



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Victoria University acknowledges the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) and Wathaurung (Wadawurrung) on our Melbourne campuses, and the Gadigal and Guring-gai people of the Eora Nation on our Sydney campus. These groups are the custodians of University land and have been for many centuries.

We acknowledge that the land on which our campuses stand is the place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. The Kulin and Eora peoples' living cultures have a unique role in the life of these regions.

As we share our own knowledge practices within the University may we pay respect to the deep knowledge embedded within the Aboriginal community and their ownership of Country.

"Our front cover image shows a mural painted by students and staff at Victoria University's Footscray Park Campus on International Women's Day, 8 March 2018. The mural was inspired by the work of Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani-born activist for gender equality and the education of girls and women, and was facilitated by Permessio Collective.

"The painting of the mural represents so much of the Respect and Responsibility program's approach. It was a joint project of Respect and Responsibility and Victoria University Student Union. The central quote was chosen for its statement of strength and determination to fight for full gender equality.

"The mural project symbolises women reclaiming our space, our voices and our right to safety. Heartbreaking stories of gender-based violence emerge every day. Respect and Responsibility acknowledges the strength of all survivors and works with hope that our combined efforts will increase confidence, change attitudes and empower young people of all genders to build a world free of sexism and violence."

Marian Cronin, Associate Director, Inclusion and Engagement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Victoria University thanks the following people and organisations for their valuable contributions to this document: Lyn Walker and Associates, Katrina Galanos, Rachael Athanasiou, Zhoë Jess, Sara Austin, Kriss Guidotti, Renee Byrnes, Shelley Hewson-Munro, Dr Kim Shearson, Teresa Tjia, Mary-Jo O'Rourke AE, Brett Kiteley STROKE Design, AMES Australia, Western Bulldogs Community Foundation, Women's Health West, Universities Australia.



VICE-CHANCELLOR'S FOREWORD

At Victoria University we are always welcoming, always ethical, always shaping the future and always working together. As a University we stand united as a place of respect, equality and diversity, and we condemn aggression in all of its forms.

The Respect and Responsibility strategy - Building Respectful Futures Together - promotes gender equity as a key action to prevent violence against women. We have made a commitment to genuine, evidence-based action to prevent violence against women and other gender-based violence, and I am proud to be able to lead the University as we tackle these issues.

By engaging with student leaders, students and staff, we frame respectful relationships as a core 21st-century skill for all graduates. This builds upon, and contributes to, community violence prevention strategies. And, by connecting researchers with one another, the strategy seeks to embody and promote the values of our institution.

We will continue to work with our partners and communities to ensure that we are designing and implementing the best possible strategies and responses to prevent violence against women.

There has never been a more important time to take definitive action. We call upon our colleagues to prevent any and all intimidation and violence against women; on every campus, in every study environment; in every research laboratory and in every career.

Professor Adam Shoemaker
Vice-Chancellor and President

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A NEW STRATEGY FOR A CHANGING CONTEXT

Violence against women is a prevalent and serious social problem in Australia. The human cost of this violence ranges from the four out of five women aged 18 to 24 who experienced sexual harassment on the street in the last 12 months¹ to the 55 women murdered in 2020, most of whom were killed by men known to them².

Although preventing violence against women is now a priority for all levels of government, the task ahead remains daunting. Markers of gender inequality such as the gender pay gap³ and community attitudes⁴ remain largely frozen and every week more violent crimes against women occur. Recent years have witnessed an acceleration of policy, research and field-based activity across Australian society to prevent this violence before it occurs.

Within higher education, the 'Change the Course' report, released in 2017, challenged universities with the results of a survey of more than 30,000 university students about their experiences of sexual assault and sexual harassment⁵. 'Change the Course' is an initiative of Universities Australia's *Respect. Now. Always.* campaign, and has led to the national higher education regulator, TEQSA, requiring evidence from every university about how it is responding to the report's nine recommendations⁶. A follow-up nationwide survey is planned for 2021. The results of this survey will inform future work across the sector.

Victoria University strongly maintains its commitment to genuine, evidence-based action to prevent violence against women and other gender-based violence, and recognises that leadership on this issue is required. Emerging evidence clearly demonstrates that organisational attitudes and behaviours around gender inequality and violence prevention will change when key senior leaders take prominent, assured and ongoing action⁷.

VU recognises its unique opportunity to become an acknowledged leader within the higher education sector. Such leadership sits within the University's vision and mission.

As a large employer, as a provider of higher education to a diverse student body and as a thought leader within the communities we serve, VU is committed to the prevention of gender-based violence and building gender equality.

The following sections of this document outline how the University proposes to extend and develop our leadership in the prevention of gender-based violence in the years 2021 to 2023.

4



VU students and staff have participated in Melbourne's annual Walk Against Family Violence since 2017.

DOMAINS OF ACTION AND VALUES

VU's strategy to prevent gender-based violence is aligned with the 'Change the Story' national framework⁸, and takes place across four interlinked domains of action, as shown below.

These domains of action embody VU's 'Always West' values: Always Welcoming, Always Ethical, Always Shaping the Future, Always Together.

**ALWAYS
WEST**

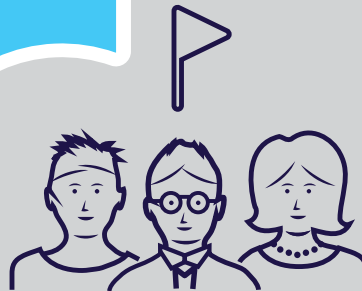
ENGAGEMENT

Partnering with students, staff and community organisations to promote respect and gender equality



LEADERSHIP

Leading prevention work among universities, and within the communities we serve



EVALUATION

Collecting and analysing data to ensure our actions are relevant, effective and contribute to building the evidence base for what works in preventing gender-based violence.



CHANGE

Providing meaningful, evidence-based training opportunities to both students and staff

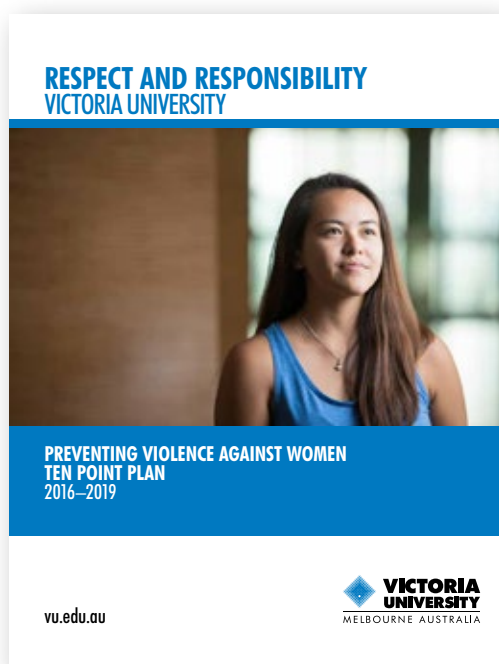


MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY TEN POINT PLAN 2016–2019

The Respect and Responsibility Strategy 2021–2023 builds on the strengths developed through the implementation of the Ten Point Plan 2016–2019.

There is consensus among sector experts and within government that gender-based violence is caused by gender inequality⁸. In recognition of this, Victoria University (VU) was one of the first Australian universities to commit to a wide-ranging program of actions to promote gender equality in order to prevent violence against women. These actions were specified in our 2016–2019 Respect and Responsibility Preventing Violence Against Women Ten Point Plan.

VU has delivered innovative, committed, evidence-based actions against all of these ambitious ten points. This work was mostly undertaken by the Respect and Responsibility program, through partnership and co-production with VU students and staff, and collaborations with key community and sector bodies. Significant outcomes were also achieved by the People and Culture, Safer Community and Facilities departments. Key highlights are described on these pages.



1 PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY ACROSS THE INSTITUTION 


Victoria University’s Gender Equity Strategy, led by People and Culture, achieved Employer of Choice accreditation from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency for the first time in 2018.

2 PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT TO THOSE AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE 

Establishment of Safer Community function and extensive training of staff and students in responding to disclosures of sexual assault or sexual harassment. There have been more than 5,000 downloads of the VU SAFE app to date.

3 FURTHER DEVELOP POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND CODES OF CONDUCT TO ENSURE THAT THE EXPECTATIONS OF BOTH STAFF AND STUDENTS IN RESPONDING TO AND PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ARE CLEAR 


Development and publication of new Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Response Policies and Procedures – a first for the University.

4 BUILD STAFF AND STUDENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN ISSUES PERTAINING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND ITS PREVENTION 


Face-to-face training delivered to more than 500 students and more than 150 staff in Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Assault or Sexual Harassment, and Being an Active Bystander. New online resources, co-designed and evaluated with more than 400 students.

5 ENSURE SAFE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL STUDENTS, STAFF AND VISITORS 

Establishment of Campus Shuttle Bus and improved lighting and access across campuses undertaken by Facilities. All Security staff received training in providing a sensitive response to all reports of gender-based violence.

6 DEVELOP COMMUNICATIONS MATERIAL TO RAISE AWARENESS OF ISSUES PERTAINING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THE ROLE OF MEN IN TAKING ACTION TO PREVENT IT 

Development of award-winning online resources for students and staff in Bystander Awareness and Action and Consent and Respectful Relationships, co-produced with VU students. 5,000 postcards with survivor-focused responding to disclosures information distributed to students and staff 2018-2020.

7 DEVELOP LEADERSHIP ROLES OF STUDENTS AND STAFF IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN 

Active and meaningful involvement by more than 50 students in reference and advisory groups. Establishment of staff focus groups. Partnership with AMES Australia in its groundbreaking Leadership Program in Preventing Violence Against Women in CALD Communities program (2017–2019).

8 DEVELOP ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP TO SUPPORT CURRENT AND NEW RESEARCH AND TEACHING ENDEAVOURS PERTAINING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN 

\$335,000 in grant funding attracted to support pioneering work in engaging men and in evaluating impacts of violence prevention programs. Participation in an internationally significant randomised controlled trial of our online training.

9 BUILD PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITIES, THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS TO SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE ACTION TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN 

Participation and leadership within prevention of violence against women such as the Western Region Preventing Violence Together 2030 partnership and partnerships with AMES, DVRCV, VicHealth and Universities Australia. Participation in global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign annually since 2016.

10 MONITOR, EVALUATE AND REPORT ON OUTCOMES ACHIEVED 

Quantitative and qualitative data collected and reported on to University committees including Compliance, Audit and Risk Committee of Council, Academic Board and Gender Equity Committee. Contributed to development of collective impact evaluation measures for regional partnership and contributed data and insights to sector-wide research and evaluation projects.



Members of the Student Reference Group for Gender Equality receiving a LearnX award for the Bystander Awareness and Action e-learning module in 2019.

LEADERSHIP, INFLUENCE AND GOVERNANCE

Victoria University has a unique influence in the community it serves and a unique opportunity to demonstrate its leadership on the issues of gender equality and preventing gender-based violence.

Our University is committed to providing a culturally safe, intersectional, evidence-based approach to supporting survivors of violence, abuse and harassment. The Respect and Responsibility program works closely with those areas of VU most likely to receive disclosures of sexual violence and provides specialised training to staff, as well as student representatives, to ensure that they have the required knowledge and skills to respond appropriately. Over time, this awareness needs to be extended to all staff, particularly teaching staff.

VU has built a relationship with the Centres Against Sexual Assault and works within Melbourne's Western Region Preventing Violence Together 2030 partnership, which brings together local government, health services and significant local organisations to deliver a shared violence-prevention strategy that seeks out and centres the voices of people with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Within the Australian higher education sector, VU supports proactive measures to prevent violence and has developed

innovative, co-designed e-learning resources. The University has opened its doors to behavioural change researchers in order to contribute to the evidence base for interventions that shift attitudes and behaviours around sexism and sexual harassment⁹.

Research has shown that intimate partner violence is the leading preventable contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15–44, being responsible for more of the disease burden than many other well-known risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking and obesity¹⁰. VU is using its research strengths through its cross-disciplinary Institute for Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities and Institute for Sport and Health to find solutions to the complex challenges impacting on the health of people and the planet on which we live, in recognition that the wellbeing of each depends upon the other¹¹.

VU is working to become a leader in primary prevention (see diagram opposite page) and, in turn, to use any authority or influence the University has to contribute to the transformation of the communities in which we live, work, study and play.

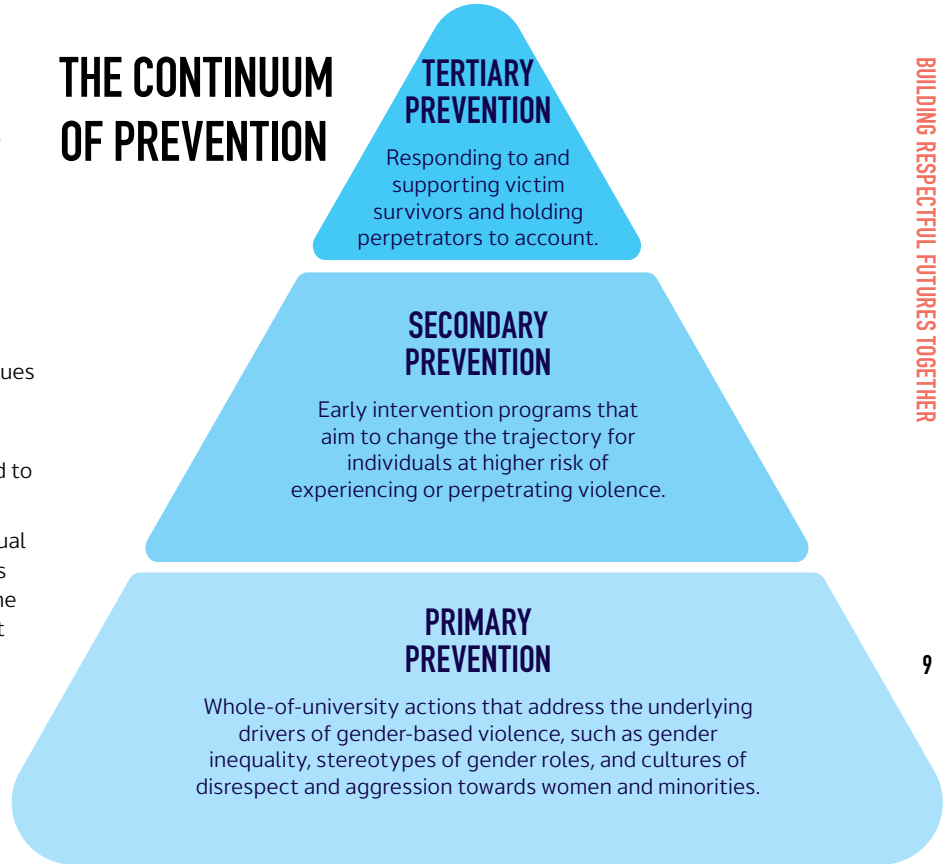


Senior leaders from VU and the community come together at events that reaffirm the University's commitment to work with our partners to prevent gender-based violence.

OVER THE LIFE OF THIS STRATEGY, VU WILL:

- focus on eliminating gender inequality and preventing gender-based violence as a core priority for the University, including championing of this work by senior VU leaders
- maintain our commitment to the Western Region Preventing Violence Together 2030 partnership
- empower the Respect and Responsibility program and other staff as appropriate to act as prevention consultants across the University, responding to issues and requests for expertise as needed
- investigate governance and policy mechanisms to ensure student leaders and senior staff are required to undertake Respect and Responsibility training
- lead implementation of the Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Response Policies and Procedures so as to generalise knowledge of these across VU, with the goal of creating an inclusive University environment that believes and supports those who have experienced gender-based violence, no matter who they disclose these experiences to
- continue to affirm that survivors are never to blame for any incidents of sexual violence and that perpetrators must be held accountable.

THE CONTINUUM OF PREVENTION



Professor Vasso Apostolopoulos shared her knowledge and stories at an International Women’s Day event held jointly by VU and the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation.

TRAINING FOR CHANGE

Entering higher education is a key moment for change in a person's life and the attitudes, beliefs and social norms encountered during study can last a lifetime. Higher education has therefore become a key site for research and action in the prevention of gender-based violence.

An emerging body of research internationally shows that lifting the rates of 'prosocial bystander' – the willingness of people not affected by an instance of discrimination to intervene in such a situation that they witness – both disrupts acts of harassment and communicates support to the persons targeted¹². Victoria University has contributed to the evidence base on this subject through the University's involvement in a groundbreaking randomised controlled trial that tested the effectiveness of a range of different behaviour change interventions⁹.

Victoria University is educating for the workplaces of the future. The next generation of leaders will be people who understand that respectful human connections are the foundation of social progress. Being a prosocial bystander – someone who challenges sexism and understands the connection between gender inequality and violence against women – is therefore not just the right thing to do, but is also a key 21st-century workplace attribute and future-focused skill.

VU's Respect and Responsibility program uses a variety of channels to deliver training and information to both staff and students, including:

- award-winning, quality-assured e-learning modules in Bystander Awareness and Action and Consent and Respectful Relationships, co-designed with a diverse group of students and staff
- face-to-face training tailored to particular groups of staff and students (for example: student union representatives, student residential advisers within campus accommodation, student mentors, library staff, security staff, counselling staff, Clubs and Societies executives, student ambassadors, People and Culture business partners, international students aged under 18)
- training in Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Assault or Sexual Harassment delivered by experienced sexual assault counsellors
- guest lectures/seminars for classes of students and work teams on request
- information briefings for staff professional development days and senior staff
- publication and distribution of communications material that promotes a culture of consent and respect, gender equality and active bystander
- social media messaging in collaboration with partners within and beyond the University.



Some of the VU students who contributed to the development of our two award-winning online resources.

OVER THE LIFE OF THIS STRATEGY, VU WILL:

- maintain the above program of education, training and information, and adapt it as required to meet emerging needs of students and staff over time, and to ensure it is inclusive of the needs of those at higher risk of experiencing violence, including students living with a disability, students of diverse cultures, gender identities, sexualities and language backgrounds, and vulnerable cohorts within Vocational Education
- lead the implementation of the EAAA specialised Sexual Assault Resistance Education for first-year women (see box)
- actively seek opportunities to integrate a message around prevention of violence against women and active bystanding within the University curriculum, particularly for first-year and second-year undergraduate students and new postgraduate students, while ensuring the most at-risk cohorts of students receive training that is appropriate to their needs
- seek funding and grant opportunities with partner organisations to develop the expertise of VU academic staff in the evaluation and delivery of projects for prevention of gender-based violence
- contribute to cutting-edge research in engaging men through innovative, place-based programs that show early evidence of success.

EAAA – EMPOWERING RESISTANCE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT

Victoria University is excited to be one of the first universities in Australia and New Zealand to offer the Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA) sexual assault resistance education program to first-year women¹³.

The EAAA program consists of a 12-hour small-group, empirically based intervention designed specifically for first-year university women. It is based on theory, research evidence and best practices for helping women resist acquaintance sexual assault, and was developed, revised and pilot-tested over a ten-year period. It includes education about sexual violence and respectful and safe sexual practices, and holds perpetrators to account.

EAAA is the only program available that has been evaluated in a clinical trial and been shown to significantly reduce the incidence of rape and other forms of sexual assault for at least one year. It is one critical part of a comprehensive strategy to address the high incidence of rape and other forms of sexual violence on our campuses. At VU, EAAA will sit alongside our ongoing work with young men around recognising and responding to gender inequality, being an active bystander and consent and respectful relationships.

For more information, visit sarecenter.org

SHOULD THE TRAINING BE MANDATORY?

A wide range of approaches to consent training and sexual violence prevention training are evident on university campuses in Australia and globally. Some universities require all students to complete a compulsory module and enforce this training through sanctions such as withholding results. Others strongly encourage and widely promote their training without making it mandatory. The growing body of international evidence suggests that multiple, reinforcing strategies are required in order to achieve lasting change¹⁴.

At the time of writing, VU has opted to make its online and face-to-face training available to all staff and students, and require completion of this training as a condition of leadership and management. This approach finds some support in studies that show training 10–15% of peer and social group leaders is measurably effective in changing attitudes and preventing sexual assault, for example in the Green Dot initiative trialled on campuses in Kentucky, United States¹⁵.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Victoria University is a major employer, education provider and thought leader in the communities in which we live, work, study and play. VU has a responsibility of care and support towards its students, many of whom are the first member of their family to access higher education. The University also cares about its staff and seeks to make VU an inclusive place to work.

VU supports and promotes the employment and education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students through its Yanneit and Bathelmun Yalingwa strategies. VU also has the honour to be the employer and education provider chosen by staff and students from a great diversity of cultural backgrounds. The education and support provided by VU therefore must be culturally safe and appropriate for students and staff of many backgrounds. We also work to include the needs and perspectives of LGBTIQ+ students, students living with disability and students from all campuses and colleges of our dual-sector institution.

Respect and Responsibility prioritises a co-production approach to working with students and staff on preventing sexual and family violence. Our Student Reference Group for Gender Equality draws students from all areas of the University, many of whom commence a leadership journey through this involvement.

Members of the Reference Group have contributed to award-winning

e-learning resources for their peers, taken out individual leadership award honours and obtained sought-after graduate employment opportunities as a result of their participation in this work.

The Respect and Responsibility program has partnered with the Student Union, the Postgraduate Association, Student Life and Leadership, VU in the Community, the Alumni Office and other parts of the University to deliver engaging events and to participate in global and national days of significance, including:

- 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence global campaign, annually since 2016
- partnership with AMES Australia in its groundbreaking Leadership Program to Prevent Violence Against Women in CALD Communities (2017–2019)
- International Women's Day
- Bluestocking Week (also known as Women in Higher Education Week)
- Staff Professional Development Festivals
- You the Man innovative theatre education event
- Storypod story collection project
- public art projects including group needlework installations, murals and flash mobs
- forums on women's financial literacy, #MeToo, hearing the voices of Aboriginal women and the future of activism
- partnership events with organisations including Maribyrnong



Victoria University LGBTIQ+ staff and students and allies join the annual Pride March.

City Council, UniSuper, WIRE, Western Bulldogs Community Foundation and HealthWest Partnerships (through the groundbreaking Project Momentum initiative)

- sponsoring the back cover of the Student Diary since 2017.

We also pursue partnership opportunities with organisations such as VicHealth, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV), local government and arts bodies, other education providers, and the Preventing Violence Together regional partnership.

OVER THE LIFE OF THIS STRATEGY, VU WILL:

- build and extend community partnerships for the prevention of gender-based violence, highlighting the unique talents and authentic voices of our diverse students, staff and community, especially through the University's Precincts strategy
- pursue creative, innovative and artistic strategies with partners within and beyond the University, using different mediums to deliver our important message
- maintain and extend regular communications with stakeholders, using multiple channels
- continue to facilitate student reference groups and other co-production opportunities with students and staff, to ensure that the voices of the whole VU community are included in our work
- promote a culture of prosocial or active bystanding, encouraging staff, students and community members to challenge instances of everyday sexism.



Karen Jackson (second from right), Associate Provost (Indigenous), pictured with Darlene Babinall, Rebecca Monohan and Aunty Joyce Cooper at the forum Protection through Connection: Voices of Aboriginal women in the west



Student performers singing at the launch of a community art project at VU@MetroWest in Footscray.

EVALUATION OF IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Prevention of violence against women is an emerging field of scholarship. Victoria University contributes to this emerging knowledge not just through the actions we take through engagement and leadership, but also through innovative research partnerships and rigorous evaluation. VU aims to contribute to building the evidence base for what works to shift sexist norms, practices and behaviours.

To this end, we have participated in a randomised controlled trial, in partnership with VicHealth and the Behavioural Insights Team, that tested the effectiveness of our award-winning Bystander Awareness and Action e-learning resource. We use our partnerships and collaborations to build academic expertise within the University in evaluation of primary prevention projects and we seek to connect VU researchers with relevant funding and research opportunities.

The Respect and Responsibility team has also been invited to share the learnings from our work at conferences including PreventX and Respect.Prevent.Respond, and with organisations including Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, VicHealth, TEQSA and Universities Australia.

VU is also a full partner in the Western Region Preventing Violence Together 2030 partnership and works to implement data collection that aligns to the partnership's Shared Measurement and

Evaluation Framework. This framework has been developed to provide a rich dataset from which to draw robust conclusions in the future. Similarly, the highly regarded National Community Attitudes Survey offers opportunities to collect attitudinal information in line with this instrument.

Engaging men as allies in prevention work is one of the most significant challenges in the field of prevention of violence against women. VU has pioneered work in engaging men through the groundbreaking Project Momentum, in partnership with HealthWest Primary Care Partnership and with funding from the Victorian Government Office for Women. Other research partners have included the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation and the City of Brimbank.

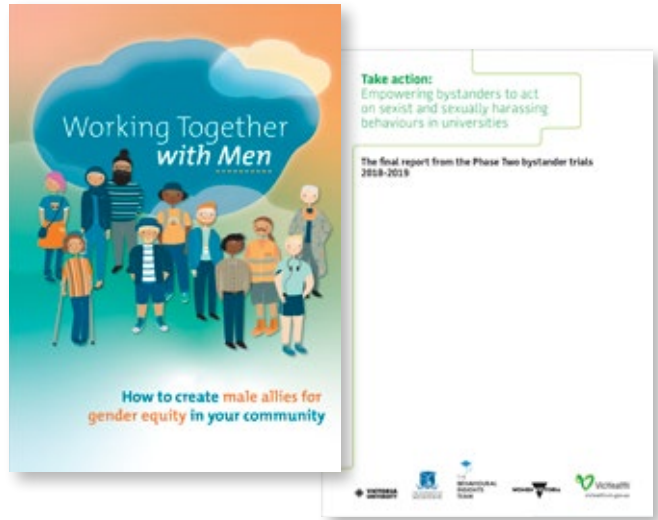
Monitoring ongoing prevention activities also provides data for continuous improvement. Data captured includes completion numbers and patterns for online and face-to-face training; numbers of priority student and staff cohorts attending workshops and seminars; tracking of University progress against national prevention benchmarks such as 'Change the Course' and Australian Council of Graduate Research recommendations; feedback from students, staff and community partners on our projects and initiatives; and regular reporting to senior University committees, including Academic Board, the Gender Equity Committee and University Council's Compliance, Audit and Risk committee.



Allies and participants in the groundbreaking Project Momentum Working Together With Men initiative

OVER THE LIFE OF THIS STRATEGY, VU WILL:

- prepare the whole University for the expected increase in prevalence data and reporting rates as an outcome of the second national survey of university students on their experiences of sexual assault and sexual harassment, which Universities Australia plans to undertake in 2021
- collect both quantitative and qualitative data from students and staff about our programs and training so as to establish a baseline, track training completions, drive continuous improvement and contribute to sector-wide understandings of primary prevention work
- collect and monitor data on students’ feelings of safety and knowledge of how to report concerning behaviour to the University, as a key measure of the success of our primary prevention work.

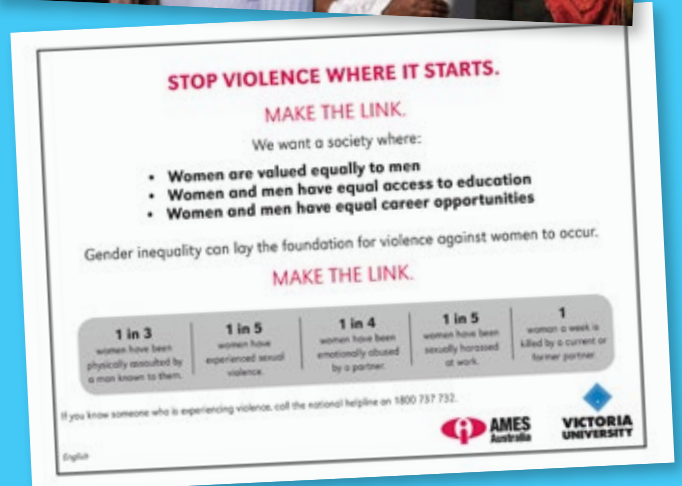


Two of the groundbreaking initiatives that Victoria University has helped to facilitate - the Working Together With Men model and sector resource, and the Bystander action research trial.

AMES AUSTRALIA'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAM TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CALD COMMUNITIES

In 2017, AMES Australia, a service providing education, employment and settlement services for refugees and migrants, initiated a program to develop leadership in the prevention of violence against women within culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Victoria University was approached to be an organisational partner in this groundbreaking program because of our diverse staff and student body. Over the next two years, five students and three staff members from VU participated in the program. Program graduates then initiated their own local or community-based projects.

VU's Respect and Responsibility program has mentored four of the program graduates as they commenced their leadership journeys in preventing violence against women. Their initiatives include a Women's Empowerment Forum, theatre education projects and participation in a men's behaviour change initiative. The AMES Australia leadership program also produced five postcard designs delivering messages about gender equality and violence prevention in 13 community languages.



WORKING INCLUSIVELY FOR GENDER EQUALITY



Victoria University is committed to achieving full equality for all genders at Victoria University. This work has received a renewed focus through the introduction of the Victorian Gender Equality Act.

The new Act requires educational institutions to meet rigorous standards against key markers of gender equality, such as the gender pay gap, the number women holding senior positions and how complaints of sexual harassment are handled. The Act requires universities to apply an intersectional lens to data collection, and to engage with staff about the importance of gender equality.

In 2018, the University was honoured to receive accreditation for the first time as an Employer of Choice with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. This accreditation must be renewed annually, and its achievement and maintenance are evidence that the University is meeting strict criteria for the citation's seven focus areas: leadership, strategy and accountability; developing a gender-balanced workforce; gender pay equity; support for caring; mainstreaming flexible work; preventing gender-based harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying; and driving change beyond the workplace.

The Inclusion and Engagement team works to bring forward the voices and insights of VU staff and students from diverse cultural backgrounds, diverse sexualities and gender identities, and those who experience disability. We work with Moondani Balluk to support culturally safe employment practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. We collaborate with People and Culture, Student Services, student organisations and our community partners to mark important dates including IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia) Day, Queernival, Wear It Purple Day, International Women's Day, Sorry Day, International Day of Persons with Disabilities and Commemoration of the Apology from the Australian Parliament for the Stolen Generations, among others.

The University implements policies and procedures that guide trauma-informed responses to disclosures of sexual assault or sexual harassment, whether made by a student or staff member. People and Culture business partners, Inclusion and Engagement staff, and health, safety and wellbeing staff have received specialised training in this area.

Guests at the International Women's Day 2021 'Human Library' event, held at Whitten Oval.



MAINTAINING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

A key part of making Victoria University a safe place to work and study is the maintenance of an active and responsive Safer Community program.

Safer Community is responsible for ensuring that students and staff are informed about the multiple ways the University works to ensure their safety and it is the first point of contact if things go wrong.

Safer Community can be contacted by any student or staff member anonymously through the contact form on the Safer Community web page and via the VU SAFE phone app. The VU SAFE app includes campus maps, emergency contacts, a 'Friend Walk' option and links to Support Services among its many features.

If a student discloses a matter of concern to Safer Community staff, their disclosure will be received sensitively and their matter responded to promptly and confidentially. Safer Community is able to find solutions to matters of concern even if they are not formal complaints. Program staff are also available to gather information and assist students who do wish to make a formal complaint about another student or a staff member.

To make the physical environment feel safe and welcoming, VU's Facilities department has made significant improvements to lighting on all campuses, installed help points and established a free shuttle bus to transport students and staff after hours. Security staff, along with other frontline staff, have all been trained by sexual assault counsellors to provide an appropriate response to any student or staff member who raises a concern with them. Security staff members are available to escort any student or staff member at night on request.

MY FRIEND TOLD ME ABOUT A SEXUAL ASSAULT. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Sexual assault and sexual harassment are very common. If your friend or classmate tells you about unwanted sexual contact, there are some simple things you can do that will really help.

- 1. BELIEVE THEM**
Believing someone when they tell you about sexual assault or sexual harassment is really important. It takes a lot of courage for someone to talk about sexual assault or harassment. Let your friend know that you believe them, and tell them that it's not their fault.
- 2. LISTEN TO THEM**
Let the person talk, and really listen. Don't focus on your reactions. Don't ask for details of the assault, or ask questions like "Why did you go there?" or "Were you drunk?" Just listen, and let them know you want to support them.
- 3. HELP THEM FIND SUPPORT**
Getting support as soon as possible is important. The back of this card has some useful contacts. Victoria University has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual assault or harassment. You can report an assault anonymously if you wish to Safer Community - turn over for details.

Information prepared by Victoria University's Respect and Responsibility program: respect.responsibility@vu.edu.au



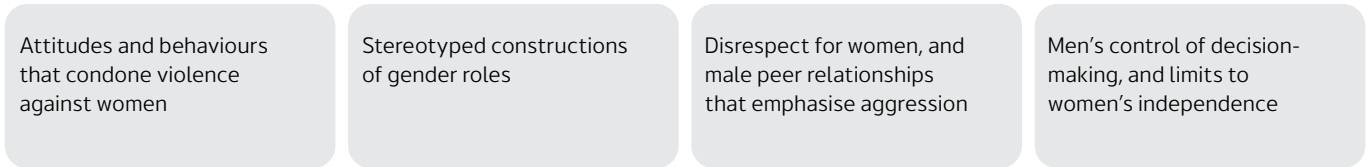
VU Safer Community, Security and Integrity Office staff interact with students at every Student Life event.

OVERVIEW

VU'S WHOLE-OF-ORGANISATION APPROACH, COMPRISING MULTIPLE AND MUTUALLY REINFORCING STRATEGIES

WHAT WILL BE ADDRESSED?

Gender inequality, identified by the national framework Change the Story⁸ as underlying the four key drivers of violence against women:

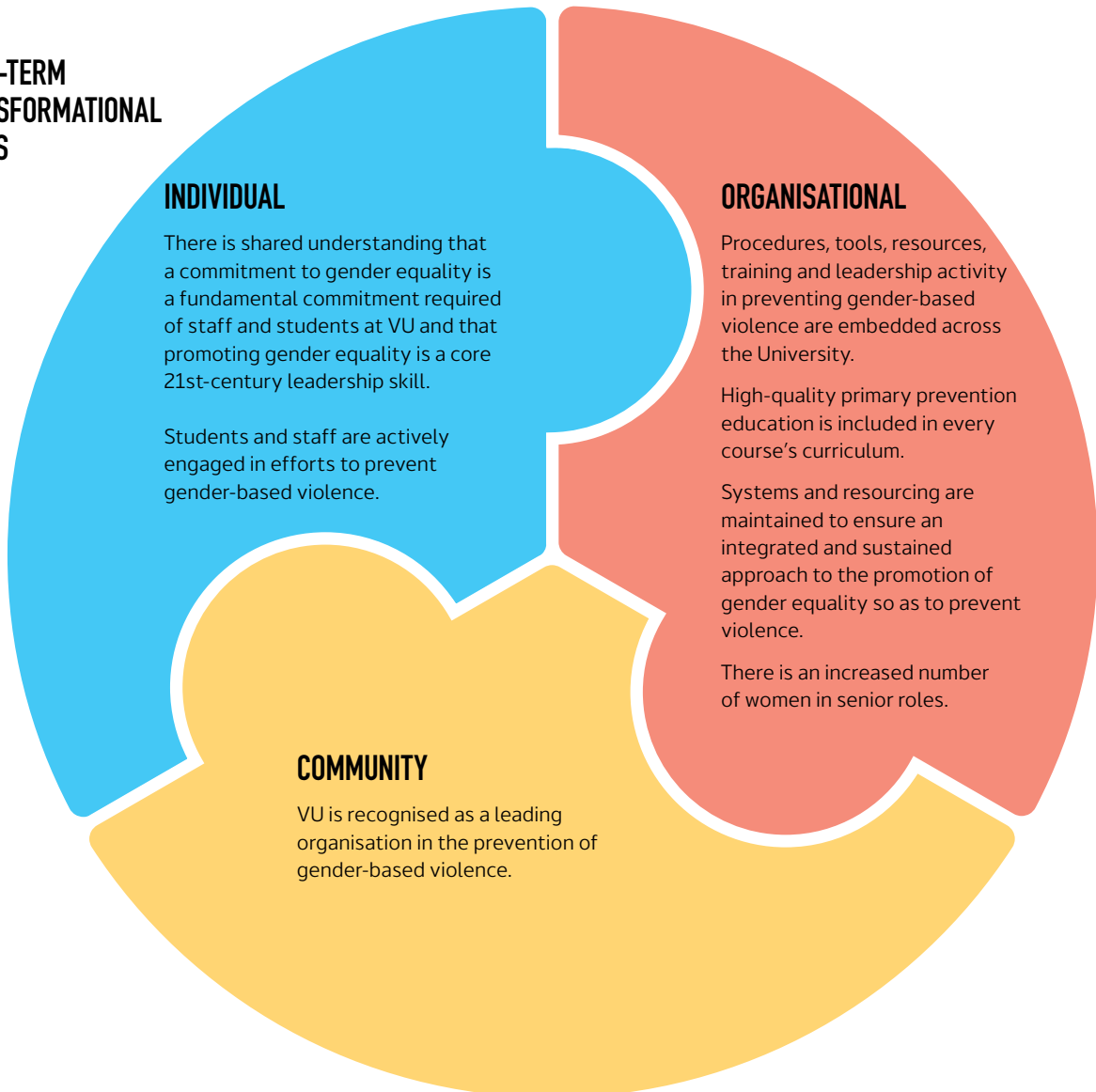


The current version of the Change the Story framework uses the terminology of 'violence against women'. At the time of publication of this Strategy, work was underway to produce an updated version of this framework document that acknowledges all genders, in recognition of the fact that trans and gender-diverse people are at higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence. This Strategy also acknowledges that violence within LGBTIQ+ relationships occurs. Respect and Responsibility will work with specialised service providers to deliver training and support that is appropriate for all members of our diverse community.

WHO IS THE STRATEGY FOR?

All Victoria University students and staff, on all campuses in Australia and internationally, and online

LONG-TERM TRANSFORMATIONAL GOALS



OUTCOMES TO BE ACHIEVED OVER THREE YEARS

ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

- The University fully meets or exceeds all its obligations under the Victorian Gender Equality Act.
- Coordinating and monitoring systems underpinning activity to prevent gender-based violence are embedded within VU.
- The Student Reference Group for Gender Equality is maintained and resourced.
- Support for and consultation with staff on this issue continue as part of the University's People strategy.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

There is increased:

- engagement by VU leaders in activities to prevent gender-based violence
- student and staff knowledge of issues pertaining to gender-based violence and its prevention
- understanding of and compliance with organisational policies, procedures and codes of conduct relevant to gender-based violence
- student and staff engagement in training to take bystander action to challenge everyday sexism.

100% of students and staff are aware of support services available to those who disclose experiences of violence.

COMMUNITY LEVEL

Joint initiatives with:

- Preventing Violence Together 2030 regional partnership
 - Our Watch
 - DVRCV
 - Respect Victoria
 - Gen Vic
 - VicHealth
 - Universities Australia and other higher education providers
 - Switchboard
 - WithRespect
 - Centres Against Sexual Assault
 - regional and local organisations
 - Victoria Police
 - AMES Australia
 - national, state and local governments
 - HREOC
 - Office for Women
 - other local partners
- Gender-based violence prevention tools and resources are shared with other organisations.
- Stakeholders and community members are aware of VU's commitment to prevent gender-based violence
- Advocacy for required policy and program reform to prevent gender-based violence is undertaken.

- Policies and procedures to respond to gender-based violence are amended to incorporate the Victorian Government's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) framework and its information-sharing legislative requirements.
- Staff training on their responsibilities in implementing prevention of gender-based violence policies, procedures and programs is delivered.
- Bystander training is delivered to relevant staff and students.
- A cross-campus communication strategy on issues pertaining to gender-based violence is consolidated and implemented.
- Monitoring and sustainability strategies are further developed and implemented.
- There is an increase in the number of academics undertaking research and delivering curriculum in the area of preventing gender-based violence.

ENDNOTES

- 1 'Everyday sexism: Australian women's experiences of street harassment', via www.tai.org.au.
- 2 Counting Dead Women Australia project via tinyurl.com/47nxwr4b.
- 3 See Workplace Gender Equality Agency, www.wgea.gov.au/data/fact-sheets/australias-gender-pay-gap-statistics.
- 4 Webster, K., Diemer, K., et al. (2018). 'Australians' Attitudes to Violence Against Women and Gender Equality: Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)' (Research report, 03/2018). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.
- 5 Australian Human Rights Commission (2017) Change the course: National report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities
- 6 Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (2020) Good Practice Note: Preventing and responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Australian higher education sector
- 7 VicHealth. (2018). '(En)countering Resistance: Strategies to Respond to Resistance to Gender Equality Initiatives', Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.
- 8 See ourwatch.org.au/Change-the-Story. Change the Story is the national framework for preventing violence against women that guides national and local prevention initiatives across Australia.
- 9 VicHealth (2019) Take Action: Empowering bystanders to act on sexist and sexually harassing behaviours in universities <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/bystander>
- 10 VicHealth. (2010). 'The Health Costs of Violence: Measuring the Burden of Disease Caused by Intimate Partner Violence'. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne
- 11 See <https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/news-events/news/victoria-university-embraces-planetary-health-with-australian-first-course>.
- 12 VicHealth. (2012). 'More than Ready: Bystander Action to Prevent Violence Against Women in the Victorian Community'. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne
- 13 See <http://sarecentre.org/evidence.php>.
- 14 See Our Watch (2014). 'Policy Brief: International Evidence Base', www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/50e1f9de-9d7b-4236-a300-91087d3eb9e6/Accessible_Policy_Brief_3_International_Evidence_Base.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf.
- 15 Coker, Fisher et al. (2015). 'Evaluation of the Green Dot Bystander Intervention to Reduce Interpersonal Violence Among College Students Across Three Campuses'. doi:10.1177/1077801214545284

The ThreadIN project of 2019 brought together 30 women from Melbourne's west, including staff and students of VU, under the guidance of needlepoint artist Jessie Deane. Each woman created her own artwork on the theme of RESPECT which was then combined into one large work.

