

# Primary Prevention Strategy 2022–2024

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DV Vic and DVRCV have merged to form Safe and Equal: [www.safeandequal.org.au](http://www.safeandequal.org.au)

Safe and Equal is the peak body for specialist family violence services that provide support to victim survivors in Victoria.

# Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

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Safe and Equal acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional and ongoing custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We pay respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded and recognise First Nations peoples' rights to self-determination and continuing connections to land, waters and community.

# Honouring victim survivors

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Safe and Equal honours the strength and resilience of adults, children and young people who have experienced family violence and recognises that it is essential that responses to family violence are informed by their expert knowledge and advocacy. We pay respects to those who have not survived and acknowledge the lasting impacts of this preventable violence on families and communities.

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# About Safe and Equal

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Safe and Equal is the peak body for specialist family violence services that provide support to victim survivors in Victoria. The interests of people experiencing, recovering from, or at risk of, family violence is at the heart of everything we do. Our vision is a world beyond family and gender-based violence, where women, children and people from marginalised communities are safe, thriving, and respected. We recognise the gendered nature of violence in our society, and the multiple intersecting forms of power and oppression which can compound the impacts of violence and limit people's access to services, support, and safety. We work closely and collaboratively with other organisations and support the leadership of victim survivors to amplify their voices and create change.

We provide specialist expertise across primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery approaches and the inter-connections between them. Our work is focused on developing and advancing specialist practice for responding to victim survivors, building the capability of specialist family violence services and allied workforces, organisations and sectors that come into contact with victim-survivors; building the capabilities of workforces focused on primary prevention; and leading and contributing to the translation of evidence and research, practice expertise, and lived experience into safe and effective policy, system design and law reform.

- **We develop family violence practice and support workforces** to ensure that victim survivors are safe, their rights are upheld, and their needs are met. The prevalence and impact of family and gender-based violence will be reduced because we are building a strong and effective workforce responding to victim survivors that can meet the needs of the community we serve, while also having a growing and impactful workforce working to prevent violence.
- **We work to strengthen and connect organisations, sectors, and systems** to achieve safe and just outcomes for victim survivors irrespective of entry point, jurisdiction and individual circumstances. Joining efforts across prevention, response, and recovery we work to ensure the family violence system is informed and supported by a well-resourced and sustainable specialist sector. Our contributions to primary prevention workforces, initiatives and alliances contribute to social change for a safer and more respectful community.
- **We are building momentum for social change** that drives meaningful action across institutions, settings, and systems for a safer and more equal society. Our workforce and practice development efforts are coupled with a partnership approach that builds community awareness and commitment to change. Our expertise and efforts enable citizens across the community to recognise and respond to family and gendered violence, hold perpetrators to account and support the ongoing recovery and empowerment of victim survivors.
- **We are a strong peak organisation** providing sustainable and influential leadership to achieve our vision. The work we do and the way we work are integrated and align with our values. This is achieved through inclusive culture, and a safe and accessible workplace supported by robust systems and processes.

## About this strategy

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The purpose of this strategy is to guide Safe and Equal's prevention focus across the organisation over an initial period of two years. It will provide clarity and consistency in how we describe our role in primary prevention, and how we intend to advance our work. The strategy is aligned with Safe and Equal's [Strategic Plan 2021–2024](#), providing a distinct focus on consolidating and expanding our role and leadership in primary prevention.

The Primary Prevention Strategy will be reviewed in 2024, and a refreshed plan will be developed based on outcomes at this point. This process will feed into, and be informed by, the refresh of the organisational strategic plan in 2024.

The audience for this strategy includes Safe and Equal (our staff, Board and membership) and key stakeholders, partners and collaborators engaged with our work in primary prevention. Full Membership of Safe and Equal is open to services that provide a specialist response to victim-survivors of family violence. Many of these members also conduct primary prevention programs and activities. In addition, Associate Membership of Safe and Equal is open to other organisations, including those undertaking primary prevention. A key action in this Strategy is to promote Associate Membership amongst our partners and stakeholders engaged in primary prevention, in order to inform and improve our primary prevention planning and initiatives.

This strategy has drawn on available literature, policy and guidance about good practice. Consultation was also undertaken with key stakeholders leading primary prevention work in Victoria and nationally. The strategy was also informed by a discussion about working across prevention and response held at the Safe and Equal Member's Forum in September 2022.

Discussions amongst staff, leadership, members and the Board helped us to further define our unique role – and how this role complements and enhances work being done by others.

# What is primary prevention?

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Primary prevention is critical to achieving the vision in our [Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#) of a world beyond family and gender-based violence, where women, children and people from marginalised communities are safe, thriving and respected.

This is a shared vision supported and underpinned by a national strategy for preventing violence against women, [Change the Story](#), and the Victorian strategy for preventing family violence and all forms of violence against women, [Free from Violence](#).

Primary prevention is focused on whole-of-population initiatives, in different settings where people live, work, learn, socialise and play. It aims to address the underlying drivers of violence (or factors that lead to violence) and stop violence from happening in the first place.

A primary prevention approach works to change the underlying social conditions that produce and drive violence against women, and that excuse, justify or even promote it. It works across the whole population to address the attitudes, norms, practices, structures and power imbalances that drive violence against women.<sup>1</sup>

[Change the Story](#), has established that men's violence against women is driven by:

1. Condoning of violence against women
2. Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
3. Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity
4. Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control<sup>2</sup>

The socio-ecological model in [Change the Story](#) is used widely to show how these drivers operate at different levels – individual and relationship, community and organisational, system and institutional, and societal.

The gendered drivers of men's violence against women are well-recognised and described, but preventing all family and gender-based violence means looking at other drivers of violence as well. These include inequality, stigma, discrimination and marginalisation experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from migrant and refugee communities, people of colour, LGBTIQ+ communities, and people with disabilities, amongst others. A number of other complementary frameworks address these issues directly, such as [Changing the Picture](#), [Changing the Landscape](#), [Pride in Prevention](#) and [Intersectionality Matters](#).

A commitment to intersectionality is a guiding principle of our work as an organisation, and includes a commitment to deepen our understanding of the family violence evidence base, build coalitions and partnerships, and engage in critical reflection.

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1 [Change the Story](#), Our Watch, page 8.

2 [Change the Story](#), Our Watch, page 36.

An intersectional lens in prevention means looking at how violence occurs in the context of both gender inequality and multiple other forms of structural and systemic inequality, oppression and discrimination. An intersectional approach ensures that primary prevention programs, systems and policies recognise and address multiple forms of oppression and disadvantage that exacerbate the experiences of gender inequality and gender-based violence.

Through ongoing partnerships with key organisations working with particular cohorts and communities, Safe and Equal is well-placed to demonstrate and build on our commitment to intersectionality in practice – by integrating this into all our work and taking meaningful action to prevent family violence, in solidarity with communities leading this work.

In prevention, as in all of our work, we are committed to the principle of Aboriginal self-determination and will work towards stronger relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Elders and communities. This includes supporting and advocating for primary prevention that is led and driven by Aboriginal communities. It means developing partnerships that inform our own primary prevention work, and participating actively in organisation-wide efforts to build our understanding of the impact of colonisation and other forms of discrimination, and strengthen cultural safety across the family violence sector.

Lastly, we are ultimately accountable to victim-survivors of family violence and our work is fundamentally shaped by their voices. Primary prevention seeks to change norms, structures and practices across the socio-ecological model and is targeted at broad social change. This work is informed by lived experience because it is firmly grounded in an evidence base drawn from research conducted with thousands of victim-survivors. Involving those with lived experience is also important in informing and delivering effective prevention messaging and initiatives in ways that are convincing and do no harm. As part of this strategy, we are committed to integrating primary prevention into Safe and Equal's ongoing work around lived experience, including working with survivor advocates through an Expert Advisory Panel.

# The prevention ecosystem

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Since the Royal Commission into Family Violence delivered its report in 2016, transformation has occurred across the systems in Victoria involved in prevention and response. Building on earlier work within Victoria that resulted in the first national framework [Change the Story](#), primary prevention has become further established as a sector through dedicated funding and policy frameworks, and integrated government action plans across prevention and response.

This has built on a proud history of community-level primary prevention activity and activism to further establish a system of organisations and initiatives with overlapping interests in working to prevent violence against women, address women's health and gender equality, and focus on family violence prevention for particular communities.

Increasingly, a sector of skilled primary prevention practitioners and organisations is coming together to lead and grow this work. This includes:

- organisations dedicated specifically to primary prevention
- organisations with a significant focus on prevention (within a broader remit of work on gender equality, women's health or family violence and sexual assault services)
- organisations with expertise and community connection related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, multicultural communities, LGBTIQ+ communities and women with disability
- organisations coordinating the work of practitioners in key settings, such as schools, universities, local councils, health and community services, community and sporting organisations
- organisations specialising in content-specific workforce capability building and workforce development in areas such as masculinities or consent

A key role of specialised prevention organisations and practitioners is to lead and support the work of others in a range of settings. Delivering a range of effective and mutually-reinforcing prevention activities and initiatives *at scale* requires both workforce development and prevention sector coordination.

A recent report by the Victorian Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor on *Primary Prevention System Architecture* specifically states that a sustained and coordinated approach for primary prevention in Victoria requires a strong and coordinated system that:

- has the appropriate infrastructure
- is clear about the roles and responsibilities of all parties
- retains a skilled prevention workforce
- is backed by sufficient and sustained funding
- is committed to ongoing evidence-based improvement and refinement<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms: Primary prevention system architecture](#), Family Violence Reform Monitor, page 8.

Safe and Equal is one of a number of non-government organisations working as part of this system, alongside key government agencies. Within this, we seek to contribute towards further developing and strengthening this system with a particular focus on supporting workforce development and building practice expertise. This strategy aims to describe our unique role within the prevention system – a role that complements the work of others, and meets specific needs.



## Our purpose and role

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*After decades of activism, advocacy, and hard work, we are at an inflection point in our common efforts to end family violence in our community... For the first time, the peak organisation for the specialist family violence sector will provide leadership on family violence ranging from prevention to response and recovery.*

A Message from the Chair, [Safe and Equal Strategic Plan 2021–2024](#)

In 2020, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV) and Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic) merged to become one entity. Together, we became the peak body for specialist family violence services responding to victim survivors in Victoria, leading across the continuum from prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.

Safe and Equal's primary prevention work has evolved from a shared history of prevention advocacy, workforce development and capability building, inherited from both DVRCV and DV Vic. Now united, we continue to pursue a significant focus on providing specialist expertise in prevention, and have significant reach and a respected role in the sectors engaged with primary prevention. Our aim is to be a force for connection and collective action in support of ending family and gender-based violence.

In developing this strategy, we consulted widely and read extensively to develop greater clarity about our role and responsibilities, and to avoid duplication or competition with others engaged in the work. The results resoundingly suggested that our strategic focus should be on workforce development, and leading this work within a broader movement toward greater sector coordination.

Our unique role and contribution in primary prevention is based on the following:

- Through our historical and ongoing role in primary prevention workforce development, we have maintained a deep understanding of the changing needs and experiences of practitioners. This connection to practice gives us a unique and vital perspective to offer in the future development of this workforce, and primary prevention programming more generally.
- Our interaction with practitioners, and the range of programs and activities that we undertake in primary prevention, underpin our expertise in innovative prevention practice. We will continue to focus on offering this specialist expertise to others, and contributing to broader sector conversations about developing and improving practice. Our specialist expertise is evidence-based, and evidence-building, as we deliver knowledge and skills back to practitioners and the sector.
- By working across the continuum from prevention to response, our organisation has a unique role to play in informing and guiding conversations to connect these spheres of work. Our strategic role as a peak body includes advocating within and leading processes that will deliver greater connection and collaboration across organisations, sectors and systems to advance primary prevention and ultimately end family violence.

## What we do

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Despite significant gains in building a primary prevention workforce in Victoria, much remains to be done. Primary prevention practitioners are often less recognised as a workforce, in part because they are dispersed across organisations and sectors. Practitioners can be working alone or in small teams within larger organisations, which can contribute to a lack of collective professional identity and support. Family Safety Victoria's [2019-20 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence](#) found that while this workforce has completed training on a range of topics, their overall confidence in their level of training and experience was moderate. Respondents indicated a range of areas where additional support and training would be helpful.

Our own work with primary prevention practitioners suggests the need to continue to build the skills, knowledge and confidence of the workforce, as well as providing opportunities for collaboration and connection. Many practitioners do not currently identify as being part of the 'prevention workforce' and work in a range of settings that may not be seen as part of the 'prevention sector'.

A comprehensive approach to future prevention workforce development will require the following:

- Defining the existing workforce and mapping future workforce requirements
- Informing an understanding of required workforce capabilities
- Supporting entry points and career pathways
- Creating a sense of collaboration, connection and professional identity
- Building skills, knowledge and confidence of practitioners
- Advocating for government investment, policies and frameworks to support strategic workforce development

Our role within this is to support and advance the workforce by bringing them together, developing their capabilities, and advocating for and with them. We take a holistic approach to workforce development, which involves wrap-around support across four areas of activity:

- Leadership and advocacy with and for the prevention workforce
- Workforce development and practice through tailored and sector-wide training and education
- Sector development through networks, communications, meaningful partnerships and communities of practice
- Organisational sustainability through creating and sustaining systems to evaluate and adapt our work, and ensuring our work remains accessible and inclusive

These activities translate the existing evidence and deliver promising practice directly to practitioners, making it accessible and implementable. We also have a strong focus on evaluating our own practice in workforce development and sharing what we have learned to contribute to the knowledge base.

Our approach to workforce development involves engaging directly with prevention practitioners, while also playing a role in strengthening and connecting organisations across the prevention system. We are committed to working within broader efforts to increase prevention sector coordination, particularly those led by Respect Victoria, and collaboratively enhancing collective impact in advancing workforce development.

## Who we work with

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Our programs and activities are focused on **primary prevention practitioners**. People working in these roles can be located in a variety of organisations, and engaged either full-time in primary prevention or as a smaller proportion of their role. Primary prevention work can be undertaken from within a range of different job roles, and at different levels of skill and leadership. Identifying and meeting the needs of this diverse workforce is the core business of our prevention work.

We also continue to learn about the value of our work to those beyond the primary prevention workforce and see the opportunity to tailor programs and enhance communications for these cohorts to build understanding and promote prevention messaging more widely.

We work closely with our **membership**, including our Full Members who are specialist family violence services, as well as Associate Members drawn from the prevention sector. Our members are an important source of expertise to draw upon in all our work, and are critical in extending the reach and impact of our work in primary prevention. We are accountable to our members, and our primary prevention work aims to create change that reduces demand and pressure on the service system over the long-term.

Our partnerships and relationships with **organisations engaged in prevention** and **organisations working with specific communities** will help us to learn and to grow our reach in a range of settings and communities.

Our relationship with **government**, particularly the Victorian government, is important in maintaining funding and support for our work. We work closely with government to collaboratively implement our programs, advise on policy and program design, and amplify the needs and voice of the prevention workforce and the prevention sector.

We also develop relationships with other **funders** in the philanthropic community who are interested in developing their understanding of the prevention landscape and the extent and kind of investment required for meaningful prevention activity.

# Our Primary Prevention Strategy

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Our Strategic Direction over the next two years is to grow our leadership role in representing and developing the primary prevention workforce, and building and sharing innovative practice.

This will be achieved by focusing on the following Strategic Aims across the organisation:

1. Increase the capability of the workforce by strengthening knowledge, skills, confidence and connection
2. Lead advocacy around workforce development to advance policies, frameworks and collective sector impact
3. Build and share knowledge grounded in innovative primary prevention practice
4. Strengthen and leverage our role working across prevention and response

These aims are aligned with the four Strategic Priorities in the Safe and Equal [Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#).

To achieve these aims we will work in the following ways:

- Engage collaboratively with practitioners, sector organisations, government and funders
- Share our expertise state-wide in Victoria, and nationally
- Advocate for change based on the experiences and needs of the prevention workforce
- Conduct participatory evaluation of our own programs and develop resources to share lessons
- Strengthen work across the continuum from prevention to response

# Strategic aims, actions and measures

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## Priority 1: Developing practice and supporting workforces

### Strategic Aim 2022–2024

Increase the capability of the workforce by strengthening knowledge, skills, confidence and connection

#### Actions

- Strengthen existing training offerings along a career pathway from foundation to leadership level
- Develop new training offerings, with a focus on new settings and specialised skills and topics
- Deliver and promote awareness of Communities of Practice as a model for providing supported mentoring for prevention practitioners
- Develop a plan to improve access and inclusion in participation and content
- Build an ongoing program of events and forums through the Partners in Prevention network to promote connection and a sense of professional identity

#### Measures

- Increased participation in workforce development activities that match known learning and support needs
- Training participants report high levels of satisfaction, and growth in knowledge, skills and confidence
- Increased participation of key targets for access and inclusion
- Increased funding and participation in Communities of Practice
- Consolidated state-wide reach and uptake of capability building activities and resources
- PiP network members report activities are meeting their learning and support needs

## Priority 2: Strengthening and connecting organisations, sectors and systems

### Strategic Aim 2022–2024

Lead advocacy around workforce development to advance policies, frameworks and collective sector impact

#### Actions

- Work collaboratively towards securing funded state-based and national strategies for prevention workforce development
- Consult with leading sector organisations and partners to develop a mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Promote Associate Membership to prevention organisations
- Engage in sector-wide discussions about improving coordination and infrastructure
- Review advisory group structures to ensure high-level engagement in implementation of the Primary Prevention Strategy

#### Measures

- Increased uptake of advice and leadership
- Increased and/or repeat investment in workforce development in Victoria and nationally
- Stronger partnerships and relationships reported by stakeholders
- Increase in membership
- Stakeholders report greater clarity on our role and responsibilities, and an increase in our strategic impact
- Advisory groups established, with sustained engagement from participants

## Priority 3: Building momentum for social change

### Strategic Aim 2022–2024

Build and share knowledge grounded in innovative primary prevention practice

#### Actions

- Develop and deliver resources to collaboratively share knowledge and lessons
- Conduct program evaluation, and collate and share learnings with the sector
- Collaboratively share learnings from formal partnership processes with Rainbow Health Australia, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health and Djirra

#### Measures

- Increased distribution and uptake of high-quality and well-targeted resources
- Increase in reporting and distribution of evaluation results
- Partners report improved relationships, and an increase in collaborative prevention activities

## Priority 4: Building a strong peak organisation

### Strategic Aim 2022–2024

Strengthen and leverage our role working across prevention and response

#### Actions

- Facilitate sector discussions and practical connections across prevention and response
- Enhance internal collaboration and upskilling across organisational units to strengthen our role and our work in prevention

#### Measures

- Members and sector stakeholders report strengthening of our role in working across prevention and response
- Our units report mutual upskilling and greater collaboration