

Increased Access to Men’s Behaviour Change Programs

Whittlesea Community Futures is seeking State and Federal Government support for tailored, culturally appropriate and language specific men’s behaviour change programs

What is happening right now?

- 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.ⁱ
- 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).ⁱⁱ
- 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).ⁱⁱⁱ
- In September 2013, Victoria Police attended 170 call outs to family violence incidents in the Whittlesea LGA. Of these, 84% were to recidivist addresses,^{iv} the highest number for the Northern Division 5.

Demand for men’s behaviour change programs

Local evidence reveals existing service responses in the municipality are not meeting the complex needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse 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.

The local settlement service Whittlesea Community Connections, reports that in 2013 there were 277 family violence cases reported to staff, an average of 23 per month. For most of these clients this was the first time they had ever reported the violence.^v

The Whittlesea municipality has the highest rate of recidivist offending for the Victoria Police Northern Division 5 (see above).

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Despite the increasing demand there has not been a proportionate increase to the workforce, program funding or additional resources in the family violence sector^{vi}. Already stretched services supporting women and children and holding men accountable for their violence are under severe pressure. Recently a local agency closed its waiting list for the Men's Behaviour Change (MBC) Program for approximately six months to deal with the backlog of clients^{vii}. Closing this program potentially discouraged men who may otherwise have engaged with this service. Further, closing it meant partner contact was also not provided, leaving women and children at risk and vulnerable to escalating violence.

Whittlesea Community Futures welcomes the recent announcement^{viii} of an increase in funding for MBC programs. However, this is not sufficient to meet the current demand for programs in the Whittlesea community.

- The Department of Human Services funds less than 2,000^{ix} places annually in Victoria's Men's Behaviour Change Programs;
- Department of Justice funds 250 places;
- Corrections Victoria funds approximately 100 places;^x
- The Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne receives Department of Human Services funding for **127 places** in Men's Behaviour Change Programs;^{xixii}
- In 2012-13 in this region there were **9861 incidents** of family violence reported to police; in the Whittlesea LGA alone there were **2110 incidents**;
- The demand for Men's Behaviour Change Programs far exceeds the current resources provided to deliver the programs.

Evidence gathered from CALD women and service providers in City of Whittlesea suggests that CALD communities are more likely to access external family violence services that will support maintaining or reconciling relationships, such as men's behaviour change programs^{xiii}. However there is limited access to behaviour change programs for CALD men due to cultural or language barriers in mainstream programs.

How can we build a better future?

Whittlesea Community Futures requests the State government to:

- i. Increase access to men's behaviour change programs through funding for culturally appropriate and language specific men's behaviour change programs.
- ii. Support to develop an innovative, place-based pilot to deliver men's behaviour change programs.

The Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project (WCFVP) is, in partnership with inTouch Inc, Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, supporting two Arabic-speaking workers to complete the accredited training at Swinburne University required to deliver Men's Behaviour Change Programs to the No To Violence standards. **This provides a unique opportunity for the State Government to deliver an Arabic-speaking program in the City of Whittlesea.**

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The Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce has identified a need to develop a more responsive approach to men’s behaviour change programs to meet the needs of the Whittlesea community.

How much will it cost?

1. Arabic-language Men’s Behaviour Change Program Pilot	Cost (per annum)
3x 26 weeks (minimum 50 hours) Arabic-language programs	\$150,000
Evaluation – Monash University Gender, Leadership and Social Sustainability Unit, <i>Including evidence-sharing forum, publishing of findings and printing of report.</i>	\$10,000
Translation of program materials, administration costs	\$5,000
TOTAL (per annum)	\$165,000

2. Develop an innovative place-based model for men’s behaviour change programs	Cost (per annum)
Research, consultation and development of an innovative place-based model for men’s behaviour change programs to meet the needs of the community in the City of Whittlesea	\$100,000
TOTAL (per annum)	\$100,000

How will the community benefit?

Family violence occurs in all communities; it is critical to provide specialist family violence services with a CALD focus in the City of Whittlesea given the high CALD population, the current and projected growth rate as well as the geographic isolation of some areas due to the urban/rural interface. The high rates of family violence incidents also require a comprehensive approach to not only address the critical issues arising currently but to position the City of Whittlesea into the future.

More equitable access to behaviour change programs for all perpetrators of family violence has the potential to reduce the high rates of recidivism in this municipality. Family violence is an issue for all communities however behaviour change programs for CALD men will have a profound impact on the number of local men being held accountable for their violence in a culturally sensitive way, and who are currently unable to benefit from existing mainstream services.

Immediate impacts	Longer term benefits
-Inclusive and equitable access to men’s behaviour change programs for CALD men	-Reduced recidivism by offenders (and costs associated policing, courts) -Improved supports for women and children through partner-contacts for CALD communities -Safety for women and children -Reduced violence against women and children

What objectives does this help us to 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

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

- The City of Whittlesea has the highest rate of recidivist family violence offending for its Victoria Police division.
- The majority of the municipality is excluded from men’s behaviour change programs due to language restrictions.

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- The City of Whittlesea has one of the highest reported incidences of family violence in the Northern Metropolitan Region.
- There has been a 249% increase in reported incidences of family violence in the municipality since 1999.
- Family violence in the City of Whittlesea is at an unacceptably high level and will continue to increase as the population grows.
- Over 40% of residents in the municipality speak a language other than English at home, compared to the Melbourne average of 29%.

ⁱ Victoria Police Family Incident Reports

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

ⁱⁱ Women's Health In the North Family Violence Fact Sheet Whittlesea LGA 2012-2013

ⁱⁱⁱ Police referrals received by NFDVS by LGA Financial Year Comparison July 2009 - June 2013

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

^v Whittlesea Community Connections Family Violence Monitor Report #6 2013

^{vi} City of Whittlesea Draft Human Services Needs Analysis 2013

^{vii} Kildonan Uniting Care, October 2013

^{viii} 'Coalition Government boosts commitment to break the cycle of violence'

<http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/9544-coalition-government-boosts-commitment-to-break-the-cycle-of-violence.html>

^{ix} Figures are approximate and based on evidence from No To Violence. Recent announcement has led to an increase in places available. Figures will be slightly different to what is stated in this fact sheet.

^x No To Violence Male Family Violence Prevention Association 2013 Holding men who perpetrate family violence accountable: A system nearing crisis point <http://ntv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013-NTV-submission-mbcp-funding.pdf> accessed 17 March 2014

^{xi} 91 are allocated to Kildonan Uniting Care; 36 to Plenty Valley Community Health Men's Active Referral Service

^{xii} As per ix

^{xiii} Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Scoping Exercise Report 2012