



Terms of Reference

Whitehorse Prevention of Family Violence and Violence Against Women

Collaborative Action Working Group

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Whitehorse Prevention of Family Violence and Violence Against Women (PFV&VAW) Collaborative Action Working Group is to inform and take collaborative action to prevent family violence and violence against women in the municipality of Whitehorse. In its first year a key focus for the group is planning local activities for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence.

BACKGROUND

The Victorian Public Health Act 2008 recognises that local government is a major partner in efforts to protect public health and wellbeing. The Act states that in preparing their plans, Councils must have regard to the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (VPHWP). Among the top priorities of the VPHWP 2015-2019 are improving mental health and preventing violence and injury.

In addition, Council is required in the Plan to 'report on the measures the council proposes to take to reduce family violence and respond to the needs of victims'.¹

In October 2017 Council's municipal public health and wellbeing plan, *Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021*, was adopted by Council and submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. The Plan was developed based on three elements: extensive community engagement, demographic and health information, and State and Federal policy directions.

Under the Council Strategic Direction 1 – Support a healthy, vibrant inclusive and diverse community – the *Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021* identified priorities, objectives and partnerships to address both responding to family violence and preventing violence against women and children.

Over the four years, and beyond, Council will collaboratively plan and deliver evidence-based strategies to increase the capacity of Council and the community to respond to and prevent family violence and violence against women. The first steps are to:

1. Continue to collaborate in the Together for Equality and Respect Regional Strategy
2. Establish task force or working groups (internal and external to Council)
3. Review current activity, best practice evidence and local data
4. Prepare local action approach and evaluation plan
5. Commence coordinated community activities for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, e.g. White Ribbon Day activities, regional social media campaign, tailored local community activities, forums and so on
6. Commence Council activities, e.g. funding applications, capacity development, partnerships

¹ The Victorian Royal Commission on Family Violence report was released in March 2016 and contained 227 recommendations. Recommendation 94 specifically states "The Victorian Government amend section 26 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)—which requires that councils prepare a municipal public health and wellbeing plan—to require councils to report on the measures the council proposes to take to reduce family violence and respond to the needs of victims.

The *Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021* identified the following population groups and key actions as priority for local effort in the Whitehorse municipality:

Whole of population

- Attitudes of respect and equality (community settings)
- Community connectedness
- Advocacy to reduce harmful use of alcohol (in terms of link to Family Violence)

Women and men; health literacy in the areas of

- Mental health (information; promoting community connection and support)
- Violence prevention (bystander actions around sexism and pro-violent attitudes)

Young people, especially newly arrived young people and international students

- Community connectedness
- Informed consent and sexual health

Women with a disability and children with a disability

- Access to family violence and other support services

In addition, ongoing work addressing elder abuse and responding to concerns of child abuse are core business of Council services.

Family violence affects people across the community regardless of social status, occupation, sexuality, age or cultural background. Mainstream service providers (including Council) for children, families, youth and older people, have a role in providing first response risk assessment and referral for people who may be experiencing or at risk of family violence and abuse, and this includes those who are more difficult to reach, such as those experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage, CALD communities, individuals who identify as GLBTI and those with barriers to communication. The effects on children of living in a violent home can be profound and long term.

Prevention of violence against women involves shifting attitudes that condone or tolerate violence, sexism and discrimination on the basis of gender, alongside changes in cultures and organisations to increase gender equality. Promoting respectful and equal relationships across the community may take place in all sorts of settings in which people of Whitehorse live, work and recreate.

A comprehensive and holistic approach to family violence acknowledges its gendered nature and involves integrating primary prevention approaches that deal with addressing the underlying drivers of violence alongside early intervention and response initiatives.

A whole of community approach is needed to take action to support effective family violence prevention and response.

GROUP STRUCTURE

The Whitehorse Prevention of Family Violence and Violence Against Women (PFV&VAW) Collaborative Action Working Group will be formed with a specific purpose and timeframe to implement agreed actions on an annual basis. It comprises broad representation from individuals and organisations in the municipality of Whitehorse who are involved in the prevention of family violence or violence against women.

Coordination and Support will be provided by Whitehorse City Council officers.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The key roles and responsibilities of the Whitehorse PFV&VAW Collaborative Action Group are to:

- Collaborate to deliver a program of activities in the City of Whitehorse during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence (25 November-10 December)
- Inform the development, implementation and evaluation of a local action plan for the period 2018-2021
- Provide information about plans, policies, strategies, initiatives and evidence that are relevant to the prevention of family violence, violence against women and violence against children in the municipality of Whitehorse, and more broadly
- Identify and facilitate opportunities for collaboration, integration, partnerships and co-design across the municipality, and beyond where relevant
- Identify ways to engage the broader community in primary prevention of violence against women
- Identify shared impact and outcome progress measures for the local action plan
- Identify and collaboratively seek funding sources as necessary to achieve agreed objectives

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Whitehorse PFV&VAW Collaborative Action Working Group will be generated from amongst local organisations, including but not limited to:

Whitehorse Council

Officers from Community Development; Health and Family Services departments; members of White Ribbon Group

Local Family Violence services

Mitcham Neighbourhood House

Kara House

EDVOS

ECASA (Eastern Health)

LifeCare Women's Centre (Crossways)

Together for Equality and Respect Partnership

Regional Family Violence Partnership

Women's Health East

Carrington Health

Neighbourhood Houses

Whitehorse Libraries

Disability service provider

Family Planning

Migrant Information Centre

Chinese Social Services

Interfaith Network

Police

Eastern Community Legal Service

Deakin University and Box Hill TAFE

Sporting Clubs

Respect and Responsibility Education Schools Project
Yarra Valley Water
Other community and faith-based organisations

MEETINGS

Four meetings per year: February, May, August, November or as determined by the group.

CHAIRPERSON

Council Community Development Officer – Health and Wellbeing in the first instance; chairing role may be rotated with agreement of the group.

DECISION MAKING

A majority consensus approach to recommendations will be encouraged by the Chair.

TERM

The Whitehorse PFV&VAW Collaborative Action Working Group will operate for the period 2018 – 2021, consistent with the term of the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, unless otherwise agreed.

COORDINATION AND SUPPORT

Whitehorse City Council officers will provide coordination and support for the Whitehorse PFV&VAW Collaborative Action Working Group including:

- Preparation of draft action plan and evaluation framework
- Collation and coordination of information shared by members
- Coordination of collaborative projects where relevant
- Hosting regular e-communication
- Chairing, minutes and room booking

Council's Community Development Officer – Health and Wellbeing will be responsible for the overall administration of the Whitehorse PFV&VAW Collaborative Action Working Group and will be the primary contact within Council.

Date agreed: 26 February 2018

Date for review: February 2019