DRIVING CHANGE

Taking action against the drivers of family and gender–based violence

Safe and Equal acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional and ongoing custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We pay respects to Elders past and present. Sovereignty has never been ceded.

DRIVING CHANGE

Taking action against the drivers of family and gender-based violence

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We all deserve a world where we can live and love freely and fully, where families and relationships are safe and respectful, and people have everything they need to thrive.

But men's violence against women is a significant social issue that continues to do profound harm, and is inter-linked with broader experiences and impacts of family and gender-based violence.

It is critical that we acknowledge this violence, increase understanding and bring it out into the open. We need to work across communities, organisations and society in all places that people live, learn, work, socialise and play, to stop violence from happening in the first place. This is best achieved using proven actions and strategies shown to bring about transformative change.

The national framework for the prevention of violence against women, Change the Story, defines this as:

> *A primary prevention approach works to change the underlying social conditions that produce and drive violence against women, and that excuse, justify or even promote it. It works across the whole population to address the attitudes, norms, practices, structures and power imbalances that drive violence against women.*[2]

But preventing all family and gender-based violence means looking at other drivers of violence as well.

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1 This resource includes content adapted from the resource *'Unpacking the gendered drivers of violence against women tip sheets'*, published by Domestic Violence Resource Centre.

2 Change the Story, Our Watch, page 8.

OVERLAPPING DRIVERS OF FAMILY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

We all have a right to live safe, equal and fulfilling lives. However, we know that overlapping forms of oppression influence experiences of family and gender-based violence. These include inequality, stigma, discrimination and marginalisation experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from migrant and refugee communities, people of colour, LGBTIQ+ communities, and people with disabilities, amongst others.

We must break down these multiple and overlapping forms of structural and systemic inequality and oppression, and build a world where everyone is celebrated for being unique.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN

➡️ **To stop this violence, we must address the ongoing impacts of colonialism and racism, alongside gender inequality.**

Our Watch (2018) Changing the Picture

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

➡️ **To stop this violence, we need to challenge ableism, and how this overlaps and interacts with gender inequality.**

Our Watch (2022) Changing the Landscape

MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN

➡️ **To stop this violence, we must address racism and discrimination based on myths and misconceptions about cultural differences, to create an inclusive and gender equal society.**

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (2017) Intersectionality Matters

LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITIES

➡️ **To stop this violence, we must work together to challenge rigid gender norms, alongside heteronormativity and cisnormativity.**

Rainbow Health Australia (2020) Pride in Prevention

TAKING ACTION AGAINST THE GENDERED DRIVERS

Change the Story outlines the four key drivers of men's violence against women – the most important social conditions that predict and drive gendered violence. Addressing these upstream 'drivers' is the foundation for primary prevention, and must guide investment, policy, programs and actions.

1 **Condoning of violence against women**

3 **Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity**

2 **Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life**

4 **Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control[3]**

It really helps to understand the gendered drivers of violence, in order to understand the change we are trying to achieve. But re-stating the drivers over and over can actually make the current situation seem inevitable and even accidentally reinforce the ideas we are trying to dismantle.

To shift people towards change, we need to start our conversations and messages with a positive vision for the future, and make sure we end with suggestions for action and practical solutions everyone can get behind.

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3 Change the Story, Our Watch, page 36.

WHAT DO ACTIONS AGAINST THE GENDERED DRIVERS REALLY LOOK LIKE?

1 Challenge the condoning of violence against women

Condoning violence against women is one of the four gendered drivers, where violence is excused, downplayed, justified or denied, or where the victim is blamed rather than responsibility being placed onto the perpetrator.

People who condone violence against women may not realise they are doing it, but their beliefs and behaviours influence others. Left unchallenged, this creates a culture of secrecy and minimisation, where it's common and accepted to look away, deny the problem or make excuses for bad behaviour.

Rates of family violence and violence against women are higher when it is condoned by societies, institutions, communities or individuals.

Imagine what daily life could be like if we addressed violence directly so our communities were based on accountability, respect and love.

What can this change look like?

- Believe victim–survivors and publicly support their stories, shifting the blame squarely onto those who use violence

- Shift attitudes that minimise violence or excuse perpetration based on gender – everyone deserves to be safe and violence is unacceptable

- Promote the idea that silence and denial hurts individuals, and also hurts us all as a society

- Build community awareness of the different forms that violence can take – physical, emotional, financial abuse, stalking and coercive control

- Raise awareness that violence impacts people and communities in different ways, but we all have an equal right to live in safety and thrive

- Change policies and systems to ensure accountability for perpetrators and supported processes for victim–survivors to report

- Ensure women who are refugees or on temporary visas are protected and supported when reporting violence or leaving a violent partner

- Create policies that put the onus on organisations and institutions to prevent and respond to harassment and abuse, rather than relying on individuals to report

- Build organisational cultures that normalise consequences for perpetration, and embrace and support victim–survivors

- Promote media reporting that normalises reporting by individuals and public exposure of violence, and tells positive stories of community support for response, recovery and resilience

WHAT DO ACTIONS AGAINST THE GENDERED DRIVERS REALLY LOOK LIKE?

2 → Promote women's independence and decision–making in public life and relationships

Men's control of decision–making and limits to women's independence is the second of the gendered drivers, where violence is more likely when women's autonomy in both public life and private relationships is constrained. This can include undermining of women's decision–making and leadership in public life, or relationships where men control women's personal, financial or social independence.

Social attitudes that normalise men's control over women, or even celebrate it, create an environment where violence is more common and less likely to be challenged.

Imagine what daily life could be like in a society where decision making is shared, and people of all genders participate fully and collaboratively in public and private life.

What can this change look like?

✔ Promote collaborative and respectful relationships, including equal access and control of finances and decision–making around money – where partners contribute equally to decisions and share the load

✔ Improve economic security and independent control of finances for women

✔ Ensure women with disabilities are assisted financially and practically to have control over their own lives and make choices about their own bodies

✔ Proactively address the representation of women in leadership positions and male–dominated industries

✔ Offer flexible working arrangements to allow everyone to take up roles as parents and carers, should they wish to do so

✔ Ensure equal gender representation in public forums and meeting facilitation so that all voices and expertise are heard and valued

✔ Support women to build networks and support each other, and provide access to training and mentoring to develop their careers

✔ Monitor and report on the representation of women in political and public institutions

✔ Ensure the rights of women to make decisions about their own bodies

WHAT DO ACTIONS AGAINST THE GENDERED DRIVERS REALLY LOOK LIKE?

→ 3 Build new social norms that foster personal identities not constrained by rigid gender stereotypes

Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity is the third of the gendered drivers. Gender stereotypes are a whole lot of fixed beliefs and assumptions that there are only two, narrowly-defined and 'normal' ways to be in the world – where being a 'man' or a 'woman' determines whether we are naturally suited to different tasks and responsibilities, along with various aspects of our personalities, likes, dislikes, desires, interests and abilities.

Messages received from family, friends, advertising and the media influence people from a young age to take up limited and stereotyped gender roles and identities. People who strongly believe in these stereotypes are more likely to condone violence. Men who hold traditional, hierarchical views about gender roles and relationships are more likely to use violence. Women who strongly adhere to them may be less likely to identify and report violence.

> *Imagine what daily life could be like if we were all just were able to be ourselves, regardless of gender.*

What can this change look like?

- ✔ Teach children about the harms of gender stereotypes and encourage them to just be themselves

- ✔ Raise awareness of the positive impacts of changing stereotypes – allowing all of us more choice and opportunity to live our lives as we want, without constriction

- ✔ Change gendered dress codes and uniforms so people can just wear what's most comfortable for them

- ✔ Encourage women's and girl's equal participation in sport, and value sporting achievements equally

- ✔ Promote equal participation in subjects like science and engineering, and health and education

- ✔ Encourage young men and boys to explore a range of positive and individual expressions of masculinity, or whatever sort of gender definition and identity suits them

- ✔ Celebrate trans and gender diverse people as a fabulous and vital part of our communities and our society

- ✔ Check ourselves for double standards at work – do we label the same behaviour 'assertive' for one gender but 'bossy' for another?

- ✔ Support and encourage people of all genders to take on caring roles for children, and enjoy this time with their families

- ✔ Challenge portrayals of 'culture' in migrant communities that reinforce myths about gendered stereotypes and enable communities to create positive change on their own terms

- ✔ Encourage media portrayals of a range of bodies so that none of us feel forced to conform to beauty standards, and all types of bodies are celebrated

WHAT DO ACTIONS AGAINST THE GENDERED DRIVERS REALLY LOOK LIKE?

Support men and boys in developing healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships

Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control is the last of the gendered drivers. When aggression, sexism and disrespect towards women is normalised amongst men, it creates a culture where violence against women is more likely to be used, supported, excused or ignored.

Combined with gender stereotypes that exclude caring and nurturing ways to express themselves, this creates a situation where men and boys seek to bond with each other by proving their 'masculinity' through actions that are sexist, disrespectful, hostile towards women and homophobic too.

Masculinity is expressed in many ways; it is as diverse and complex as the people who express it. Supporting men and boys to explore alternative ways of expressing themselves and relating will create cultures where they can be themselves fully and authentically, and have better relationships with each other, their partners, their families and their coworkers.

> *Imagine daily life when male peer professional and personal relationships support gender equality and we all share similar values and beliefs based on respect.*

What can this change look like?

- ✔ Teach boys and men to recognise harmful expressions of masculinity, and challenge their peers to do better

- ✔ Ensure workplace programs promote awareness of power differentials and build cultures that break down 'boys clubs' by actively welcoming and encouraging equal contributions for staff of all genders

- ✔ Help young people question and distance themselves from hard-core and violent pornography, and explore positive sexualities that are fun for everyone involved and chosen freely

- ✔ Challenge homophobia in male sporting environments, and value gay role models who are living life positively and proudly

- ✔ Break down double standards of behaviour between men – if it isn't ok to act that way in front of women, then don't do it

- ✔ Enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, including community-led solutions for positive peer and family relationships

- ✔ Promote positive media depictions of a range of male relationships – as caring friends, fathers and partners – modelling behaviours and interactions with women that involve care, respect and equality

TAKING ACTION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

In addition to actions that directly target the gendered drivers of violence, Change the Story outlines further actions that need to be taken to change the broader context of gender inequality and other forms of oppression.

We all have a role to play in social change. Small things can make a big difference.

➡ We can build our own understanding, and change how we relate to our friends, families, partners, kids, coworkers and out in the community

➡ We can advocate for our workplaces, schools, universities and sporting clubs to be part of the change underway

➡ We can support organisations leading this work, and delivering programs for change

➡ We can join and follow movements for change online

➡ We can stand up for change in the moment – as an active bystander – when it is safe to do so

But we also need large and sustainably funded programs to achieve the change that's necessary. This will mean a multi-faceted approach across all the places people live, learn, work, socialise and play, using different techniques:

Direct participation programs with individuals, families and communities
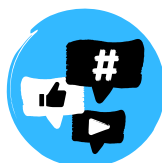
Communications and social media campaigns

Organisational change to actively prevent violence and shift policies, systems and cultures

Civil society and advocacy, and social movement activism[4]

You can be involved in primary prevention whether you work full-time in a related area, or see yourself more as a supporter, or someone who would like to do more. So, get involved, learn more, and be part of the growing workforce involved in the primary prevention of family and gender-based violence.

For further resources, training and leadership programs, and to join the 'Partners in Prevention' network, visit safeandequal.org.au/working-in-family-violence/prevention

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4   Change the Story, Our Watch, pages 79-89.

Driving change: taking action against the drivers of family and gender-based violence

VICTORIA State Government