

# Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention: Making the Links

*Minute No.*

---

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

**The purpose of this report is to inform Council of a new project entitled “Gender, Local Governance, and Violence Prevention: Making The Links”.**

## 1. BACKGROUND

The University of Melbourne has been funded by VicHealth and the Australian Research Council to undertake a three year (2006-2008) linkage project to develop Australian local government policy to ensure an integrated approach to violence prevention in both public and private space. Four local government areas in Victoria, including Maribyrnong Council, have been chosen to participate in the project. The project will be led by the University of Melbourne through the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning with support from a PhD student.

The idea for this project, largely informed by the international experience, has stemmed from four inter-related trends;

1. There is a growing international concern about violence in home and in public spaces at the local, state, national, and international levels. The impacts of these fears are felt throughout the community and materialise in the growing reliance on ‘gated communities’, private policing, the erosion of public space and the perception of ‘stranger danger’ which leads to children’s decreased abilities to walk, bicycle or use public transport freely;
2. There is growing research and policy interest in the relationships between the built environment and health outcomes;
3. The expansion of “whole of community” approaches at the local government level involving a range of community partnerships to respond to local issues and;
4. There is growing international and local interest in gender mainstreaming which ensures that the concerns and needs of both genders are considered in decision making.

# **Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention: Making the Links**

The project requires commitment from local government and one community agency to take a leadership role. Preliminary discussions have been held with Women's Health West who have agreed in principle to be a community leader in this project in partnership with Maribyrnong Council.

The project is broken up into three years:

## Year One

An initial workshop will be held in the first half of 2006 with representatives from the participating local government areas to introduce them to the project and the literature and research on the issue of violence prevention. Following the workshop, the University of Melbourne in partnership with Maribyrnong Council will conduct an audit of existing policies that have a direct or indirect impact on violence prevention. A local workshop will then be held in Maribyrnong with local service providers and organisations, state government, Police and local government representatives to ascertain local concerns, develop baseline local indicators, and build upon the programs, policies, and resources already in place.

## Year Two

The project will work with participating Councils in the second year to develop integrated violence prevention programs. These programs will be based on tools researched by the University of Melbourne including indicators of urban safety, surveys to discover what local agencies are doing and needs and community capacity assessments related to current violence prevention programs. At the end of the second year, a preliminary external evaluation will be conducted. A 'stop and assess' workshop informed by the results of the evaluation will be held with participating Councils to determine the direction of the project for the final year. A "how to" manual for planning a number of successful strategies for other local governments will be produced from the workshop at the end of the second year.

## Year Three

In the last phase of the project, the "how to" manual will be rolled out involving four training sessions across the state and the manual will then be sent to all Victorian municipalities. A final evaluation will be conducted to assess the extent to which the projects at the local and state level have made progress towards integrated violence prevention in Victoria.

## **2. COUNCIL POLICY**

The involvement of Maribyrnong in this project is particularly timely as a key objective of the *Maribyrnong Safer Communities Policy 2003-2006* is "to empower the local community to reduce the incidence of violence" and indicates that the "actions in this area will be to support initiatives that focus on family violence reduction and increase the capacity of women to participate more fully in community life without fears for their safety."

## **3. COUNCIL PLAN**

The Gender, Local Governance and Violence Prevention Project supports the Council Plan's commitment to "Our Community: In partnership we will strive to build our diverse community through enhanced health, wellbeing and safety options."

# **Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention: Making the Links**

Strategy 1: Work closely with our diverse communities to build capacity and social infrastructure.

Strategy 2: Deliver responsive services that meet identified community needs.

Strategy 3: Take a leadership role in advocating on key issues impacting on the community.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

Recent research by VicHealth indicates that one in five women report being subjected to violence at some time in their adult life (ABS 1996a). Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15-44, being responsible for more of the disease burden than many well-known risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking and obesity.

Victoria Police have also identified family violence, violent crime and victimisation in their current strategic plan – *The Way Ahead 2003-2008*. At the local level, Region 2 has dedicated extra resources and support for female victims of violence.

The Maribyrnong Safety Taskforce, the local safety committee, is a partnership led by Council and the Footscray Police in conjunction with the community, other organisations and state government departments. The role of the Taskforce is to develop strategies to address identified community safety issues.

The Maribyrnong Safety Taskforce identified Family Violence as a key issue at the annual planning day in 2005. As a result, a subcommittee of the Taskforce, consisting of local service providers, Police and state government representatives, has been recently formed to coordinate a partnership approach to family violence issues in Maribyrnong.

It is envisaged that the Family Violence Working Group will play a key role in the implementation of the project at the local level.

## **5. FINANCIAL / BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS**

Under the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Melbourne and the partner agencies Council will be required to:

1. Nominate a Council representative to liaise with the project team over the term of the project; and
2. Provide funding for the Council representative to participate in the violence prevention activities at the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, June 19-23 2006. The cost is approx. \$3,000 - \$3,500 for airfares and accommodation, which can be funded through the operating budget.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This project provides an opportunity to:

1. Build on the partnerships established by the newly created Family Violence working group, through the Maribyrnong Safety Taskforce, by

## **Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention: Making the Links**

- creating some evidence based strategies and programs to reduce the prevalence of violence in Maribyrnong; and
2. Contribute to a stronger integrated policy approach between the 3 spheres of Government in responding to violence prevention in both the public and private realm.

### **OFFICER RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**

**That Council note the participation of Maribyrnong City Council in the 'Gender, Local Governance and Violence Prevention' project.**