

**STATEWIDE**  
**PREVENTION WORKFORCE**  
**DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**



Summary Evaluation Report 2024–2025



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.

## **ABOUT THE STATEWIDE PROGRAM AND THIS REPORT**

Safe and Equal delivers the multi-year Statewide Prevention Workforce Development Program (Statewide Program) for Victoria's primary prevention of family and gender-based violence workforce. The Statewide Program is a wrap-around package of learning and support activities that commenced in 2021 and is due for completion in 2026. The Statewide Program offers professional and skills development opportunities, along with opportunities that support connection and collaboration, to practitioners involved in primary prevention across the state. Safe and Equal receives funding from the Victorian Department of Families Fairness and Housing (2022–2026) and Department of Education (2021–2026) to deliver the Statewide Program. Funding from the Department of Education has been extended to 2028.

The Statewide Program has an accompanying multi-year Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Framework (MEL Framework). The MEL Framework supports Safe and Equal in collecting meaningful data in a timely manner for continuous real-time learning and improvement, and to determine the reach, quality and impact of the Statewide Program. Safe and Equal staff work with an external evaluator to undertake all data collection, analysis and sense making for the evaluation of the Statewide Program.<sup>1</sup>

This report contains a snapshot of activities and outputs for the 12-month period, June 2024 to May 2025. It presents selected evaluation findings arising from evaluation activity conducted during this time. It includes staff reflections on what's working well and what could be improved, before a short conclusion and an outline of next steps for the year to come.

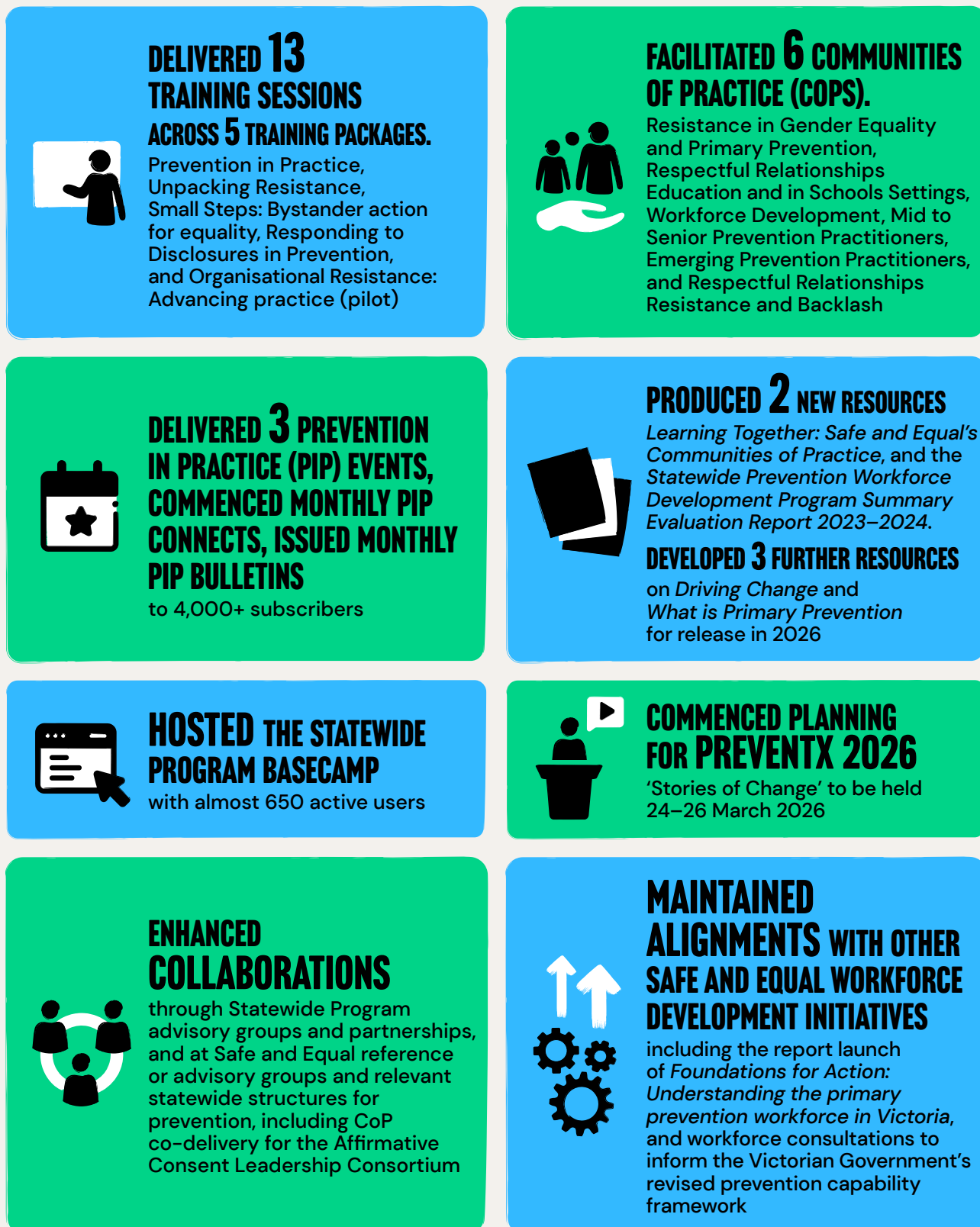
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<sup>1</sup> Safe and Equal staff were supported by WLK Consulting for external technical assistance and mentoring throughout the evaluation process.

# SNAPSHOT OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

This year, Safe and Equal delivered on all core components of the Statewide Program while ensuring all activities continued to meet the learning and support needs of Victoria's evolving prevention workforce. A snapshot of activities and outputs is illustrated as follows.

Figure 1: Program delivery highlights



# SELECTED EVALUATION FINDINGS

## Participant engagements remain strong

This year, Safe and Equal facilitated the engagement of 5,300+ participants in various Statewide Program activities: from the expertly run [Communities of Practice \(CoPs\)](#) and [training offerings](#), to the [Partners in Prevention \(PiP\) Network](#) and [monthly e-bulletins](#).<sup>2</sup> This figure reflects a slight increase from the total for 2023–2024, for a year that did not include the PreventX national conference (as a biennial event) but did ‘reset’ the Program’s PiP events (discussed shortly). It is noted further that the increase in engagements is in keeping with the upwards trend in figures since 2021–2022, as shown in Table 1.

Statewide Program activity	Participant engagements (number)			
	2021–2022	2022–2023	2023–2024	2024–2025
PreventX national conference	296	NA	390	NA
Training offerings	100	155	172	149
Communities of Practice	38	71	74	111
Networking events	NA	25	111	408
Workshops	35	NA	NA	NA
Webinars	325	323	244	NA
Electronic Practice Network	453	465	499	645
PiP Network	2,562	3,151	3,696	4,021
Advisory Groups	15	37	35	35
<b>TOTAL ENGAGEMENTS</b>	<b>3,824</b>	<b>4,229</b>	<b>5,221</b>	<b>5,369</b>

*Table 1. Participant engagements (number) by Statewide Program activities, 2021–2022 to 2024–2025*

The CoPs continued to build on Safe and Equal’s longstanding engagement with the prevention workforce through this ‘tried and tested’ mechanism of learning and support. This year, Safe and Equal convened six CoPs with a combined total of 111 members, an increase in reach of 50% compared with last year.

- + Resistance in Gender Equality and Primary Prevention
- + Respectful Relationships Education and in Schools Settings
- + Mid to Senior Prevention Practitioners
- + Emerging Prevention Practitioners
- + Workforce Development
- + Respectful Relationships Resistance and Backlash

All but one CoP commenced and concluded for the period covered by this report. The Respectful Relationships Resistance and Backlash CoP is specific to the Department of Education’s Respectful Relationships workforce and will be continuing into next year.

<sup>2</sup> As with previous years, the number of participant engagements does not reflect the number of unique individuals moving through Statewide Program activities. It is likely that many individuals engage with more than one Program activity in any given year. Indeed, the intention of the Program is to offer multiple mutually reinforcing opportunities to participants in support of connection and capability building as an integrated experience.

Safe and Equal delivered 13 online training sessions to 149 participants across five packages. Trainings were either sessions that were part of a course or single sessions delivered multiple times.

- + Prevention in Practice (existing)
- + Unpacking Resistance (existing)
- + Responding to Disclosures in Prevention (existing)
- + Small Steps: Bystander action for equality (existing)
- + Organisational Resistance: Advancing practice (pilot)

Safe and Equal's high-quality primary prevention resources continued to be sought after and accessed by practitioners in the field. Two new resources were released during 2024–2025.

*Learning Together: Safe and Equal's Communities of Practice* written for current and prospective participants in Safe and Equal primary prevention activities, and for prevention leaders and policy makers interested in understanding the transformative potential of CoPs for workforces and the movement to end violence.

*Statewide Prevention Workforce Development Program: Summary evaluation report 2023–2024* that presents key findings from the evaluation of the Statewide Program 2023–2024. Conclusions and next steps arising from the evaluation have influenced Safe and Equal's direction for Program activities for the 2024–2025 period; for instance, this year's preparations for PreventX 2026. In keeping with stakeholder requests for more in-person opportunities, the conference is being planned as an in-person event with online options available.

PiP membership grew to 4,021 members, reflecting an increase on last year. Safe and Equal continued to send out monthly e-bulletins to PiP members and host the broader Statewide Program Electronic Practice Network (Basecamp) for almost 645 active users.

## Program activities remain adaptive to workforce needs

Last year's summary evaluation report highlighted several things that the Safe and Equal team does well when it comes to workforce development for Victorian primary prevention. These include listening to the challenges raised by practitioners; continuously determining workforce needs; and adapting Statewide Program learning and support activities as necessary.

This year, Safe and Equal heard clearly the call from practitioners to raise the visibility of work occurring in prevention, including the diversity of the endeavour. Safe and Equal responded through a PiP reset. This led to the introduction of a more predictable set of opportunities for the Network from 2025 comprising:

- + two in-person events each year, one in rural/regional Victoria and one in Melbourne;
- + a third in-person event via an annual Pitch event (previously two-yearly and tied to PreventX);
- + monthly PiP Connects, an online drop-in space for practitioners to get together over lunch, share insights and build connections.

The three in-person events have shone a light on the breadth of prevention work across the state, and in doing so have amplified the value of prevention efforts to Victorian communities.

“ We were at a Respectful Relationships workforce meeting and Central office said there might be an opportunity for a specific CoP. We said we'd love that. So, Central saw the value in our connections as peers and with Safe and Equal as a resource. From that have come benefits in building connections with the Safe and Equal team. For example, I have emailed them about the 16 Days of Activism. What's happening and how we can support the organisation's work while bringing it to the local perspective.”

– CoP member

“ The concept of 'together we are stronger' was particularly powerful. The planning of this event brought together practitioners and experts in the field that demonstrated how organisations across Gippsland from different disciplines can come together and support each other and the community.”

– Gippsland event participant

The rural/regional event in Gippsland in May 2025 is particularly noteworthy. Safe and Equal planned this event collaboratively with Gippsland Women's Health (GWH) as the specialist organisation for the region's prevention infrastructure, Respectful Gippsland, and to coincide with the launch of [Respectful Gippsland Regional Partnership Strategy](#).

“ The pitches today were inspiring. They gave me hope in the work, connected me to the work, and created opportunity to see the breadth of work that is happening across Victoria and multiple communities.”  
– Pitch event participant

Together, Safe and Equal and GWH shaped a purposeful event and worked in ways that demonstrated the PiP Network's reach in rural/regional areas as well as the leadership of women's health services in rural/regional partnerships. The collaboration was definitely two way.

The Gippsland event, along with the other events in the series, have been a positive inclusion to the PiP component of the Statewide Program, and an example of the Program adapting to meet the expressed needs of the prevention workforce. Participants have greatly appreciated the 'deeper dives' into the scope of Victorian prevention, the recognition of the diversity of their prevention effort, and the opportunities to connect with others in prevention and reflect on community reach and the impacts of their work.

## Activities connect practitioners to each other and as a prevention community

Practitioners working across a range of sectors, settings, organisations and communities have continued to access opportunities afforded through the Statewide Program to share practice insights and deepen professional connections. This has occurred through their participation in PiP events (described above) and also via CoPs. Consistent with previous years, data collected this year through routinely administered feedback forms show that an overwhelming majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements related to their CoP experience:

- + The CoP was a safe space to share practice challenges and successes (96%)
- + The CoP has helped strengthen connections with other practitioners (89%)

Case Study 1 offers additional insight into the value practitioners place upon professional connections for prevention work. It draws out the role of the Statewide Program in connecting practitioners to each other and in bringing them together as a prevention community. Indeed, this year was the first time that Safe and Equal heard primary prevention being so consistently described and referenced as a *community*. Given that primary prevention is not one sector and encompasses a set of broad and diverse workforces, consideration could be given to 'prevention community' as a preferred descriptive term going forward.



### CASE STUDY 1: OUR PREVENTION COMMUNITY

This case study focuses on the role of the Statewide Program in contributing to Victoria's prevention community.<sup>3</sup>

It's common in frameworks like *Change the Story* to describe prevention as a 'system' or 'infrastructure' comprising a range of practitioners, organisations, leaders, decision makers and other stakeholders across multiple workforces, settings and sectors. These descriptors can feel formal, cold and mechanistic. Safe and Equal's own research, *Foundations for Action*, brought to light the difficulties in fixing a suitable alternative. It doesn't always feel like a good fit when prevention is referred to as a 'workforce' or a 'sector' for instance – at least not in the singular.

This case study offers a pathway through current descriptive dilemmas by bringing to light the different ways that people doing prevention work are starting to describe primary prevention as a community. The term 'community' also serves as a reminder that so much of primary prevention is about the *people* and their *connections* with one another for the work.

<sup>3</sup> This case study is based on the reflections of CoP members and facilitators who were interviewed in May and June 2025 as part of the evaluation of the Statewide Prevention Workforce Development Program 2022–2026.

## Program activities are spaces for connection and community

CoPs have been a cornerstone of Statewide Program activities since its inception. CoPs are literally communities shaped by and for people who want to advance primary prevention work, both individually and collectively, through deepened professional relationships and shared learning. We know from the multi-year evaluation of the Statewide Program that CoPs are valued highly by participants as expertly held spaces to contribute practice experiences, reflect on the work, learn from collective insights, and build connections with like-minded practitioners that they otherwise might not have met in the day-to-day of prevention. CoPs are places where members immediately feel 'at home' or can return to at any time in their career trajectories.

*That's part of the labour and intention involved. Holding the space for everyone so the CoPs can be what the communities want to get out of them. Some people like to focus on the nuts and bolts. Others prefer to focus on philosophical conversations. The first couple of sessions, we always talk about what it looks like to be together, but also our flexibility around this.*

– CoP facilitator

*I felt uncertain at first. I was like, 'I guess I'm an emerging practitioner, but am I really allowed to be part of this CoP?' I'm aware of myself as a man doing work that is populated mainly by women, recognising that women are doing incredible work. It's easy for me to come along as a token bloke who doesn't necessarily encounter the resistance and backlash that my female colleagues might get. But in that CoP, I felt at home very quickly. I formed connections. I've still got really close colleagues through these relationships.*

– CoP member

*As a regional practitioner, the most beneficial outcome of the Program's activities has been the opportunity to meet a community of people outside of my geographical area, hearing about what's happening in different areas. Activities like the CoPs have given me access to programs and initiatives across Victoria: the positives and the challenges. They have given me access to people that I might not have encountered through local CoPs.*

– CoP member

*A few years ago, I'd gotten to the point where I was comfortable with primary prevention content. Then I went to another department that wasn't focused on prevention. In the 12 months there, my confidence levels for prevention went downhill. Everything about the work had moved on so quickly. Safe and Equal's CoPs supported my re-engagement with the primary prevention community. Being able to re-build networks and see where everyone is up to, what the state of play is. Especially in Victoria, where it moves fast. It was really good. The next round of CoPs, I'll be putting my hand up again so I stay engaged with the prevention community.*

– CoP member

## Activities connect participants to the broader prevention community

The Statewide Program fosters connections that continue well beyond the activities in which they initially formed, and into prevention spaces outside of the Program. Being part of the CoPs, for instance, affords members a wider view of the breadth of initiatives, partnerships and organisations in Victorian primary prevention. With this expanded horizon come opportunities to participate in the prevention community more broadly through cross-representation on project reference groups or advisory structures; this in turn fosters collaborations, continued learning and professional growth.

*I've been around the block in other roles and workplaces. I feel I do have experience and expertise to contribute. I'm a critical thinker, a good communicator. Through the CoP, I formed a connection with someone at Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV). I found out about WDV's program for gaining credentials in disability and gender in prevention, and was invited to sit on that project reference group. The relationship that formed, the trust that formed, opened doors for my contribution to and learning from other settings that are not just Safe and Equal programs.*

– CoP member

There's also the sense of connection that the Statewide Program fosters in participants to feel part of the Safe and Equal community, and to be part of the organisation's role in Victorian primary prevention.

*I want to mention the CoPs and Pitch event that's been part of PreventX. I feel like staff at Safe and Equal really make themselves available to us. They allow empathic personal connections that strengthen professional practice; that ability for us to get to know and augment a sense of trust with specific individuals who work there. There's that sense of knowing and being known that I feel strengthens my capacity as a worker, because it gives me confidence in the work I'm doing. It means that I feel very comfortable if I need to draw upon these relationships for advice, support or information. This goes both ways. Through the connections built and the trust that has formed, I was invited to join the Practitioner Reference Group, which means I also get to contribute to Safe and Equal's prevention work.*

– CoP member

## Facilitators find a sense of connection and community too

While participants get a lot out of CoPs in terms of their sense of connection and community within and beyond these spaces, we must not overlook those on the facilitation side of things. Facilitators speak very warmly of CoPs as opportunities for mutual exchange, and not as 'one way traffic.' As facilitators, they do not stand apart from members but consider themselves just as connected to the prevention community, and to the professional care, nurturing and learning this community affords to members for the work of challenging and transforming the underlying drivers of violence.

*Connection is the outcome and the process or journey all at once. I think this is what participants get out of CoPs. It's certainly what I get out of them as a facilitator. The connections and shared experiences. How many times have we heard prevention practitioners say, 'I feel isolated.' Whether they're in a huge organisation with ten others or they're the sole practitioner in their workplace. There's this narrative around us feeling isolated for a whole range of reasons. For me, the primary outcome or positive impact has been connection, learning from others.*

– CoP facilitator

*I rarely have access to spaces to learn, or even any time to read a book on practice. To me, I'm just as much a CoP participant as I am a facilitator, as I get to learn so much from other practitioners. I have very few spaces where I get to connect with other practitioners in meaningful ways, and so this CoP is such a great dual learning experience for us all. I love being part of these CoPs, and while it's a lot of work, I'd probably do it for free! I get so much out of it.*

– CoP facilitator

*If the CoPs didn't exist, the workforce would be smaller and less skilled than it is now. But also, I don't know where I'd be without the CoPs. Not in a good place, is what I would say. You could say we're not in an entirely good place now, but I'd be in a much worse place without that support of the CoPs.*

– CoP facilitator

## Positive shifts in knowledge and confidence continue

The Statewide Program continued to generate positive impacts on practitioner learning. During the year, many participants reported gains in knowledge in prevention practice and confidence for the work following their attendance at activities such as training courses or sessions, CoPs and PiP events.

Data collected through feedback forms across various Program activities and aggregated for analysis, show that an overwhelming majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements related to the *knowledge and confidence* dimensions of professional learning.

- + The activity deepened my understandings of prevention practice (91%)
- + The activity improved my confidence to take action on the topic or theme discussed (90%)

“ I got to talk about how we are using our program across the community, which I hope helped the Respectful Relationship staff who were in the CoP. I got to learn too. I saw that others are coming up against the same challenges. It was interesting for us to share, problem solve and talk through that with Respectful Relationships staff. To hear their perspectives and get a better understanding of why. Then ask, ‘What can we do to change that?’.”

– CoP member

“ I keep coming back to confidence. The interpersonal connections, the quality of CoP conversations, the quality of the Pitch event, the Practitioner Reference Group. These have given me increased confidence in my work as a practitioner. The people at Safe and Equal, in the CoPs, are very generous. Very good at encouraging and reinforcing good practice when we see it. That has been really helpful. I’ve felt it’s been the wind beneath my wings. To keep on having a go. To share the work I’m doing. Hopefully when I speak about the work I’m doing, others are encouraged as well.”

– Program participant

Learning impacts such as these owe much to the environment supported by Program activities, especially the CoPs. It is common for members to ‘test’ real-world project plans or resources under development, or even to re-examine specific areas of prevention practice, all in the professionally caring peer-to-peer setting of the CoPs; then to take insights gained confidently into one’s work for enhanced practices when ‘back at the desk.’

## Statewide Program is a backbone of support when things get tough

This year, Statewide Program activities have been a source of certainty for the prevention workforce amidst ongoing community resistance and backlash, and shifting government agendas.

Participants have spoken of the Program as a backbone of support as they encounter resistance to action on the drivers of violence and backlash against prevention’s social change agenda more broadly. A simple reminder of the ‘long haul’ of prevention, and finding strength and solidarity in this, can re-energise when the going gets tough.

“ I definitely learned some strategies around how to engage, the specific words, the structures for how to engage without causing conflict or sacrificing your own values. But I think the biggest difference the CoP has made to me is the relief – the release of responsibility. We had a big discussion around how there exists a massive part of the population that you just can’t do anything with. Before this, I was very much seeing that as a failure on my part. But having that discussion in a group with lots of different identities and cultural backgrounds, and being told ‘you need to take care of yourself first,’ was extremely validating”

– CoP member

Fluctuations in political commitment at all levels of government, along with inevitable funding uncertainties and the ever-present reality that resourcing could be scaled back at any moment, are further reasons why practitioners value stable multi-year, multi-level workforce development initiatives like the Statewide Program. Knowing that there are opportunities through the year for professional connection, validation and wellbeing as well as for learning and growth – and the odd celebration of shared effort – can help practitioners to ‘steady’ emotions around political and programming contexts of prevention.

Then there is the ongoing isolation of being a prevention practitioner. Primary prevention is universal in scope, meaning it requires skilled and supported people to do the work across diverse organisations, sectors, settings and communities. While specialists in response should and do have structured opportunities for debriefing and supervision, the same is not necessarily the case for their primary prevention counterparts. The Statewide Program fills the gap in the support needs of practitioners who often feel like they are ‘going it alone’ in their day-to-day roles, by bringing them together in ways that otherwise would not occur.

“It’s a very siloed job. Hearing people say that it’s really hard, that we’re allowed to focus on the people who will engage and are interested and open to change, it’s just made my job a bit easier to manage day-to-day with that sort of perspective.”

– CoP member

“We’re not working directly with victim survivors but we are working with them when we read the stories, digging up statistics, running sessions or events, and so on. Yet, we don’t have spaces for debriefs, supervision as such. I feel like the CoP is a soft version of this. That space for practitioners in primary prevention. Because in our positions in local government or schools or health entities, there is no such space specifically on topics of primary prevention. So, this is one of the benefits of the CoP. It’s also a recommendation for its importance.”

– CoP member

## True partnerships are pivotal for high-quality workforce development activities

Safe and Equal continues to build on established relationships with organisations specialising and leading in intersectional prevention practice, to ensure Statewide Program activities are of the highest quality in terms of identifying and responding to workforce needs. Organisations include Rainbow Health Australia, Zoe Belle Gender Collective, Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health, Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) and Djirra alongside Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Sexual Assault Services Victoria as a part of the Affirmative Consent Leadership Consortium.

Safe and Equal reported last year on the consultations that occurred with one of WDV’s Experts by Experience panels for a successful PreventX 2024. The consultations meant that access, safety and inclusion considerations were built into conference planning from the start and not as an afterthought or ‘bolt on.’

This year’s summary evaluation report is an opportunity to take a wider view of the enduring relationship between WDV and Safe and Equal as two respected statewide organisations and leaders in primary prevention and workforce development. Case Study 2 shows that impactful partnerships for workforce development do not magically happen, but are built upon deep trust and authentic relationships nurtured over time. The case study delivers insights for prevention more generally too, for it shows how respect, reciprocity, transformation and gratitude are at the heart of any true partnership.



## CASE STUDY 2: PARTNERSHIPS FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

This case study focuses on the partnership between Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) and Safe and Equal for activities of the Statewide Program since 2022.<sup>4</sup> It is a story that is broader than the Statewide Program, for it brings into focus the evolving and enduring relationship between WDV and Safe and Equal over several years, and the benefits of this connection to each organisation's respective programs and their leadership in prevention. It is a story that also delivers insights for prevention more generally, in that it shows how true partnerships have elements like respect, reciprocity and transformation at their heart.

### A champion and an opportunity to work together

Our story begins with one of WDV's workforce development initiatives. In 2020, WDV released a toolkit for Victoria's Women's Health Services (WHS) as a key output of the organisation's WHS Capacity Building Project. The toolkit supports WHS to audit their own organisations and implement changes for gender and disability inclusive environments. By completing the toolkit steps, WHS can role model gender and disability inclusion to regional partners with whom they work, thereby collectively addressing ableism and gender inequalities as intersecting drivers of violence against women and gender diverse people with disabilities.<sup>5</sup>

The following year, a practitioner with significant expertise in gender-based violence and disability inclusion, not to mention strong connections with WDV through previous employment there, joined Safe and Equal's Prevention Team. She brought motivation to the Team to think more deeply about gender and disability in prevention, which led to conversations with WDV on the opportunity to apply the WHS toolkit to Safe and Equal's context.

WDV and Safe and Equal subsequently developed a formal partnership agreement for a 12-month period to adapt elements of the toolkit for Safe and Equal's use and to complete the toolkit steps for a specific initiative. The Prevention Team chose to focus on selected events for that year.

As the collaboration progressed, Safe and Equal realised that this was the start of a journey for them; that as far as the Prevention Team was concerned the relationship with WDV could not be limited to a one-off encounter. A genuine commitment to disability accessibility and inclusive practices demanded more, and this was demonstrated by what happened next.

### Continuing the journey through PreventX

PreventX is Safe and Equal's biennial national conference on prevention and a notable component of the Statewide Program. In the lead up to PreventX 2022, the Prevention Team consulted with WDV's Gender and Disability Experts by Experience Advocacy Group (the Experts) for their expertise in gender and disability inclusive practices. Together, the Experts and Safe and Equal personnel considered the conference structure, themes and online user experience, to make sure an intersectional lens (specifically the disability and gender intersection) was applied throughout.

The Experts offered practical advice on how the Prevention Team could undertake actions across these domains. Notably, and in keeping with best practice consultation with women and gender diverse people with disabilities, the Prevention Team 'closed the loop' by connecting with the Experts at the conclusion of the conference, to report on actions taken for PreventX 2022 and reflect on how to do better next time.

WDV and Safe and Equal co-developed a case study that describes the consultation process and its outcomes. A similar process was then undertaken for PreventX 2024 with a fresh case study.<sup>6</sup> The expectation is that the process will be continued for PreventX 2026.

All of this shows that disability access and inclusion considerations can become the practice norm; and all of this is ultimately contributing to a national conference that is increasingly accessible to and inclusive of people with disabilities (and is trauma informed and strengths based too) in delivery as well as content. Trusted relationships that are not merely transactional but enduring are vital here.

<sup>4</sup> This case study is based on the reflections of Safe and Equal and WDV staff who were interviewed in May 2025 as part of the evaluation of the Statewide Prevention Workforce Development Program 2022–2026. Interviewees were Sozic Brohan and Helen Freris (WDV) and Amelia Ditcham and Hannah Dwyer (Safe and Equal).

<sup>5</sup> An updated toolkit is accessible through WDV's website.

<sup>6</sup> [PreventX 2022 case study](#) and [PreventX 2024 case study](#) can be accessed through WDV's website.

*It's nice to see that every two years there is more consideration given to disability access and inclusion. There is always more to do, of course; and hopefully PreventX 2026 will see a continuation of and building on the work to date. It's actually funny because now it's Safe and Equal's Prevention Team that gets back to us to advise on things like live captions providers!*

– WDV

## A significant milestone for Safe and Equal

Perhaps nothing speaks more strongly to an organisation's commitment to access and inclusion, and to dismantling disability and gender inequalities as intersecting drivers of violence, than gaining credentials in disability and gender, and through this by locating specialist capabilities, skills and confidence for work at this intersection in specific staff members and across an organisation.

WDV offers two types of credentialling as part of its Gender and Disability Workforce Development Program: an Individual Credential Program and an Organisational Credential Program. Safe and Equal was involved in the Individual Credential Program pilot in 2023, through a member of the Prevention Team. Safe and Equal is currently involved in the Organisational Credential Program for whole-of-organisation learning and improvement. The steps for both programs is similar to the toolkit audit and planning steps. First receive training. Next identify areas to audit. Then develop a plan and commit to making sustainable change. Last but not least, reflect and learn along the way.

The organisational opportunity, however, marks a significant milestone in the journey insofar as it goes beyond the Prevention Team to other parts of Safe and Equal. The partnership is held between WDV and Safe and Equal's Culture, Operations and Engagement Portfolio as the liaison, to reflect this organisation-wide endeavour.

*WDV identified us as a highly-valued participant who could help build impact for their program. This helped me to champion the initiative beyond the Prevention Team to other parts of Safe and Equal. I said to senior leadership that WDV has asked us to participate. This trusted partner has asked us to do organisational credentialing. We're at the point now where we have individual specialists in disability and gender in the Prevention Team, and the potential for the organisation to systematise what the Prevention Team has learned and has been doing in practices and processes. It's a big deal.*

– Safe and Equal

## Positive impacts on the prevention system

Reflecting on these developments as a whole, the multi-faceted partnership and collaborations between WDV and Safe and Equal have yielded many positive impacts for the Statewide Program and indeed for Victorian primary prevention. Consistent measures for accessibility and inclusion have widened opportunities for participation in the Program. Improved practices and processes are embedded in ways of working within Safe and Equal's Prevention Team. Connections and relationships have been nurtured and are enduring between the two partners.

In terms of the prevention workforce, practitioner capabilities are ultimately better supported by locating disability and gender content as integral to intersectional practice, not as a 'bolt on.'

*Over time, there has been a greater recognition and possibly a greater integration of disability across Victoria's primary prevention work, a recognition of its importance. This is due to the saturation of Changing the Landscape, and Safe and Equal and its Statewide Program have been integral to that. I think that as we have interacted with Safe and Equal and others in prevention (as facilitated by Safe and Equal) it's becoming more recognised that disability is as much a part of prevention as other areas, and that it is vital to the work. I don't think we would have been able to achieve this on our own without the Statewide Program and the work that Safe and Equal spearheads in prevention.*

– WDV

Finally, as two separate organisations with unique roles in workforce development – one as a specialist community-based organisation, the other as a mainstream statewide peak – WDV and Safe and Equal have gained individual reputational benefits in working together over time.

## What does this case study tell us about partnerships?

This case study shows that at the heart of any true partnership for prevention are elements like respect, reciprocity and transformation. Gratitude for the opportunity to reflect, learn and grow together is another notable feature.

**Respect** means recognising where each partner sits in the prevention system and valuing the unique part that each partner plays in workforce development, including their respective leadership roles for specific programs of activity. WDV and Safe and Equal are statewide organisations that contribute differently to prevention in Victoria. Their mutual recognition and valuing is evident in the collaborations described in this case study; it is also shown by their mutual representation on each other's prevention reference or advisory groups, and by Safe and Equal intentionally seeking WDV's input into prevention system pieces like the Foundations for Action initiative.

Respect also means taking the time to learn about each other and do background work *before* engaging in any partnership. This makes a huge difference to community-based organisations like WDV, who are often approached by stakeholders expecting capability uplifts and explanations from scratch.

*As women with disabilities, we're often put in a position of having to explain what we mean by disability and gender. It's really apparent at Safe and Equal that there's a valuing of the knowledge that's already been derived from us working together; it's clear that they've read resources like Changing the Landscape and learned about what we do, before each encounter. They respect us enough to do this, and we're not having to do the heavy lifting of explaining things to them.*

– WDV

Perhaps most importantly, respect means recognising that partners are not always equal when they enter partnerships, whether that's because of the size of their organisations, the time and resources they can contribute to the work, or their spheres of influence and capacity to influence. Given these differentials, respect means 'power with' rather than 'power over.' It means using power to platform the shared endeavour rather than standing over or extracting from the other.

*What Safe and Equal does well, because they are quite a big organisation in prevention, is sharing the power with smaller organisations. I'm not just talking about WDV. There are other organisations like Rainbow Health Australia. I know they are partnering with Safe and Equal as well. We have something to learn from the way Safe and Equal shares power too. While we are a small organisation, compared to other disability organisations we are often the biggest. So, this is something for us to keep in mind, to share the power with others when we do our disability and gender work.*

– WDV

**Reciprocity** means understanding that partnerships are always two-way in terms of connections, learning and benefits. For Safe and Equal in particular, disability was never about a diversity box to be ticked off, and WDV was never approached as a once-off partner to be forgotten about after 12 months. Rather, the relationship between the two organisations commenced and continues as a mutual exchange over time.

*The flow of knowledge, collaboration, reputation and openness to further partnership activity. It works both ways. Communication has continued, so there's ongoing connection.*

– WDV

*I think WDV sees us as completely reliable in wanting to change, in wanting to make sure we're doing what we can to reduce violence against women with disabilities. I think they see our commitment. That as a mainstream organisation we want to and will implement change; and that we want to reduce the situation of organisations like WDV having to do the work. Because of that, I feel like every part of our relationship and our work together has flourished. It feels really great.*

– Safe and Equal

**Transformation** means expecting to come out of a partnership different to how one went in. For Safe and Equal, the partnership has been a journey over several years that started with a champion, progressed to collaborations on PreventX, and moved to embedding specialisation within the Prevention Team before arriving at organisation-wide credentialling in disability and gender (where it is at the time of writing). For WDV, the partnership has given the organisation an expanded platform for good practices in gender and disability access and inclusion, and has helped to elevate and amplify the centrality of disability and gender as core to intersectional prevention work.

**Gratitude** means never taking for granted that partnerships always bring opportunities for partners to reflect, learn and grow from each other.

*Professionally and organisationally I'm so grateful for this work. From the beginning of our connections to now, from where we started to how we've evolved, when I reflect on how much of an influence WDV has had on my own knowledge and practice as well as that of the Prevention Team and now the organisation, I'm so grateful. Gratitude is the word.*

– Safe and Equal

## Momentum is building for positive change on the prevention workforce

Collective action is at the core of Safe and Equal's approach to strategic workforce development, and runs alongside the Statewide Program's focus on learning and support. During the year, Safe and Equal sought to catalyse collective action on workforce development whenever possible through conversations, connections, partnerships and collaborations.











This year, collective change on the prevention workforce and the wider prevention system continued to 'snow ball' through Safe and Equal's Practitioner Reference Group (PRG) and Prevention Strategic Advisory Group (PSAG). These are dedicated structures for prevention stakeholders that provide spaces to discuss a range of matters, including workforce development and its progress in Victoria.

This year, Safe and Equal launched *Foundations for Action: Understanding the primary prevention workforce in Victoria*, the report arising from the Foundations for Action initiative completed last year. The launch was part of the first event in the refreshed PiP series, and took place in Melbourne. Safe and Equal also completed consultations and drafting of the revised prevention capability framework for the Victorian Government. And Safe and Equal extended its formal partnership with Jesuit Social Services – The Men's Project, and extended its relationships with Victoria's women's health services via the Women's Health Services Network, by commencing work on a theory of change for masculinities and men in the primary prevention and early intervention of family and gender-based violence.

While none of these activities are funded Statewide Program initiatives, they are nevertheless Safe and Equal strategic efforts that run in parallel with the Program to help leverage relationships and catalyse collaborations for prevention workforce development and prevention system policy and practice improvements.

# WHAT'S WORKING WELL AND WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

As the fourth year of the Statewide Program drew to a close, Safe and Equal staff took the opportunity to reflect on evaluation findings for insights on what is working well, what to keep doing and what to improve upon going forward. These thoughts are summarised as follows.

What's working well?	What do we keep doing or improve upon?
<p> Continuously identifying workforce needs through actively listening to the challenges of practitioners, and then customising Statewide Program learning and support activities in response to needs.</p>	<p> Safe and Equal has heard ongoing requests this year for more in-person opportunities to connect, share, learn and support, and will endeavour to provide more in-person opportunities in the coming year.</p> <p> PreventX 2026 scheduled for 24–26 March is one such opportunity with in-person and online modes of delivery being planned. CoPs are another potential avenue for hybrid delivery that will be explored over the next few months.</p> <p> At the time of drafting, Safe and Equal were commencing a new CoP focused on prevention in sports. This CoP emerged based on a desire to continue to build momentum for whole-of-sport engagement in Victoria.</p>
<p> Relationships with organisations or networks that support specific communities or settings prioritised for prevention action.</p>	<p> Safe and Equal will continue to build on our relationships with these external organisations or networks so that Statewide Program activities can be of the highest quality in identifying and responding to evolving workforce needs.</p>
<p> Alignments between the Statewide Program and other Safe and Equal initiatives that support collective action on workforce development.</p>	<p> Safe and Equal will continue to undertake strategic initiatives and identify opportunities for cross-program activities that are complementary to the Statewide Program's focus on workforce learning and support, including utilising the theory of change for masculinities and men in prevention.</p>
<p> Data collection for purposeful monitoring and evaluation of the multi-year Statewide Program.</p>	<p> Safe and Equal will continue to collect high-quality data, and collate all data collected to date, for analysis, sensemaking and valuing of the Program as a whole. Evaluation findings with strategic recommendations for program improvement will be released in 2026.</p>

# CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This summary evaluation report has shown that the Statewide Program continues to engage well and effectively with Victoria's primary prevention workforce through its delivery of multi-pronged learning and support activities. The Program's ongoing responsiveness to identified workforce needs, and its adaptations to core activities such as the PiP events, are factors contributing to this achievement.

This summary evaluation report has shown that the Statewide Program continues to have a positive impact on practitioner knowledge and confidence, professional wellbeing and sense of community and solidarity – thereby equipping a vast segment of Victoria's prevention workforce with what it needs to know for the work and supporting it to succeed in the work. This has been especially important in the context of ongoing resistance and backlash, shifting government agendas, and the isolating nature of being a prevention practitioner.

This summary evaluation report has shown that the Statewide Program continues to be highly valued by participants for the opportunities it offers to connect, engage in conversations that matter, and share practice challenges and breakthroughs. Safe and Equal's relationships with participants and organisations or networks across diverse sectors, settings, communities and locations are factors contributing to this achievement.

This summary evaluation report has shown that Safe and Equal is aligning the Statewide Program with other workforce development initiatives, and is strengthening the organisation's role as a system lead through a multi-pronged approach to advocacy. This approach utilises existing prevention structures to progress strategic workforce development and practice improvements. Through these moments, Safe and Equal is building momentum for positive change on the prevention workforce as a vital part of Victoria's prevention system.

The coming year, 2025–2026, reflects the final year of the multi-year Statewide Program in its current cycle of funding. For the next 12 months, Safe and Equal will:

- + Deliver PreventX 2026 'Stories of Change,' drawing on evaluation and other data collected for PreventX 2024 'Messaging for a Movement' and including in-person and online delivery modes.
- + Scope and potentially introduce hybrid in-person and online delivery modes for the CoPs.
- + Retain the series of PiP events as in-person opportunities for members, with monthly PiP Connects as online spaces.
- + Continue to deliver high-quality resources that build on prevention practice leadership.
- + Review existing prevention training offerings and release a refreshed 12-month calendar.
- + Continue to focus the Statewide Program on practitioner learning and support, and on collective action for Victoria's prevention workforce and the prevention system more broadly.
- + Deliver a final evaluation report that presents the Statewide Program's achievements and insights gained over five years of implementation. The report will include strategic recommendations on 'what next' for the Statewide Program, and for prevention workforce development and system improvements in Victoria.

Safe and Equal acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.