

Taking Action on Family Violence

Whittlesea Community Futures requests State and Federal Government support to prevent and respond locally to violence against women and children

Whittlesea Community Futures# calls on the State Government to:

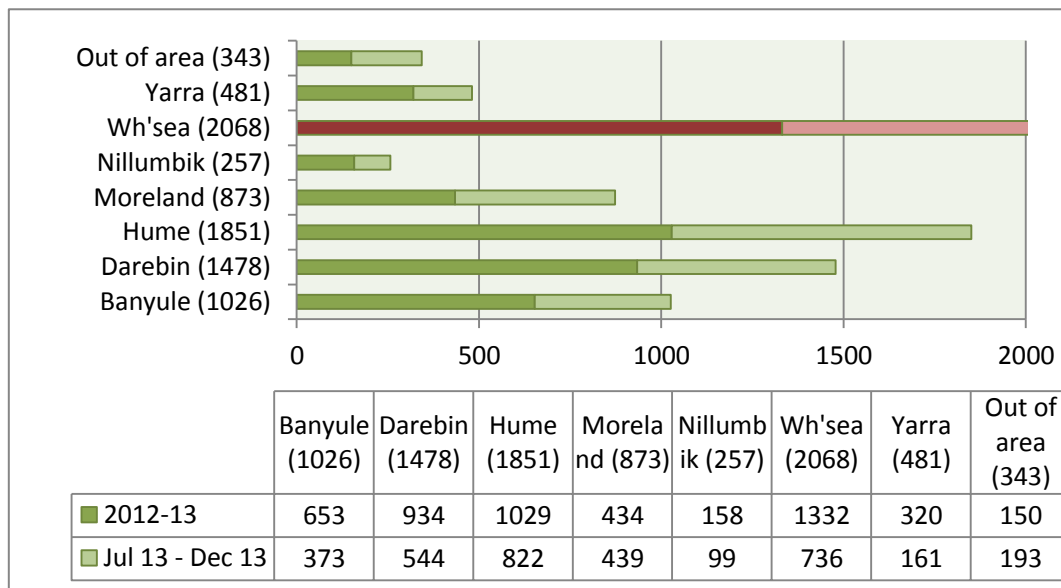
1. Invest in an integrated early-intervention and prevention project to respond to family violence in CALD communities
2. Invest in a primary prevention program in schools to help prevent violence and sexual assault against women and children
3. Provide additional funding for local specialist family violence services
4. Provide funding to increase access to men’s behaviour change programs

What is happening right now?

The rate of family violence in the City of Whittlesea is at a critical new high of 1249 incidents per 100,000 people, compared to 1071 for Victoria. This is the highest rate of reported family violence in the Victoria Police Northern Division 5.ⁱ Over the past 18 months the number of incidents referred to Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service has risen dramatically to the highest in the Northern Metropolitan Region (Figure 1)ⁱⁱ. The number of children present in family violence incidents has also steadily increased over the past five years to 743 in 2012-13.

Local agencies have declared family violence a critical health and safety issue for our community and established the *Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce*ⁱⁱⁱ to address this.

Figure 1: Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service Victoria Police Family Violence Incident referrals past 18 months



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In the City of Whittlesea:

The municipality has been overlooked by recent funding including the Department of Human Services' *Preventing Violence against Women in Our Community* cluster-councils initiative, Department of Justice *Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children* Grants and VicHealth *Preventing Violence Against Women Demonstration Site project*, despite an extremely high prevalence of family violence, huge funding shortfalls in existing response-end services and limited capacity for prevention work.^{iv}

- 2,110 family violence incidents in 2012-13 were reported to Victoria Police including one homicide (an increase of 35% on the previous year); In 743 of these incidents children were present.^v
- An average of 41 family violence incidents are reported to Victoria Police *every week*.
- More than half of all assaults (56%) arose from family violence.
- Family violence was the context for 46% of all rapes and 15% of all other sex offences (95% of the victims were female; 100% of the alleged offenders were male).^{vi}
- Significantly more referrals (3618) to the regional family violence service from Victoria Police for women from the Whittlesea municipality than from *any other municipality* in the Northern Metropolitan Region (NMR).^{vii}
- In September 2013, Victoria Police attended 170 call outs to family violence incidents in the Whittlesea LGA^{viii}. Of these, 84% were to recidivist addresses,^{ix} the highest number for the Northern Division 5.

The financial cost of domestic violence:

- Access Economics estimate the cost of family violence to the Australian economy is \$8.1 billion (2002-03) and the projected cost to Australia will reach \$9.9 billion by 2021-22.
- Victims bear the largest cost burden, estimated at \$4.05 billion; the next largest burden is on the general community (\$1.2 billion).
- The annual cost per victim who has ever experienced domestic violence is \$4,570 (2002-03).
- The total lifetime cost of domestic violence is estimated to be \$224,470 per victim (2002-03).^x

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How can we build a better future?

1. Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project *(Family Violence Fact Sheet 2)*

Local evidence reveals existing service responses in the municipality are not meeting the complex needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities experiencing family violence. Thirty-four per cent of residents in the municipality are born overseas and over forty per cent speak a language other than English at home.^{xi} In order to break the cycle of family violence and empower CALD communities to prevent and respond to violence against women, an appropriate mix of prevention and early intervention strategies needs to be adopted.

2. Primary prevention in schools *(Family Violence Fact Sheet 3)*

Primary prevention and early intervention with children and young people in schools, such as education about gender equity and respectful relationships, can have a lasting effect on their relationships in the future and prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

3. Additional local specialist family violence services *(Family Violence Fact Sheet 4)*

The local settlement service reports that in 2013 there were 277 cases reported to staff, an average of 23 per month^{xii}. For most of these clients this was the first time they had ever reported the violence. Many non-specialist services report similar experiences. Currently, family violence services provide outreach from local non-specialist agencies. Due to funding limitations these programs are only available for a limited period each week (approximately 3 hours). With increased funding specialist services would be able to build on the current responses to the Whittlesea community and co-locate full-time case-worker/s at key local services to increase support provided to CALD women.

4. Increased access to men's behaviour change programs *(Family Violence Fact Sheet 5)*

Family violence occurs in all communities; behaviour change programs for CALD men will have a profound impact on the number of men being held accountable for their violence and ultimately aim to reduce recidivism by engaging these men to change their behaviour.

How much will it cost?

Element	Costs (per annum)
1. Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project <i>Support CALD communities, newly arrived migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to break the cycle of family violence and empower these communities to respond to the challenge of preventing violence against women</i>	\$467,833
2. Primary prevention in schools <i>Improve connections to resources and support Establish schools and communities that value and support non-violent norms and respectful and equitable gender relations</i>	\$145,000
3. Additional local specialist family violence services <i>Increase immediate response to police referrals Provide secondary consultations to other services Case-work and therapeutic response for women and children</i>	\$300,000
4. Increased access to men's behaviour change programs <i>Increased access to programs for CALD men Improve partner-contact for CALD women Reduce repeat offences (recidivism rates)</i>	\$265,000
Total cost (per annum)	\$1,177,833

How will the community benefit?

The high rate of family violence incidents in the City of Whittlesea requires a comprehensive approach to address the critical issues arising now and as the population continues to grow in the future. Addressing family violence requires significant investment from governments; however the return on investment proves extremely beneficial and cost-effective in the long term^{xiii}.

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Short-term to intermediate impacts	Long-term benefits
1. Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -build an effective and culturally-responsive multi-level service system to reduce the incidence and impact of family violence in CALD communities -increased knowledge of what constitutes family violence -improved early-identification of CALD women at risk of violence -increased awareness of support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -reduced violence against women -reduced community acceptance of family violence -assist to reduce recidivist violent offending for CALD men
2. Primary prevention in schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved connections to resources and support for young people, schools and their families -Schools that value and support non-violent norms and respectful and equitable gender relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -reduced intergenerational transmission of violence and its impacts -young people and communities that value gender equity and respectful relationships -reduced gender inequality -improved interpersonal skills and family and gender relations
3. Additional local specialist family violence services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Immediate response to women in crisis -Provide secondary consultations to other services -Provide case work & therapeutic response to women and children -Improved response to CALD women and children due to co-location with the settlement services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved response to police referrals and high-risk cases -Safety for women and children -Reduced violence against women and children -Improved capacity of non-family violence services to identify family violence in clients due to co-location of services
4. Increased access to men's behaviour change programs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Inclusive and equitable access to behaviour change programs for all men -Improved supports for women and children through partner-contacts for CALD communities -Safety for women and children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reduced recidivism by offenders (and costs associated policing, courts) -Reduced violence against women and children

Adapted from VicHealth Preventing violence against women: A framework for action

What objectives does this help us achieve?

Federal Government

- National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children 2010-2022
- National Plan First Action Plan 2010-2013: Building A Strong Foundation

Victorian Government

- Everyone Has A Responsibility To Act – Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children 2012-2015
- VicHealth Framework for the Prevention of Violence Against Women
- Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children

City of Whittlesea

- Council Plan 2013-2017
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017
- Connect: A municipal plan for children, young people and their families 2013-2018
- Building a Respectful Community A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region 2011-2016
- Department of Justice North Metropolitan Region Regional Community Safety Plan 2011
- Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership Action Plan 2011-2016

Key Messages

- Family violence in the City of Whittlesea is at an unacceptably high level and will continue to increase as the population grows.
- There are high proportions of groups identified as vulnerable in the municipality and this requires a tailored response to meet their needs.
- Immediate increased funding and resources for response-end specialist services is required to ensure fair and equal access to services for outer urban residents.
- Whittlesea residents are excluded from behaviour change programs due to the limited availability of culturally appropriate and language specific programs.
- It is critical to provide for cultural diversity within specialist family violence services given the highly diverse population, the current and projected growth rate as well as the geographic isolation of some areas due to the urban/rural interface.

#Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership

The Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership is a voluntary alliance of organisations including the City of Whittlesea, State and Federal Government Departments, and Human Service Organisations, working together with shared commitments and goals for the benefit of the City of Whittlesea's communities.

All member agencies of the WCF's Partnership recognise the strength and value of an effective partnership in contributing to the improvement of the well-being of the City of Whittlesea's communities and are committed to working in partnership for the wider benefit of the City of Whittlesea's communities.

<http://www.whittleseacommunityfutures.org.au/>

ⁱ Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik, Whittlesea

ⁱⁱ Police referrals received by NFDVS by LGA Financial Year Comparison July 2009 - December 2013

ⁱⁱⁱ Led by CEO of City of Whittlesea, a partnership of key local and regional agencies working to address family violence in the City of Whittlesea

^{iv} City of Whittlesea Human Services Needs Analysis

<http://www.whittleseacommunityfutures.org.au/partnership/strategy.html>

^v Victoria Police Family Incident Reports

http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?a=internetBridgingPage&Media_ID=72311

^{vi} Women's Health In the North Family Violence Fact Sheet Whittlesea LGA 2012-2013

^{vii} Police referrals received by NFDVS by LGA Financial Year Comparison July 2009 - June 2013

^{viii} Victoria Police Whittlesea Family Violence Unit discussion November 2013

^{ix} where police have attended three or more times in the past 12 months

^x Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse 2011, The financial cost of domestic and family violence <http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au>

^{xi} Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 Census of Population and Housing

^{xii} Whittlesea Community Connections Family Violence Monitor Report #6 2013

^{xiii} Victorian Health Promotion Foundation The health costs of violence: measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence: a summary of the findings VicHealth 2004