



# Development and implementation of Victorian violence against women policy reform – achievements + challenges

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# Violence against women reform: key policy directions

- Family Violence Reforms (2005)
- Sexual Assault Reforms (2006)
- Indigenous Family Violence 10-yr Plan (2008)
- New State Plan to Prevent Violence against Women (2009)

Significant practical outcomes, but also built a new understanding and way of working across government

# Focus on FV Reform: the journey pre 2005

- Fragmented response, high demand; limited integration.
- Reliance on services to stop the violence; concern about justice + police responses

## Key Drivers included:

- Late 2001 Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon announces a new focus on violence against women as a major priority for Victoria Police

## 2002

- Victoria Police *Violence Against Women Strategy: A Way forward* released
- Victorian Government's *Women's Safety Strategy 2002-07*
  - Establishment of the *Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence* tasked with the development of an integrated service system model

## 2003

- 10 Indigenous FV Regional Action Groups (RAG) established and the release of the Victorian Indigenous FV Taskforce Final Report

## 2004

- Victoria Police released *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence* ; appointed Family Violence Advisors and begin using risk assessment tools
- Health Costs of Violence Report (VicHealth) / Access Economics Report

# Where we have come from: 2005 - now

## 2005 (\$35 million)

- Release of the Statewide Steering Committee Report – *Reforming the Family Violence System in Victoria*
- Family Violence Court Division + Family Violence Court Intervention Project

## 2006 + 2007 (\$14 million)

- Regional Partnerships - 20 partnerships and 70 organisations
- Establishment of Specialist Family Violence Services in Magistrates' Courts (3 venues)
- ARC Research Grant – SAFER research program commences
- Referral pathways, protocols, new codes of practice, new risk assessment evidence base

## 2008 (\$24 million)

- Implementation of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, incl. FV Safety Notices
- Systemic Review of FV deaths
- Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan

## 2009 - 2010 (\$35 million)

- Embedding + consolidating reform
- Strengthening the risk management response
- Development of 10 Year Strategic Framework for FV Reform

# Key elements for effective and ongoing reform

- a shared vision
  - improve safety of women and children including option of staying at home
  - accountability of perpetrators
- strong and sustained partnership with the non-government sector - FVSAC
- regional partnerships driving new governance
- cross-portfolio ministers group: Women's Affairs (lead), Attorney-General, Police, Community Services, Housing and Aboriginal Affairs
- cross portfolio IDC and working groups
- investment FVR - over \$100 million since 2005

# Embedding a common framework - key levers

- A new Family Violence Protection Act (2008)
  - Guiding principles + objects in legislation – gender + context
- Family Violence Risk Assessment + Risk Management Framework (2007)
  - consistent framework for identifying and managing risk
  - tool & its implementation are a key mechanism to embed and expand integration of FV & mainstream service sectors
  - core elements - professional judgement, each woman's own perceptions of risk and evidence based risk factors
  - centrality of specialisation to our system
  - from 2010 – increased resources (\$2.7m/3yrs) to embed CRAF into health sector/s
- Sustainable partnership with non-government sector central

# Where it brought us

The new way of working developed through the reform process was:

- Getting different work areas to treat the problem as prevalent and serious
- Getting them to do so in an integrated, consultative way
- Getting money to help

Where it brought us:

- 'First door's the right door' response
- More accountability for perpetrators
- More reporting by victims of violence



# 10 year FV Strategic Framework: *A Right to Safety and Justice 2010-2020*

- Rights based: strong focus on women and children's rights
- Safety and Wellbeing: of women and their children
- Accountability: means to reduce risk to women and children and an end in itself
- Diversity and access: conceptualising the intersections across population groups/disability/mental health, importance of building evidence.
- Responsibility: government and community are responsible for responding to family violence – links to State Plan to Prevent VAW + development of National Plan



# A Right to Respect

Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020

Union Irony  
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Respect  
Rights  
Diritti  
Xuqub

## New direction – primary prevention

Despite significant reform, perpetration was unchanged

But not a constant worldwide (IVAWS and VicHealth research)

Shared understanding enabled govt (advisory committees → public servants → FV Ministers) to move into primary prevention of VAW

New idea, no other govt doing it in comprehensive way – commissioned VicHealth to review the evidence and produce a conceptual framework for policy making

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## **VicHealth Framework 2007** ***Preventing Violence Before It Occurs***

Addresses **underlying causes/key determinants** of VAW  
(gender inequality, gender stereotypes)

Aims to create broad change by working at many **levels**:  
individual, community, organisational and society (ecological  
approach)

Key points – feminist analysis of ‘VAW’ brought into public  
health model, identifying schools, that an overarching plan was  
necessary

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Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020

Framework endorsed by FV Ministers

**Based on recommendations from VicHealth  
Framework, 2008/09 state budget announced:**

\$200,000 for the development of a State Plan, based  
on the VicHealth framework

\$300,000 for 'piloting' of good practice schools-based  
work to prevent VAW (to start where evidence was  
strongest)

## 2008-09 Development of State Plan to Prevent Violence against Women

Conceptualisation based on Framework, ie – multi-level and needing new settings to those engaged in reforms:

1. Education and training
2. Local govt, Health and Community Services
3. Workplaces
4. Sport and Recreation
5. Media, Arts and Popular Culture

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Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020

## **Engagement/consultation process crucial:**

Women's and community services key drivers

But getting shared understanding and ownership across new areas a priority + prevention for existing areas

Kept working with and building evidence directly relevant to different work areas:

- 'Drilling down' into settings from VicHealth framework
- Surveys re existing practice in community sector
- Research on PVAW re CALD and disability
- Separate Indigenous process

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Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020

## Things that helped:

- Having allies and something to build on
- Having evidence and statistics
- Having, from the FV reform process, a 'narrative of progress' to convince people change is possible
- Having investment + testing of new projects to point to (mostly from VicHealth, but also other agencies)
- Being able to show a 'doable' way forward



# A Right to Respect

Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020

## **Vision:**

Victorian communities, cultures and organisations are non violent and gender equitable. Relationships are respectful and non-discriminatory.

## **Goals:**

1. A significant reduction in violence against women.
2. Non-violent and non-discriminatory social norms.
3. Gender-equitable, safe and inclusive communities and organisations.
4. Equal and respectful relationships between women and men.

# A Right to Respect

Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020

## But 'the treaty is not the treaty'

- .. About the people, the goodwill built through the process, and the momentum for change
- Weaknesses lie in different work areas being time poor and having broader priorities – ongoing tension of 'mainstreaming' vs specialisation
- Strength lies in new (\$14.1m/4yrs) investment, policy platform and solid engagement
- Good advocacy will continue to be crucial – need everybody making links (eg – Nat Plan, ALRC review, Nat Women's Health Strategy) and driving same agenda