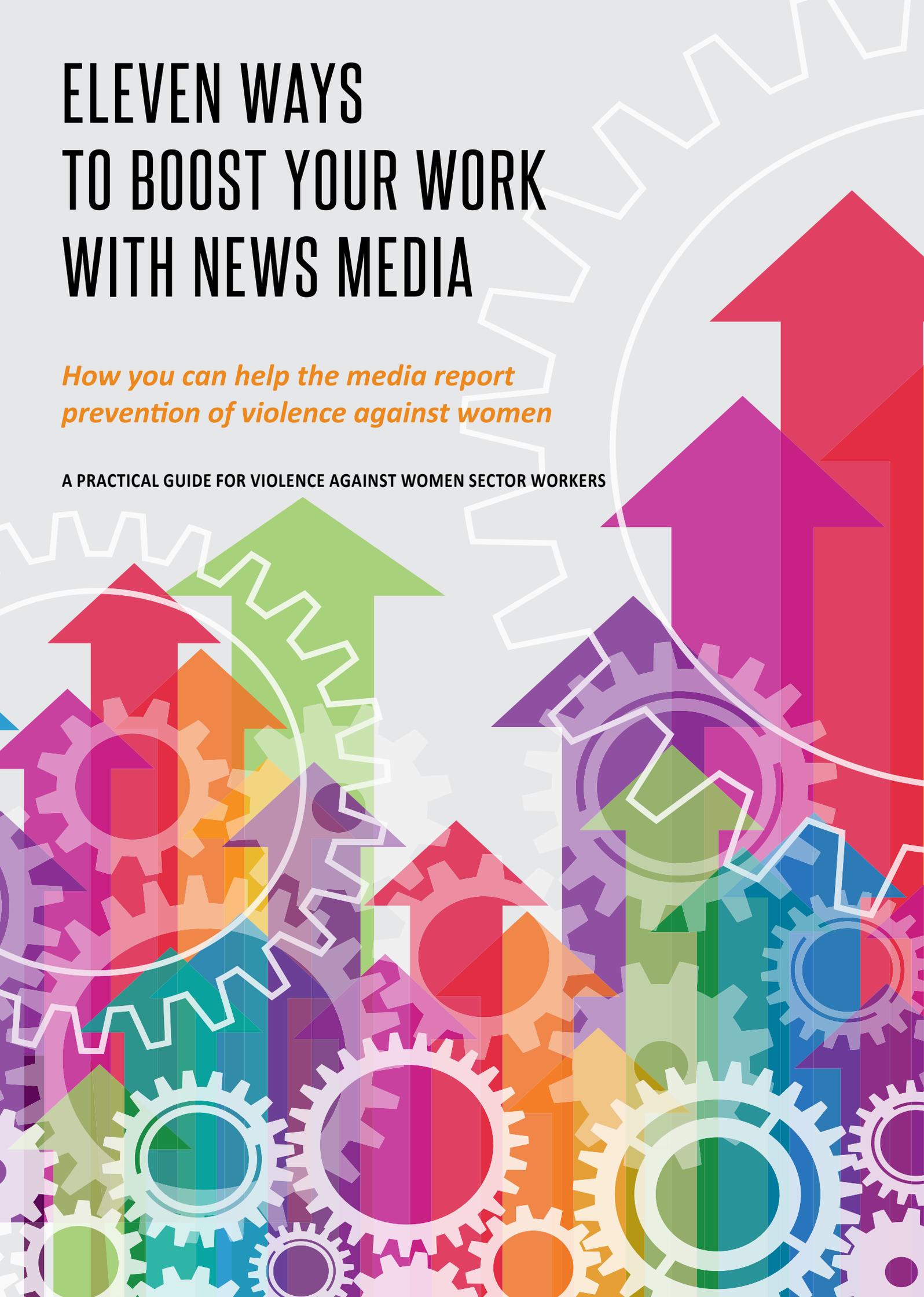


ELEVEN WAYS TO BOOST YOUR WORK WITH NEWS MEDIA

*How you can help the media report
prevention of violence against women*

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SECTOR WORKERS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide was developed by Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic) in partnership with the EVA Media Action Group.

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The members of the EVA Media Action Group played a central role in advising on the aims, focus and structure of the guide. The EVA Media Action Group, Communications Working Group, and Review Team provided review and input into drafts, in particular Michelle Edmunds, Vicki Kyritsis, Amy Webster, Vicki Lee Thomas, Dave Lane, Sara Jane Hooper, Jan Earthstar, Kristine Olaris, Peter Horsfield and Kellie Nagle.

Editing support was provided by Vicki Lee Thomas, Dave Lane, Michelle Edmunds and Peter Horsfield.

The guide has used ideas and messaging from existing resources on prevention of violence against women (PVAW), in particular:

- Domestic Violence Victoria, *Working with news and social media to prevent violence against women: A Strategic Framework for Victoria*
- Our Watch, *Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*
- Women's Health West, *Speaking Publically about preventing men's violence against women: Curly questions and language considerations*
- Women with Disabilities Victoria, *Information and Resources* (online factsheets)
- Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA) forum, *General Information* (online factsheets)
- Violeta Politoff, *Australian Media 101* (unpublished guide)
- Women's Health East, *Speaking Out program* (unpublished training guides)
- White Ribbon Australia, *Fact sheets* (online factsheets)
- VicHealth, *Infographics for the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)*

And also including:

- National Australia Bank, *Working with media cheat sheet* (unpublished guide)
- Municipal Association of Victoria, *Preventing violence against women information sheets* (online factsheets)

Copies of this document, in Word and PDF format, can be accessed online at www.dvvic.org.au

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INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE

Background to this guide

This guide is a supporting resource for *Working with news and social media to prevent violence against women and their children: A Strategic Framework for Victoria*¹ which provides strategies and information on working effectively with media to prevent violence against women and their children (PVAW) (available at www.dvvic.org.au).

This guide is focused specifically on Actions 2.1 and 2.2 of the Framework - increasing the capacity of practitioners to work with and provide plain-language PVAW messages to news media.

Who can benefit from this resource

This guide is aimed at practitioners working in the area of violence-against-women response, early-intervention and prevention services and programs who want to work more effectively with media to communicate key messages about PVAW.

These practitioners work in sectors that are specific to or inclusive of violence against women issues, including but not limited to services or programs on family violence, Aboriginal communities, sexual assault, disability, women's health, migrant and refugee communities, LGBTI communities or municipal councils. They will have different levels of involvement in the media work of their organisation, with some playing a public role as spokespersons while others will be involved in behind-the-scenes planning or design of communications content and materials.

This guide provides practitioners with tools and 'food for thought' to support their work with media. It includes discussion and tips on working with media on PVAW, as well as suggested critical PVAW 'themes', messaging content and key statistics that can assist communications with the media and encourage the inclusion of prevention messages in news stories.

Why this resource has been developed

Delivering clear information and accurate messages about PVAW to the community through the media is not always easy. The issue is plagued by myths and poor community understanding.

We have seen a rapid increase in the quantity and quality of media reporting about VAW in Victoria over recent years. This has created a current opportunity to provide information and evidence about PVAW to the media in ways that make the issue more accessible and engaging for the community. This media focus will not necessarily last, and taking a strategic and united approach to this work, as detailed in *Working with news and social media to prevent violence against women and their children: A Strategic Framework for Victoria*, will better support maintaining this focus for as long as possible and achieving long-term PVAW outcomes.

Better reporting on VAW includes improving news, analysis and social media content about:

- The right of women and children to live free from violence
- The drivers and reinforcing factors of violence against women
- The central role of gender equality in preventing violence against women
- The myths and misconceptions about violence against women
- The prevalence of violence against women
- The impact of violence against women on our community
- Actions that community members can take to prevent violence against women

¹ Domestic Violence Victoria, 2015, *Working with news and social media to prevent violence against women and their children: A Strategic Framework for Victoria*, Domestic Violence Victoria, Victoria.

This guide defines *prevention* work with the media as a specific task, and one which focuses on a long-term strategic approach to the present opportunity we now have for media coverage.

Defining prevention work with the media

This document is focused on strategic prevention messaging and work with media, which it defines as work that includes a focus on *primary PVAW content on what causes and underpins VAW and how we can prevent it*, and which is undertaken in a collaborative and united way.

Primary PVAW refers to activities and interventions that seek to prevent violence before it occurs. Primary prevention differs from response or early intervention, which occur after violence has occurred, at early signs of violence or which target individuals and groups who exhibit early signs of perpetrating violent behaviour or who are subjected to violence.

Evidence shows that one of the most significant causes of VAW is the inequality of power and status between men and women. This includes structural gender inequalities in society, and embedded social attitudes and norms about women's value and place in society².

Prevention work with the media involves moving away from focusing solely on incidents or individuals, even when media are pushing for such a focus, and integrating messages and information on primary prevention, namely gender inequality and its central role as a driver of VAW, and the influential role of other factors such as alcohol (see **Quick Reference Supplement 1** for further details). Sharing general information on the issue of VAW (i.e. not prevention specific) is, of course, a fundamentally important part of prevention, but acts to support prevention information rather than being the main focus.

In shifting the focus away from individual incidents and towards the larger issue of preventing all violence, it becomes necessary for the way we work, and the messages we communicate, to be consistent and strategically aligned to each other and with the evidence base. It is these strategic elements that make *prevention* work with media a specific task.

Understanding the media industry

Providing effective messages and information to the media requires an awareness of and responsiveness to the needs of the media industry. Media outlets are not there to 'tell our stories'; they look for stories that appeal to and increase their audience, and that attract advertisers. This may mean that reporting can lack the nuance, terminology or content that PVAW specialists expect.

Working more effectively with the media industry requires developing skills that include knowledge of the media industry and its business requirements, being responsive to media agendas and requests, providing accessible content, and finding proactive ways to build news interest and nuance in the reporting of PVAW.

Working with the media also requires an understanding that media professionals are part of the wider community, they are exposed to the same myths and misunderstandings about PVAW, and they may have had personal experience of discrimination and/or violence that shape their personal response to the issue.

² See note 1

How to use this resource

PVAW and working with media are specialised areas of work. This resource cannot replace training in either primary prevention or in media and communications; it aims, however, to highlight some key considerations to get you started or to improve your current work.

While parts of this guide will be relevant to all work with media and to the broader issue of VAW, such as advocacy or campaigning by individuals and groups, it focuses on improving the media's coverage and portrayal of PVAW, and building practitioners' capacity to contribute to this.

This resource is divided into eleven sections and five quick reference supplements. Each section focuses on one area of working effectively with media on PVAW, and the quick reference supplements provide key 'themes', messaging content and evidence on PVAW. It is designed to be read in full, however, central ideas **are repeated throughout the resource** with recognition that practitioners will refer to individual sections as need arises.



PLAN FOR YOUR CAPACITY

Globally, the resources invested in the prevention of violence against women (PVAW) pale in comparison to the extent of the issue, and the long-term, intensive investment required to create real change. Frequently, practitioners' work with media on family violence, sexual assault and violence against women (VAW) has been something undertaken 'on the side', i.e. on top of funded, planned, recognised and recorded work.

This means that most workers in the field are under-resourced for the work required. Women's organisations in particular can often operate on limited resources and the demands on their service and program delivery can limit their capacity to work strategically with media.

However, there are ways that can support working with media within capacity limitations.

WHAT TO DO

Recognise your limits and leave behind the feeling you are failing

- ➔ A long history of inadequate funding has meant that workers have 'stepped up' and taken on media work without sufficient capacity, recognition or training: this can take a toll on staff workloads and on quality of work
- ➔ If you are doing media 'on the side' remember that this is probably a credit to you and is better than not doing it at all: take the steps listed below to amend this where you can and avoid blaming yourself and other workers for 'doing it badly'. Make improvements where you can!

The number one strategy to address capacity limitations on media work is to adequately and specifically incorporate this work into organisation and project planning and scheduling at all levels.

The aim is to avoid doing media 'on the side', on top of recognised workloads with limited support, evaluation, recording or recognition of investment and outputs, and instead developing ways to build work with media into the organisation, including:

- ➔ Develop recognition, on an organisation level, of how providing commentary in the media can support the aims of the organisation and/or PVAW project: to recognise commentary as an 'output' and an achievement of the organisation
- ➔ Make commentary part of regular strategic or organisation planning at Board and management level
- ➔ Include the provision of commentary (responsive and proactive) in relevant staff roles, duty statements, workloads and annual reporting about successes and achievements
- ➔ Be sure to record all work you do with media, whether it is preparing media policies or key messages, taking calls or doing interviews: include it as part of your position or organisational reporting requirements.

- ➔ Develop clear media resources, policies and processes to support media work, including:
 - Pre-approved organisational positions and/or key messages prepared and ready to go
 - Policies on who can provide or make 'instant' decisions about giving commentary
 - Resources for referring media to appropriate spokespersons outside of your organisation³
 - Protocols to account for out of hours media work, such as early morning news
 - Policies on when the organisation should or shouldn't provide quick turnaround comment, for example, you might discuss and decide on the pros and cons of providing comment on certain issues (N.B. See 'Risks and legal issues' and 'Be aware of legal issues in commenting to media' in **Section 8**); you might say yes when there is a high profile case in your area but no when there is new legislation proposed that requires full review before making public comment
 - See other sections of this resource for considerations to include in your media policies, including **section 4, 5, and 7**.
- ➔ If you are an agency responding to VAW, it is critical to emphasise the important role specialist response services play in adding to the PVAW dialogue. Bolster this with reference to *Change the Story*⁴, the national PVAW framework, which comments on this important role.

While these actions may not immediately result in your organisation or project obtaining or allocating funds for this work, it will identify and acknowledge media work as a recognised 'output'.

Be straightforward with media professionals about:

- ➔ Your interest in and commitment to working with them
- ➔ Your capacity to prepare brief, accessible and accurate statements on a misunderstood and socially contentious topic
- ➔ What you can realistically provide, e.g. written quotes but not interviews or vice versa; comments only on certain days and the like
- ➔ If you are nervous or wary, be direct with media about this in a calm and respectful way, such as saying "The last time I had this conversation with a journalist it didn't work out well for me, so I am feeling a little wary of answering these questions..."
- ➔ Ways the media could support you to work with them more efficiently and effectively, including:
 - Providing you with as much notice as possible when comment is needed
 - Setting up meetings with them to talk through background information on PVAW outside of news cycle pressures.

Learn from what works

- ➔ Use existing knowledge and resources from outside of your organisation rather than developing it from scratch, including existing resources such as media policies, tip sheets on media, key messages and project slogans, FAQs sheets on PVAW
- ➔ **See Quick Reference Supplement 4** or contact DV Vic if you do not know where to access existing resources: www.dvic.org.au.

³ See <http://www.thelookout.org.au/media-centre/spokespeople-contacts> for a list of Victorian contacts.

⁴ Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, 2015A, *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch, Australia.

RECOGNISE THE COMPLEXITY OF PVAW WORK

To support effective work with media on the prevention of violence against women (PVAW), it is helpful to be aware of the complexities of this topic and in this field of work. These structure how the community views and responds to the issue, which in turn, influences how the media reports both VAW and PVAW.

PVAW complexities include:

- ➔ It is **commonly misunderstood** by much of the population
- ➔ It is **plagued by social myths** that direct people to look at the topic in particular ways, and to be resistant and untrusting of the evidence-base when it conflicts with these myths
- ➔ It involves **concepts of power**, social structures and the interaction between individuals, gender and society which can challenge people's world view
- ➔ It can feel very personal to people (including media), for example by:
 - o Being an **eye-opener** and stirring people to question their beliefs or behaviours or those of others
 - o Being a **positive or negative** challenge to people's identity, lifestyle and/or social status
 - o Touching people's **personal experiences of violence or discrimination**, e.g. making people feel recognised and heard, or bringing up painful memories
 - o **Inspiring people** to want to take action
- ➔ There is significant **terminology and jargon** attached to the issue which can be difficult to communicate in accessible language and yet it is critical that the community understands and engages with the issue in order to effectively prevent it.

Because of these complexities, it can be challenging for people:

- ➔ To **understand** the facts in what you are saying: given that these facts can challenge what we have been socialised to accept as normal
- ➔ To **contemplate** the implications of your message, i.e. how can we change this? Or what does this mean for society and for me?

WHAT TO DO

Recognise the central role of key PVAW messages in helping to address the most common PVAW topics and myths

- ➔ *Be clear about the distinct nature of primary prevention* and try to stay focused on prevention messaging, even within complex topics (see **section 5** for details on prevention messaging and its use).

Understand that poor understanding, together with myths and resistant attitudes make it particularly important to work with media in order to get clear, evidence-based PVAW messages out to the community. However, they can also make this task particularly difficult.

Recognise that the complexities in communicating PVAW are a central part of creating social change and will demand significant time and effort

- ➔ Addressing myths, resistance and disagreement is not something that ‘gets in the way’ of change, it is one of the central components of your PVAW work.

Maintain an awareness that information might be new, confusing or challenging for people to hear. Remember:

- ➔ Respectful engagement is a positive contribution to sharing PVAW information
- ➔ Even if you think it is ‘obvious’ or ‘basic’, it can take time for others to assimilate and understand the evidence relating to PVAW; information needs to be provided patiently and in an accessible way.

Pay particular attention to the most complex topics, as they can be the ones that come up the most often, and can be the most useful about which to share information

- ➔ Be prepared for direct questions from media professionals wanting to address some of the common community questions and ideas about PVAW: even where these might be myths, media are keen to address issues of relevance to their audience
- ➔ Use examples: complex concepts can be easier to understand when they are linked to real stories and scenarios
- ➔ Recognise that common and/or difficult questions can be opportunities to engage the media on common myths and current evidence
- ➔ Note that being caught off guard, shocked or surprised can make it harder to communicate on complex topics: try to be prepared for the unexpected, even if it is media that you might know well.

Recognise that diversity issues affect individual and groups of women’s experiences of violence. This is a complex area that often can be sidelined, poorly understood, or dismissed, even within PVAW policy and programs

- ➔ For example, try to ensure you understand and are prepared to explain the interactions between gendered violence and discrimination based on Aboriginality, migrant, refugee or asylum-seeker status, disability, sexuality, gender identity, race, socio-economic groupings, and other identities and/or social discriminations (see **section 5**).

Set realistic expectations of your communications capacity with a view to supporting the long-term sustainability of the work

- ➔ Recognise that communicating about complex topics can be demanding, and that many who work in the field can feel overwhelmed by the entrenched and often unyielding nature of the issue and the slow and demanding work required to prevent and respond to it
- ➔ Have realistic expectations of the change that you personally can achieve; communications about PVAW are a collective responsibility and it is not the personal responsibility of PVAW workers to change community attitudes
- ➔ Avoid taking resistance to the topic personally; some people will agree and support you immediately, some will engage with the information and process it slowly, and some will either not engage or not agree with you. Recognise that if your communications are emotionally charged they are less likely to be heard
- ➔ Communications should focus on repeating the evidence accessibly, respectfully and continually - not on 'convincing' people.



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ELEVEN WAYS TO BOOST YOUR WORK WITH NEWS MEDIA

KNOW SOME MEDIA INDUSTRY BASICS

It can be useful to have a broad understanding of the key structures of the media industry, as they influence how news is produced and the nature of your interactions with media professionals.

Hierarchies and roles within the media workplace

Journalists and even editors are not free to report whatever they like. The structures and hierarchies within newsrooms can shape news agendas and processes.

Journalists are generally assigned to 'rounds' or topic areas that they must cover, such as court reporting, political, social affairs, or education. While some are assigned to general news, they still must respond to priorities of the day and their editors' requirements: they are not 'free' to report on any media release you send them.

Journalists often do not write their own headlines, picture captions, sub headings and so forth. This was traditionally the job of sub-editors but as many have been retrenched, this can also fall to other editorial staff. A journalist may not have any say in the heading layout or placement of their piece. News throughout the day may shift and reprioritise a story originally scheduled for some prominence.

While **senior journalists** will generally have a stronger position within their outlet, they still are rarely free to write whatever they like at any given time and may need to argue their case with a superior about the news value of specific stories.

Chiefs of staff, editors, producers and senior journalists will have the most influence on news agendas and story selection. Senior journalists, such as the chief of staff or news director, will allocate stories through the day and reporters need to race to prepare/write/record them to the required word limit or length by a particular time. It may be a topic they have never reported on before. Once they have developed their story, it returns to an editor or producer who may cut or alter the content before going to print/broadcast. It may even be postponed or dropped entirely.

Chiefs of Staff and Editors, while holding decision-making powers within their outlets, must adhere to the style and audience needs of their outlet. Editors will argue that their audience is critical in determining what they publish, with audience engagement being ever more critical in the 24/7 news cycle⁵ where story popularity is determined quickly and commercial imperatives can be pressing.

Suburban, rural and regional media outlets can be differently structured. They are generally smaller, and staff can perform multiple roles i.e. acting as reporter, photographer and sub-editor.

Community media and some radio can be more flexible in their structures and hierarchies and many are set up to give voice to alternative, marginalised or localised topics. In this way, they may have more freedom to follow stories of interest or relevance to the journalist/presenter.

Media Outlet type

Media outlets can be national, state-wide, or locally-focused and this will influence what stories and issues they report. The medium - be it radio, television, online or print - will also influence the content needed to make a story newsworthy: appropriate content may be in the form of quotes, a guest speaker, and/or photographic or video material.

It is not uncommon for people to mistakenly pitch stories about local events to national papers like The Australian; so be sure you understand the scope of the media outlet that you are targeting. For example, The Australian is unlikely to write about a local Sixteen Days of Activism event unless it is in the context of say a series of 16-days events across local councils that have influenced Commonwealth Government policy or funding.

⁵ See section 4

Television is focused heavily on visual elements to accompany its information: faces, people, places, interviews and other imagery. If a story does not have these elements, it is difficult for television to report on it.

Radio uses personality, voices, commentary and interactions to present and engage with information.

National media, such as *The Project* or *The Australian*, will be focused on issues of national relevance, i.e. those that are likely to affect the whole country.

State-wide media, such as *The Age* or *ABC Radio Victoria*, will be focused on issues of relevance to the whole state. This often can mean more of a metropolitan focus as this is where most of their audience lives.

Suburban, regional and rural media, such as *Star* and *Leader* newspapers, or regional radio stations, need to be directly relevant to their local residents.

Community and independent media, such as *3CR* radio, *NITV* or *Red Flag* newspaper, may cover international through to local issues depending on the focus of a particular program, paper or writer. You therefore need to research their focus and pitch your content accordingly.

Online media is, by its nature, available to a global audience but its target audience and/or interest areas will still be determined by the outlet and its national, local, or issue-driven interests, though these may differ slightly to meet the specific needs of the online environment. The vast majority of media outlets have online platforms.

Social media, particularly *Twitter* and hashtags are increasingly important tools in alerting journalists to stories, events and interactions between individuals or groups. Social media allows you and other people to directly talk to journalists, and sometimes engage them in debate. Sometimes social media interactions or debates can become the story.

Media style and audience

A media organisation's target audience(s) or followers, particular style or political leaning, or different time or length requirements should be noted. For example, radio and print newspapers tend to attract an older audience than other media and the online audience tends to be younger; *The Age* has a more university-educated, urban audience, while the *Herald Sun* has a broader, older audience, many of whom are in outer-urban and regional Victoria. Television news has to present items within seconds and minutes, whereas current affairs programs often have much longer segments in which to tell a story.



WHAT TO DO

Work strategically with the media industry as a whole

- ➔ Familiarise yourself with the actions and strategies of the Victorian Framework *Working with news and social media to prevention violence against women and their children*⁶, to support strategic, coordinated and consistent approaches to PVAW with media in a way that is broader than individual journalists, producers or organisations.

Know the media outlets most relevant to you

Basic lists and information about news outlets and publications can be found online (see **Supplement 4**).

- ➔ Try to think beyond the media that you yourself consume.
- ➔ The local papers and radio in your area
- ➔ Influential state and national media outlets (those with the highest readership or viewers) i.e. *Herald Sun* or *Channel Nine News*
- ➔ The outlets and reporters more likely to cover VAW: those already covering it, or those that report on similar areas/issues e.g. there have been journalists and outlets that have taken this issue on diligently in recent years
- ➔ The likely audiences, reporting style and content focus of these media.

Know the media professional you are speaking to

Do a quick online search when contacted by journalists you're not familiar with (ask to call them back in five minutes) for details such as:

- ➔ Their outlet's style, focus, likely audience
- ➔ Their previous reporting, particularly about PVAW or other social issues
- ➔ Their role, e.g. are they a rounds or investigative journalist, a senior journalist, an editor or an intern?

Consider how media type and style will influence reporting and information needs

- ➔ Local media will want local content, while content with a national perspective will be more attractive to national media
- ➔ Target your material, e.g. target social policy content to social issues reporters, or education content to education reporters
- ➔ Content will need to be relevant, interesting and accessible for the specific media and to their audience, (this includes their PVAW reporting history and likely knowledge). See **section 5** and **8** to help make your information accessible.

Do not rely on yourself or the journalist having the final say in a story

- ➔ The hierarchies and business requirements of the media industry will influence what is reported as much as an individual journalist
- ➔ Stories will be checked and altered through a hierarchical process, and you may not be able to check your quotes or the final draft of a story even if the journalist does their best to support this happening; and some journalists may be insulted if you ask to check your quotes or their story before publishing.

⁶Domestic Violence Victoria, 2015, *Working with news and social media to prevention violence against women and their children: A Strategic Framework for Victoria*, Domestic Violence Victoria, Victoria.

BE RESPONSIVE TO NEWS TIMELINES AND DEADLINES

Understand the pressures on news production

Just as in the prevention-of-violence-against-women (PVAW) sector, limits on capacity can influence how media operate.

While news media as a whole is made up of large conglomerates with significant social power, it is important to understand the context of news production and its impacts on media professionals' capacity to research and report issues. This in turn will affect your ability to get your messages to media audiences.

The 24/7 news cycle

The 24/7 news cycle refers to round-the-clock reporting and publishing; it's a reflection of contemporary society and technological capability. Over recent years, the range of news publishing platforms has increased, with digital media now competing with traditional television, radio and print. This has created a highly-competitive and pressured environment for news providers, who are challenged to deliver the latest news to an easily distracted and increasingly fragmented audience⁷.

There is now less time to produce news and fewer people to work on it. This has resulted in a decline in most publishers' and broadcasters' research capability; a move from "traditional values of verification, proportion, relevance, depth, and quality of interpretation" towards "sensationalism, entertainment, and opinion"⁸.

As a result, media professionals may not have time to gather background information from you, and may be under more pressure to make their stories 'compelling' above all.

News immediacy

The 24/7 news cycle demands near-constant updates, comment and reaction. A story can build quickly, influenced by (often competing) reactions and comments from agencies, experts or audiences. This means that journalists and producers often hunt 'reaction' stories and you may find yourself (perhaps frequently) approached for an 'instant' comment. If so,

it is worth keeping in mind the news context that fuels this urgency and this can help you make more informed decisions about contributing to the debate or stepping out of it.

Understand newsworthiness, news timeliness and deadlines

News production is driven by the perceived newsworthiness of information and publishing deadlines; more so given the pressures of 24/7 news.

Newsworthy is a key media term and refers to how engaging a story might be to an audience. This is discussed in detail in **section 9**.

The *timeliness* of information relates to the relevance of the story content. A broad social issue will be considered much more newsworthy if it relates to a current and specific event.

A *deadline* is when 'copy' (a journalist's news piece) is due to a producer or editor. Copy or story deadlines vary according to the type of publication, its publishing platform and production cycle.

Responding to timeliness and deadlines will increase your ability to contribute to stories and build relationships with media.

The importance of answering requests

Journalists and producers generally need information fast. Answering your phone, responding to requests quickly and making yourself available for follow-ups requests will increase your reliability as a source on PVAW. If you ignore or reject initial approaches, its unlikely further requests will come your way.

The importance of responding to current affairs

VAW incidents and legal matters, such as murders or court cases, are often high priority news. It's times such as these, when media are interested and focused on

⁷Kansas, D & Gitlin, T, 2001, 'What's the Rush: An e-epistolary Debate on the 24 hour news clock', in Giles & Snyder, *What's Next?: Problems & Prospects of Journalism*, Transaction Publishers.

⁸Weaver, DH et al., 2006, '8. Journalists' Best Work', *The American Journalist in the 21st Century: U.S. News People at the Dawn of a New Millennium*, Routledge, p. 226.

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ELEVEN WAYS TO BOOST YOUR WORK WITH NEWS MEDIA

VAW, which are good opportunities to share prevention information. When media cover violent incidents, their questions often include: “Why/how did this happen? What can be done to stop it happening again? What can people do?” You will be under pressure to answer these questions quickly and a media interview can easily turn to myths or common misconceptions, such as the ‘monster myth’, victim-blaming, or a focus purely on law-and-order responses to violence. However, these questions offer opportunities for prevention messages, so it is important to have ready prepared key messages, statistics and evidence-based arguments to contribute to the conversation.

The importance of the law

If the story involves a police arrest where charges are laid, or a court case or appeal that is in progress or pending, there are some restrictions on what public comments you can make about the case and those involved. See **section 8** for details.

Responding to ‘out of hours’ requests

It can be harder to meet requests for early morning news on radio and television because they are ‘out of hours’. However, they attract large audiences and so shouldn’t be ignored. Local radio, particularly in rural and regional areas, is influential so it’s worth the effort to respond to early morning requests from the media.

WHAT TO DO

Consider news pressures and how they might affect your work with media.

When a journalist/producer contacts you, consider their deadline first and foremost

- ➔ Ask about their deadline, i.e. What time do they need to submit their story?, What is the latest time you can give them comment?, What is their preferred time for comment from you? (Journalists are likely to ask you for comment ‘ASAP’, so it is useful to get the full deadline details from them so you have some wiggle room to think about what you will say before commenting.)
- ➔ If you can’t meet their deadline:
 - Offer someone else who likely can
 - State your interest in being contacted in the future and **briefly** summarise what you could offer
- ➔ If you think you can meet the deadline:
 - See the other sections of this resource to help you learn how to develop comment, including **section 2, 5 and 8**

- If you investigate further and find you can’t meet the deadline, be sure to get back to them ASAP and let them know so that you don’t damage their trust in you as a source.

Provide information accessibly

- ➔ Recognise that quick and easy-to-use information is most valuable in the media’s time-tight environment
- ➔ Remember to say that PVAW is a complex area, with many myths; offer further information, contacts, or some of your time to discuss PVAW in more depth, so that journalist/producers can be better informed.

Have realistic expectations of media’s time to dedicate to PVAW

- ➔ Have realistic expectations of the media’s knowledge; journalists and producers are spread thinner these days and have less time to research, gather information from a range of sources and pitch story ideas to editors

- ➔ If a journalist or producer asks the ‘wrong’ questions or makes inaccurate and objectionable statements, avoid taking it personally or assuming that it is deliberate; without the time to research PVAW, they may be caught up in the same myths, stereotypes and ‘gender blindness’ that influence many
- ➔ Remember that you are a PVAW expert and use your knowledge to clarify misunderstandings and provide accurate evidence
- ➔ The media reports on a myriad of social issues; of course everyone thinks their stories are the most important but media professionals make decisions based on their outlet’s preferences, targets and priorities
- ➔ Consider your work with the media to be a medium to long-term project; news priorities might mean you do not get a story or your comment published immediately but your work today, may produce better results later on.

Avoid

- ➔ Ignoring or not replying to media calls or requests when you are busy
- ➔ Making assumptions or not asking about deadline details
- ➔ Slow processes by your workplace management for approving media comment.

Work towards

- ➔ Knowing the timelines of news outlets relevant to you, remembering that they can be different for local or state media, for print, television, radio and online
- ➔ Timely responses and smooth approval processes for comment (if needed)
- ➔ Responding to news immediacy as an opportunity to contribute prevention messages
- ➔ Adopting efficient policies about who can make or prepare media statements
- ➔ Identifying a media contact person for your organisation who understands the appropriate questions to ask and the basics of media liaison when a call comes in
- ➔ Agreed positions on key issues or messages to support faster and easier development of comment (see **Supplement 1**)
- ➔ Identifying one or more spokespersons for your organisation to whom comments can be attributed
- ➔ Specific policies for ‘instant’ commentary, including processes to support timely responses to out of hours opportunities
- ➔ See **section 1** for further information.

Give some consideration to risks associated with providing fast commentary

- ➔ While providing comment is important, keep your wits about you; a fast reaction can put additional pressure on you:
 - o Consider all relevant risks (including the legal and professional); see **section 8** for risks to consider
 - o Be sure to stick with your key messages and statistics to avoid getting pulled into debates that aren’t helpful or relevant to the evidence base; see **section 5 and 8** to help you.

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ELEVEN WAYS TO BOOST YOUR WORK WITH NEWS MEDIA

PREPARE TAILORED PVAW MESSAGES FOR ALL COMMUNICATIONS (INCLUDING TRICKY QUESTIONS)

'PVAW messages' are key messages that include and centre on *primary prevention content* about the *causes and prevention of violence against women (PVAW)*⁹.

This guide focuses on three elements of strategic PVAW messaging to media:

1. **Centre all communications with media on key PVAW messages: to make your main ideas clear and easy to report**
2. **Base your PVAW messages on the three 'themes' listed in Quick Reference Supplement 1 of this guide: to enable a consistent prevention focus across the state and to alleviate confusion or contradiction**
3. **Phrase and present PVAW messages in a way that is tailored to the particular media outlet and audience you are working with at any given time: to ensure that they are relevant, interesting and accessible.**

The importance of key messages

*'... about the time that you're absolutely sick of saying it, is about the time that your target audience has heard it for the first time - Frank Luntz*¹⁰

'Key messages' is a term that refers to:¹¹

- ➔ A set of short, standard phrases that describe an issue in plain language
- ➔ The most important points that you want your audience to hear, remember or react to
- ➔ The key points that you consistently make to reach out to your audience
- ➔ The bridge between what your audience already knows and where you want to take them.



Key messages are particularly important because:

- ➔ PVAW is a complex and misunderstood topic, shrouded in myth, stigmatised and based upon accepted community norms, and PVAW messages can be hard to distil into simple statements that can be easily understood by media and their audiences
- ➔ A large part of effective communications and public relations is repetition. A message about any issue often has to be heard multiple times before people notice and respond favourably. Hearing a message from multiple sources can increase the power of this repetition. Therefore, the effective promotion of any issue must include repeated use of clear and consistent information about it
- ➔ They allow you to be clear about, and to prioritise, the most important information you want media to hear, particularly in a crowded media environment
- ➔ They help media to more easily find short and simple 'sound bites' to share with their audience.

⁹ See *Introduction to this resource* for a definition and further information on primary prevention.

¹⁰ Fitzpatrick O, 2013, *The Charismatic Edge: The Art of Captivating and Compelling Communication*, Gill & MacMillan, p. 174.

¹¹ See **Supplement 3** for key characteristics of key messages

The importance of PVAW themes

Many media stories on violence against women (VAW) are likely to be spurred by incidents, such as a recent murder, a government announcement, or a pending or recently-decided court case. What can be overlooked by media, and therefore in the information we provide to them, is primary prevention and the broader context of violence against women.

If we are to make progress on PVAW, situational questions focused on 'Why did John hit Mary and how can we stop him from doing it again?' need to be redirected away from this individual focus and into a broader understanding of what causes VAW and how we can prevent it.

The three PVAW themes provided in **Quick Reference Supplement 1** represent the core elements of primary prevention: the primary cause of VAW, the influential factors that shape and exacerbate it, and what we can do to stop it.

Creating your key messages under these themes, will ensure that your work with media contributes to the creation of a united voice that progresses media reporting and community understanding of PVAW.

The importance of tailoring your messages

As discussed, **Quick Reference Supplement 1** provides three PVAW themes on which to base your messages to support state-wide consistency. Alongside this, we need to find new, relevant and interesting ways to frame this information for each audience. Parroted messages are boring to media and can appear irrelevant to the news story being reported.

Tailoring your messages to each media situation can increase understanding, interest and uptake, and the likelihood that media will come back to you in the future. Tailoring can target the message angle, language, phrasing, tone or complexity to be relevant to a media's audience based on age, location, culture and/or understanding of VAW.

The 'trickiest' questions to respond to

Some areas have been identified by practitioners as particularly hard to answer with succinct and clear messages, particularly because they touch on many different myths and issues. These include:

- Those that state or imply that women are to blame for the violence perpetrated against them
- Those that state or imply that men are being overlooked, denigrated or discriminated against in the context of PVAW
- Those that argue against the gendered drivers of violence against women
- Those that state or imply that alcohol, drugs, mental illness, carer responsibilities, socio-economics, particular migrant populations or other factors are 'to blame' for VAW
- Questions on the relationship between gender discrimination and other social factors or discriminations, e.g. how violence against women and racial discrimination can interact and affect women's experiences of violence
- Requests for comment on current murders, violent incidents, or current cases which are currently sub-judice (a particular case or matter that is under trial or being considered by a judge or court)

Many practitioners report that when faced with myth-laden, evidentially-complex or otherwise difficult PVAW questions, they can have difficulty in determining: where to start, how to simplify the evidence, how to effectively link the intersecting issues, which myth to address first, what the follow-up questions might be; they might also feel weary or defensive, worry that they will lose their train of thought, not doing the issue justice with their response, and last but not least, how to handle aggression or resistance.

Tips are provided in the 'What to Do' section below on using PVAW messages to simplify the process of addressing tricky questions.

WHAT TO DO

Base your messages on priority PVAW themes

- ➔ Review the three PVAW themes in Quick Reference Supplement 1 and base your message development on these themes, using the key concepts also where useful

Prepare a list of ‘standard PVAW messages’ based on PVAW themes

- ➔ **When a proactive or responsive media occasion arises, you use these prepared messages as a starting point** for developing fully tailored messages. This will be far quicker than writing messages from scratch! Often we do this informally, by referring to previous presentations or previous media comments. The process is faster and less frantic when you formalise it
- ➔ **Brainstorm a list of PVAW scenarios** that are likely to arise in the future, be newsworthy and draw media attention e.g. a murder, new policy, 16 Days of Activism event etc. Include likely contextual details that you should consider i.e. media that are likely to be interested in such a scenario (i.e. local radio, commentators, television news etc.), location elements (local or national relevance?), newsworthiness aspects (see **section 9**), likely myths that will be raised or difficult questions that could be asked
- ➔ **For each scenario, develop a list of ‘standard PVAW messages’**
 - o Focus them on the three key PVAW themes (and any relevant key concepts) recommended in **Quick Reference Supplement 1** and the current evidence base for primary prevention¹²
 - o Follow basic key message principles (see **Quick Reference Supplement 3**)

- o Check you are not overstating or over-simplifying your case
- o You only need three to five messages for each scenario but don’t worry if you have more, at this stage it doesn’t matter because this is only your reference list.

Tailor your messages each time you use them

- ➔ **Know your audience.** Given time constraints, this will often be a quick, on-the-spot assessment, but can also include some research if you have time. Consider:
 - o All audiences you are speaking to: the journalist, the news decision-makers such as editors and producers, and the news audience (see **section 3**)
 - o Their likely views or attitudes about PVAW and knowledge of its terminology, concepts, etc.
 - o Any relevant demographic information about these audiences, such as age, gender, education, income, class, marital status, etc.
- ➔ **Angle, language and tone of message**
 - o Include one or more newsworthy characteristics to your messages (see **section 9** for a list of newsworthy characteristics)
 - o Is the language you are using the same language that your audience would use themselves? Are there unnecessary complex or technical words that you can remove? If not, can you explain technical words, such as ‘drivers’ and ‘reinforcing factors’ in language that your audiences would use themselves?
 - o What is the tone of your message and what does it say to your audience? Does it inform them, engage them to act etc.?

¹²Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, 2015A, Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Australia.

- o How can you most effectively link your messages to the current issue? What does your audience most identify with in this particular situation, incident or topic? How else can you make your messages current and relevant?
 - ➔ **Introductory information and examples.** What initial information do you need to introduce and set the scene for your messages? What examples can you give that contextualise your messages?
 - ➔ **Location and cultural factors**
 - o Are there specific geographical or cultural issues that affect how your message needs to be phrased, presented or made relevant? This might be specific words or phrasing, tone, inclusion of local/cultural references or relevance to local interest or events.
 - ➔ **Time and other practical factors.** How long will the news piece be, and how much time will the journalist have to speak with you?
 - ➔ **Always stick to your evidence base**
 - o Never oversimplify or overstate your case to make it more relevant or interesting. Ask: Is my message accurate to the evidence base? Do I need to give up some of the simplicity in order to maintain accuracy? Is there key terminology that I need to include?
 - o Consider new learnings and global evidence on PVAW
 - ➔ **Learn from what works.** Always consider your previous successes or challenges and use these to inform your tailoring.
 - ➔ **Note that tailoring messages for media is a professional skill** which requires experience and expertise to master. Investing in media training can be a great way to build capacity of an organisation and increase the confidence of staff.
- Stay on message, including when answering tricky questions**
- ➔ **Use key messages as the central component of all information** you provide to media. When preparing content, start with your key messages and build information around them
 - ➔ **Include them in all communications**, including media releases, written media comments, interviews, the media-relevant sections of your website, and public speeches
 - ➔ **If you often find yourself straying away** from your PVAW messages
 - o Check your key messages: perhaps you are straying away from them because they are not representing the key information you want to get across. You may need to review and change your key messages to better address your priority content
 - o Practise saying and writing your messages, and keeping supporting information relevant, brief and accessible.

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ELEVEN WAYS TO BOOST YOUR WORK WITH NEWS MEDIA

- ➔ **View tricky questions as an opportunity to use your key messages**
 - o Simplify the situation. Never focus on ‘defeating’ the myth or changing the journalist’s opinion, simply offer your counter information
 - o Point out any myths that have been raised i.e. ‘That’s a common view but the evidence shows...’
 - o Explicitly state how common and dominant myths are on PVAW
 - o Offer the real evidence on VAW and its prevention, using the relevant PVAW messages
 - o Remember that it is a journalist’s job to address common public opinions and beliefs, even if they are myths, and every opportunity to offer counter-information to myths is useful
- ➔ **Stick with it.** Be consistent with delivery
 - o The more times your target audience hears, reads or learns your key messages, the better recall they will have about your issue
 - o Staying on message takes practice and experience, so allow yourself to learn and improve over time
- ➔ **See section 8 for tips on providing comment and doing interviews.**



KEEP KEY STATISTICS AT HAND

Statistics on violence against women and its prevention (PVAW) are compelling and should form part of any information you provide to the media on the issue.

Considerations to keep in mind when using statistics include: their accessibility, accuracy, relevance (local or other), how current they are and how they might be published.

Some statistics about PVAW are written in plain language and are simple for non-statisticians to understand. Others are presented in a way or use research and/or terminology that can make them overly complex, difficult to understand or even misleading for a lay person. Some statistical terminology can be replaced with more simple language but be careful about distorting their meaning in the process.

Look for relevant, regularly-updated statistics and findings from reliable organisations such as *Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)*, *Our Watch*, *the Australian Human Rights Commission*, *Victoria Police*, *Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)*, those reported in *VicHealth's National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS)*, global sources such as *WHO* and the *United Nations (UN)*¹³. However, some areas of PVAW lack comprehensive or current data; regional and local data can be particularly hard to find at times.

WHAT TO DO

Use Quick Reference Supplement 2 and 4 to support your collection of key statistics.

Use key prevention messages and statistics that are complementary

- ➔ Use statistics to back up your key messages and use key messages to explain and amplify statistical information.

Consider the accessibility of the statistics you want to use

The aim is to avoid doing media 'on the side', on top of recognised workloads with no support, evaluation, recording or recognition of investment and outputs, and instead developing ways to build work with media into the organisation, including:

- ➔ Is there terminology, jargon, phrasing, or numbers that make it hard for the audience to grasp their meaning (even more so on radio or television)?

- ➔ Can you replace confusing words or phrases without changing the meaning of the statistic?
- ➔ Can you round or simplify numbers (e.g. change '53.2%' to 'just over half')
- ➔ Can you break up a long or complex statistic into parts and deliver them bit by bit?
- ➔ Make sure the statistic is the most up-to-date that is available; as the media trades on 'the latest' information, find out when new statistics are released
- ➔ Where there are limited or no statistics for a particular area of PVAW, the absence of data can become the story; use anecdotal evidence to show why further research and data is needed.

Consider collecting newsworthy data for your local service

This will require extra work but it could prove newsworthy. Data doesn't need to be expansive and could be as simple as documenting how many women with children were supported by your service over a specific period.

¹³ See Supplement 3 for further details

BE RESPONSIVE TO MEDIA REQUESTS FOR PERSONAL STORIES

Responding to the media's demand for fresh, personal stories from women who have experienced violence is one of the most frequent – and difficult – requests that practitioners face when working with media on PVAW.

This resource does not claim to have the answer to meeting the media's demand for a hundred or more Rosie Battys! However, even without such a perfect solution, this section provides suggestions for addressing this demand.

Creating opportunities out of media's requests for personal stories requires a number of key considerations, including:

- Understanding why the media wants personal stories, and what sort of stories they are after
- Accepting that most of the time it is not possible to meet these requests
- Recognising the safety, ethical and practical issues in women sharing their experiences with media
- Responding to requests in ways that build rather than reduce contact with the media
- Supporting the medium to long-term increase in capacity to meet these demands
- Working with media to broaden the newsworthiness of PVAW beyond personal and/or tragic stories.

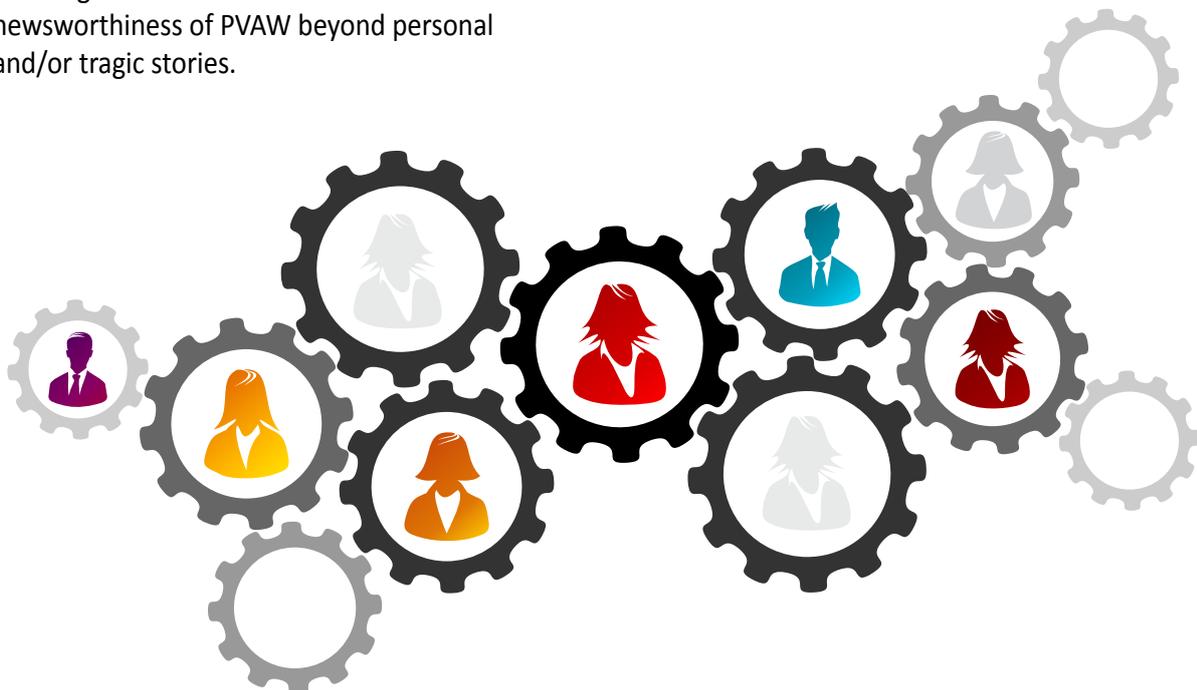
Why do media want personal stories?

Personal stories, details and images are highly valued by the media.

News audiences are more responsive to real people's lives, stories and emotions than to concepts, statistics, research or theories. Experiences, struggles and successes resonate with people. This is not unique to reporting on PVAW and is a reflection of what news 'reaches' people and how emotion plays an important role in communication.

Because of this, personal stories are 'gold' to the media. Even where a social issues story is based on a launch, new research or a public event, it will often feature a personal story or anecdote at the start to grab the audience's attention.

A journalist/producer's preference for personal stories should not be interpreted as disinterest in other information about PVAW. Often, it reflects a good intention, e.g. their desire to find engaging personal stories that bring issues and lived experiences to the audience in order to guide them to more in-depth PVAW analysis.



Safety, ethical and practical issues

It is critical that the community understands women's lived experiences of violence. History is largely silent on violence against women and for too long these voices have not been heard. It can be empowering for women to tell their stories, and society will benefit by breaking this silence, challenging stereotypes and promoting community dialogue.

For these reasons, and in spite of the frustration of not being able to meet demand, media interest in sharing women's stories is positive and should be encouraged. However, as already noted, not all coverage is good coverage.

There are safety and ethical issues involved in women telling their stories and in how well their stories are presented by the media. There are risks of identification, abuse and/or trauma for the women themselves, to their children and families, and potentially to legal proceedings. This risk should not deter these important stories from being told but it is vital that women's stories are shared with news and social media in a careful, ethical and respectful way.

An organisation can face significant investment in measuring, planning and supporting women around these safety and ethical issues. For several years, the Victorian *Women's Health East* has run a media advocates program which supports women who tell their stories of violence to the media with formal media training, counselling and other practical support. This program has been highly effective and *Women's Health East* has worked extensively with *Our Watch* to develop a national implementation guide to help other organisations across the country run similar programs. It includes detailed considerations about safety, ethical and practical requirements and at the time of publishing, *Our Watch* is finalising it for launch.

The importance of representing diversity in story-telling

Many women in Victoria experience violence and their experiences are diverse. It is important that this diversity is represented in news stories because it better enables the community and women to identify and respond to violence when it happens. It also builds community awareness about the nature of violence against women, what causes it, what factors play a role in reinforcing or increasing it and how we can prevent it.

While many areas of PVAW are underreported, some of the most neglected include personal stories of sexual violence (particularly sexual violence committed by someone known to the woman), as well as violence against women with disabilities, from refugee and immigrant backgrounds, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, against lesbian, bisexual, trans and gender queer women, and against women living in rural and remote areas.

WHAT TO DO

Consider safety and ethical considerations

Please look out for the publication of the *Our Watch* guide on running media advocates programs, or contact *Our Watch* for further information at www.ourwatch.org.au

Ideally, the work is best done with this guide and a dedicated worker and/or program to assess safety and provide necessary support to women in speaking to the media:

- ➔ This includes supporting informed consent of the woman based on her awareness of the process and potential impact on her; assessing safety issues with her such as the potential of her being identified, the impact on children and the possibility of retribution; supporting her through the interview process and post interview, including dealing with trauma, threats or abuse that may result from the media exposure.

Where a dedicated worker or program is not available, ensure adequate practical and counselling support is available for women speaking to media, including assisting her to assess risks before deciding to speak to media.

Respond promptly to media requests

- ➔ Whether you can or cannot meet the request, always respond quickly and thank the journalist/producer for their interest in reporting on the issue
- ➔ Avoid expressing frustration about particular requests you think miss the point, or a sense that the journalist/producer is biased against, or dismissive of, other important PVAW information
- ➔ If you can't meet their request, offer the journalist/producer other specialist comment, background information or other story ideas.

Know what advocates programs are running in Victoria

- ➔ Have contact details handy (see www.thelookout.org.au¹⁴ for current programs)

Wherever possible, refer media directly to an advocates worker or program

- ➔ Provide the journalist/producer with the name and contact numbers of the project coordinator.
- ➔ Some journalists/producers will be sceptical about advocate's programs and their ability to offer 'new' stories or un-clichéd comments, so briefly explain the role of these programs and how they support to women to tell their stories in their own words.

If you are handling the request without an advocate program or training available

First and foremost, be sure to consider the woman's safety and other ethical or legal issues as detailed above.

- ➔ Get as much detail as possible from the journalist/producer about what they are looking for and what they need for their story: Do they need someone who can use their real name or is a pseudonym okay? Do they want a picture, and if so, can it be masked, pixilated or obscured in some other way? Where and when can the interview take place? Where and when will the story be published? What story specifics do they need (e.g. someone who has experienced homelessness)?

Explain to the journalist/producer that meeting their requirements may take some time which could affect their ability to meet their editor's or the program's deadline.

¹⁴ www.thelookout.org.au/media-centre/spokespeople-contacts

If the request cannot be met

If there are no advocate programs or others to meet the request:

- ➔ Explain the ethical and capacity issues around supporting women to tell their stories
- ➔ Suggest that the importance of advocate programs and the need for more of them could be a story in itself.

Promote alternative newsworthy content on PVAW

Detail the importance of reporting other neglected but newsworthy aspects of PVAW in place of, or alongside, women's stories.

See **sections 5 and 9**, and consider some interesting story angles you could pitch that might develop audience interest and engagement with the broader issue, including:

- ➔ Underreported areas of VAW and PVAW, such as sexual violence (particularly that committed by someone known to the woman) and how gender inequality interacts with other discrimination, including violence against women with disabilities, from refugee and immigrant backgrounds, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, against lesbian, bisexual, trans and gender queer women, and those in rural and remote areas
- ➔ Personal stories of gender inequality, not just violence
- ➔ Analysis of global and/or local issues and impacts of gender inequality
- ➔ Personal stories and/or profiles on response and prevention specialists
- ➔ Analysis of institutional responses to gender inequality or PVAW
- ➔ Promotion and analysis of prevention initiatives and policies.

Be proactive with existing media advocates programs

Alongside your responsive work, promote women's stories at a time that is most convenient for you and for them. By doing this you can help set the media agenda and timelines.

Meet with local media advocate programs and discuss ways to work together.

- ➔ See if they can support any of your service's clients who may be keen to talk to the media
- ➔ Invite media advocates to speak at events you are running or in which you are participating
- ➔ Include comment from media advocates in your or your organisations' media releases, tweets and other social media
- ➔ Include media advocates' stories as case studies in presentations or other materials
- ➔ Develop specific story-telling opportunities for media advocates, e.g. YouTube videos produced for your organisation's website.

Acknowledge and support the expansion of media advocates programs

- ➔ Look out for the release of Our Watch's national implementation guide to running ethical media advocates programs (still in development as of March 2016)
- ➔ Support the development of new programs in the future.

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ELEVEN WAYS TO BOOST YOUR WORK WITH NEWS MEDIA

KNOW SOME BASICS ON GIVING COMMENT OR MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Effectively using messages on prevention of violence against women (PVAW) in interview and other media contexts involves knowing some interview basics, to make sure that you keep your key information central to your comments and responses.

The media will not always do things the way you want them to

- Journalists/producers are usually in a hurry; they may know very little about PVAW and be assigned the story at short notice
- When the media get it wrong, it is not necessarily intentional; the journalist/producer will hear different views from others and will be trying to explore them by asking about myths or other perspectives that to you may seem unhelpful
- News media are expected to represent many social issues and cannot be across all of them
- If you provide a comment but are not quoted (or quoted fully) in the story this doesn't mean the journalist/producer 'didn't get it' or that it was a waste of your time; while you may have been cut from the story by someone up

the production line, e.g. a subeditor, you will probably have impressed the journalist

- Having conversations with the media about misconceptions or problematic questions can be a useful opportunity to share your expertise.

Risks and legal issues

- Making specific comments about people charged by police, court cases, appeals or pending appeals can not only take you into risky legal territory, it can negatively affect a woman's safety and her pursuit of justice
- Making defamatory comments without good reason (i.e. a legally acceptable defence) can be intrusive and costly.

Not all coverage is good coverage

- Being available for media is important, however accuracy and reliability are more important than taking every opportunity thrown your way. The tips below should allow you to prepare for your media interviews or comments, so they you can enter into them in an informed and effective way.

WHAT TO DO

Be aware of legal issues in commenting to media

Some media outlets may be prepared to take risks, so it is important that you know what you can and can't say

- ➔ **Avoid speaking directly about any individuals or individual cases, particularly matters that are under consideration by the court**, including people charged by police, IVO proceedings, court cases, appeals or pending appeals
- ➔ However, **always take the opportunity to speak generally about the research** that relates to that issue e.g. use bridging phrases such as: "While I can't speak to this case, what we do know is that..." and speak to the evidence on the issue at hand, whether it is breach of IVOs, harming children to punish mothers etc.

- ➔ **Further information on legal issues** around reporting on family violence, including court restrictions and defamation, has recently been released by the *Australian Press Council*; this is designed for media professionals but provides a useful overview nonetheless www.presscouncil.org.au¹⁵ Further information on 'Defamation basics' is also available here www.defamationwatch.com.au
- ➔ If you require further information or would like specific training, please contact Domestic Violence Victoria.

¹⁵ www.presscouncil.org.au/uploads/52321/ufiles/Guidelines/Legal_Restrictions_on_Family_and_Domestic_Violence_Reporting.pdf

Tips for providing comment, handling interviews and promoting your key messages

- ➔ **Always ask for questions in advance if possible;** some journalists will be happy to provide a list, however if not, you can ask broadly about the types of questions they want to cover
- ➔ **Have key PVAW messages prepared**
 - **This will help you stay focused on PVAW,** rather than being solely directed by the journalist's story
 - See **Quick Reference Supplement 1** for PVAW messaging 'themes' and **Section 5** for information on developing messages based on PVAW themes and tailored to your audience; remember to include statistics and some examples that are most relevant to the story
 - **Practise** combining and using them in a tailored and relevant way to the story and audience
- ➔ **Centre your responses on the PVAW themes and your messages**
 - **Stick to your key messages** and don't get side tracked or provoked by provocative questions or comments
 - **Politely point out any questions or areas that you think are problematic** or unhelpful "That is a problematic question for a number of reasons."; "We are asked that question a lot, I would argue that it is the wrong question to ask..."
 - **Use bridging phrases to redirect the discussion:** "The question that we should be asking is..."; "The real issue here is..."; "I think the more important point is..."; "What I'm seeing in my area is..."; "That's not my area of expertise but what I can say is..."; "The fact is..."
- ➔ **Always be accurate and honest** about what you know and don't know:
 - There is an important rule to observe when dealing with the media: if you are not sure don't say or write it
 - Stay calm and focused
 - If you can't answer a question:
 - Avoid saying 'no comment'
 - Explain that the question is outside your area of expertise, e.g. "I don't work directly on issues to do with children..."
 - Offer other relevant information, e.g. "Our work does examine..."; "What we do know is..."
 - Refer to someone who could answer the question asked, e.g. "I would recommend getting in touch with..."
- ➔ **Nothing is guaranteed to be 'off the record';** do not say anything to a journalist/producer that you aren't happy to have quoted and recognise that 'off the record' may not always be observed
- ➔ **Avoid giving 'generic' or 'bland' comment** which can decrease the chances of your comments being published or broadcast:
 - Consider the newsworthiness of how you present your comments and information so that they are relevant to the story and will be interesting for the audience (see **section 5 and 9**)
 - However, be accurate with your content; don't sensationalise or change your core content in an attempt to be newsworthy as this will diminish your credibility and the community's understanding of the issue.

- ➔ **Always be respectful**, even if flustered or frustrated:
 - o Express appreciation for being contacted
 - o Politely correct inaccuracies and offer evidence for your challenge
- ➔ Recognise their role: don't get frustrated if they get it wrong
- ➔ Recognise your role as the expert/commentator and direct the interview to your key messages.

Additional tips for TV and radio interviews

- ➔ Keep some key messages on your phone, at home, or in the car to be ready for 'out of hours' requests for comment
- ➔ A one-hour interview may get as little as 15 seconds of airtime, so concise key messages are very important
- ➔ **Take the time to consider your answer**; if you don't have an immediate answer, it is good to pause and think, and to even ask for the question to be repeated to give yourself time to respond – avoid being pressured into saying something you don't mean to say
- ➔ **Keep a plain shirt at work** for short-notice TV interviews if you are likely to be contacted for TV interviews (some patterns, stripes and green colours are bad for camera).

Remember to email positive feedback when the media get it right

- ➔ **Recognise the value of opportunities** to contribute to news, discussions and agendas around PVAW, and foster them. See **Section 10** for information on building relationships with media.

If you are not quoted or quoted insubstantially

- ➔ Journalists do not have final say in story content; if your quotes are not included, do not assume that this means the journalist did not want them included or that it was a waste of time
- ➔ Keep in mind that:
 - o Speaking to journalists is a good opportunity to communicate your messages and information, and build relationships, even if the coverage is not as thorough as you would have liked
 - o Being quoted is not the be all and end all. Your information may have helped shape a story, or may have stimulated future story ideas for the journalist
- ➔ Be sure to include work you do with media as part of your job reporting, even if you are not quoted.

If you are misquoted

Media professionals follow a code of ethics; if you feel you have been misquoted, you can follow processes to have this addressed

- ➔ Keep in mind that the misquote may not be intentional
- ➔ Contact the journalist by email or phone and politely explain why you feel you were misquoted; this is a good way to maintain a good relationship with them
- ➔ If you then feel you have been gravely misrepresented and the journalist is not responsive, politely explain your issue to their chief of staff or editor (you can find the contact details online or get their details through the main enquiries line on the news outlet's website)
- ➔ If the outlet does not adequately address your grievance, you can view information on making complaints against the media on the Australian Press Council's (APC) website www.presscouncil.org.au/making-a-complaint

BUILD THE NEWSWORTHINESS OF YOUR CONTENT

What does newsworthy mean?

Newsworthy is a key media term and refers to how engaging a story is, or is likely to be, to the audience.

Aspects of newsworthiness to keep in mind:

- ➔ Newsworthiness is a perception, not a fact; there is a difference between how important you think a topic/story is (e.g. relevance to community education or social change) and how interesting an audience will find it
- ➔ Media must have an interested audience for their news stories; newsworthiness can't be ignored
- ➔ Each media outlet will define 'newsworthiness' differently, this will depend on their target audience's interests, political leanings, age, lifestyle, etc.
- ➔ Judgements about the newsworthiness of a topic/story are generally based on years of experience in the newsroom
- ➔ Newsworthiness can change or be different than expected: audience interests change over time and/or due to particular events, a topic's newsworthiness will depend on the angle or how it is presented, and media estimations of newsworthiness can sometimes be wrong.

What makes something newsworthy?

Here is a list of characteristics that define how newsworthy a story or issue is expected to be for an audience:

- ➔ **Impact:** Will the issue impact on people? Will people feel it matters to them? Who and how many people will be impacted?
- ➔ **Immediacy:** Is the issue timely? Is it linked to something that is timely?
- ➔ **Authority:** Are authoritative voices involved in the story? Is the story linked to an issue with an authoritative voice?
- ➔ **Proximity:** Does the story relate directly to an audience? Is it linked to something that does or will relate directly to an audience?
- ➔ **Uniqueness:** Is there something new, odd or surprising involved?
- ➔ **Conflict:** Is there conflict or the potential for conflict?
- ➔ **Emotions:** Is there a personal story or emotions involved? Can people emotionally relate to the story?
- ➔ **Trends:** Is there an emerging or existing pattern or trend of incidents or outcomes?



WHAT TO DO

While VAW issues have long been considered a private issue, only relevant to women or some people, or not of broader interest, this is starting to change in Victoria. Below are some of the ways you can help increase the newsworthiness of PVAW

Use clear key messages in your communications

- ➔ Ensure that the information you provide is clear, accessible and relatable to your audience. (See **section 5 and 9**).

Brainstorm newsworthiness

Do some brainstorming about PVAW newsworthiness. Here's an example:

- ➔ **Impact:** Violence against women is one of the most significant health and welfare issues for half of the population. It currently results in more than one homicide a week in Australia. That kind of impact affects large sections of the community everyday -women, men, children, families, schools, workplaces. Find ways to stress and link your stories into this impact
- ➔ **Immediacy:** Long-term prevention can seem to have no urgency. However, each incident of VAW in our community, or each launch of research, a new program, etc., creates a news opportunity and potentially community interest in what causes VAW and how it can be stopped. Find ways to link your story into something that has immediacy
- ➔ **Authority:** Community leaders and VAW specialists add real value to your stories. Include them directly or link in with events in which they are involved
- ➔ **Proximity:** Find ways to position your story so that it has relevance – that could be relevance to your local area, or to a current event or issue
- ➔ **Uniqueness:** What is different about your story? Is it new, e.g. an event, program or new funding? Does it discover something, e.g. program evaluation findings or new research? Can you give unique information or insight about current events?. E.g. Rosie Batty's piece comparing attention to and spending on 'terrorism' versus family violence
- ➔ **Conflict:** Unfortunately conflict is a selling point. For PVAW, it is worth considering the angle of 'avoiding conflict' so that we do not support sensationalising our stories. Again, Rosie Batty's comparison of terrorism and family violence made us consider different social problems and how we were responding to them
- ➔ **Emotions:** Examples include personal stories or case studies from workers, comments from families on preventing this happening to someone else, stories about people positively impacted by a program or event, stories about experiences of gender equality or inequality
- ➔ **Trends:** Are there patterns or trends upon which to comment? E.g. positive or negative changes in statistics regarding VAW. Is there a trend related to incidents in your area? Is there a contrast between your area and a neighbouring area? Is there a trend related to project successes addressing a particular issue? Find ways to show that your story is not a single incident but part of a larger trend that is of relevance to more people.

Build interest and newsworthiness into your work - responsively and proactively

Start thinking about PVAW from a media and community-interest perspective. Try to maintain this as a focus that is as important as the statistics.

➔ Try to anticipate demand from media:

- o Is there upcoming newsworthy content? e.g. anniversaries of significant events, release of reports, new legislation, changes in government strategy
- o If you know what is coming, you may be able to get ahead of the official announcements; the media love being able to preview material or an issue the day before a big announcement, so can you offer them anything (without breaking embargos or other commitments relevant to you and your organisation)?

➔ Consider collaborations:

- o Is there another agency that you can partner with to share the load and promote your event or media release? Can you link research and expertise to create a package for the media?

➔ Become active on social media:

- o Stay up to date; most social media is fast-paced and requires timely engagement
- o Share newsworthy content so that media start to follow you for information
- o Package your content with consideration for newsworthiness so that your posts draw attention
- o Follow journalists and media outlets on social media and engage with their posts

- o 'Tag' the media in posts that are particularly relevant to them, i.e. if they are a regular commentator on a particular topic; be aware that this can be playing favourites, so be sure to share the attention around with consideration for relationships
- o Engage with newsworthy material on social media; provide thoughtful and engaging comments and replies
- o Try to garner significant community interest in your posts through followers, sharing and replies so that the media can see that you generate interest

- ➔ Consider how to make your current activities and communications more newsworthy; pay attention both to promotion and to content, e.g. can you add a high profile speaker to the event you are running?
- ➔ Start new activities or communications that are likely to be newsworthy, e.g. can you collect and release some local statistics, even on a small scale, that you might usually just keep in-house?
- ➔ Think about how your key messages address newsworthiness and try to use groups of messages that target different newsworthy characteristics
- ➔ Use events, statistics, research, personal stories and authority figures wherever possible
- ➔ Learn how to create a good media release and always use the most newsworthy content as the lead, e.g. if you have a key and/or high profile speaker at your event, include their name in the title of the release. Find help with writing media releases online, for example 'Writing a Media Release' on www.ourcommunity.com.au¹⁶ gives an excellent outline and tips.

¹⁶https://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1575

Newsworthiness, integrity and reliability

- ➔ Remember that giving 'generic', 'bland' or complex comments will decrease your chances of your comments being included by media. However, successful media engagement does not mean that "all coverage is good coverage". You should not sensationalise, oversimplify or otherwise change your core content and lose the integrity of your information. Instead consider the newsworthiness of how you present your information. Try to find a balance between making content accessible to media and maintaining its truth and integrity
- ➔ Take a realistic approach and recognise that even when you do get a story covered, it may not be covered in the way that you were hoping or in the level of detail you wanted. Sometimes successful media engagement might be about making incremental improvements or curtailing the worst in reporting, and this is just as valuable as your positive and successful experiences
- ➔ Recognise some of the challenges that an increase in popularity or newsworthiness of PVAW might bring:
 - o More media attention means more time and effort required from you; make sure you plan for capacity issues – see **section 1**
 - o There also are some risks to popularity that should be considered but which should not scare you off media work: PVAW is a complex and specialist area which also affects many people personally; some media may enthusiastically pursue information that they have heard, even if it does not adhere to evidence; social discriminations also can come into play in reporting, where particular classes, races, individuals or groups are blamed for VAW, rather than examining the prevention evidence on the social and structural drivers. Try to steer media in the right direction and be respectfully honest with them if you feel they are off track.



BUILD MEDIA TRUST AND COMMITMENT TO PVAW

The nature of prevention of violence against women (PVAW) generates contradictory opinions, ‘facts’ and voices on the issue. It also competes with many other important social issues. The media need to trust you and your information, and recognise the importance of PVAW.

Creating media trust in you as a source, your information, and the validity of PVAW as a key community issue, rests on building respectful relationships with media and clearly communicating PVAW information and evidence, in both your responsive and proactive work with media.

WHAT TO DO

Respond to requests respectfully

- ➔ Reply to all requests promptly, even if it is to decline
- ➔ Be respectful, even if rushed or frustrated
- ➔ Always keep your word on getting back to journalists by specific times
- ➔ Express interest and appreciation for being contacted, even if you can’t provide comment
- ➔ Accept that some media will come to you for a story and won’t be interested in further information, or may only be interested further down the track.

Use key messages

- ➔ Basing your comments to media on consistent, evidence-based and plain language key messages improves your value as a source of information by making your commentary accessible, reliable and useable in media’s reporting.

Be accurate and reliable in what you can offer

- ➔ Always be accurate and transparent on whether a media request is within your expertise
- ➔ Be confident and assertive in letting media know when an area/issue falls outside your area of expertise
- ➔ Nothing is guaranteed to be off the record with media - avoid offhand comments, making guesses, or steering away from the current evidence.

Be helpful beyond what serves you directly

- ➔ Refer media to further contacts¹⁷ wherever possible, even if you have provided comment
- ➔ Where they have time, talk with media and give them background information on PVAW even if you won’t be quoted personally
- ➔ Take opportunities where you can, but accept that you may not get anything back immediately.

¹⁷ <http://www.thelookout.org.au/media-centre/spokespeople-contacts>

Remember to send positive feedback when media get it right

- ➔ If you have had a positive experience, you like the way that you have been quoted, or the story more broadly, pass on this feedback. This is a powerful way to support good work and the reporting of this issue, and can't be done enough!
- ➔ Send feedback to both the journalist and their editor/producer; it can be a simple email if you have little time.

Proactively contact media and build conversations

- ➔ Where relevant, be aware of individual journalists' reporting area (called 'rounds'), e.g. politics, social affairs, education
- ➔ Contact specific journalists when information comes up that is relevant to their reporting area e.g. any new statistics or reports from your local area
- ➔ Proactively research journalists that report on PVAW-related issues and request that they make some time to speak with you briefly about:
 - o Upcoming events or other story pitches that you think will be of interest to them
 - o The impact reporting can have on the community: their understanding of PVAW and women's experiences of violence, and in supporting or dispelling myths; story content and angles that can be helpful or unhelpful, and why.

Recognise the long-term nature of both media relationships and social change

- ➔ Working with the media is medium and long-term work
- ➔ Consistent evidence-based messages support the media to trust the information you give them about PVAW (see **section 5**)
- ➔ The reliability of workers in this field as a whole will contribute to building trust in PVAW information. The more 'in sync' workers are in communicating the story clearly to the media, the more the media will feel confident to approach those in the field
- ➔ Results may not always be immediate and you may not always be the one to reap the benefits from your work with the media. Media commitment to this issue may come from their interactions with multiple workers in the field.



WORK WITH MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS STAFF

Not all agencies have a media and communications (media-comms) worker or department; many agencies working in the area of violence against women (VAW) do not. However, recognition of its importance and dedicated resourcing for this role is on the increase.

For those working in organisations that do have media-comms workers or departments, this section outlines some of the things you might consider in order to work more effectively with them. If you do not have roles of this sort in your agency, the content in this section may be relevant to how you work with other communications decision-makers in your organisation, or you may skip it altogether.

Varying roles

The area of Media and Communications broadly refers to activities aimed at communicating information about an organisation. This includes communications to the media (e.g. media releases, media comments), communications to the public (e.g. websites, brochures) and internal communications (e.g. staff newsletters, operational policies).

Staff in this area can be involved with or responsible for all communications, or be focused on specific areas (e.g. media relations only) or specific projects (e.g. website only).

Skills and knowledge

Media-comms workers can be incredibly useful to work with on prevention of violence against women (PVAW). Their skills and knowledge can include:

- ➔ How to write and present information in succinct, accessible and interesting ways
- ➔ Media relationships and contacts, including the best editors and reporters to contact for particular stories
- ➔ Other contacts and relationships, including key spokespersons for your or other organisations
- ➔ An understanding about how the media industry functions and how best to present information with regard to newsworthiness, timelines and deadlines,

media release formats, and presentation of quotes and comment

- ➔ Current media reporting of issues that are of relevance to your organisation, e.g. they may have a collection of news pieces/articles about VAW
- ➔ Risks in communications, and things to avoid or do differently

Those working in media-comms will be diverse in their knowledge and experience with the issue of PVAW, ranging from those who have had no prior PVAW experience at all, to those who are equally specialised in both areas.

Working with media and communications staff

Many workers in PVAW find their media-comms staff or departments to be a wealth of information and have had great success in working collaboratively with them.

Collaborative work with media-comms can have two main benefits: improving communications about PVAW projects, and increasing the inclusion of PVAW content in the broader communications of the organisation.

Possible barriers

Some workers in PVAW identify particular barriers in building relationships with media-comms teams within their organisations, for example:

- ➔ Lack of organisational recognition or attention to the importance of media-comms to the area of PVAW, and vice versa, i.e. the importance of PVAW communications to the aims of the organisation
- ➔ Strict organisational hierarchies that limit collaborative work between departments or with media-comms staff
- ➔ Heavy media-comms staff workloads that result in their being unable or resistant to take on work from other areas
- ➔ Personal resistance from media-comms staff to working with PVAW projects or workers.

WHAT TO DO

Recognise the important role that the specialised skills of media-comms staff can bring to PVAW communications.

Identify media-comms staff in your organisation and their role(s)

What area(s) of communications do they cover? Is it inclusive of media work? Is there a hierarchy of roles that they work within? Do they support all workers, or just specific projects or management?

Consider how best to work with your organisation's media-comms staff

Do you have questions or want specific help from them to support your project(s)? Do you want to discuss the inclusion of more PVAW content in the organisation's broader communications? Is this long-term or short-term work?

➔ **Do you want to include (more) PVAW content into broader communications of the organisation?**

For example:

- o Media releases. Could PVAW content be included into media releases that, at first glance, may not seem relevant to PVAW? I.e. new housing laws that could inadvertently disadvantage women? Could media releases promoting the organisation include mention of its PVAW projects or activities?
- o External newsletters or e-bulletins. Does the organisation have regular external newsletters and can PVAW content be included in these? Either a specific section, or applying those lens to other content?

- o Internal staff communications. Are staff aware of internal policies and procedures within their organisation that support gender equality and where they can get further information on these? I.e. FV leave, maternity leave
 - o Events, speeches or comments. Are there events being run, speeches or comments being given on behalf of the organisation where mention of PVAW could be included?
 - o Website. Does your website promote PVAW information and projects? Could additional links be included to draw viewers to it?
- ➔ **Do you want to create new PVAW-specific communications**, including any of the above mediums?
- ➔ **Do you want to improve communications for your PVAW projects?** For example:
- o Proactive media work and project planning. Can media-comms staff offer advice in your project planning to make the project more interesting and newsworthy? Can aspects be adapted to attract media attention?
 - o Project content. Can they offer advice on the creation of project communications, i.e. media releases, website content, or promotional materials? Can they review draft documents so that you can learn to improve their presentation etc.?
 - o Regular support. Can you meet at regular intervals to discuss how your communications are going and troubleshoot issues with them?

When working with media-comms specialists be aware:

- ➔ Media-comms can be a fast-paced, busy and demanding area involving long-term, as well as responsive work requirements
- ➔ Media-comms staff may get approached often with requests for assistance and be in high demand
- ➔ Recognise that many media-comms workers are previous (or current) journalists. In that sense, they may operate similarly to media and you may need to follow some of the same tips from the previous sections of this resource about approaching them
- ➔ They may have little or a lot of experience with PVAW
- ➔ Responsibility for PVAW communications should not exclusively rest on PVAW or media-comms workers: this work should be supported by management and a whole of organisation approach.



QUICK REFERENCE SUPPLEMENT 1: CRITICAL THEMES AND CONCEPTS FOR PVAW MESSAGING

About this supplement

The objective of this supplement is to support users to develop key messages on prevention of violence against women (PVAW) that you can weave into your communications with media. This is whether you are proactively engaging the media around PVAW, or responding to questions about VAW incidents, programs, policies, legislation etc.

This supplement provides **three PVAW ‘themes’**; and lists of **‘key concepts’** on PVAW to support Victorian VAW practitioners’ to focus their communications on the most critical information and evidence on PVAW, and to support consistent PVAW communication across organisations and spokespersons in Victoria.

The aim of the themes and concepts is to guide you in more quickly and easily developing tailored PVAW messages that are compelling, newsworthy and relevant to each audience you will work with. This supplement should be used alongside the information in **Section 5** on how to tailor and use messages for your audiences, and the evidence provided in **Quick Reference Supplement 2**.

Note that the themes and concepts provided are not new information: they draw together current national and international evidence on PVAW, as well as existing project slogans, messages and other communications from organisations, networks and groups across Victoria¹⁸. Note also, further content may be required in the future to reflect any new global evidence on PVAW, particularly around the complex intersections of gender and other bases for discrimination and violence.

Priority themes for PVAW

Prioritise the following three themes in your communications with media, to support a move away from individual or incident-based news coverage and to increase a prevention focus in media reporting and community understanding.

Theme 1. Talk about the causes of VAW

E.g. International research is clear that gender inequality is a key underlying factor for violence against women.

Theme 2. Explain the influential role of other factors

E.g. Other factors such as harmful use of alcohol, poverty, discrimination, and the way violence in general is used and accepted in our community all play a part in VAW; they interact with gender inequality and need to be addressed alongside it.

Theme 3. Talk about what everyday people, governments and communities can do to prevent VAW

E.g. Violence against women is preventable; prevention requires everyone to play a part in changing the culture, attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence against women, in particular inequalities between men and women.

¹⁸ See Acknowledgements and Quick Reference Supplement 4

Key Concepts for Theme 1. Talking about the causes of VAW¹⁹

International research is clear that gender inequality is a key underlying factor for violence against women.

Disrespecting women does not always result in violence against women; but all violence against women begins with disrespecting women²⁰.

Gender inequality exists within social structures, norms and practices that work together to create an environment where women and men are valued differently.

Gender inequality can be seen in a history of laws and policies that have formally restricted the rights and opportunities of women.

Gender inequality continues to exist today, often in ways that are invisible to many people, through the unequal social value, power, resources and opportunities available to women and men.

Gender inequality is present in our society in many ways. *Change the Story* tells us that the key aspects of gender inequality that are linked to violence against women are when:

- There is an imbalance of power between men and women in families and relationships as well as in workplaces, schools and other arenas of public life
- Roles for men and women and ideas about masculinity and femininity are rigidly defined
- Peer relationships between boys and men that support or promote aggression and disrespectful attitudes and behaviour towards girls and women
- Communities condone or excuse violence against women.

‘Everyday’ sexism is part of, and reinforces gender inequality.

Violence against women is the extreme end of gender inequality, but less extreme forms of ‘everyday’ sexism create and reinforce gender inequality and violence:

- The threat of violence impacts on all women, limiting different aspects of their lives.
- Sexist jokes, comments and behaviours reflect and reinforce sexist attitudes. They excuse and support the gender stereotyping and discrimination that often leads to violence against women.
- If no-one speaks up when a sexist comment or joke is made, it sends the message that these attitudes and behaviours are okay.

¹⁹ Please see **Quick Reference Supplement 2** for evidence and statistics to support this content

²⁰ Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, *Joint press conference: Women’s Safety Package to Stop the Violence*, 24 September 2015, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/2015-09-24/transcript-joint-press-conference-womens-safety-package-stop-violence>

Different approaches are needed to address violence against women and violence against men.

Talking about violence against women is not to dismiss the issue of violence against men.

While violence can be perpetrated and experienced by many different groups in society, violence against women has different causes and dynamics from violence against men:

- Violence against women is usually perpetrated by someone known to the woman, is often part of a pattern of longer-term abuse, and is more likely to lead to the woman being hospitalised, killed or living in fear.
- Violence against men most likely happens in a public place, by a male stranger, and as a single incident.

Violence against both women and men have elements in common:

- The overwhelming majority of violence against women or men is committed by men
- A large factor in all patterns of violence is that in many (if not most) societies, violence and aggression are seen as part of masculinity.

There are persistent and longstanding myths on the causes of violence against women, which can create community confusion about the issue, and can also blame victims for violence or excuse violent behaviour.



Key Concepts for Theme 2. Explaining the influential role of other factors²¹

Change the Story tells us that other ‘reinforcing’ factors play a significant role in making gender inequality and violence against women more severe or frequent, they are:

- When violence in general is used or condoned
- When alcohol is mis-used
- When individuals and families suffer inequality and discrimination
- When circumstances challenge men’s power or status in the family, the workplace or the wider community. Violence against women may be used by some men to reassert power and control. This is sometimes referred to as ‘backlash’.

A general social acceptance of all forms of violence adds to the social acceptance of violence against women but is not enough on its own to cause it.

Alcohol and drugs can contribute to the frequency and severity of violence, but do not explain it.

Alcohol and other drugs do not cause violence against women and their children but can increase the likelihood, frequency and severity of violence.

Violence against women can be more severe or frequent for women facing socio-economic inequalities and discriminations.

Gender inequality needs to be viewed and addressed alongside other significant factors that influence violence against women.

All forms of discrimination impact disproportionately on women and girls due to gender discrimination against them.

In the Australian context, **women of lower socio economic status** can experience more extreme and prolonged violence and greater barriers to seeking protection. N.B. Research on this issue is particularly complex: please see **Supplement 2** for detailed information.

Young women (18-24 years) experience significantly higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women in older age groups.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence and violence against Aboriginal women must be understood in the context of issues such as: dispossession of land and traditional culture, the impact of the Stolen Generations, racism and discrimination, economic exclusion and entrenched poverty and alcohol and drug abuse.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience both higher rates and more severe forms of violence compared to non-Indigenous women, including making up a high number of homicide victims, experiencing much higher rates of family violence in rural and remote areas, and being much more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence.

²¹ Please see Quick Reference Supplement 2 for evidence and statistics to support this content

ELEVEN WAYS TO BOOST YOUR WORK WITH NEWS MEDIA

Women and girls with disability experience violence at significantly higher rates, more frequently and over longer periods, in more ways, and by more perpetrators than other women and girls.

Women with disabilities continue to be one of the most excluded, neglected and isolated groups in Australian society, experiencing widespread and serious violations of their human rights.

Women from refugee and migrant backgrounds can experience barriers to addressing and seeking help for violence because of immigration policies that make them dependant on their husband's migration status, social isolation, cultural and language barriers, lack of understanding about the Australian legal and support systems and their rights, and distrust of authority.

Lesbian, bisexual, trans and gender diverse women can face heterosexist discrimination against their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression which can contribute to their experiences of gender inequality and violence.

Women in mental health inpatient services report high levels of sexual abuse and assault, harassment and fear for their safety.

Most **women in prison** have histories of victimisation, including childhood sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, and violence from non-intimates and carers.

Women living in rural and remote communities can face greater vulnerability to violence due to: geographic isolation and distance from police, legal and support services; the scarcity of community support services in those communities; lack of privacy in smaller communities; the higher likelihood of firearms being present within homes; and expensive private and limited public transport networks.

Long-term exposure to, or experience of, any type of violence, particularly in early life, can establish attitudes and behaviours accepting of the use of violence, however this does not occur in isolation from the influence of gender and power. The impact of violence in early life can reflect gendered patterns of violence – in which men are more likely to perpetrate violence and women to experience it.

While exposure of children to violence against women can shape later attitudes to violence and gender relationships, making some more accepting of violence against women, it conversely makes others highly intolerant of violence against women.

Sometimes when men's power and authority is challenged, violence can increase or become more severe.

Where women are expected to 'know their place' in a family, workplace or community, violence or the threat of violence may be accepted as a reasonable way to maintain this order, especially when it is women who challenge it.

KEY CONCEPTS FOR THEME 3. TALKING ABOUT WHAT EVERYDAY PEOPLE, GOVERNMENTS AND COMMUNITIES CAN DO TO PREVENT VAW²²

Violence against women is preventable.

The use of violence against women is learned behaviour based on gender inequality, which is reinforced through cultural norms, practices and structures; because it is learned behaviour it can be addressed and prevented.

To prevent violence against women, we need to change our culture.

Countries that have higher levels of gender equality tend to have lower levels of violence against women.

If we are to eliminate violence against women, gender inequality in all areas of public and private life, and all forms of violence against women, must be understood and addressed.

Addressing other forms of social inequality will also help to reduce violence against women.

Prevention of violence against women requires:

- Changing the circumstances that allow and condone violence against women, including structures, norms and practices
- Whole of community action against sexism and inequality
- Governments to identify ending violence against women as a priority and to commit to sustained government action at all levels
- Appropriate institutional responses to violence and gender inequality, including in workplaces, education, legal services and health care.

Everyone can play a part in preventing violence against women.

- Take a zero tolerance to violence against women
- Promote and normalise gender equality and diversity in public and private life, including in teaching and modelling this to children and young people
- Respectfully challenge sexist or derogatory attitudes towards women
- Men can play a critical role by challenging disrespectful attitudes and behaviours towards women amongst their male peers
- Shed and challenge aspects of masculinity that are harmful to others.

²² Please see **Quick Reference Supplement 2** for evidence and statistics to support this content

ELEVEN WAYS TO BOOST YOUR WORK WITH NEWS MEDIA

There are many actions that institutions and groups can take to prevent violence against women, for example:

- Schools can run comprehensive programs on gender equality and respectful relationships
- Local, state and national governments can provide comprehensive prevention campaigns and projects that reach the community in different settings
- Sporting clubs can introduce gender equality programs that create equality of participation and resources to female and male sporting groups and athletes
- Businesses and workplaces can support women's equality in the workplace by addressing equal pay, respectful attitudes towards women in the workplace, the numbers of women in leadership roles, family violence leave, and sexual and other gendered harassment policies
- Community services (including health, disability and children) can commit to working with specialist services to prevent and respond to violence against women
- Media can represent women in news and entertainment with equal value, and remove sexist advertising.

Appropriate responses and early intervention have a role in preventing violence against women

How we respond to violence against women sends a message about how we value women and girls. This message can be heard by women experiencing violence, perpetrators and the community at large.

Adequate support services for addressing violence against women send the message that violence is not okay or normal, and addressing it is a priority for society.

Early intervention initiatives are critical to stopping violence before it reaches crisis point and sending the message that no level of violence is ok.

When news media include appropriate VAW contact details in their stories, it sends a message to the community that stopping violence against women is a priority.

Always include a contact for specialist violence against women support services in your media releases and in interviews. Ask the journalist to include the number or web link at the end of their story and consider whether to also include local contact information. Recommended contacts are:

- In an emergency, call Police on 000.
- 1800 RESPECT is a 24-hour, national phone line and website that can answer questions, and provide phone counselling and referrals for further crisis or legal support.

Local services are available across Australia for family violence, sexual assault, trafficking, emergency housing and legal referrals, and can be contacted through 1800 RESPECT.

Community legal services are available across Australia for advice and support in legal matters pertaining to violence, and can be contacted through 1800 RESPECT.

Concepts to address myths about causes of violence against women²³

Two common myths are addressed below by way of example. Please see **Section 5** for advice on using key messages to address myths, and **Quick Reference Supplement 4** for further resources on myth-busting):

Violence against women is not caused by loss of temper, sexual frustration or mental health conditions.

Most men do not use, and are strongly against the use of violence against women.

Anger, stress and loss of control are common excuses used to explain or defend men's violent behaviour.

For most men who use violence against women, the violence is not about 'losing control', it is about trying to control another person, and exert power over them.

Most men who commit violence against women do not use violence in other aspects of their lives.

While there are some mental health conditions that can increase violent behaviours, mental illness does not itself explain violence against women. Most men with a mental illness do not perpetrate violence against women and most perpetrators of violence do not have a serious mental health problem.

Violence against women is not specific to particular ethnicities, cultural or religious groups

Religion and 'culture' are often used to explain the prevalence of violence against women among particular groups, however, violence against women and gender inequality exist globally and within almost all cultures and religions. This includes Australia's Anglo-Celtic culture.

Violence against women is higher in societies that view masculinity as dominant and superior, where belief about male and female roles in society are rigidly held, and where gender inequality is greater. Other/general 'cultural' or religious values are not the cause.

Note: You will need to develop tailored messages to make them compelling and newsworthy to different audiences, rather than using the content above as your actual messages. Please see **section 5** for information and examples of how to tailor and best use this supplement. Please see **Quick Reference Supplement 2** for evidence to support your messages.

²³ Please see **Quick Reference Supplement 2** for evidence and statistics to support this content

QUICK REFERENCE SUPPLEMENT 2: USEFUL STATISTICS AND EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT KEY THEMES

About this supplement

This supplement provides key statistics to support the key 'themes' of **Supplement 1**, and to help you build a list of your 'favourite' statistics to keep at hand for media work. They can be used alone, or to complement your PVAW messages.

Online links for further statistics, information and resources are provided in **Quick Reference Supplement 4**.

Please consult the other sections of this resource to support your effective use of information, messages and statistics in your PVAW work with media.

Evidence for Theme 1

Prevalence of VAW

1 in 5 Australian women have experienced sexual violence and 1 in 3 Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15²⁴.

More than one woman a week is murdered in Australia by a current or former partner. In 2015, 79 women were murdered in Australia in the context of gender-based violence. Thousands more are injured or made to live in fear²⁵.

Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to preventable ill-health, death and disease for Victorian women aged 15-44. Violence contributes more to the health burden for this group than many other well-known risk factors such as smoking and obesity²⁶.

The fear of violence including harassment, is a permanent constraint on the mobility of women and limits their access to resources and basic activities. High social, health and economic costs to the individual and society are associated with violence against women. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into subordinate positions²⁷.

A woman is hospitalized every three hours in Australia due to family violence²⁸.

Around 800,000 women in Australian workplaces are experiencing domestic or family violence, and one in five women experience sexual harassment in the workplace at some time²⁹.

Nine out of ten Australian women have experienced either verbal or physical street harassment³⁰.

Of women who have experienced violence from an ex-partner, 73% have experienced more than one incident of violence³¹.

The gendered nature of violence

Around 95% of all victims of violence – whether women or men – experience violence from a male perpetrator³².

Studies by the United Nations, European Commission, World Bank and World Health Organization all locate the underlying cause or necessary conditions for violence against women in the social context of gender inequality, which is the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women, and discrimination associated with that inequality. Gender inequality can play out within families and households, institutions and social structures³³.

‘Gendered drivers’ are particular expressions of gender inequality which consistently predict higher rates of violence against women:

- Condoning of violence against women
- Men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence in public and private life
- Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women³⁴.

At an individual level, one of the most consistent predictors of the perpetration of violence against women are traditional views about gender roles and relationships, attitudes that support male dominance, and attitudes that reflect sexual hostility towards women³⁵. Violence is more common in families and relationships in which men control decision-making and is less so in relationships in which women have a greater level of independence³⁶.

Women are significantly more likely than men to have experienced:

- an episode of stalking as an adult: 19% compared to 7.8%
- sexual assault since the age of 15: 17% compared to 4%
- physical assault by a male in their home during the last 20 years: 62% compared to 8.4%
- emotional abuse by a partner since the age of 15: 25% compared to 14%³⁷.

Overall, men are more likely to experience an incident of violence in their lifetime, however, violence against men is more likely to occur in a public place, by a male stranger, and as a single incident³⁸.

Women are more likely than men to: be sexually assaulted, fear for their lives due to actual or threatened violence, sustain physical injuries from violence, experience psychological harm, including mental health problems, experience post-separation violence from their former partner, require medical attention or hospitalisation, experience repeated violence in intimate relationships, and/or be murdered by their partner or former partner³⁹.

Adult women account for almost half of all human trafficking victims detected globally. Women and girls together account for about 70%, with girls representing two out of every three child trafficking victims⁴⁰.

Other factors, such as alcohol and poverty are not enough on their own to explain violence against women. They play a role when they occur in conjunction with gender inequality⁴¹.

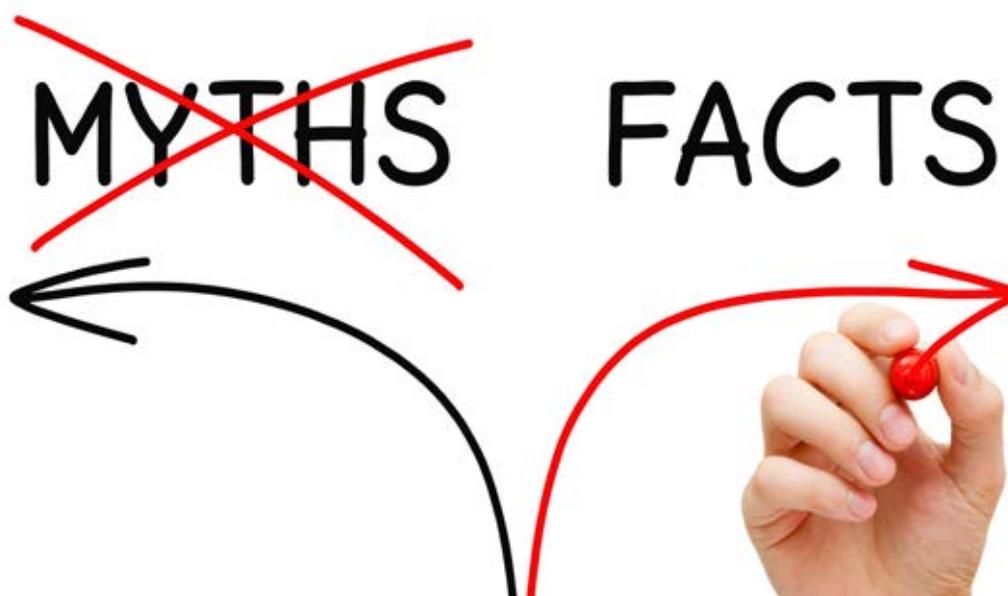
Prevalence of myths about VAW

Findings from VicHealth's National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)⁴² include:

- 64% of Australians think that men being unable to control their anger causes violence against women
- 51% of Australians believe that most women could leave a violent partner if they really wanted to., and 8 out of 10 Australians find it hard to understand why women stay with a violent partner.
- More than 50% of Australians believe that women often make false claims of domestic violence to improve their custody cases for children following separation
- 43% of Australians agree that rape is the result of men not being able to control their need for sex.
- 38% of Australians believe that, 'a lot of times, women who say they are raped had led the man on and then had regrets'
- 22% of Australians believe that domestic violence is excusable if a person gets so angry they lose control
- 9% of Australians agree that domestic violence can be excused if the offender is heavily affected by alcohol
- 9% of Australians believe that a man is less responsible for rape if he is drunk or drug-affected at the time of the assault.

People overwhelmingly view:

- Masculine traits as producing better leaders and women who have masculine traits as more competent
- Women who display more feminine traits as more likeable, less competent, less likely to succeed in their future careers, and less suitable for recruitment⁴³.



Evidence for Theme 2

'Reinforcing factors' within the context of the gendered drivers, can increase the probability, frequency or severity of violence:

- Condoning of violence in general
- Experience of, and exposure to, violence
- Weakening of pro-social behaviour, especially harmful use of alcohol
- Socio-economic inequality and discrimination
- Backlash factors (when male dominance, power or status is challenged)⁴⁴.

There are complex interactions between the gendered drivers of violence against women and other factors because:

- Gender inequalities operate in a multitude of ways, and some are more influential than others
- There are a number of other factors that interact with gender inequalities to exacerbate or reinforce violence against women
- Other forms of social, political and historical discrimination and disadvantage intersect with, and affect the relative influence of, these drivers and reinforcing factors in any one context⁴⁵.

There are substantial variations in the prevalence of violence against women between countries and regions, which suggests that some of the key factors that influence violence are likely to lie at population-level social and economic conditions⁴⁶.

Previous experiences of violence

Long-term exposure to, or experience of, any type of violence – particularly in early life, but also for adults – can establish and reinforce a belief that violence is an appropriate form of discipline, punishment or way of solving disputes. But such social learning does not occur in isolation from learning about gendered power and roles. The impact of exposure to or experience of violence reflects existing gendered socialisation and patterns of violence, that is, boys and men are more likely to go on to perpetrate violence, and girls and women to experience and/or accept it⁴⁷.

While exposure of children to violence against women can shape later attitudes to violence and gender relationships, making some more accepting of violence against women, it conversely makes others highly intolerant of violence against women⁴⁸.

Alcohol and drug use

Various research studies have shown that where alcohol and drug use and abuse is a concern for a perpetrator, they are most commonly violent when not under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol⁴⁹.

Research has found that alcohol abuse only increases the likelihood of a man perpetrating violence, if he already holds attitudes and beliefs that condone or support violence, gender inequality or rigid gender roles⁵⁰.

Alcohol and drugs can influence the frequency and severity of intimate-partner violence and other alcohol-related norms, but do not on their own explain assaults⁵¹.

Socio-economic status

The United Nations recognises that in an international context, poverty and disadvantage does increase women's vulnerability to violence because poverty is generally linked to living in uncertain and dangerous environments⁵².

In the Australian context, women of lower socio economic status can experience more extreme and prolonged violence⁵³ and greater barriers to seeking protection⁵⁴, however there is inconclusive evidence on whether education, employment status, income levels or living in an area of locational disadvantage make women more vulnerable to violence⁵⁵.

The experience of multiple forms of disadvantage, discrimination and inequality however can result in higher probability of violence. There is evidence to show that when socio-economic measures are combined with other measures of disadvantage such as disability, being a sole parent and/or living in a remote area, this creates a higher likelihood of experiencing violence⁵⁶.

There is significant evidence that family violence does create complex economic issues for women and their children, and many experience financial risk or poverty as a result. Family violence affects women's financial security in key areas of life: debts, bills and banking, accommodation, legal issues, health, transport, migration, employment, social security and child support⁵⁷.

Young women and girls

Most women first experience street harassment when they are under 18⁵⁸.

Most victims of sexual assault are females under the age of 25⁵⁹.

Young women (18-24 years) experience significantly higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women in older age groups⁶⁰.

24% of young LGBTI people aged 12 to 21 experience homophobic abuse at home, with fathers more likely to physically assault their children⁶¹.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Despite representing just over 2% of the total Australian population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women accounted for 15% of homicide victims in Australia in 2002-03⁶².

Aboriginal women are hospitalised due to family violence at least 23 times more than non-Aboriginal women⁶³

Aboriginal women living in rural and remote areas can experience up to 45 times more domestic violence, than the non-Aboriginal population⁶⁴.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are five times more likely to experience physical violence and three times more likely to experience sexual violence, compared to other Australian women⁶⁵.

Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities are a large and diverse population group in Victoria⁶⁶:

- Nearly one in five women and girls have a disability
- The rate of disability for Victoria's culturally and linguistically diverse population is 22%, slightly higher than in the general population
- The proportion of Victorians with a disability is higher in rural and regional Victoria than in cities: 22% compared to 17%
- Nationally, 51% of Indigenous women and girls have a disability.

Over one-third of women with disabilities experience some form of intimate partner violence⁶⁷.

Women with a disability are twice as likely to experience violence throughout their lives as other women, are more vulnerable as victims of crimes from both strangers and people who are known to them, yet crimes against disabled women are often not reported to law enforcement agencies, and they are less likely to receive an adequate service response⁶⁸.

Women with disabilities face additional inequalities to men with disabilities, for example:

- Women and girls with disabilities are often at greater risk than men with disabilities, both within and outside the home, of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation⁶⁹
- Women with disabilities are more likely than men with disabilities to be unemployed, have primary caring responsibilities, and be affected by poverty⁷⁰
- Women with disabilities are less likely than men with disabilities to receive service support⁷¹
- Women with disabilities are more likely than men with disabilities to face medical interventions to control their fertility⁷².

Women and girls with disabilities in Australia are at particular risk of forced and coerced sterilisations performed under the auspices of legitimate medical care or the consent of others in their name⁷³.

Gender-based assumptions and expectations generally place restrictions on women with disabilities' freedom to act and to be recognised as autonomous, fully capable adults, to participate fully in economic, social and political development, and to make decisions concerning their circumstances and conditions⁷⁴.

Refugee and immigrant women

46.8% of Victorians were either born overseas or have a parent born overseas⁷⁵, yet very limited Australian data exists to measure the rates of gendered violence against refugee and immigrant women. Research has tended to focus on a specific cultural community in a particular place, and is primarily on family violence⁷⁶.

Rates of family violence against immigrant and refugee women are not definitively known, however, evidence shows that immigrant and refugee women face additional forms of family violence and additional barriers to seeking help, including:

- Threats to jeopardise migration status used within the context of family violence
- Access to information and services limited by immigration policies and migration status
- Facing extremes of social isolation, including limits to speaking and/or writing in English, limited understanding of the law and legal system, distrust of people in positions of authority, fear of losing custody of their children, significant barriers in accessing support services, and inability to return to their birth family after having passports confiscated by their husbands
- Facing multi-perpetrator violence, complex forms of family violence in extended-family and community settings, forced and early marriage, and more community pressures to stay in violent relationships⁷⁷.

Lesbian, bisexual, trans or gender-queer women

Research and data on domestic and other gendered violence against LBT women is globally limited and requires more attention⁷⁸.

'Corrective rape' is a specific form of violence perpetrated by men against lesbian or bisexual women under the guise of 'curing' them of non-normative sexuality through rape and gang rape⁷⁹.

National studies show:

- 35% of lesbians, 31% of bisexual women, 49% of trans women and 55% of trans men experienced heterosexist harassment or abuse in the previous 12 months (which is the same proportion as gay/bi males)⁸⁰.
- 32% of lesbians and 48% of bisexual women report being forced or frightened into sexual acts, compared to 17% for gay and bisexual men⁸¹
- One third (32.7%) of LGBTI Australians have reported having been in a relationship where the partner was abusive (same sex or opposite sex partner)⁸²
- LGBTI people with disabilities experience twice the levels of verbal or written abuse than LGBTI people without disabilities (i.e. hateful or obscene phone calls, graffiti) and more serious types of abuse (i.e. spitting)⁸³.

Smaller studies suggest:

- LBT women are equally or more likely to experience intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual assault in adulthood than their heterosexual peers⁸⁴
- LGBTIQ individuals experience higher levels of stalking behaviours than heterosexual individuals, with most behaviours tending towards the more serious end of scale (e.g. verbal abuse, physical harm, forced sexual contact and threats)⁸⁵
- In contexts where social stigma is high and the legal framework is unsupportive, LBT women who experience intimate partner violence have even less access to support services than cisgender⁸⁶ heterosexual women⁸⁷
- More than 85% of LGBTI people have been subjected to heterosexist abuse, including verbal, physical and sexual violence, with the majority being from a male perpetrator⁸⁸
- Social stigma and antipathy are linked to sexual assault, rape, and murder of LBT women⁸⁹
- The more patriarchal a society, the more homophobic it tends to be⁹⁰.

Women in mental health facilities

Research from mental health services (MHS) across Victoria have found that of women in psychiatric in-patient units, 45% experienced sexual assault, more than 80% lived in fear of being abused, 67% reported harassment during admission, and 61% reported the assault to nurses and indicated that nurses were 'slightly helpful' (18%) or 'not at all helpful' (82%)⁹¹.

Women in prison

Over half of women in prison have histories of victimisation, including childhood sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, and violence from non-intimates and carers (research findings range from 57% up to 90%)⁹².

Victorian case studies⁹³ suggest that:

- women who are criminalised frequently experience discrimination and bias at the hands of police, government funded services such as Child Protection, and community support services including family violence services; and may find themselves in a position whereby seeking a police response to family violence worsens their overall situation
- imprisoned women are subjected to humiliation, degradation, sexual assault through strip search practices and the use of force within prisons.

Women in rural and remote communities

Where comparable data exists, it indicates that there can be a higher incidence of domestic violence in regional, rural and remote communities than in metropolitan settings⁹⁴.

Women in regional and rural locations encounter further challenges when facing family violence, including but not limited to geographic and social isolation, limited private finances, greater opportunities for perpetrator's surveillance of victim/survivors, challenges with maintaining anonymity and privacy, expensive private and limited public transport networks, limited crisis accommodation, less access to support and health services than is available in metropolitan areas, and limited access to legal services⁹⁵.

Women in regional and rural locations also face a greater likelihood of conflict of interest issues when seeking legal assistance, the 'digital divide' when accessing information and assistance and perpetrator gun ownership⁹⁶.

Services and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors, culturally and linguistically diverse survivors and survivors with disabilities are also more limited than those in metropolitan areas⁹⁷.

Evidence for Theme 3

There is broad international consensus that the prospects for primary prevention are sound and there is a growing body of international evidence on the types of techniques that are effective in preventing violence against women⁹⁸.

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) states that, 'a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women'⁹⁹.

The United Nations' Development Fund for Women measured data from four of the largest international gender equity indices, against data from 56 countries on physical and sexual violence. The results revealed that countries with the lowest rates of gender equality also had the highest rates of men's violence against women¹⁰⁰.

Essential actions of preventing violence against women¹⁰¹:

- Challenge condoning of violence against women
- Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships
- Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys
- Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.

Supporting actions to prevent violence against women¹⁰²:

- Challenge the normalisation of violence as an expression of masculinity or male dominance
- Prevent exposure to violence and support those affected to reduce its consequences
- Address the intersections between social norms relating to alcohol and gender
- Reduce backlash by engaging men and boys in gender equality, building relationship skills and social connections
- Promote broader social equality and address structural discrimination and disadvantage.

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QUICK REFERENCE SUPPLEMENT 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY MESSAGES

This supplement supports section 5 of the resource and provides a list of some core key message principles that you should refer to when developing your prevention of violence against women (PVAW) messages.

Please see **section 5** of this guide for full information on how to use this list and develop your PVAW messages.

Characteristics of key messages

Overall

- Short, standard phrases or paragraphs that describe your issue in plain language and are able to be tailored to your purpose or audience
- The most important points that you want your audience to hear, remember and react to
- Key points you consistently make when you reach out to your audience
- Create a bridge between what your audience already knows and where you are trying to take them
- Description of your issue in 10 words or less if possible
- The core of your communication activities
- The way to get your audience to ask “Why”? “How”? and be curious about what you have to say.

Specific

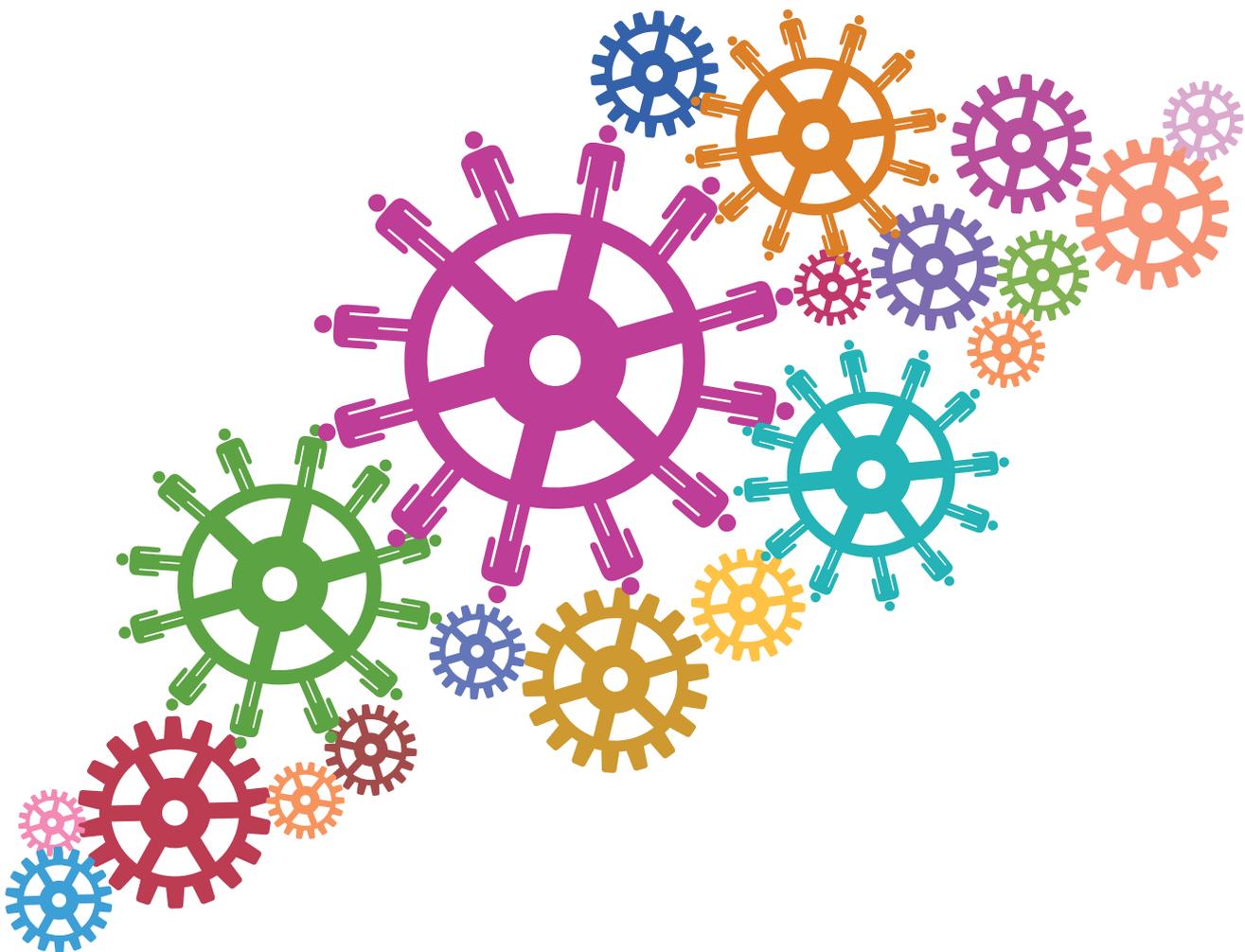
- **Easy to say, easy to grasp and easy to remember:** Remember this can take some time to develop
- **Three to five in number:** Consider creating specific messages for each target audience if more are needed
- **Clear:** Free of jargon, devoid of technical language - Don't make your audience feel stupid! Use plain language - There's a difference between the language we use when we're speaking compared to when we're writing
- **As short as possible, but no shorter:** A memorable sentence, 7-15 seconds. Brevity, however, should not come at the expense of meaning: use the KISS (Keep it Simple Stupid) principle
- **Specific, concrete and active:** Address a particular challenge relevant to the audience and emphasise what can be done. The issue, facts or evidence may not be your key message. Your audience should be able to “see” your message
- **Use numbers accessibly:** For example - instead of saying “between 18 and 48%”, use “about a third”
- **Appeal on a number of levels:** Your message can appeal to authority, emotion, and/or reason
- **Well ‘framed’:** A Frame is the overall angle that the message comes from. For example, consider the difference between the framing of the terms ‘pro-life’ and ‘pro-choice’: ‘life’ might be considered a more powerful concept than ‘choice’

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- **Can be in various groupings:** You can use particular messaging formats in creating your messages (see www.powerprism.org/27-9-3-elevator-pitch.htm , www.jrmyprtr.com/ill-blame-cure-consequence-message-grid , for two examples)
- **Simple and including main ideas only.** Do not try to explain many ideas at once, prioritise the top ideas you are trying to communicate
- **Positively focused.** Whilst all messages can't be positive, try wherever possible to make it easy for the audience to respond positively – focus on the range of possibilities for change, and give everyday people something they can contribute to PVAW.

Remember

- **Your communications are not limited to your key messages.** Messages can always be expanded later with analogies, case studies or personal stories, which are great ways to explain and exemplify your key messages.



QUICK REFERENCE SUPPLEMENT 4: FURTHER RESOURCES

Australian Framework for primary prevention of violence against women

- Our Watch, VicHealth, ANROWS (2015), *Change the Story*, [www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do-\(1\)/National-Primary-Prevention-Framework](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do-(1)/National-Primary-Prevention-Framework) . Contains all fundamental VAW information on the key drivers, reinforcing factors and prevention.

Resources on messaging or working with media

- **Our Community**, incredible resource of free information on media (and many other topics). Search 'media' at www.ourcommunity.com.au and a list of media-related resources will come up for you to browse through
- **Women's Health Goulburn North East**, *Courageous Conversations* website to guide conversations with the community on PVAW www.courageousconversations.org.au
- **Women's Health West**, fantastic resource *Speaking Publicly about preventing men's violence against women: Curly questions and language considerations* (2015), www.pvawhub.whwest.org.au/speaking-publicly-about-preventing-mens-violence-against-women-curly-questions-and-language-considerations , pp 19-33 particularly cover messages & statistics

Guides for victim/survivors on providing comment to the media

- **Victim Services, NSW Attorney General & Justice** (2010) *A guide to the media for victims of crime* www.victimsclearinghouse.nsw.gov.au/Documents/bk16_media-guide.pdf
- **Women's Health East**, *Speaking Out program* (unpublished training guide), contact *Women's Health East* for access to these resources
- **Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime** (1993-2015), *If the Media Calls: A Guide for Crime Victims & Survivors*, www.crcvc.ca/publications/if-the-media-calls/

Information on media organisations and outlets

- **Our Community**, incredible resource of free, downloadable excel spreadsheets of (most) outlets and newsroom email contacts for all of Australia (organised by state and media type) www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1423
- **Wikipedia** has some good lists of media in Australia, including *List of newspapers in Australia* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_newspapers_in_Australia, *List of radio station callsigns in Victoria* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_radio_station_callsigns_in_Victoria , a summary of media in Australia which also links to a bunch of other pages https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_of_Australia

Guides for reporters/media on how to report PVAW-related issues

- **Our Watch** (2014), *Reporting on sexual violence, Reporting on domestic violence, Reporting on family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and Reporting on child sexual abuse*, www.ourwatch.org.au/News-media/Reporting-Guidelines
- **Domestic Violence Victoria** (2013), *EVA's Reporting guidelines for journalists* [retrospective resource – reference only], www.evas.org.au/images/docs/Responsible-Reporting-guidelines-2013.pdf

- **CAFS Ballarat** (2011), *Family Violence in the News: A Media Toolkit, May 2011*, www.cafs.org.au/about/publications
- **DART Centre for Journalism and Trauma** (2011), *Reporting on sexual violence*, www.dartcenter.org/content/reporting-on-sexual-violence, and reporting on intimate partner violence, www.dartcenter.org/content/legwork-where-to-look-what-questions-to-ask, www.dartcenter.org/content/basics-what-every-reporter-needs-to-know-about-ipv, www.dartcenter.org/content/ethics-and-practice-interviewing-victims.
Note: DART is international, so these resources include international content.

International

Note: There are many of these, below are two current examples

- **VAW Prevention Scotland** (2015), *Handle with Care: A guide to responsible media reporting of violence against women*, www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/handle-care-media-guide?destination=node%2F333 (this is the official page however it requires a login. Instead, if you simply google “handle with care zero tolerance” it seems to direct you to a pdf link without needing a login. Please contact DV Vic if you can’t access this document.)
- **Chicago Taskforce** (2012), *Reporting on rape and sexual violence*, www.chitaskforce.org/policy-recommendations/reporting-on-rape-and-sexual-violence

Research, factsheets and information on VAW and its prevention

Primary research and statistics

- **ACON**, includes information, contacts and research on LGBTI family violence, however much is NSW specific www.acon.org.au/lgbti-health/domestic-and-family-violence
- **Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)**, search for ‘personal safety survey’, and the ‘statistics’ section can also be browsed through www.abs.gov.au
- **Australian Human Rights Commission**, their ‘Publications page has sections on ‘Family and Domestic Violence’, ‘Sex Discrimination’ and ‘Sexual Orientation, Sex and Gender Identity’ <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications-home/all>
- **Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS)**, ‘Resources’ page lists all national research and publications www.anrows.org.au/resources
- **Gendered Violence Research Network: University of NSW**, range of projects and research on gendered violence, particularly ‘Gendered violence & work’ www.arts.unsw.edu.au/research/gendered-violence-research-network
- **Melbourne Research Alliance to End Violence against women and their children: Melbourne University**, range of projects and research on violence against women www.maeve.unimelb.edu.au/research/current-projects
- **Social Equity Institute**, Melbourne University, enter terms such as ‘violence against women’ or ‘sexual assault’ in their search bar to find articles on recent research www.socialequity.unimelb.edu.au
- **VicHealth**, look for ‘National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS)’, released every four years, some great infographics are available on the latest survey findings (2014) www.vichealth.org.au
- **Victoria Police**, enter ‘crime statistics’ in their search bar (warning: they can be tricky to decipher) www.police.vic.gov.au

- **United Nations (UN)**, the UN (and their arms) put out numerous reports, research findings and statistics; search for 'violence against women and girls' or 'gender-based violence' in their search bar www.un.org/en
- **Women's Leadership Institute Australia**, research on gender equity and women's leadership, including 'Women in Media Report' www.wlia.org.au/research

Factsheets and other information

- **Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (FVPLS)**, 'Resources' page includes factsheets and publications on Aboriginal family violence, including www.fvpls.org/Resources.php
- **CASA Forum**, factsheets on sexual violence including General Information, Childhood Sexual Abuse, Rape & Sexual Assault, Family violence, Male survivors www.casa.org.au/survivors-and-friends/general-information
- **City of Greater Dandenong**, Statistical Data for Victorian Communities www.socialstatistics.com.au
- **The Lookout**, look for 'resources' then 'fact sheets' for family violence www.thelookout.org.au
- **No To Violence (NTV)**, 'Resources' page includes all recent NTV publications, including NTV's response to the One in Three campaign www.ntv.org.au/resources
- **Our Watch**, search for 'Understanding Violence' page which currently includes links to 'Facts and figures', 'Myths about violence' and 'FAQs about the issue' pages www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence
- **Women's Health in the North**, range of Preventing Violence against Women Resources, including a northern region strategy, factsheets, regional statistics, and project tools www.whin.org.au/resources/preventing-violence-against-women.html
- **Women's Health Goulburn North East**, Courageous Conversations factsheets on PVAW www.courageousconversations.org.au/category/resources
- **Women's Health Grampians**, information and factsheets, see particularly 'PVAW Resource Hub' link at bottom of page www.whg.org.au/priorities-programs/prevention-of-violence-against-women#resource-hub
- **Integrated Family Violence Network Hume Region**, range of online resources for family violence www.familyviolencehumeregion.com.au
- **White Ribbon Australia**, 'Fact sheets', www.whiteribbon.org.au/resources/facts
- **Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)** : 'An Overview of the Status of Women With Disabilities in Australia' page lists numerous statistics and information www.wwda.org.au/about/snapshot
- **Women with Disabilities Victoria** : 'Our Publications' page includes many resources, including Factsheet 3: Violence against women with disabilities, and WDV Violence Position Paper www.wdv.org.au/publications.htm#ourpublications
- **Women's Health Victoria**, The Equality and Safety Guide for Women: guide for Women's Health workers and their partners for action planning, implementing and measuring primary prevention in the Victorian regional context www.equalityandsafetyforwomen.org.au
- **XYOnline**, information on masculinity, gender equality and PVAW, compiled by Dr Michael Flood a leading academic on PVAW www.xyonline.net/links

QUICK REFERENCE SUPPLEMENT 5: GLOSSARY

Gender

Gender is the socially-expected identity and behaviours of females and males.

People are born female, male or intersex but are taught to be girls and boys, women and men. This learnt behaviour makes up gender identity and dictates gender roles. Different cultures, communities and time periods can have different expectations of gender identities and roles.

Cisgender refers to when a person's self-identity conforms with the gender that corresponds to their biological sex i.e. not transgender

Gender Equality

Gender equality is when all genders are equally valued in society and have equal access to opportunities and power, without being restricted by sex or gender expectations and roles.

Gender equality includes equal:

- Value and status within relationships, family and community life
- Access to education, work opportunities, health information and services
- Private and community decision-making power
- Access to activities such as sport and leisure.

Greater equality and more flexible gender roles give everyone more opportunities to develop to their full capacity as human beings, without restrictive gender roles that limit these opportunities. All people can all be strong, respectful and fair, kind and capable human beings. Healthy boys and men are not controlling, dominating and disrespectful.

Respectful relationships

Respectful relationships are:

- Relationships where people feel safe, valued and respected
- Where people are listened to and heard, and can reasonably make their own choices
- Where violence, control and degradation are not used

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality exists globally and is the inferior status and lack of relative power attributed to girls and women in societies, and the discrimination and violence that disproportionately affects them. Extreme definitions and understandings of masculinity, including those based on controlling and dominating others, are unhealthy and need to be changed to remedy gender inequality.

Violence against Women

Violence against women is gender-based violence committed against girls and women in their public or private life. Such violence is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering, and includes threats, coercion, or restriction of freedom. It is not limited to physical assault and can include attacks or restrictions on women's physical, sexual, cultural, financial, educational, social or spiritual freedom, or their health.

Globally, the most common forms of violence against women are family violence and sexual violence committed by a person known to the girl or woman, or within war and armed conflict. However, violence can be committed by institutions, such as the police force, groups or individuals including an intimate partner, family members, friends, acquaintances, a date or a stranger. Violence against women includes the following types of violence: sexual violence, family violence, institutional violence, forced marriage and trafficking, and forced procedures or restricted health access, all of which are defined below.

Women's lives are diverse; within the context of this diversity there are forms of discrimination and violence that affect women disproportionately due to their gender identity. For example, women with disabilities can be targeted as women and with more specific violence focused on their disabilities, e.g. removing wheels from wheelchairs or denying access to interpreters. Similarly, women facing work or financial difficulties can be doubly targeted as women and because of these other difficulties. Perpetrators, for example, may target their workplace and try to get them fired.

Family Violence

Domestic and family violence is the repeated use of violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour by an individual against a family member or someone with whom they have, or have had, an intimate relationship (sometimes referred to as relationship violence). In Aboriginal and some other communities the definition of family may include kinship groups and other community members.

Domestic and family violence can include behaviours such as regularly putting someone down using verbal abuse, making threats, using physical violence, damaging property, and controlling or keeping tabs on who someone sees, what they do and where they go. Family violence includes abuse of people with disabilities by their carers whether they are family members or not.

Increasingly, family and domestic violence takes the form of elder abuse and/or adolescent violence. Many victims of these types of violence are women, and many perpetrators male, but such abuse also is perpetrated against male victims and can have different dynamics to violence against women.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is any sexual behaviour that someone has not agreed to, where another person uses deception, coercion, physical or emotional force against them.

Sexual violence includes unwanted touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, coerced sexual activity, sexual assault and rape. This extends to obscene gestures, voyeurism, unwanted sexual comments or jokes, sex-related insults, pressuring for dates or demand for sex, indecent exposure, being forced to watch or participate in porn, offensive written material, unwanted, offensive and invasive interpersonal communication through technologies.

Sexual violence is most often committed by a person known to the girl or woman, or within war and armed conflict. However, violence can be committed by institutions and groups, such as the police force or prisons, or individuals including an intimate partner, family members, friends, acquaintances, a date or a stranger.

Institutional Violence

Institutions are significant social structures with practices through which collective actions are taken, for example government, business, unions, schools, churches, courts, or police.

Institutional violence is physical or any other violence that results from institutional conditions, objectives, actions or policies. Institutional violence can take extreme forms, like murders committed by totalitarian governments; alternatively, it can be subtle acts of omission, deception or discrimination through socially-accepted systems.

Forced Marriage and Trafficking

Forced marriage is a marriage that is not freely and fully consented to because of the use of coercion, threat or deception.

Trafficking is the transport of people by force, coercion or deception for purposes including:

- Exploitation, including sexual exploitation,
- Practices similar to slavery, or
- The removal of organs.

Forced Procedures or Restricted Health Access

Forced procedures include forced or coerced sterilisation, contraceptive use or female genital cutting.

Restricted medical procedures include preventing access to reproductive or other health services.

