

# **1. World Urban Forum Report and Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention Update**

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

**The purpose of this report is to provide a report back on the World Urban Forum held in Vancouver in June 2006 and to update Council on the Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention Project.**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 21 February 2006, Council endorsed the participation in the Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention Project (GLOVE) and recommended to send the Acting Coordinator, Safer Communities and Health Promotion to the World Urban Forum in Vancouver.

The GLOVE project is a three year research project funded by the Australian Research Council and VicHealth. The purpose of the research project is to develop Australian local government policy that will take an integrated approach to violence prevention in both public and private space, using a gender mainstreaming process and a community-government partnership model. The project aims to analyze the current local government context in the light of international good practice on violence prevention to develop and evaluate integrated violence prevention programs.

Four local councils, including Maribyrnong Council, have been chosen to participate in the project to develop initiatives in partnership with key community stakeholders to prevent violence.

As a requirement of Council's participation in the project, a nominated representative from Council was asked to attend the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada from 19 – 23 June 2006. The purpose of attending the conference was to learn from international experiences of violence prevention, particularly led by local government.

### Background to the World Urban Forum

The World Urban Forum is organized and convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT) every two years to discuss issues relating to the rapid urbanization of the developing and developed cities across the world. It is a non-legislative technical forum in which experts can exchange views in the years when the governing council of the UN-HABITAT does not meet.

The third World Urban Forum coincided with the UN-HABITAT's thirtieth year. The theme of the forum was "Our Future, Sustainable Cities: Turning Ideas in Action" and was attended by approximately 10,000 people from over 100 countries.

The World Urban Forum agenda was comprehensive with plenary sessions, 6 dialogues, 13 roundtables, caucus opportunities, expositions and over 150 networking and training events.

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Each of the four Victorian GLOVE project sites had representatives attending. Melissa Afentoulis, CEO, Women's Health West attended as a community partner for the City of Maribyrnong.

### GLOVE – an international perspective

The participation of the Victorian projects in the World Urban Forum was paramount to understanding the public policy context of violence prevention in the international realm. As Dr Carolyn Whitzman, the Chief Research for the GLOVE project notes,

This project is a part of a set of international projects linked by an organization called Women in Cities International. The project arose from the concern that research and public policy aiming to reduce violence in the public and private realms is presently disconnected as are the understandings of public and domestic violence. The international projects, in Canada, Africa, Latin America/Caribbean, Europe and Asia, also share a common analysis, whereby violence and fear of violence is seen as a major factor preventing the full participation of citizens, particularly women, in public life.

Opportunities to meet with international projects prior to the commencement of the project in Maribyrnong was a valuable learning experience to share what works and what doesn't work in different contexts.

## 2. COUNCIL POLICY

The involvement of Maribyrnong City Council 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 GLOVE Project supports the Council Plan through the following strategic objectives:

- **Community Engagement And Advocacy** - We will provide every opportunity for the community to participate and be involved, adopting multi approach community engagement tools, to ensure all groups have equal opportunities to participate and be involved in Council's decisions and advocacy
- **Community, Leisure & Cultural Facilities Services and Spaces** - Contribute to the wellbeing of the diverse Maribyrnong communities and to the health and vitality of the city by ensuring access to community and cultural facilities, programs and spaces

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## 4. DISCUSSION

### Key Findings – Violence Prevention

It was reassuring for the Victorian community partners and local governments that many approaches internationally to address violence are similar to the challenges in the Victorian context. Many of the projects focused on a grass roots community building approach to violence prevention grounded in sustainable structures and public policy. Many of the sessions during the forum attended were extremely valuable in that they showcased innovative approaches to violence prevention in a range of political, social, economic and physical environments.

The most valuable dialogue was between the Canadian projects. Through Women in Cities International, 6 geographical sites had been chosen to participate in an 18 month pilot project with funding support from the Office for Status of Women Canada.

The range of violence prevention initiatives included:

- Conducting women's safety audits to addressing barriers to public safety for women. Women's involvement in the audits was essential to delivering successful outcomes such as establishing safe havens on public transport.
- Addressing the vulnerability of women particularly at risk of violence by creating women's only safe shelters
- Coordinating agencies and government to provide an integrated response to violence such as the development of protocols for services
- Eliciting high level political support to disseminate positive messages through the media, events and through the distribution of promotional material
- Utilising Councillors and Mayors as champions to raise the profile of issues effecting women's safety and build it into health public policy.

Learnings from other local government experiences of violence prevention are very useful in acknowledging the unique positioning of local government to respond to local experiences of violence through public policy change influencing the social, built, economic and natural environments.

The opportunity to travel with and learn alongside other Victorian colleagues was also a fantastic opportunity to understand different experiences in violence prevention and to learn about different political and service provision landscapes that influence planning for violence prevention in other areas of Victoria.

### GLOVE – Next Steps

The GLOVE Project is being developed and overseen locally by the Family Violence Working Group, a subcommittee of the Maribyrnong Safety Taskforce, chaired by Melissa Afentoulis, CEO, Women's Health West.

Council, in partnership with Women's Health West has committed to achieving the following objectives prior to the end of year 1 of the project in June 2007;

- Mapping / audit of policies and programs at Council, services within the City of Maribyrnong, Primary Care Partnership and the State Government,

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- The initial scoping and mapping work will then inform a local workshop with key stakeholders. The purpose of the workshop will be to develop local initiatives in relation to violence prevention,
- Commence reviewing and re-labeling policies and program to account for violence prevention at Council,
- Develop a local evaluation based on the state wide evaluation framework.

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

The GLOVE Project will be implemented over the next two and a half years with in kind staff support required from each of the participating Councils. Advisory support will be provided by the University of Melbourne. Local actions developed will be within the existing resources of Council with further external funding sought if necessary.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The World Urban Forum offered a unique opportunity to learn from international experiences of violence prevention. It was reassuring that many projects internationally are facing the same barriers and constraints in acknowledging and responding to issues relevant to women.

The experiences internationally are similar to the instances of violence in the Maribyrnong setting, however the interventions need to be considered for their applicability in the Victorian context. The learnings and relationships established through participation in the World Urban Forum will be highly valuable as the GLOVE project is further developed in the City of Maribyrnong.

## **OFFICER RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**

**That Council note the report from the World Urban Forum.**