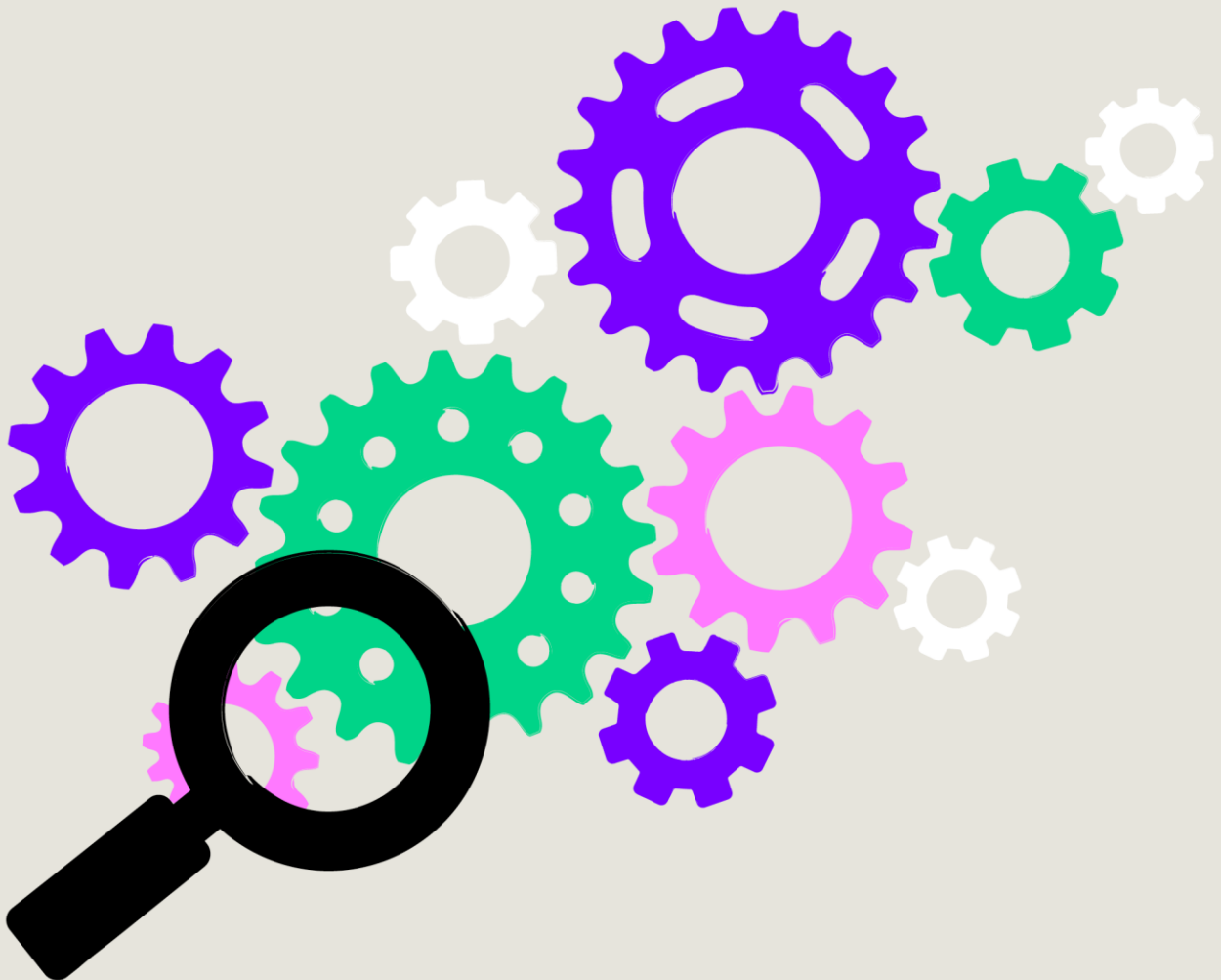


## Statewide Prevention Workforce Development Program

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Summary Evaluation Report 2022/23



# Contents

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Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners ..... 2

Snapshot..... 3

Introduction ..... 4

Program achievements..... 5

Evaluation findings ..... 7

Conclusion and next steps ..... 14

# Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

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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. We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded and recognise First Nations peoples’ rights to self-determination and continuing connections to land, waters, community and culture.



Prepared by Kate Randall (Lirata) and Meghan Cooper (Safe and Equal)

# Snapshot

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This report is a summary of evaluation of the Statewide Prevention Workforce Development program in 2022/23. This program builds on Safe and Equal's (formerly Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria's) long history of building the knowledge, skills and connections of the primary prevention workforce. This year the program delivered a range of training courses, Communities of Practice, practical resources, webinars, events and networks, with participation in most activities increasing since last year. More than 570 people attended activities and over 4,000 were engaged in networks. Safe and Equal invested heavily in consultation and ongoing collaboration with practitioners and specialised organisations working within and for key communities, informing program design and to develop a Safe and Equal Primary Prevention Strategy.

Evaluation demonstrates that the Statewide program remained highly successful in reaching and building the capability and connection of primary prevention practitioners across Victoria during 2022/23. Performance on all key indicators was well above target, and results relating to relevance and effectiveness exceeded last year's performance. The inter-connected and complementary nature of activities facilitated peer and sector connection, with feedback from practitioners suggesting they see benefits for their wellbeing, learning and confidence.

Participant feedback and internal reflection has identified a small number of opportunities for further refinement: going forward, some different approaches will be trialled to enhance participation and deepen peer connections, while strengthening monitoring and evaluation and extending collaboration and partnerships. This will further boost the program's reach, relevance and effectiveness, and contribute to a prevention workforce that is skilled, connected, diverse and resourced, with a strong sense of primary prevention identity as part of a broader movement to end family and gender-based violence.

# Introduction

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2022/23 was Year 2 for the Statewide Prevention Workforce Development Program (known as 'the Statewide program'), delivered by Safe and Equal with funding from the Victorian Department of Families Fairness and Housing (2022-26) and Department of Education (2021 – 25). It was a year of consolidation and design to inform the remainder of the multi-year program, after successfully merging the Partners in Prevention (PiP) and Free From Violence Workforce Capacity Building programs in 2021/22. This report covers the period 1 June 2022 to 17 May 2023.

Evaluation was conducted by the Primary Prevention Unit with support from [Lirata](#), in line with the program's Monitoring Evaluation and Learning framework for 2022/23. Data collection methods included participant feedback surveys after each activity (n=209), a survey of the PiP Network (n=97), case study interviews (n=3), stakeholder interviews (n=8), and action learning workshops with Safe and Equal's Primary Prevention Unit staff (n=10). Evaluation data is complemented by extensive stakeholder interviews (n=68) throughout the year to inform [Safe and Equal's new Primary Prevention Strategy](#) – which add rich information about the relevance and effectiveness of the program and its predecessors. The new strategy also guided design of the multi-year program.

# Program achievements

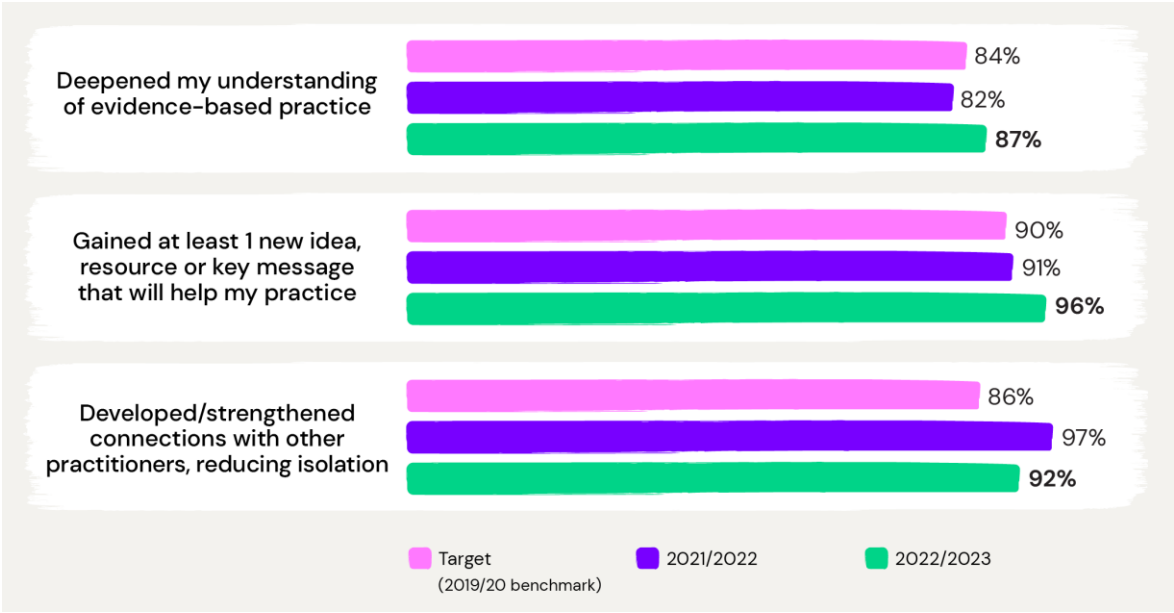
This year Safe and Equal has focused on continuing delivery of core prevention activities, whilst engaging with the wider prevention sector to clarify priority needs and identify how Safe and Equal can best focus its efforts going forward. Key highlights and achievements are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Program delivery highlights



Program data demonstrates that Safe and Equal's prevention activities remain highly successful in engaging and supporting primary prevention practitioners across Victoria, building their knowledge, confidence and professional connections. Performance against key indicators shows that the **relevance and effectiveness of prevention activities has improved since last year**. Practitioner feedback suggests **growing appreciation of opportunities for peer and sector connection, and benefits for wellbeing, learning and confidence**. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: The program exceeded performance targets on all key indicators**



# Evaluation findings

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## Engaging practitioners across a range of settings, locations, career stages and communities

This year Safe and Equal remained effective in reaching prevention practitioners across Victoria and beyond, with **576 practitioners<sup>1</sup> participating in activities. A total of 4,192 people engaged with the program, including membership of PiP and the online Basecamp network.** Participation in most activities increased this year, with highlights including:

- Training participation grew more than 50% from 2021/22, with 155 practitioners over 13 courses.
- The PiP Network grew by nearly 600 members.
- Webinars attracted the most attendees of all activities, with 325 people joining across 3 events.
- Communities of Practice (COPs) supported 71 practitioners, almost double last year's participation.

Data limitations mean the diversity of participating practitioners is not clearly measurable<sup>2</sup>, but a small sample of demographic data is available from feedback surveys. Within this sample (n=209):

- Around half were based in metropolitan Melbourne (49%), and a quarter were in rural/regional Victoria (27%). The proportion of rural/regional respondents decreased around 10% from last year, despite most activities being online, and interstate participation appears to be growing.
- Most saw themselves as mid-level practitioners (42%), while around a quarter were entry level (27%) and 19% senior practitioners.
- The majority of respondents (44%) worked in health, family and community services settings including specialist family violence services. Compared to last year, fewer are from school and early childhood settings (11%).

Safe and Equal expanded the ways we build relationships and collaborate across the prevention sector with a diverse range of organisations through formal partnerships, convening and participating on Advisory functions and ongoing learning with practitioners and organisations through COPs. Safe and Equal continued partnerships with Rainbow Health Australia and the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (a partnership funded through another program, but the relationship is integrated into many facets of our work) and established a new formal partnership with the Men's Project at Jesuit Social Services. Safe and Equal convened a larger and more diverse range of organisations in its Advisory Groups this year, while also participating in Advisory functions of sector peers. Together,

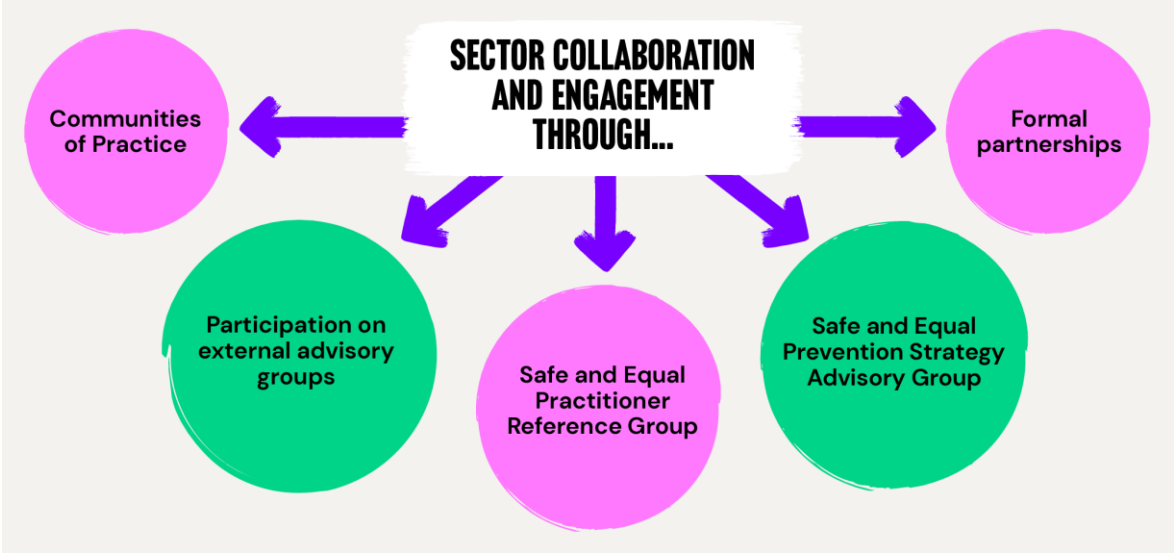
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1 These are counts of total attendees/subscriptions, not individuals – some practitioners engaged with more than one activity.

2 This is further discussed on page 12 (Lessons Learned)

this reciprocal engagement strengthens our understanding of the needs of particular communities, settings and the prevention workforces that support them. This understanding informs our activity design including COPs, trainings, events as well as our ongoing advocacy and approach to sector collaboration.

**Figure 3: Multiple modes of ongoing sector collaboration with practitioners, specialist organisations, and communities helped shape the program**



### Activities are informed by practitioners and responsive to their needs

Themes and activities were directly informed by practitioner and community expertise, through the PiP member survey, Advisory Groups, and key partner organisations.

- Through ongoing collaboration with Women with Disabilities Victoria, accessibility was embedded across all prevention activities – and this year the proportion of survey respondents with disability increased notably to 17%.
- Responding to priority issues raised by the PiP membership and Advisory Groups, a new [Intersectionality resource](#) was developed, and a partnership established with 'The Men's Project' at Jesuit Social Services to strengthen and inform activities focused on engaging men and boys in prevention.

This consultation, learning and collaboration has clearly helped make prevention activities highly relevant to practitioners. Participant feedback surveys show **96% reported gaining at least one new idea, resource or key message that would help their practice**, further improving on previous years' performance. Comments suggest participants especially valued the chance to discuss issues with their peers, practical learning activities including role plays, and Safe and Equal's facilitation of open, safe and energetic group spaces.



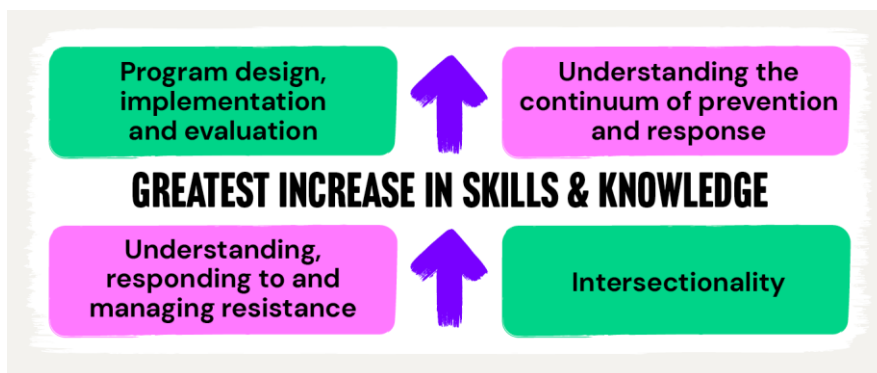
## Building capacity and knowledge in prevention practice

The effectiveness of prevention training and other capacity building activities also improved this year, with **87% of survey respondents reporting a deeper understanding of evidence-based practice**. Effectiveness is evident across trainings and webinars, and particularly strong among Communities of Practice (93% of respondents).

*“The gendered drivers and reinforcing factors ... this is the best explanation I have had ever. It was so in depth and clear. Really drilling in the knowledge.”*

– Prevention in Practice training participant

**Figure 4: Topics with greatest increase in practitioner skills & knowledge**



## Informing prevention programming and practice

Safe and Equal’s prevention COPs supported more than 70 practitioners over a period of months, to help them apply prevention knowledge and skills in their own work. Feedback surveys indicate **the COP experience was highly relevant to their practice, and learning from peers’ experiences was instrumental** in supporting the application of evidence, strategies and frameworks, and developing prevention projects. Illustrated in the Practitioner Case Study below, COPs are a key component of Safe and Equal’s holistic approach to workforce development. The Statewide program provides a ‘wrap-around’ support of networks that interconnect with and enhance other capability building supports such as training, resources and programs like the Fast Track Leadership program, and support the 16 Days of Activism Grassroots Initiative.

## Practitioner case study

### Georgia Ransome, 'Good People Act Now' Coordinator, Banksia Gardens

Professional knowledge gained through Safe and Equal's activities has directly informed Georgia's work, particularly in the area of intersectionality. Georgia has developed training to help her team apply an intersectional lens – for her organisation this was *“quite an emerging field that certainly was not spoken about 3-4 years ago”*, and has helped them move from focusing on prevention of violence against women to prevention of gender-based violence, exploring varying experiences of violence within the community.

Involvement in the Fast Track Leadership Program and then the Community of Practice supported Georgia to lead and embed these changes. Over time she has seen positive effects, with more and different people joining the program. *“We now certainly have a much more diverse range of people involved ... because it is more appealing, more accessible ... it reflects people's actual lives to them ... and people are bringing their family along.”*

Safe and Equal's prevention resources have also been a useful go-to for Georgia, especially the tip sheets and *Fast Facts* poster. She finds the way they are written *“easy to get the message across in an engaging way”*, and a valuable time-saver for organisations with limited capacity to create their own resources.

PiP members continue to use [Safe and Equal's many prevention resources](#) in their work, both new and existing. Among PiP member survey feedback respondents, the **most commonly used resources are the Tip Sheets and Fast Facts** resources, and various **videos from webinars and the PreventX conferences**.

## Supporting practitioner wellbeing

Safe and Equal has long maintained that connection with peers and with the sector is vital to practitioners' wellbeing. This year, 5 COPs and a face-to-face PiP Networking event created intentional space for peer connection and exchange.

This was a great success, as evidenced by feedback surveys where **over 90% of respondents agreed these activities supported them to develop and strengthen connections with other practitioners, reducing isolation**. While this result is slightly below last year's performance (97%) it is still well above the evaluation benchmark target of 84%.

Comments suggest a **growing understanding amongst practitioners of the value of connecting with their peers and the sector, and that they are seeing benefits for wellbeing, learning and confidence in their practice**. This feedback is also emerging in training activities, where Safe and Equal has increasingly used break out rooms and discussions to support peer exchange.

*“There is another level of resistance right now. There are things we are hearing that we haven’t heard before and it is powerful to have those conversations and know how to respond. To help each other with an element of self-care.”*

– COP participant

*“[Most valuable aspects] Connecting with people in the beginning stages of primary prevention across many different fields, organisations and programs. Having the opportunity to discuss and support each other in various challenges ... opportunities and room for growth in primary prevention.”*

– COP participant

## **Practitioner case study**

### **Georgia Ransome, ‘Good People Act Now’ Coordinator, Banksia Gardens**

For Georgia personally, the biggest difference her involvement with Safe and Equal has made is that it *“creates [the] community that you need. It can be heavy [work] and having that community urging you on and keeping you keen and excited ... is pivotal to be able to do this work ... Being connected to the sector reminds you of the ‘why’ and lets you share your successes and failings, and learn from others.”*

Like many prevention practitioners, at times Georgia has felt a bit isolated in her work – and Safe and Equal’s prevention activities helps support her connection and wellbeing: *“I cannot imagine how siloed my work would be, how small my networks would be if that support wasn’t there.”*

## Strengths, improvements and lessons learned

### Strengths and improvements

Extensive feedback from evaluation surveys and stakeholder/Advisory Group consultation interviews highlights the most valuable aspects of Safe and Equal's prevention activities, and points to some key opportunities improvement. These themes will guide continuous improvement going forward, to further strengthen the program's reach, relevance and effectiveness.

#### What's working well?

- Activities are inter-connected, offering 'wrap-around' support through access to networks of experienced practitioners, which complements formal training and practical resources.
- Training is of high quality, grounded in practice, accessible, and consistently effective in building knowledge and skills.
- Trainers and facilitators are knowledgeable and supportive. This is particularly encouraging given that Safe and Equal have engaged a number of new trainers this year.
- COPs facilitate valuable opportunities for shared reflective practice which strengthens participants' understanding, confidence and application of learning in their practice.

#### What could be improved?

- There is an emerging need to focus on the role of men, boys and masculinity in prevention. This will be a priority for Safe and Equal in 2023/24. A newly established partnership with 'The Men's Project' and recruitment of a male identifying trainer are both positive steps to date.
- Intersectionality remains a common topic of interest. While evaluation indicates Safe and Equal's prevention activities in this area are effective, feedback also suggests this work must continue, strengthen and consolidate.
- Appetite for face-to-face activities seems to be growing somewhat, though feedback remains mixed. Overall, online delivery is being well-received; yet feedback from some COP and Advisory Group participants suggests face-to-face options may help sustain engagement and deepen connections. Certainly the PiP In Person event was successful, attracting 25 attendees. A face-to-face element of 2024's PreventX conference is planned, and other activities will be explored.
- Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations could be improved, with feedback indicating concern that First Nations communities and organisations are not currently represented on the Advisory Groups. This area for improvement was also identified in last year's evaluation. Safe and Equal is keen to support prevention priorities in First Nations contexts, and continues to explore opportunities through an organisational partnership with Djirra. Care and time is being taken to ensure engagement is meaningful and respectful of First Nations organisations, who are often over-consulted and poorly resourced.

The Safe and Equal Primary Prevention Unit has also reflected on some of their key challenges and lessons learned throughout the year. These lessons may be useful for other organisations undertaking prevention or engagement activities, and are summarised here in the spirit of sharing experience and learning with the sector.

### **Lessons learned about program development and delivery**

- **Effective collaboration and partnerships require a purposeful approach and regular review by each party.** This has included formal review processes – e.g. a thorough review of and consultation with an Advisory Group to re-focus its purpose and mechanisms, developing Group Agreements, and partnership health checks – and ongoing informal processes, such as integrating reflective questions into meetings about ways of working and expectations, to ensure all parties feel heard and are able to participate safely and effectively.
- **While COPs are demonstrably effective and valued by practitioners, the reality is that consistent attendance remains difficult for many time-poor practitioners.** Attendance has fluctuated and at times has been low, though overall attendance and consistency of engagement has improved on previous years. A lot of effort has gone into strengthening COP recruitment and engagement processes in recent years, and further options are now being explored to support peer connection and exchange in more flexible ways. Upcoming focus groups with COPs will help inform new models or approaches that can be piloted.

### **Lessons learned about evaluation**

- **Better data collection methods are needed to understand the diversity of program participants, and the needs of particular practitioner cohorts or communities.** Collecting demographic data via feedback surveys means diversity can only be assessed for the smaller portion of activity participants who complete surveys – not for all attendees (as discussed earlier in findings about reach). Furthermore, after 2 years of collecting and analysing this data, it has not indicated any clear trends about how well the program meets the needs of specific cohorts or communities. Going forward, feedback surveys will no longer be used for these purposes and instead:
  - Diversity of reach will be measured through a narrower range of demographic data collected at participant registration, thereby capturing all participants; and
  - Safe and Equal will continue to draw on specialist expertise from Advisory Groups and partners to understand needs in various communities, and test how prevention activities can best respond.
- **A ‘learning by doing’ approach to refreshing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has supported the program team’s evaluation capacity and built a more cohesive shared understanding of the program** aligned with a new Prevention Strategy. Workshops and expert mentoring enabled all team members to be involved in clarifying the program’s intended outcomes through a new Theory of Change, and critiquing evaluation design and tools. This substantial investment of time has been worthwhile in rebuilding evaluation capacity and confidence after a period of strategic and staffing changes.

## Conclusion and next steps

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This evaluation demonstrates the Statewide program remained highly successful in reaching and supporting a range of primary prevention practitioners across Victoria during 2022/23. Prevention activities continue to support practitioners with valuable knowledge, skills, confidence and connections – with performance well above target and generally improving. Activities and topics are informed by practitioners and specialists and therefore relevant and evidence-based, meeting current and emerging needs. This knowledge informs advocacy and approaches to cross-sector collaboration for collective action. The inter-connected and complementary nature of activities is facilitating connection with practitioners seeing benefits for wellbeing, learning and confidence, and building a strong foundation for greater collaboration in prevention practice.

By collaborating with and listening to organisations involved in prevention activity Safe and Equal continues to clarify its leadership role within the prevention sector and the next 3 years of the Statewide program will focus on building skills, resourcing and connecting practitioners, and further enabling sector collaboration. Activities will focus on practice that is evidence-based as well as flexible and nuanced, drawing on many sources of expertise to meet primary prevention needs and objectives across communities and settings in Victoria. For practitioners, this means inter-connected opportunities to build their knowledge, skills and confidence in ways that support continual learning, both from formal evidence and shared experience.

Guided by the new Primary Prevention Strategy and Statewide Program Theory of Change, going forward Safe and Equal will complement this holistic workforce development approach with an increased focus on policy and advocacy leadership that catalyses and sustains collective action between prevention and specialist organisations. In these ways, Safe and Equal looks forward to supporting a prevention workforce that is growing and connected, and strengthening the movement to end gender-based violence.



Safe and Equal acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.