young people and children, older people, and LGBTIQA+ communities.

Important terms

Family violence - defined in the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, it is: any behaviour that is sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive, coercive or threatening. It can also include any behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of the behaviours described previously.

293 Springvale Road (PO Box 1) Glen Waverley VIC 3150 **Web** www.monash.vic.gov.au **Email** mail@monash.vic.gov.au
T (03) 9518 3555 **National Relay Service** (for the hearing and speech impaired) 1800 555 660
Interpreter Services 普通话 4713 5001 廣東話 4713 5002 Việt Ngữ 4713 5003 Ελληνικά 4713 5004 हिंदी 4713 5005
Other languages 4713 5000 Italiano 4713 5008 한국어 4713 5010 සිංහල 4713 5020 தமிழ் 4713 5021

Gender based violence – any form of violence targeting a person on the basis of their gender or gender presentation.

Violence against women – defined by the *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*: any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or private life.

Support is available

If you or someone you know is experiencing family violence, support is available through 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 (National Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Counselling Service).

Visit Family Violence Support for more information including specialist support services.

OFFICIAL

CITY OF MONASH

Free From Violence Commitment Statement

Consultation Summary (October 2026)

Summary of Consultation

Feedback on the draft commitment statement and accompanying actions was provided by Council managers, as well as members of the Disability Advisory Committee, Gender Equity Advisory Committee, LGBTIQA+ Advisory Committee, Monash Youth Committee, Multicultural Advisory Committee, and Positive Ageing Reference Group. The feedback received has helped to create a stronger and clearer statement.

Overall, there was broad support for the Free From Violence Commitment Statement. There was feedback that it is a strong statement, and important for Council to play a leadership role in this space.

While in general people felt that the statement was clear and easy to understand, some suggested changes were offered on the draft to ensure clarity around particular words and definitions.

Common themes included wording around priority cohorts, council and community, definitions of violence, and inclusion of statistics. These are summarised below and full list of feedback and responses and actions are in the table.

Priority cohorts amended to priority population groups

The draft Free From Violence Statement contained wording around 'priority cohorts' which was considered by several people to be unclear or not explicit enough about particular demographics of people that may need to be recognised. As a result the actions have been amended to state, "We will include specialised services for our priority population groups who may have different needs or considerations, which includes First Nations people, multicultural communities, carers and people with disability, young people and children, older people, and LGBTIQA+ communities."

Distinction not needed between Council as workplace and the community

The draft statement included some wording around settings in the community and council as a workplace, and multiple people suggested clarity about who the statement refers to when it uses the word 'we'. Some feedback suggested that, as Council is part of the broader community, no distinction was needed between 'Council as a workplace' and 'the community'. As a result, the statement and actions have been updated to reflect this.

Definitions

There was some confusion around the definition of family violence, violence against women, and gender-based violence. Definitions have now been added to the end of the document for clarity and to ensure it is clear that people of all ages, genders and backgrounds can be victim survivors of family violence.

Statistics

Some feedback questioned whether there was a need to include more background context and statistics around family violence and all forms of violence against women. It was decided that this information could be found

293 Springvale Road (PO Box 1) Glen Waverley VIC 3150 **Web** www.monash.vic.gov.au **Email** mail@monash.vic.gov.au
T (03) 9518 3555 **National Relay Service** (for the hearing and speech impaired) 1800 555 660
Interpreter Services 普通话 4713 5001 廣東話 4713 5002 Việt Ngữ 4713 5003 Ελληνικά 4713 5004 हिंदी 4713 5005
Other languages 4713 5000 Italiano 4713 5008 한국어 4713 5010 සිංහල 4713 5020 தமிழ் 4713 5021

separately on Council's website and does not fit in the statement which is not intended to be updated as regularly as statistics will change.

Table 1: All feedback received and responses

Internal feedback (Council managers)	Response and action
I wholeheartedly support the role Council is seeking to play in this space and think it's important that we take a leadership role in what, for me, feels like a leadership void on these issues.	Noted.
The third dot point ("Set expectations around behaviour and supports for our staff and embed these in our internal processes and policies") feels a little too focused on the mechanics of implementation compared to the other statements. To me, the intent is largely captured by the following dot point regarding considering the impact of our policies, programs and services.	Agree. Have amended to clarify why this sentence is included (i.e. to ensure that Council leads by example) and shortened it a little.
The reference to "priority cohorts" in the sixth dot point seems to appear without context. As a reader, I found myself asking who the priority cohorts are and what makes them a priority. If this terminology is retained, it may be worth either defining it earlier in the document or providing some context so readers can better understand its meaning and purpose.	Agree. Have amended to reflect wording in the Health Plan around 'priority population groups' and naming them more explicitly.
Overall, I think this is a strong statement.	Noted.
The punctuation is inconsistent on the bullet points. To meet Australian Government Standards I would recommend a full stop at the end of each as these are complete sentences that can stand alone.	Agree. Have amended to reflect this feedback.
You may have a particular reasoning for the order, however I would suggest the order below	Agree. Have amended the order of the actions to reflect this feedback.

– starting off with the broader statements then into the more specific actions. Recognise that family violence and all forms of violence against women can happen to anyone, no matter their background. Some people who experience other forms of discrimination and disadvantage may be at greater risk. Acknowledge that prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women is everyone's responsibility, and we all have a role to play. Raise awareness in our workplace and community of family violence and all forms of violence against women, including the link with gender inequality; Consider the impact of our policies, programs and services on people in our community who may be experiencing family violence, and make changes so our work is fairer for everyone; Set expectations around behaviour and supports for our staff and embed these in our internal processes and policies. Provide regular training for Councillors, staff, and community to build capacity in gender equality and prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women. Provide information about support services whenever we discuss family violence and all forms of violence against women, and include specialised services for our priority cohorts.	

Advisory Committee feedback	Response and action
Multicultural Advisory Committee	
Remove the dot points and just have as more of a paragraph.	The statement was presented as dot points in the consultation Powerpoint – the actual statement will be written in sentences. The second and third sentences have also been combined so it reads more like a paragraph.

Make sure there is supporting information e.g. stats available elsewhere (doesn't have to be in the statement).	Agree. This is available on our website.
Gender Equity Advisory Committee	
Do we need to have a definition of violence?	Agree. Have added some definitions at the bottom of the document for clarity.
Concern it may not be inclusive of trans and gender diverse people throughout.	Have included gender based violence; have also included more information about priority population groups including LGBTIQA+ communities. Wording around 'family violence and all forms of violence against women' comes from the FFV Guide for Local Government.
Does it need to be more action based?	Actions sit below the commitment statement.
Phrasing seems reactive not preventive, don't like the 'zero tolerance' approach, can this be re-worded?	Council works across primary prevention through early response and intervention where zero tolerance is relevant.
Can we include something about the drivers of violence?	The link with gender inequality as an overarching driver is mentioned in the actions.
Can we remove the word 'celebrated'?	This wording is consistent with our diversity statement and specifically called out as important to include by our DAC.
Can we remove 'will' in the actions?	Agree; have amended to reflect this feedback.
Monash Youth Committee	
The Committee felt the Free from Violence Commitment Statement was too long. They suggested combining the first and fourth sentences into one sentence, and the second and third sentences into another.	Have combined second and third sentences as suggested. Have retained first and fourth to start and finish on positive note.
The Committee felt that the protection of children should be explicitly acknowledged within both the commitment statement and the associated actions.	Have amended to include priority population groups including children in the actions.
The Committee felt Council should take greater responsibility for community education	The action around community capacity building and training covers this issue.

and suggested including a specific action focused on community education. Members felt young people are generally exposed to this topic through school, but that adults aged 18 and over would benefit from further education.	
The Committee suggested including measurable outcomes for some of the actions to support accountability and evaluation.	Measures are located within the Health Plan.
The Committee felt greater emphasis should be placed on supporting groups at increased risk of violence, including LGBTIQA+ communities and people with disability.	Agree. Have amended to include priority population groups including LGBTIQA+ communities and people with disability and carers.
Disabilty Advisory Committee	
Members expressed support for the wording 'all have a role to play'.	Noted.
Members expressed support for the wording 'preventing violence before it happens.'	Noted.
Members expressed support for 'celebrated' being part of the first sentence. They feel that this is sometimes missed in discussions of diversity and is important.	Noted. This wording will be retained.
The statement is to the point and simple.	Noted.
When we say 'at our workplace and in our community' isn't the workplace part of the community? Can we just say anywhere in the community?	Agree. Have amended to remove this wording – similar feedback also received from PARG.
Positive Ageing Reference Group	
Vague – what does 'our community' mean Monash - Council, Monash workplace. Just have the wording 'zero tolerance for violence' and not the in the workplace and community wording.	Agree. Have amended as Have amended council/workplace is part of the community and does not need to be separated. Similar feedback also received from DAC.
Remove regardless of our differences wording.	This wording is reflective of our diversity statement.

We are committed to the prevention of family violence – not clear what this looks like in action.	Actions sit below the statement.
Who is 'we' - at the start of the sentences. Suggested - Monash Council is committed to the - state the commitments – or start each sentence with 'Monash council'	This is intended to be Monash Council. Have updated to reflect this feedback.
The community within the community – who is the statement for.	Have amended to make clearer that actions relate to what Council will do.
Women are acknowledged, should we be more general and broad, as family violence includes boys and girls as children and it was noted that there are women who perpetrate violence as well - noted carer violence.	The statement refers to family violence (where victim survivors may be of any gender) as well as violence against women, acknowledging the significant impact on women. The first action also notes that family violence can happen to anyone. We have added definitions at the bottom of the document to provide clarity.
General discussion that there is an increase in violence in society. Is it worth Council making a statement noting increasing violence generally in society, giving a scope to the statement.	Violence statistics are variable and change year on year. It also depends what type of violence we are measuring. Prefer to not include as family violence is an ongoing, harmful issue. Statistics can accompany the statement on the webpage which can be more readily updated.
Found 'Consider the impact of our policies, programs and services on people in our community who may be experiencing family violence and make changes so our work is fairer for everyone difficult to read with lots of wording and the language'.	Agree. Have re-worded to simplify.
Who are our priority cohorts – what does this mean, should we be calling this out, is this triggering bias. Statement and Actions to be more general Split the point for dot 3, including specialised. Priority cohorts.	Have amended to clarify that priority cohorts refers to priority population groups and have explicitly named these groups outlined in the Health Plan.
Use the word 'Ongoing' training, instead of the word regular.	Have amended to reflect this feedback.

LGBTIQA+ Advisory Committee	
The statement is very clear.	Noted.
It would have been good to call out gender equality to be more inclusive of the LGBTIQA+ communities but also understand it's focus is on women with the focus on 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. Liked the suggestion of listing priority population groups.	Gender equality is noted in the statement. Updated the actions to acknowledge impact on LGBTIQA+ communities.