



Action Planning for Family Violence Prevention

Community Briefing Paper 2019

Quick Facts about Family Violence

- Family violence affects people from all backgrounds and walks of life. As a community we all pay the human, financial and social costs.
- Every week, at least one woman is murdered in Australia by a current or past partner.
- Children are present as victims or witnesses in about a third of all incidents reported to police.
- Women with a disability experience higher risk of violence.
- In Whitehorse, on average 21 incidents of family violence were reported to police every week from July 2017 to June 2018.
- You can be part of preventing violence against women.

Men can be victims, but research shows that mostly men are the perpetrators of intimate partner violence and family violence. Violence against women is now accepted across the world as one of the most serious issues we face. Its impacts are damaging and far reaching.

While violence against women is serious and common, we can stop it from happening in the first place.

What is Family Violence?

Family violence is against the law. It includes:

- Controlling behaviours (e.g. deciding who you can see or what you do)
- Stalking (e.g. monitoring your online activity, following you)
- Verbal abuse (e.g. put downs, threats and intimidation)
- Physical assault (e.g. pushing, slapping, punching, choking)
- Sexual assault (e.g. manipulating or forcing you to do sexual things, even if you are married)
- Emotional abuse (e.g. implying or saying that you are crazy or that you are over-sensitive)
- Social abuse (e.g. isolating you from family and friends)
- Economic abuse (e.g. controlling access to money)
- Spiritual abuse (e.g. preventing you from practicing your spiritual beliefs, telling you what to believe)
- Harming, or threats to harm, pets
- Threats or actually self-harming and then saying you are responsible
- Homicide (murder)

Read about [Recognising Family Violence](#)

Impacts

Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15 to 44. The impacts of family violence include:

- declined physical and mental health
- loss of housing
- loss or limited access to employment
- risky financial security
- isolation and alienation of extended family/social support
- negative impact on development of children who witness and experience it
- death

Some women have a multiplied risk of experiencing violence because of colonisation, racism and additional forms of discrimination. In essence, family violence is about the exertion of power and control by a person or people over someone else. People who are LGBTIQ+ can also experience family violence.

In addition to these personal impacts, there are large social and economic costs. The annual cost of family violence in Victoria in 2014-15 was in the order of \$3.1 billion.

Violence against Women is Preventable

Over the past decade it has been acknowledged that violence against women, including family violence, can be prevented. We have seen the emergence of research, policy and practice designed to prevent violence against women before it occurs.

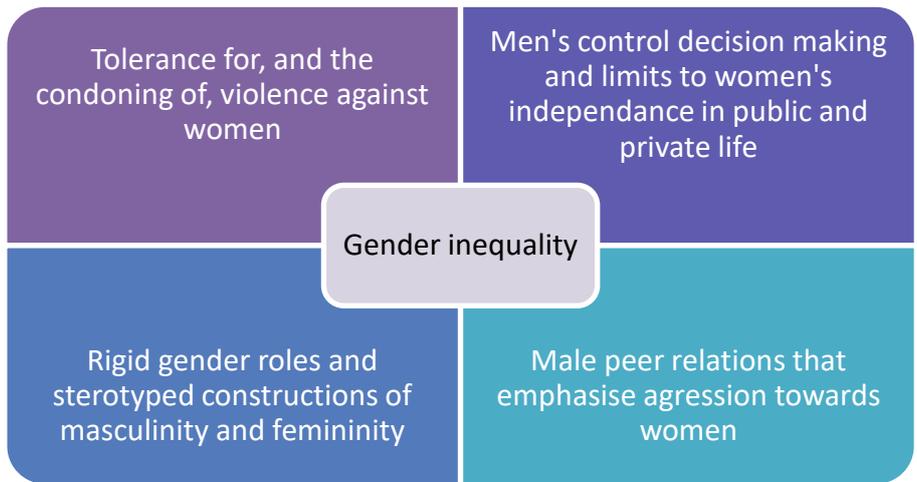
Gender inequality is known as the underlying context that underpins violence against women - the connection, however, is complex and requires thought from different viewpoints.

Gender inequality is a situation in which women and men do not have equal power, resources or opportunities, and that their voices, ideas and work are not valued equally by society.

Stopping violence against women from happening in the first place involves shifting attitudes so that violence and sexism is not OK and challenging those stereotypes for men and women that limit boys' and girls' development, alongside changes in cultures and organisations to increase equality between men and women. The evidence indicates that if we work at changing these "drivers" of violence against women, we will increase gender equality and reduce family violence.



The Drivers and Underlying Context for Violence against Women



Findings from the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (conducted every four years since 2009) show that where a person's support for gender equality and understanding of behaviours that are violence against women are low, that person is more likely to hold attitudes supportive of violence against women.

Community Action for Prevention

To prevent men's violence against women from happening in the first place, as a community we can take actions that counteract the drivers (root causes).

Action		Solution
Promote equality and demonstrate respect for women	➔	Reduce attitudes that violence and sexism is OK Increase women's say about decisions that affect them
Challenge rigid ideas about how women and men and girls and boys should act or fulfil certain roles	➔	Create more opportunities for everyone to reach their potential
Create environments where everyone is able to equally participate	➔	Both men and women contribute Organisations and clubs reap the benefits of the best skills available

Prevention efforts will be strengthened if these essential actions are supported by actions to:

- Prevent exposure to violence and support those affected to reduce its consequences
- Challenge whether it is a normal part of being a man to express violence
- Question drinking cultures that emphasise male conquest and aggression or excuse men's violence
- Develop positive ways to engage men and boys in gender equality, building relationship skills and social connection

We all have a role to play.



Promoting equal and respectful relationships in Whitehorse

Local Government reaches people where they live, work and play. Council plays a central role in leading and promoting peaceful, helpful and safe environments for the community.

Whitehorse Council is committed to the prevention of family violence and violence against women and children.

Taking action to prevent violence against women is about promoting respectful and equal relationships – in relationships, families, groups, cultures and organisations, and in all the places where we live, work and recreate – as well as not standing by when we witness disrespect, sexual harassment and discrimination. Equity measures in sports ground use is an example of how Whitehorse City Council strives to promote gender equity in its day to day business.

Council Initiatives

Council is committed to prevention of violence against women and children. Current actions include, but are not limited to:

- In 2019 Council is developing an Action Plan to guide local initiatives for prevention of family violence and violence against women and children.
- *Whitehorse Strengthening Local Action for Family Violence Prevention Project* involving action planning, awareness raising, learning and participation opportunities for local people.
- Host of the Whitehorse Collaborative Action Working Group
- Contributing partner in the [Together for Equality and Respect Partnership](#) and [Eastern Elder Abuse Network](#)
- Collaborative projects to promote equality and respect in community settings, such as the Faith Networks and Sporting Clubs.
- Whitehorse Celebrates Equality and Respect program over 16 days in November and December, information and activities focusing on stopping violence against women from happening in the first place. Whitehorse Manningham Libraries run their annual Gender Equity Storytime sessions during this time.
- Women's Leadership and Business Programs
- Engaging fathers and promoting gender equity in Maternal and Child Health and Early Years Services.
- Parenting Information Forums to support healthy and respectful relationships in families

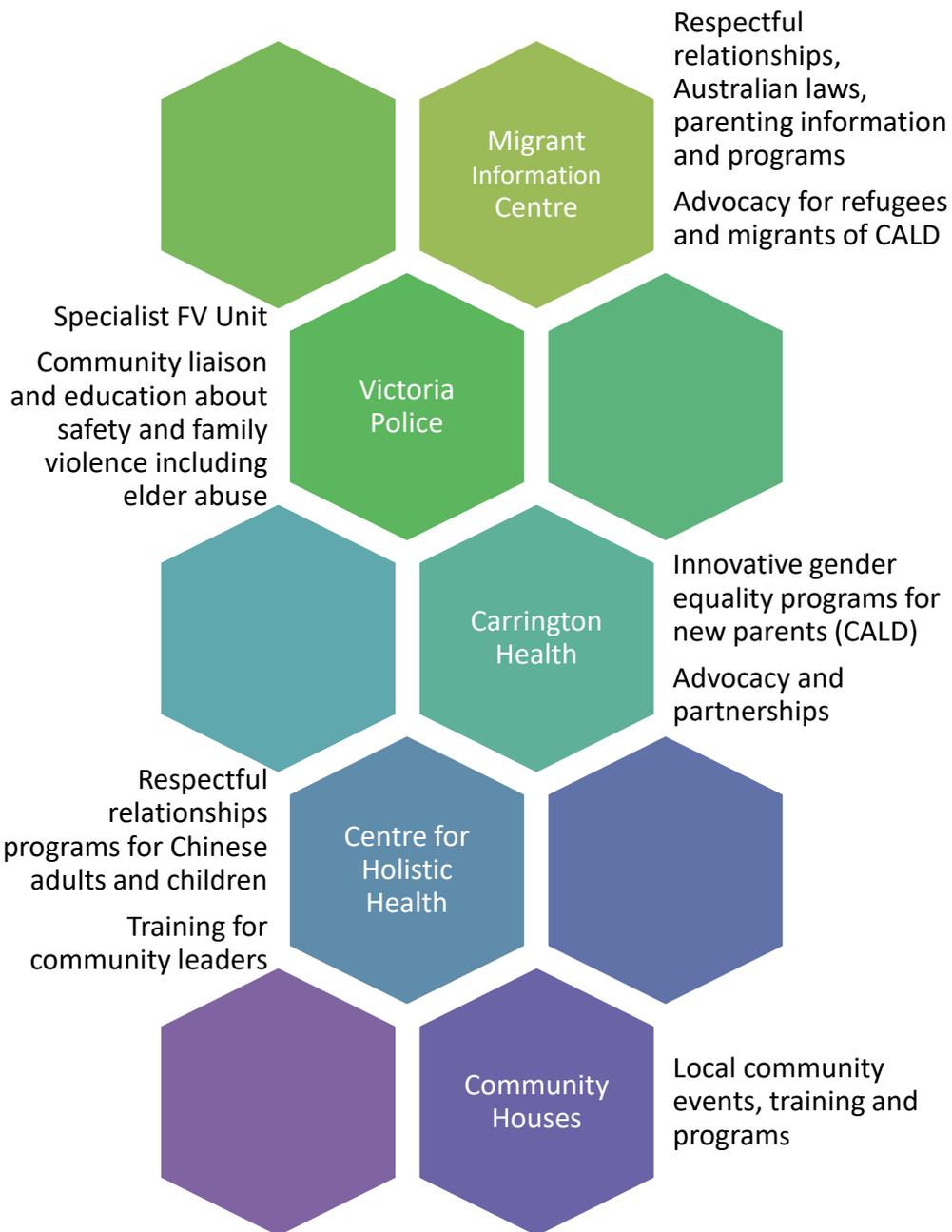


- Funding of Community Grants that align with Council Strategic Directions and Health and Wellbeing priorities. The [Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021](#) prioritises the prevention of family violence and violence against women and children.
- CEO Participation in the Listen Learn and Lead Project to increase equity in organisational practices.
- Increase ability of Council's workforce to recognise, respond and refer in cases of elder abuse and child abuse, as well as other forms of family violence.
- Employee Flexibility Policy and Family Violence leave provisions accompanied by Family Violence Resource kit for staff.

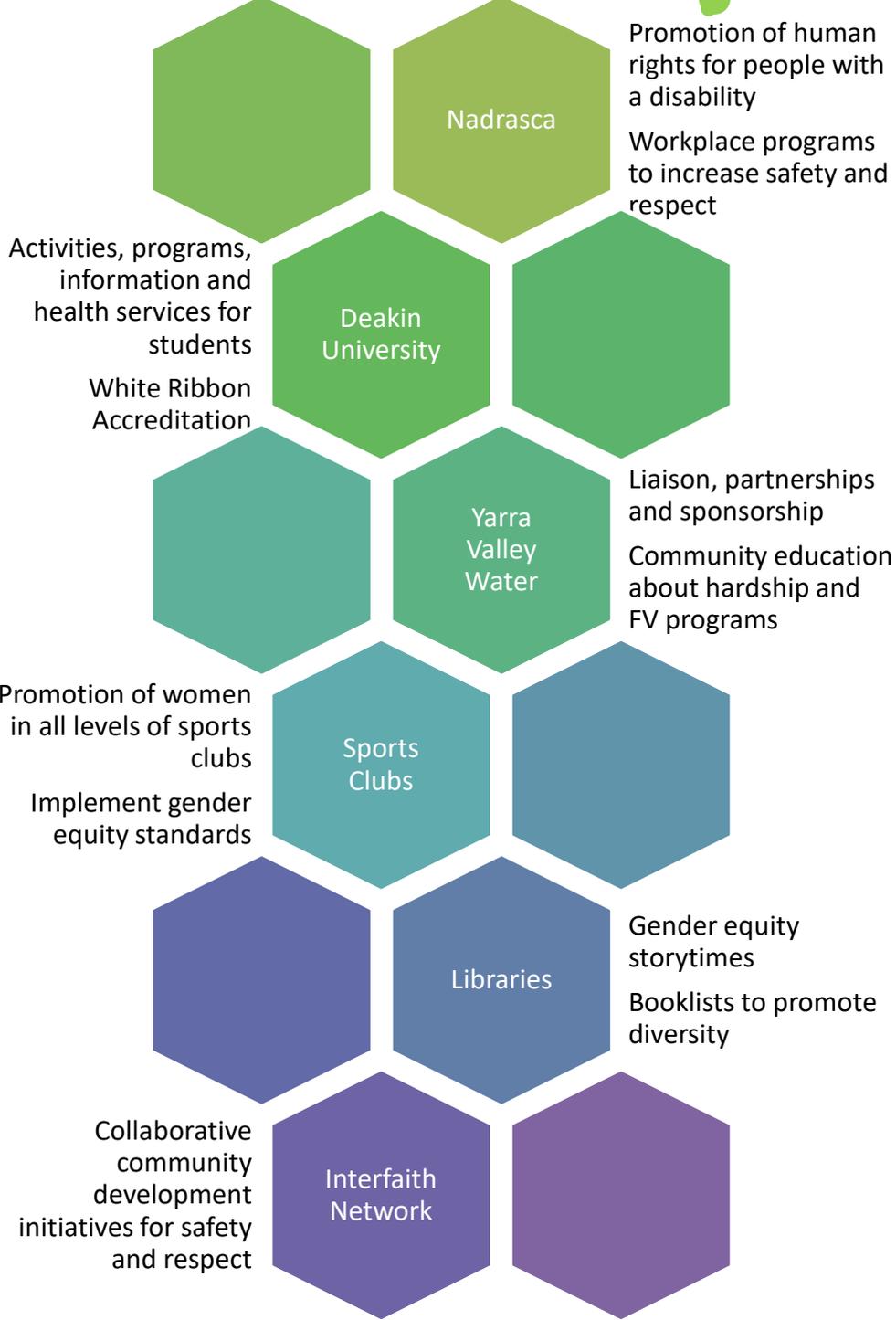


A snapshot of Local Organisations taking Prevention Action





Should your organisation be listed here?



Local Partners for Prevention

There are many organisations in Whitehorse such as those above, and more broadly, working together to promote equality and respect, and creating a safer community for those who are vulnerable to intimate partner violence, family violence and elder abuse. For example

[Together for Equality and Respect Partnership](#)

[Regional Family Violence Partnership \(RFVP\)](#)

[Eastern Elder Abuse Network](#)

Further information and to get involved in Family Violence Prevention and Local Partnerships please contact CDEnquiries@whitehorse.vic.gov.au

If you are concerned about yourself or anyone else

If in immediate danger call 000

safe steps Family Violence Response Centre

24/7 crisis response

1800 015 188

If you cannot safely call the 24/7 phone line, email safesteps@safesteps.org.au

National Domestic Violence 24/7 Helpline

24 hour counselling support

1800 RESPECT

1800 737 732

Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS)

Access to multilingual staff

9259 4200

9-8pm Mon–Fri, 9-5pm Sat

[Family Violence Services List and Further Information](#)

Download the  [Womens Safety Card \(145.24kB\)](#) for written information about local support services.

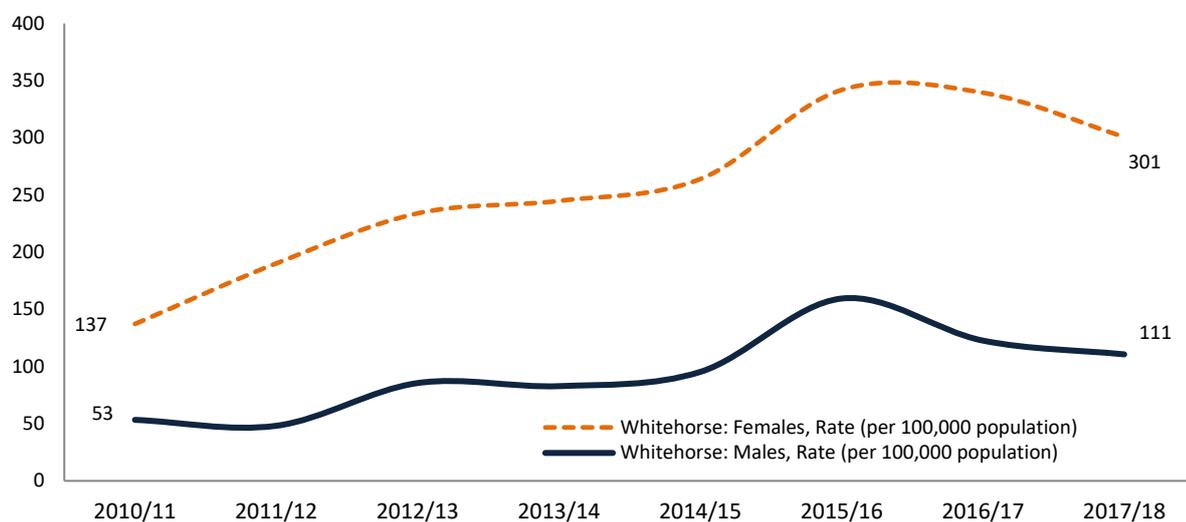


Gender Equality Report Card 2019

Indicator: Rates of Family Violence Incidents

While in the short-term, the apparent rates of family violence may go up because of improvements in reporting, in the long-term if prevention works, rates will come down. The rates of reported family violence are lower in Whitehorse than other parts of Melbourne, but remain unacceptably high. It is estimated that reports to police may account for only 25% of all incidents.

Whitehorse data clearly shows there is a difference between rates for men and women and that over the past five years this gap has been fairly constant.

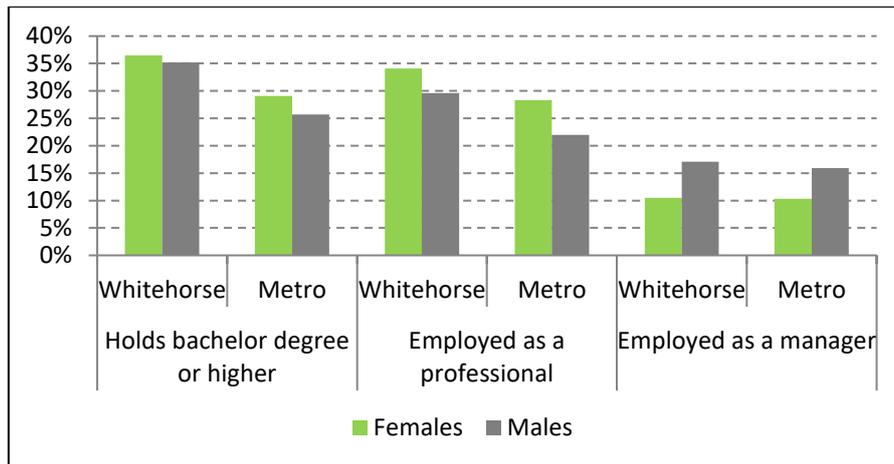


Indicator: Women in Managerial Positions

Whitehorse has similar figures to the rest of Melbourne when it comes to gender inequality.

In Whitehorse we have a higher percentage of females with higher education and working as professionals than men, yet women are much less likely to be holding managerial positions.





Despite a marginally higher percentage of females in Whitehorse with a bachelor degree or higher (36.5% compared to 35.2%), males are more likely to hold a managerial position (17.1% compared to 10.5%).

Indicator: Weekly Income Gap

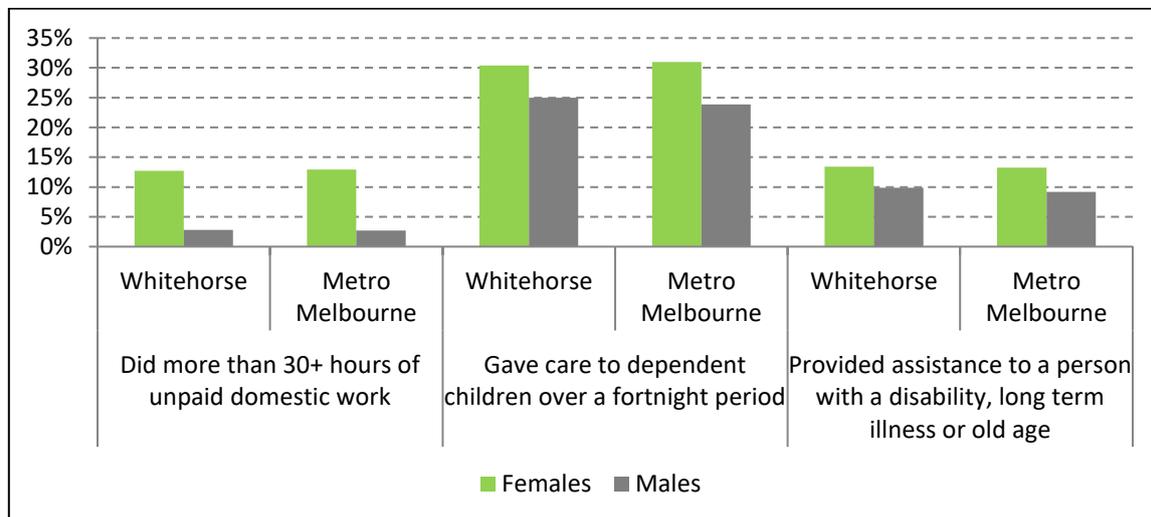
In Whitehorse there are more women working part time and with lower weekly incomes than men. This has implications for women’s savings and superannuation, for example, placing older women who rent at risk of poverty and homelessness.

Whitehorse		Victoria	
\$498	\$798	\$516	\$815
female median weekly income	male median weekly income	female median weekly income	male median weekly income



Indicators: Unpaid Work and Caring Responsibilities

In Whitehorse, as for the whole of Melbourne, women do the bulk of unpaid domestic work, and are more likely to care for children and for others. This responsibility limits women’s participation in public life and leadership roles, as well as earning capacity.



In Whitehorse females are much more likely than males to spend 30 hours or more on unpaid domestic work each week (12.7% compared to 2.8%). Females are also more likely than males to provide care to dependent children over a fortnight period (30.4% compared to 25.0%) and are more likely than males to provide help to a family member and/or other person with a long-term disability/illness over a fortnightly period (13.4% compared to 9.9%).

Indicator: Perceptions of Safety

In Whitehorse women have much lower perceived levels of safety being out in the community at night than men. This fear affects women’s freedom and participation in the community.



Females in Whitehorse are much less likely to feel safe walking alone after dark than males (36.1% compared to 79.5%), consistent with the Victorian average.



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