

Position Statement

26 April 2019

Preventing Violence Against Women

Violence against women and their children is prevalent and it is preventable. Violence against women is driven by gender inequality. Whole of population culture change initiatives focusing on the drivers of violence against women are essential. Actions that will prevent violence against women are:

- Challenging the condoning of violence against women
- Promoting women's independence and decision making
- Challenging rigid gender stereotypes and roles
- Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships

Gender inequality sets the necessary social context for violence against women to occur. By promoting and normalising gender equality in public and private life we will make change. ([Our Watch](#))

Secure weighted funding to expand regional prevention strategies

Funding is usually distributed on a per-capita basis, however this leaves regional, rural and remote areas with far less resourcing compared to metropolitan counterparts. Regional, rural and remote areas have much larger distances to cover to deliver services and programs. We need secure funding for a prevention team instead of a single coordinator.

We need substantial funding based on a weighted formulae, taking into account the distance a community is away from a regional or urban service. Regional and rural organisations are restricted by current funding structures, they face challenges in securing experienced prevention professionals as competitive salary and relocation incentives cannot be offered. Solutions similar to the Medical Rural Bonded Scholarship Program, where workers in rural or remote communities (eg. min. 3 years) have their HECS debt dismissed, need to be investigated.

Invest in research to identify effective primary prevention initiatives specifically for rural and remote communities.

Primary prevention need to suit the local community and not one primary prevention initiative suits every community. What works in metropolitan areas does not necessarily transferable to a country areas. There is a lack of research in effective rural and remote prevention strategies and it should be noted that harmful rigid gender roles are often further entrenched in rural communities. Rural and remote Gippsland is under researched and under resourced and our needs are significantly different to metropolitan areas.

Invest in recurrent funding models that reflect the nature of rural and remote communities.

The current funding for prevention initiatives in Gippsland is not ongoing or sufficient. We know that creating cultural change requires a generation of work. The current *National Plan to Reduce Family Violence against Women and their Children* is in its fourth and final iteration and is due to end in 2021. We urge bi-partisan support for another 12 year plan with an intense focus on preventing violence against women, and a recurrent model of funding to ensure that the plan can be effectively implemented.

Scenario

Jasmine is 6 years old, living in Yarram, both of her parents work on their beef farm. Jasmine is often told by her father how pretty she is. Whenever Jasmine offers to make a cup of tea, her mother comments about what a good wife Jasmine will be one day. When Jasmine is 15 years old she goes shopping with her mum and some friends for a dress for the school dance. While trying on a red dress, she gets told she looks 'slutty' and that boys will assume she is 'easy'. As Jasmine grows up she learns that women need to be careful what they wear and how they behave, so that men don't assume the 'wrong thing'.

Jasmine's brother Steven is two years older, he was always told how strong and tough he was whenever he helped his father on the farm. When he falls over and skins his knee and starts to cry, his father tells him to 'man up and stop being a girl'. When he is 17, his dad starts asking if he is dating and 'got any yet'. As Steven grows up, he hears the message that women are weaker than men, and that sex is an entitlement.

Both Jasmine and Steven grow up and have a similar education and job. But Steven gets promoted more quickly while Jasmine gets overlooked, because male clients want male salesmen. Jasmine marries Jack and Steven marries Kira. Jasmine still goes home and does the majority of the housework, because that is what she was taught a 'good wife' does. Jasmine earns less than her husband, so Jack looks after their financial matters. Steven however, does not do any housework, nor is he the main breadwinner in his house, yet he takes control of the finances because that is what he was taught men do.

Once Jasmine has a child, she is prevented from going back to work because of the lack of childcare spaces available in Yarram. Steven on the other hand does not even miss a day's work after Kira has a child. His superannuation continues to increase as there is no interruption to his salary. Jasmine become increasingly dependent on Jack, she is not equal to him. When he starts hitting her, she confides in her brother Steven. But Steven tells her what a 'good bloke Jack is' and that 'she must have done something to encourage it'. Jasmine puts up with the violence because she is so dependent on Jack and she has nowhere else to go. Eventually it ends....one way or another.

Jasmine and Steven's story does not need to end this way. Through societal and cultural change we will see equal distribution of power, resources and opportunity for men and women. Jasmine and Steven's story can look very different. **Both Jasmine and Steven can live a life that is both empowering and rewarding, a life that is free from discrimination, restrictions and violence.**