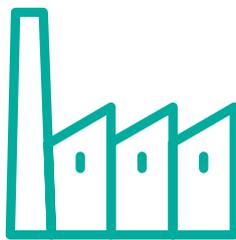




# Preventing violence against women

## Final report

CREATING HEALTHY WORKPLACES SERIES



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**Acknowledgements:**

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# Contents

**2 Overview: VicHealth’s Creating Healthy Workplaces program**

**3 Foreword**

**4 Introduction**

4 Project overview

7 Project partners

**8 Violence against women**

8 The role of workplaces in preventing violence against women

**9 Y Respect Gender project**

9 Planning

10 Implementing the strategies

10 Evaluation

11 Frameworks and guidelines

**12 Key findings**

12 Project results

12 Successes

13 Insights

**16 Conclusion**

**17 References**

## Tables

**4 Table 1: Overview of the Y Respect Gender project**

**7 Table 2: Y Respect Gender project partners**

**9 Table 3: Overview of Y Respect Gender sites**

**11 Table 4: Y Respect Gender evaluation measures**

**11 Table 5: Y Respect Gender evaluation tool**

**11 Table 6: Frameworks and guidelines informing the Y Respect Gender project**

**14 Table 7: Enablers and barriers to changing the workplace culture**

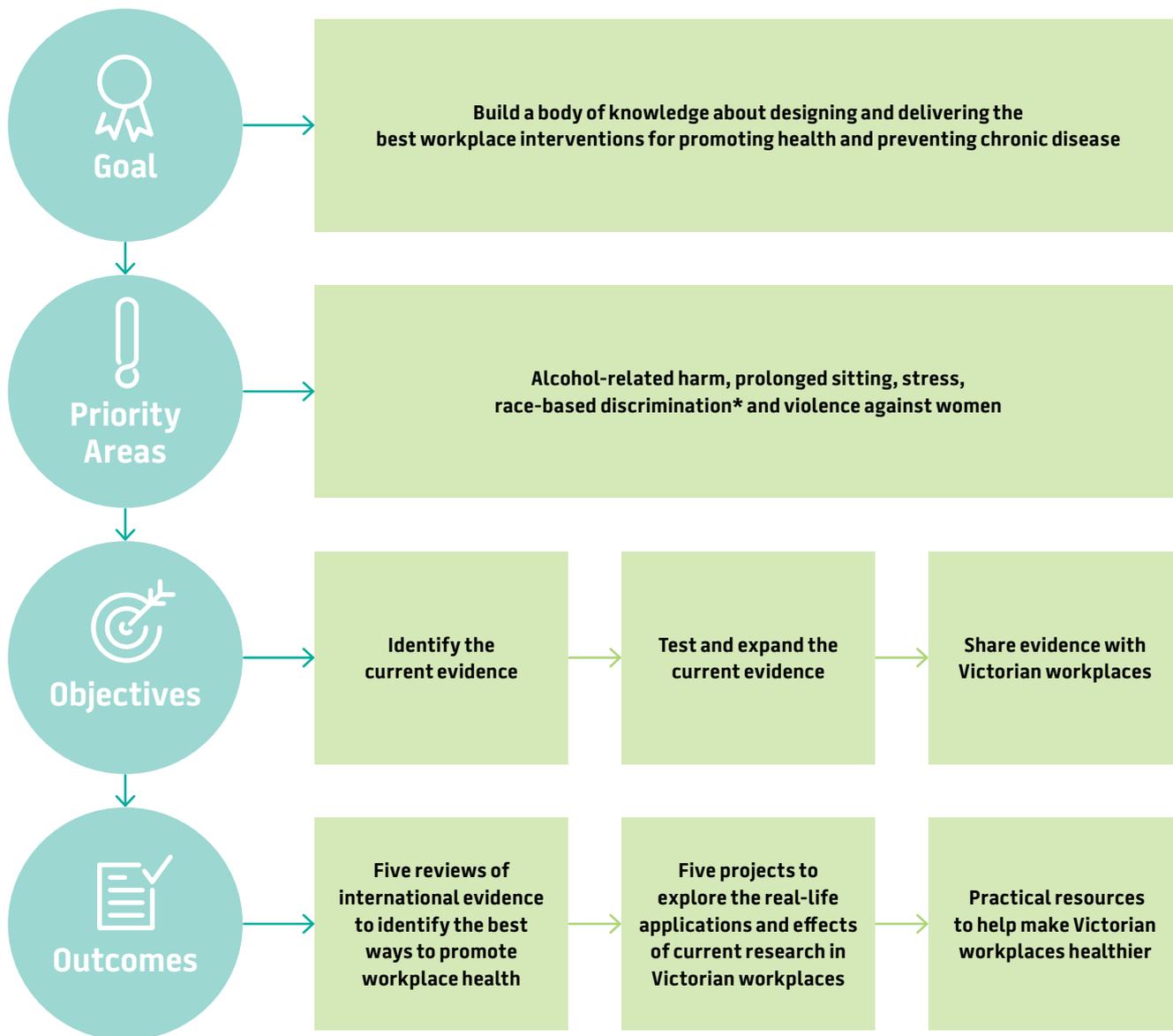
## Figures

**12 Figure 1: Percentage of respondents understanding the link between disrespectful relationships and violence against women**

**12 Figure 2: Percentage of employees who heard about gender equity policies during staff induction**

# Overview:

## VicHealth's Creating Healthy Workplaces program



For more information and publications on the Creating Healthy Workplaces program, including five evidence reviews and a report on early insights from the projects, see [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/workplace](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/workplace) and partner agency websites.

\* Information on the race-based discrimination project will be available at a later date.

# Foreword

VicHealth is playing a leading role in building Australian knowledge on ways to make our workplaces healthier.

VicHealth's Creating Healthy Workplaces program has built a body of knowledge about how to promote good health and prevent chronic disease in the workplace. The program focused on finding the best ways to tackle alcohol-related harm, prolonged sitting, stress, race-based discrimination and violence against women.

At VicHealth we know that some of the most powerful influences on our mental and physical wellbeing exist in the environments where we live, work, learn, play and build relationships with one another. The workplace is an important place for promoting good health and preventing chronic disease. Many Victorians spend up to one third of their day at work, so workplaces have the potential to reach a substantial proportion of the population who may not otherwise respond to health messages, may not use the primary healthcare system or may not have time to make lasting changes to their behaviour. Healthy working environments can improve productivity, staff morale and enhance the ability of an organisation to attract and retain staff. It can also decrease staff turnover, absenteeism, accidents and injuries, and worker compensation claims. Promoting and protecting health in the workplace, particularly for those who are most vulnerable, is crucial to a fully functioning economy.

VicHealth's workplace program continues to inform and support the promotion of workplace physical and mental wellbeing and the prevention of chronic diseases. Our activity focuses on creating and sharing the outcomes of new research, development of new resources, collaboration with new partners and the design of innovative solutions to emerging workplace trends and problems.

Preventing Violence against Women (known as Y Respect Gender) is one of five projects funded under the Creating Healthy Workplaces program in 2012–15. Violence against women is unacceptably common. Gender inequality is at the core of the problem, and therefore at the heart of the solution. The project suggests ways that workplaces can help prevent violence against women. Importantly, it includes insights on how to start the process of changing the workplace culture and how to communicate the role of gender inequality and gender stereotypes in causing violence against women. Y Respect Gender is an excellent example of evidence-based primary prevention of violence against women. It continues VicHealth's pioneering work to change the current situation in Australia, where one woman is murdered every week by a current or former partner, and to protect every woman's right to safety and wellbeing – once and for all.

This report is one in a series of final reports on the projects, in which we share what we have learned about what works when promoting health and wellbeing in the workplace. We hope you find it interesting and relevant to your work.



**Jerril Rechter**  
Chief Executive Officer, VicHealth



# Introduction

This report is for employers, policymakers and workplace health practitioners. It aims to share the key findings from Y Respect Gender, the Preventing Violence against Women project conducted as part of VicHealth’s Creating Healthy Workplaces program.

VicHealth worked in partnership with YMCA Victoria and the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University, using a comprehensive systems approach to develop and test a number of interventions that tackle the underlying causes and conditions that lead to violence. The Preventing Violence against Women project focused on building equal and respectful relationships between men and women.

In particular, it aimed to increase women’s representation, leadership and influence in the workplace. The project reached around 8000 YMCA staff and volunteers in Victoria, of whom more than 1200 took part in training and workshops.

The Preventing Violence against Women project makes an important contribution to this subject. It demonstrates how workplaces can help stop violence before it starts, by building equal and respectful relationships between men and women in the workplace. This is very different from most of the current literature, which focuses on responding to violence after it has occurred, rather than preventing it from happening in the first place.

## Project overview

**Table 1: Overview of the Y Respect Gender project**

YMCA Victoria	
<b>Project aims</b>	Y Respect Gender aimed to demonstrate ways for organisations to tackle the causes of violence against women by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• building equal and respectful relationships between men and women</li><li>• increasing women’s representation and leadership in the workplace</li><li>• creating a positive, respectful and equitable organisational culture and working conditions.</li></ul>
<b>Work sites</b>	160 sites across Victoria
<b>Target group</b>	All staff (employees and volunteers)

Project phase

**Plan**

- Recruit project coordinator
- Conduct two-day forum to develop the project logic model and action plan
- Establish project team
- Engage four sites
- Launch the project

**Implement strategies**

- Intensive activity in four sites
- Leadership engagement and capacity building
- Training and education
- Policy and procedures
- Communications and marketing

Project phase

**Evaluate**

The results of the two interventions were measured by employee surveys before and after the project, and aimed at identifying changes in behaviour, attitudes and knowledge.

Interviews, observation, reflections and document analysis were conducted throughout the project to examine the implementation process and to identify change at the organisation and systems level.

**Evaluation indicators**

**Individuals**

- Women are represented in all aspects of leadership, influence and visibility across the whole organisation.
- Relationships between men and women in the workplace are equal and respectful.

**Workplace/community**

- All policies, programs, practices and services reflect and practise gender equality and respectful relationships.
- Gender equity is embedded in the recruitment, promotion and practices of the organisation.
- Leaders actively implement gender equity in all aspects of their work.

**Society**

- The YMCA advocates for equal and respectful relationships, both inside the organisation and in its relations with other organisations and individuals.

Key findings

The workplace culture changed, bringing greater awareness of the importance of gender equality and respectful relationships, and greater readiness to talk about gender equality, gender stereotyping, and men’s violence against women.

More women were represented in leadership, as demonstrated by an increase in the number of women in senior management roles.

Participants understood better the connection between gender equality and violence against women.

Leaders were better able to promote gender equality and respectful relationships.

**VicHealth's Creating Healthy Workplaces program was undertaken in partnership with Victoria's foremost researchers, business and industry, to promote health and prevent illness.**

## Project partners

For Y Respect Gender, VicHealth worked with industry partner YMCA Victoria, who implemented the project in its workplaces, and with researchers who designed and evaluated the interventions.

**Table 2: Y Respect Gender project partners**

Industry partner	Research and evaluation partners
<p><b>YMCA Victoria</b></p>	<p><b>Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University</b></p>
<p><a href="http://www.victoria.ymca.org.au">www.victoria.ymca.org.au</a> Community not-for-profit</p>	<p><a href="http://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs">www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs</a></p>
<p><b>Scott Holmes</b> Project Coordinator</p> <p>YMCA Victoria has been operating since 1853. Its mission is to empower young people, promote healthy living, and have a positive social impact. More than 8000 staff and volunteers deliver services in 160 places across Victoria. These include campsites, student accommodation, recreation and sporting facilities, swimming pools, early education, schools and kindergartens, youth services and youth justice facilities.</p> <p>YMCA Victoria is the largest YMCA association in Australia, and one of the largest in the world, with more than 18 million visits every year. The organisation has a mostly casual, female and young workforce (most employees are aged between 18 and 25 years), but with few women at senior management levels.</p>	<p><b>Associate Professor Sue Dyson</b> Principal Research Fellow</p>



# Violence against women

Violence against women occurs on a continuum, from psychological, economic and emotional abuse through to physical and sexual violence. Violence against women is a prevalent, serious and preventable abuse of human rights.

Every week in Australia, at least one woman is killed by her partner or former partner. Intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 than any other preventable risk factor. Domestic or family violence against women is the single largest driver of homelessness for women, a common factor in child protection notifications, and results in one police call-out every two minutes – on average – across the country. It causes wide-ranging and persistent harm to women's physical and mental health. The greatest of these harms is mental illness – anxiety and depression – which makes up 58 per cent of the total disease that results from violence.

Violence against women is not limited to the home or intimate relationships. Every year in Australia, more than 300,000 women experience violence – often sexual violence – from someone other than a partner. Eight out of 10 women aged 18 to 24 were harassed on the street in the past year.

## The role of workplaces in preventing violence against women

Violence against women can be prevented. The most effective way to prevent violence against women before it starts is to address the gendered causes of violence.

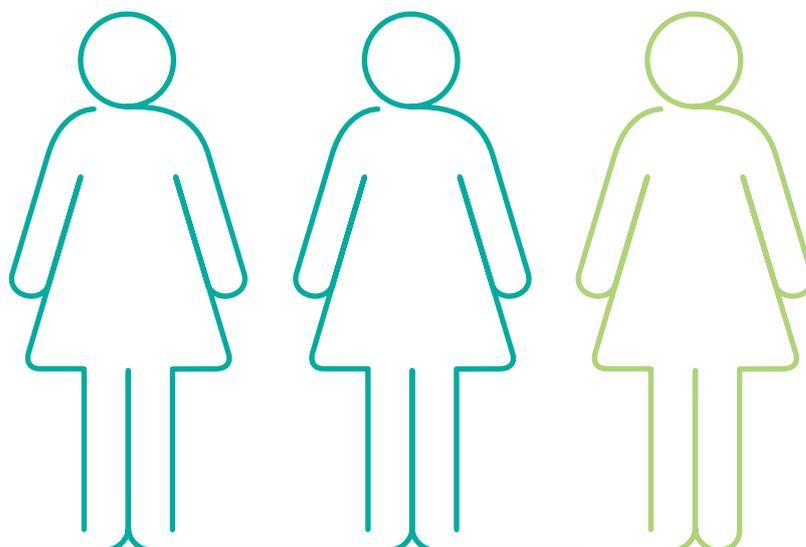
Organisations have a critical role in preventing violence against women: they can help stop violence before it starts by building equal and respectful relationships between men and women in the workplace. But current evidence on how to do this is limited, because most efforts to date have focused on responding to workplace violence after it has occurred, rather than stopping it before it starts. The Y Respect Gender project addresses this gap between evidence and current practice. It improves our understanding of how the workplace can effectively prevent violence against women.

### EVIDENCE REVIEW



The evidence review *Preventing violence against women in the workplace* is available at: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/search/creating-healthy-workplaces-publications](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/search/creating-healthy-workplaces-publications)

**More than 60 per cent of women report experiencing some form of violence at work and 75 per cent report experiencing unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour at work (VicHealth 2012).**



# Y Respect Gender project

## Planning

### Recruit project coordinator

The formal tender process used to recruit workplaces required the majority of funds to be spent on employing a project manager (minimum 0.8 equivalent full-time). This ‘embedded project coordinator’ for workplace health interventions is a worker who is employed, physically located and organisationally located, in the organisation to coordinate the project.

In partnership with VicHealth and the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, YMCA Victoria recruited a project coordinator. Recruitment efforts focused on attracting someone with:

- experience in developing and implementing programs
- an understanding of primary prevention, health promotion and organisational change
- high-level partnership and communication skills.

### Hold a two-day forum to develop the logic model and action plan

At the beginning of the project a two-day planning session was held with 25 YMCA Victoria staff. At this session the three overarching project aims – equal and respectful relationships, women’s representation and leadership, and organisation culture and working conditions – were structured into five specific objectives:

1. Facilitate positive behaviour change among our people by
  - increasing awareness, knowledge and understanding of gender equity and equal and respectful relationships

- building skills
- living according to our core values.

2. Ensure that all programs and services reflect the principles of gender equality and equal and respectful relationships.
3. Actively involve current leaders in implementing the project.
4. Increase the representation, influence, visibility and leadership of women across the organisation.
5. Build YMCA Victoria’s reputation as an advocate for equal and respectful relationships, and share our knowledge with others.

### Establish project team

A project team was formed to strengthen and support implementation, made up of staff members who volunteered or were invited to join. Efforts were made to include representatives of different organisational levels and sectors, and senior women. This was so the team as a whole could learn from their experiences and to strengthen opportunities for women to be advocates for gender equality and respectful relationships.

The project team had between 12 and 14 members, including the project coordinator and representation from the project design, research and evaluation partners. The project team met every six weeks for 90 minutes, plus occasional extra planning meetings.

### Select four pilot sites

Four sites were selected to test more intensive, grassroots activity in YMCA Victoria. The sites represented the four administrative areas of YMCA Victoria: Ascot Vale (north), Ashburton (east), Bass Coast (south) and Derrimut (statewide). See Table 3 for an overview.

**Table 3: Overview of Y Respect Gender sites**

	<b>Ascot Vale Leisure Centre (AVLC)*</b>	<b>Ashburton Pool and Recreation Centre (APARC)</b>	<b>Bass Coast Aquatic and Leisure Centre (Wonthaggi)</b>	<b>Derrimut Community and Children’s Centre</b>
<b>Reason for selection</b>	Example of a large and busy recreation centre	Example of a large and busy recreation centre	Example of a smaller, regional recreation centre	Example of childcare, early learning and education
<b>Services provided</b>	Recreation centre consisting of a gym, pool, sports stadium, crèche, café, group fitness rooms and consultancy rooms	Recreation centre consisting of a gym, pool, sports stadium, crèche, café, group fitness rooms and consultancy rooms	Gym, indoor pool, small indoor stadium and crèche	Early learning centre, including kindergarten programs and long day care
<b>Number of employees</b>	More than 200	More than 200	Approximately 50	Approximately 50
<b>Location</b>	Metropolitan	Metropolitan	Regional	Metropolitan

\* No longer managed by the YMCA.

## Launch the project

Following the official launch of VicHealth's Creating Healthy Workplaces program in April 2012, YMCA Victoria introduced the Preventing Violence Against Women project at an internal function in May 2012. The project then became known as the Y Respect Gender project (YRG).

## Implementing the strategies

A whole-of-organisation change program was implemented, with strategies tailored and adapted throughout the project in response to learning gathered through the evaluation. This was led by the YMCA Victoria project coordinator, with support from the project team and senior staff, including the Chief Executive Officer.

### Undertake intensive activity in four sites

Sites were used to find ways to achieve the project objectives at a local level in a sustainable fashion. Sites were responsible for implementing activity in their own centres, with support from the project coordinator. This facilitated change process focused on local ownership supported by strong leadership and the YMCA's stated values. Key actions across the sites included:

- staff training, education and information
- review and audits of current practices, policies and procedures
- communications and marketing
- partnerships (for example, with Play Unlimited, an Australian group that advocates gender-free marketing of children's toys)
- events (for example, White Ribbon Day and International Women's Day).

### Involve leaders and build capacity

The project coordinator worked closely with senior staff to build their capacity to understand the purpose of the project and their role in its implementation, both during and after the project, and to increase leadership capacity for promoting gender equality and respectful relationships.

Senior staff at YMCA Victoria, including the Chief Executive Officer and board members, were actively involved in the project. They were represented on the Y Respect Gender project team, attended project presentations and workshops, and 20 leadership staff attended a VicHealth forum: Leadership for Preventing Violence Against Women.

## Training and education

The project coordinator developed and delivered training and presentation packages. More than 1200 YMCA Victoria staff and volunteers took part in training and education programs, on topics including:

- gender equality in contemporary Australia
- gender equality in the workplace
- respectful relationships in the workplace
- the development of gender stereotypes
- the difference between sex and gender
- the prevalence and gendered nature of violence against women
- the relationship of gender inequality to men's violence against women.

## Policy and procedures

The project coordinator undertook an audit of organisational systems (including policies, formal and informal procedures, decision-making arrangements, business systems and planning, and internal communications), and recommended changes to the appropriate internal decision-making bodies.

When steps are taken to prevent violence against women, there is often an increase in people coming forward to disclose victimisation. For this reason YMCA Victoria developed and approved, as one of the first actions of the project, a Workplace Response to Family Violence policy. The policy was supported by a procedure, implementation plan and communications plan.

## Communications and marketing

A whole-of-organisation communications strategy was developed and implemented, which used a familiar and non-confrontational 'menus and recipes' theme (see page 13 for further details).

## Evaluation

The results of the Y Respect Gender project were measured using pre-project and post-project employee surveys aimed at identifying changes in behaviour, attitudes and knowledge. All staff were surveyed toward the beginning of the project (979 completed surveys; approximately 20% response rate<sup>1</sup>) and near the end of the third year (342 completed surveys; approximately 7% response rate), in order to understand changes over time.

Interviews, observation, reflections and document analysis were conducted throughout the project to examine the implementation process and to identify change at the organisation and systems level.

<sup>1</sup> Based on 5000 staff members. The number fluctuates with casuals so it is difficult to calculate an exact number.

**Table 4: Y Respect Gender evaluation measures**

Evaluation indicators		
<p><b>Individuals</b> Women are represented in all aspects of leadership, influence and visibility across the whole organisation.</p> <p>Relationships between men and women in the workplace are equal and respectful.</p>	<p><b>Workplace/community</b> All policies, programs, practices and services reflect and practise gender equality and respectful relationships.</p> <p>Gender equity is incorporated into the recruitment, promotion and practices of the organisation.</p> <p>Leaders actively implement gender equity in all aspects of their work.</p>	<p><b>Society</b> The YMCA advocates equal and respectful relationships, both within the organisation and in its relations with other organisations and individuals.</p>

**Table 5: Y Respect Gender evaluation tool**

Evaluation tool	How the tool was used
Employee survey	<p>The YMCA Victoria Staff Survey: Y Respect Gender was used before and after the project, to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workplace values</li> <li>• experiences and expectations of respect at work</li> <li>• knowledge of policies that promote gender equality</li> <li>• knowledge of the project</li> <li>• supports and barriers to career advancement</li> <li>• gender stereotype threat.</li> </ul>

## Frameworks and guidelines

The frameworks and guidelines informing the Y Respect Gender project are listed in Table 6.

**Table 6: Frameworks and guidelines informing the Y Respect Gender project**

Framework	How the framework was used
<p>VicHealth’s <i>Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria</i> (VicHealth 2009)*</p>	<p>The most effective way to prevent violence against women – to stop it before it starts – is to address the gendered drivers that lead to violence.</p> <p>The project was informed by VicHealth’s framework, which sets out three priority action areas that tackle the underlying causes and conditions that lead to violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women</li> <li>• promoting non-violent norms</li> <li>• improving access to resources and systems of support.</li> </ul>
<p>World Health Organization’s <i>Healthy workplaces: a model for action: for employers, workers, policymakers and practitioners</i> (WHO 2010)</p>	<p>The project followed the principles set out in the World Health Organization’s <i>Healthy workplaces: a model for action</i>, in particular the principles of successful workplace interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leadership engagement based on core values</li> <li>• involvement of workers and their representatives</li> <li>• gap analysis</li> <li>• learning from others</li> <li>• sustainability and integration.</li> </ul>

\* A new national framework for preventing violence against women was released in November 2015 by Our Watch, VicHealth and ANROWS: *Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*.

# Key findings

## Project results

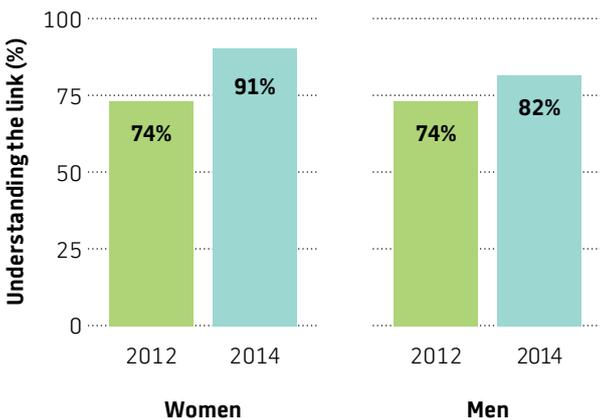
Over 6000 employees and 1500 volunteers across YMCA Victoria were involved. The main results from the qualitative data were:

- a change in the workplace culture, bringing greater awareness of the importance of gender equality and respectful relationships, and greater readiness to talk about gender equality, gender stereotyping, and men’s violence against women
- more women represented in leadership, as demonstrated by an increase in the number of women in senior management roles
- leaders who were better able to promote gender equality and respectful relationships

Results from the staff surveys showed:

- better understanding of the connection between respectful relationships and violence against women (Figure 1).
- increased awareness of gender equity policies in the workplace (Figure 2).

**Figure 1: Percentage of respondents understanding the link between disrespectful relationships and violence against women**



Pearson Chi-Square: Women (value: 27.722,  $p < .001$ ), Men (value: 5.100,  $p = .078$ ).

**Figure 2: Percentage of employees who heard about gender equity policies during staff induction**



Examples of project impacts:

- More discussion of gender equality was reported.
- Marketing posters that were seen as reinforcing gender stereotypes were removed.
- Birthday cards used by a centre that were seen as reinforcing gender stereotypes were re-designed.
- Toys at a childcare centre were audited in order to remove any that were overly gendered.
- Gender equality principles were incorporated into play spaces and programming.
- Staff were reported as alerting their colleagues for using gendered language and ‘benevolent’ sexism.
- Staff were more involved in White Ribbon Day.

## Successes

### Using organisational systems to consolidate and maintain change

A comprehensive organisational and systems approach was used to consolidate and maintain the changes made. Organisation-level and systems-level changes achieved as a result of the Y Respect Gender project at YMCA Victoria included:

- new Workplace Response to Family Violence policy and procedure
- increased capacity of senior leaders to promote gender equality and respectful relationships
- Y Respect Gender project goals included in YMCA Victoria’s business planning
- amendments to people and culture policies (for example, gender equality expectations incorporated into staff induction and position descriptions; amendments to the Code of Conduct to proscribe behaviour that reinforces gender stereotypes)
- gender equality principles included in the organisational risk register
- content included in learning and development programs (for instance, unconscious bias content included in a leadership course)
- organisational policies reviewed to ensure gender equity.

### Making long-term change

Y Respect Gender has resulted in the YMCA Victoria having an ongoing commitment to gender equality through the new diversity, equality and inclusion committee. YMCA Australia is also exploring opportunities to integrate the program of work across all 23 YMCA associations nationwide.

Working towards gender equality and respectful relationships was made sustainable by incorporating it into a broader commitment to achieve diversity, equality and inclusion, which arose from an increased awareness of equality and inequality in the workplace. Organisational systems were used to ensure long-term commitment and sustainability. Other key measures taken to make sure the program continues included:

- involving senior staff in the project team
- regular reporting to board and senior management
- describing the project in a 30-minute presentation to key staff and workplace groups
- holding an internal forum at the end of the project to report on the work and discuss its continuation
- establishing a new working group to pursue the goal of achieving diversity, equality and inclusion.

## Insights

### Communicating gender equality, gender stereotypes and respectful relationships

Strong involvement from YMCA Victoria communications and marketing people was vital in formulating appropriate messages and marketing formats. A whole-of-organisation communications and marketing strategy aimed to attract the attention of men in ways that encouraged them to participate but did not play down the reality of gender inequality and sexist behaviour. An initial focus was on protecting the reputation of YMCA, in response to some of the organisation's early anxiety about the project.

A '**menus and recipes**' theme was a recognisable and non-confrontational way to communicate on this difficult and, at times, confronting topic. Designed to look like a café blackboard menu, the resource consisted of four cards, joined together to make an A-frame. The cards were titled 'For Starters', 'Our Main Aim', 'Sweet Success' and 'Your Takeaway Options'.

A novel element of the project was the inclusion of themed fortune cookies in the communication and marketing strategies. Each cookie contained one of five messages:

- Y Vic, building a safe world for women and children
- A respectful relationship is a healthy relationship
- Go anywhere, do anything
- Gender equality is everyone's business
- You can't spell equality without the Y.

## NEW RESOURCES DEVELOPED



- guidebook to help centres develop an action-learning approach to the project objectives
- guidebook for YMCA Victoria centre managers to use: *Gender matters: Recipes for building respect and equality in Y Vic workplaces*
- short animated video on gender equality and respect in the workplace
- range of marketing material
- training and presentation packages

## Changing the workplace culture

Y Respect Gender changed the overall culture of YMCA Victoria. Evidence for this was:

- a greater awareness of the importance of gender equality and respectful relationships, plus a greater awareness of the current performance of the organisation
- greater readiness to talk about gender equality, gender stereotyping, and men's violence against women
- a stronger focus on finding ways to do things differently and on making different choices, in order to build a fairer workplace culture.

Organisational cultural change does not just happen. The whole organisation must become involved, supported by organisational values, management and staff participation, champions and incentives for change. It requires overcoming resistance, communicating persistently, identifying the most influential individuals, stimulating an appetite for change, and creating a critical mass of new thinking. These things take time, and evaluation data suggests that it took at least two years for most of the defensive reactions within YMCA Victoria to dissipate.

Individuals and groups wanting to develop interventions to change workplace cultures should consider the enablers and barriers, as experienced in the Y Respect Gender project, presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: Enablers and barriers to changing the workplace culture**

<b>Changing the workplace culture</b>	
<b>Enablers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-of-organisation approach</li> <li>• The organisation’s values include a commitment to achieve diversity, equality and inclusion and these existing values were used to frame activity</li> <li>• Leaders who are determined and actively involved</li> <li>• Staff surveys and consultations</li> <li>• Staff enthusiasm and participation</li> <li>• Workplace champions (individual staff and project teams or coordinating bodies)</li> <li>• Sophisticated and sensitive communications, projecting a positive tone</li> <li>• Building on the organisation’s existing strengths</li> <li>• Allowing adequate time</li> <li>• Paying attention early in the project to making sure it can be sustained beyond the funding period</li> <li>• Support from the organisation’s key service teams (such as Communications and Marketing, and People and Culture)</li> <li>• Partnership with VicHealth, which provided funding and gave credibility to the project</li> <li>• Sharing staff knowledge through communities of practice</li> <li>• Iterative, action learning approach that focused on the process of change, not just the outcome</li> <li>• Prominent media coverage of violence against women in the general community raised staff awareness and helped give legitimacy and purpose to the project.</li> </ul>
<b>Barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large and complex organisation, operating across multiple sites and sectors, and varying local cultures</li> <li>• Low staff turnover at senior management level, leading to few opportunities for women to move into senior roles</li> <li>• Largely casual workforce</li> <li>• Complex and confronting issues (violence against women, gender equality)</li> <li>• Competing business demands (staff were concentrating on delivering services; marketing strategies were in conflict with the contractual obligations of some locations)</li> <li>• Constantly changing workplace environment, including changes to key personnel</li> <li>• Organisational adversity to risk</li> <li>• Staff perception early in the project that YMCA was ‘admitting it had a problem’ by taking part.</li> </ul>

**Organisational cultural change does not just happen. The whole organisation must become involved, supported by organisational values, management and staff participation, champions and incentives for change.**

# Conclusion



Gender inequality is at the core of the problem and is therefore at the heart of the solution, as clearly stated in the new national framework to guide the prevention of violence against women: *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*.

The Y Respect Gender project tackled the gendered drivers of violence against women in order to prevent violence from happening, rather than responding to it after it has occurred.

The project's focus on respectful relationships and gender equality in the workplace was successful, resulting in:

- greater understanding of the link between disrespectful relationships and violence against women
- leaders better equipped to promote gender equality and respectful relationships
- more women in senior roles
- a better workplace culture.

This project has reached 8000 YMCA Victoria staff and employees, and countless more of the 18 million Victorians who use a YMCA Victoria centre each year.

The project makes an important contribution to our knowledge about how the workplace can prevent violence against women, and provides new knowledge on how to communicate the role of gender inequality and gender stereotypes in causing violence against women. The project is an excellent illustration of evidence-based primary prevention of violence against women, continuing VicHealth's pioneering work in promoting the health and mental wellbeing of all Victorians.

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