



Preventing domestic and family violence:

Action research reports from five
Australian local government councils

EDITED BY
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ANROWS

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to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

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Acknowledgement of Country

ANROWS and its partners in this research acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land across Australia on which we live and work. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging. We value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and knowledge. We are committed to standing and working with First Nations Peoples, honouring the truths set out in the Warawarni-gu Guma Statement.

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Action research reports from five Australian local government councils

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This report addresses work covered in the ANROWS project *Local Government Toolkit Trials Evaluation*. Please consult the ANROWS website for more information on this project: anrows.org.au/project/anrows-action-research-evaluation-of-the-local-council-domestic-and-family-violence-prevention-toolkit/

ANROWS research contributes to the six national outcomes of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. This project addresses national plan outcome 1 – Communities are safe and free from violence.

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ANROWS also thanks the managers and project officers from the five participating local government authorities – the City of Charles Sturt, Latrobe City Council, Mackay Regional Council, the City of Mandurah, and the City of Parramatta – for their efforts in producing the work reported here. These officers were the main drivers of the research, and this volume is a direct result of their enthusiastic cooperation.

Acknowledgement of lived experiences of violence

ANROWS acknowledges the lives and experiences of the women and children affected by domestic, family and sexual violence and neglect who are represented in this report. We recognise the individual stories of courage, hope and resilience that form the basis of ANROWS research.

Caution: Some people may find parts of this content confronting or distressing.

Recommended support services include: 1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732 and Lifeline – 13 11 14.

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Acronyms

ACA	Australian Council of the Arts
ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CEO	Chief executive officer
DFV	Domestic and family violence
DSS	Department of Social Services (Australia)
DV	Domestic violence
DVO	Domestic violence order
ELT	Executive leadership team
LCC	Latrobe City Council
LGA	Local government authority
MPAG	Major performing arts group
MRC	Mackay Regional Council
VAW	Violence against women
VCSA	Victorian Crime Statistics Agency
WADVS	Western Adelaide Domestic Violence Service
WAWAFC	Western Adelaide Violence against Women Collaboration



INTRODUCTION

Local government, action research, and domestic and family violence prevention

DR PETER NINNES, PROJECT MANAGER, ANROWS

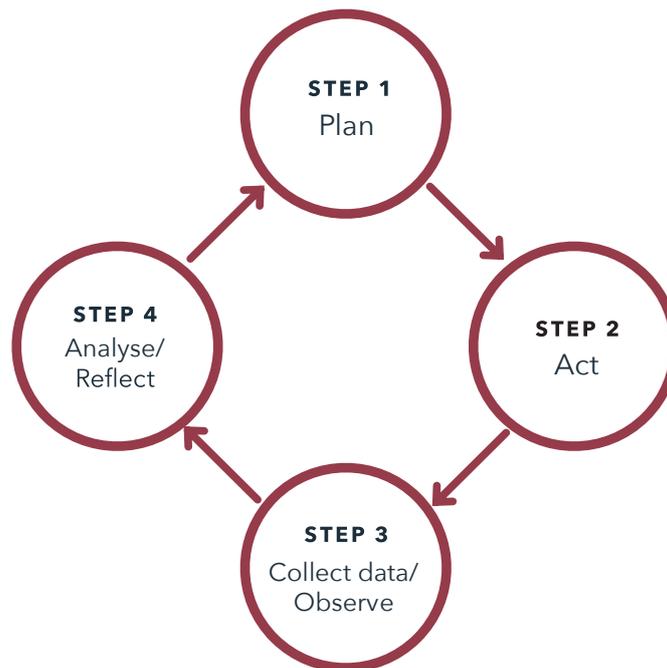
CELESTE KOENS, PROJECT OFFICER (EVALUATION), ANROWS

The purpose of this volume is to document the use of action research in evaluating domestic and family violence (DFV) prevention activities in local government authorities (LGAs) around Australia. The volume is intended for DFV prevention practitioners in local government and other community services. It provides insights not only into DFV prevention work in the local government context, but also the use of action research as a means of integrating evaluation processes and continuous improvement into everyday DFV prevention work.

The reports in this volume arose from the work of five LGAs around Australia that trialed the draft *Local council domestic and family violence prevention toolkit* (“the toolkit”).¹ The toolkit was developed by Palladium under contract to the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). DSS commissioned the work in response to Action 1.2(a) of the Third Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022. This required action to “co-design tools and resources with local governments to engage with business, sporting organisations and community groups to promote action against violence” (DSS, 2016, p. 9).

The toolkit was designed as a “resource for local councils that are interested in contributing to the prevention of domestic and family violence in their community” (DSS, 2018, p. 3). It employed the conceptual framework found in *Change the story* (Our Watch et al., 2015). This evidence-based framework identifies gender inequality as the driver of violence against women. In particular, preventing violence against women involves promoting gender equality through:

¹ More specifically, “the toolkit” refers to the version evaluated by ANROWS and the trial sites, namely, the *Local council domestic and family violence prevention toolkit* (April 26, 2018 version). The most recent version of the toolkit at the time of writing (May 2019) is called the *Local government domestic and family violence prevention toolkit*.

Figure 1 The action research cycle

- challenging the condoning of violence against women;
- promoting women’s independence and decision making;
- challenging stereotypical constructions of masculinity and femininity; and
- strengthening positive, equal and respectful relations.

Each LGA implemented and evaluated the toolkit from April 2018 to June 2019. They chose various components of the toolkit to use, depending on the previous DFV prevention work they had done and the direction they wanted to take the work over the course of the trial. Since their work had a prevention focus, many of their activities examined or addressed gender inequality.

The five toolkit trial LGAs were:

- City of Charles Sturt (South Australia);
- Latrobe City Council (Victoria);
- Mackay Regional Council (Queensland);
- City of Mandurah (Western Australia); and
- City of Parramatta (New South Wales).

Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) was contracted to support the LGAs in implementing and evaluating the toolkit and feeding back the results to the toolkit developers. ANROWS also worked with each LGA to develop case studies of their DFV prevention activities and to write the action research reports included in this volume.

The LGAs used action research to evaluate the toolkit. Action research aims to improve understanding of issues as well as what works and what can be improved or changed in professional practice (Orr & Ninnis, 2016). Therefore, action research is undertaken in the course of everyday work. Action research provides a means to document and reflect on practice and improve outcomes. In the studies reported here, action research has been used to document and reflect on the contribution the toolkit made to DFV prevention activities.

Action research is usually thought of as involving a cycle of four steps (see Figure 1; Orr & Ninnis, 2016). These steps are used to frame each of the reports in this volume. In addition, each report provides a description of the context of the work, including some general facts

about the LGA and the DFV work done to date. The authors were encouraged to reflect not only on the results of the research, but also on the evaluation process itself and the lessons learned.

Each trial site undertook a range of activities while implementing and evaluating the toolkit. This volume reports on one of those activities from each site. The first report comes from the City of Charles Sturt in Adelaide. Their toolkit trial focused on engaging with community organisations to increase awareness of DFV. They implemented a number of creative art activities. The “Act of Love” activity forms the basis for their action research report.

In Victoria, Latrobe City Council’s trial of the toolkit focused on working internally to improve systems for monitoring and evaluating DFV prevention work and on engaging with the community to raise awareness. Their report focuses on the use of a community initiative fund as a vehicle to increase understanding among community organisations of the drivers and compounding factors of DFV and the role of gender equality in prevention.

The Mackay Regional Council in North Queensland began the trial with a Mayor’s DFV taskforce already in place. Their toolkit implementation and evaluation work sought to build the knowledge and understanding of DFV and bystander action among members of the taskforce and all managers in the organisation. Their report reflects on the training they provided to these key leaders in collaboration with an outside training organisation.

In Western Australia, the City of Mandurah’s DFV prevention activities focused on understanding attitudes among staff to gender equality. Their report reflects on the process of undertaking a gender attitudes survey. It sets out the ways in which various teams in the council worked together to lay the groundwork for the survey and maximise the response rate.

Finally, the City of Parramatta in western Sydney used the toolkit trial as an opportunity to review gender equality in the services they offer. Their report presents the results of a gender audit of theatre productions at the city’s Riverside Theatre. In addition, the report provides reflections on the process of undertaking the audit and the way in which outside developments in theatre impact the gender balance of their productions.

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1. Arts projects as an entry point to engagement around domestic and family violence prevention

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Summary

The City of Charles Sturt ran a creative arts project called the “Act of Love”, in which artists produced portraits of people affected by domestic and family violence (DFV). The aim was to raise awareness of the prevalence and impact of DFV. A short film was made about the process. Following a public launch, the portraits and film were displayed at the council offices from 25 November to 21 December 2018, which included the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign period (hereafter, “the 16 Days of Activism”).

Lessons learned

The key lessons learned from this project were:

- The arts provide a non-confrontational and engaging medium in which to discuss and raise awareness of DFV.
- Using a best practice selection process with clear criteria ensures that capable artists are recruited and high-quality artworks produced.
- All aspects of such a project need to be carefully planned, communicated and organised, since it involves a large number of participants.
- The exhibition generated great interest from other councils and galleries, so future activities of this kind could plan to tour the exhibition after its initial display.

The arts provide a non-confrontational and engaging medium in which to discuss and raise awareness of DFV.

Introduction

The City of Charles Sturt is situated west of the central business district of Adelaide, South Australia, extending to the coast, with a population of approximately 117,382 (I. D. Consulting, 2019a). The city comprises a blend of working-class communities with pockets of high-income areas. Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities comprise 27 percent of the population (I. D. Consulting, 2019a, b).¹ The most common forms of employment are health care and assistance, retail and manufacturing, while the unemployment rate is 5.15 percent (I. D. Consulting, 2019c, d).

The city works closely with the Western Adelaide Domestic Violence Service (WADVS) and has supported the service with grants, collaboration and awareness-raising activities. The WADVS has at least 100 women accessing crisis care at any one time.

The city has been an active member of the Western Adelaide Violence against Women Collaboration (WAWA WC) since 2012. The network has diverse representation from a wide range of government and non-government agencies. Membership of the WAWA WC has provided the city with detailed understanding of DFV occurring in local communities.

¹ The most frequent places of birth are the UK, Italy, India, Vietnam Greece and China.

When the city was chosen as a toolkit trial site, the focus was on a suite of arts activities to engage the local community in a discussion about the impacts of DFV. Sporting events and clubs are often seen as an obvious arena for raising awareness about DFV (e.g. VicHealth’s bystander training toolkit for sport organisations (VicHealth, 2014)). However, the project team was inspired by a statement in the toolkit that “the arts can be a valuable medium to explore norms, drive visually engaging campaigns in public spaces and provide new creative interactive methods to engage the community on DFV” (DSS, 2018, p. 10). In addition, the project team was aware of the positive contribution that the creative arts can make to the city’s cultural life (Australian Council of the Arts, 2018). The project team decided to showcase these projects during the 16 Days of Activism in November-December, 2018.²

Several council-led DFV awareness-raising activities were planned for the 16 Days of Activism. Four of these activities focused on the creative arts:

- Act of Love: A portrait story.
- The Clothesline project.
- The Message to My Love campaign.
- The Slice of Life Film project (in partnership with Zahra Foundation).

This report focuses on the Act of Love project. Descriptions of the other three projects are available on the council’s website (City of Charles Sturt, n.d.).

The Act of Love project involved 12 artists painting portraits of local community members affected by domestic and family violence. The portraits have the potential to be a thoughtful portrayal that captures a larger story. The Act of Love is the interchange between the artist and the sitter, with the finished portrait being gifted to the sitter at the end of the exhibition. A short documentary film was created to further record the project.³

The next sections of this report discuss the planning, implementation and data collection involved in this project. These are followed by reflections on the data and the lessons learned throughout the process.

Plan: The City of Charles Sturt approach

The project team started the task by focusing on each member’s personal strengths. For example, the project manager brought prior experience in using the arts for community development work. The team scoped out each project and identified who would lead and who would provide support in the following areas:

- budget;
- target audience;
- purpose;

² The project team comprised the author, who is the Social Inclusion Coordinator and was the project manager, along with Khadija Gbla, Safe Communities Coordinator, and Arrow Tong, the Safe Communities Administration Assistant.

³ The film can be viewed on the council website: <http://www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au/DFVPP>.

- partners and stakeholders;
- how to manage and support the participants;
- venues and resources required;
- timeline;
- project brief, contracts, memoranda of understanding and procurement guidelines;
- documentation process and information-gathering techniques;
- launch, including identifying and booking guest speakers;
- risk assessment; and
- evaluation.

The project manager identified the material costs for artists and the budget for the film, and then contacted DFV partners and invited survivors from diverse backgrounds to consider being involved in the project. The project brief was used to invite up to 12 artists to submit expressions of interest to create a portrait for the project. The artists could nominate someone to paint that they already knew or could go into a random draw and be paired up with a sitter. Three quotations were sourced (under council's procurement policy) for a filmmaker to document the project from start to finish.

The timeline was created to ensure all aspects of the project were achievable and scheduled. These included: running "meet and greet" sessions between artists and participants; lining up dates and venues for filming; identifying and booking guest speakers for the launch; preparing launch invitations; making a running sheet; film editing; preparing questionnaires for participants as part of the documentation and feedback process; and booking wall space for hanging the artworks.

Both the project manager and the Safe Communities Coordinator were participants in the project as well as support persons. The Safe Communities Administrative Assistant helped with filming days, the launch, and preparing and coordinating the evaluation processes and reports.

Act: Selecting the artists and sitters and supporting the artwork production

Artists were selected both for their artistic skill and for their ability to interact respectfully and compassionately with sitters. Throughout the project, both artists and sitters were reminded to practise self-care. Sitters were given control of how they would be portrayed and how much they wanted to share. This was empowering and reduced the risk of re-traumatisation. The project team provided debriefing sessions and emotional support for all participants, especially the sitters.

The project team decided to select a diverse range of sitters, and sought representation from:

- CALD communities;
- Aboriginal communities;
- men who have been impacted by DFV;
- young people;

- people who are financially challenged;
- people experiencing mental health issues;
- children; and
- older people.

The project team worked to ensure that all participants felt safe, comfortable and well supported. This took additional time, but building rapport and implementing intersectionality were critical to the success of the project. As a result, once participants and artists got on board, no participants wanted to pull out of the project and they all committed from the beginning to the end.

Artists and sitters who experienced access and cultural barriers were supported with transport, a crèche, a child-friendly environment and flexibility with time arrangements. This ensured that there was maximum participation and each portrait could be produced in time for the exhibition launch.

The team addressed a number of challenges during the project:

- One artist, who chose her own participant, ended up pulling out just as all 24 participants were confirmed. The project team identified another sitter among council staff at short notice and she was paired with the filmmaker, who was a professional portrait photographer.
- All 24 people could not attend the meet and greet event, so a second event was organised the following week for those who missed out.
- One artist lived in Alice Springs. The project team felt that having her as an artist would be valuable, so the team worked flexibly with her to timelines that meant she could deliver.
- One artist felt that the funds allocated for art materials was insufficient for a professional artist. The project manager explained that the Act of Love involved “gifting” the portrait, and the materials budget allowed for that. The artist then committed to the project.
- One participant attended a filming session at the wrong time but was accommodated. This required negotiation with the filmmaker, who was concerned about the day’s shooting schedule.
- One of the artists delivered an artwork with a second-hand frame in an unsatisfactory condition. The project manager organised a professional framer to reframe the artwork within half a day. The artist was eventually convinced that the change was necessary.
- At the launch, the Aboriginal dancers arrived late, and their supplied music did not work. This meant a delayed start while the technical issues were resolved.

Collect: Measuring performance and obtaining feedback

In order to measure the success of the project, data were collected for the following metrics. Performance measures are given in parentheses, where determined beforehand.

- Number of artists engaged and financially compensated for materials (12).
- Number of sitters recruited who have experienced DFV (12).
- Number of diverse groups/communities represented (as many as possible).

- Proportion of artists and sitters providing feedback on the process (90%).
- Professional filmmaker hired (1).
- Video produced (one x 1 hour).
- Condensed video produced and loaded on Facebook (one video of up to 7 minutes' length).
- Number of artworks produced (12, one by each artist).
- Exhibition to be on display during the 16 Days of Activism at the Civic Centre.
- Act of Love Film to be uploaded on the City of Charles Sturt website and to be a resource for community awareness and education.
- Number of local media attending launch.
- Number of attendees for launch (150).
- Number of members of parliament attending launch (1).

The artists and sitters also responded to several feedback questions provided by email after the project was completed.

Questions for sitters:

- How was your experience in this project?
- Did you feel supported throughout this project?
- What difference has this made in your life if any?
- Would you recommend participating in this project to others?
- Any general feedback, comments or suggestions?

Questions for artists:

- What have you learned?
- What difference has this project made in your life if any?
- Would you recommend this project to others?
- Any general feedback, comments or suggestions?

Reflecting on the project's achievements

Most of the performance measures were met or exceeded, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Planned and actual values of indicators for the Act of Love activity

	Planned	Actual
Number of artists engaged and financially compensated for materials	12	12
Number of sitters recruited who have experienced DFV	12	20 ⁴
Number of diverse groups/communities represented	As many as possible	Communities represented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal • Sudanese • Sierra Leonean • Congolese • Iranian • Irish • Indian
Proportion of artists and sitters providing feedback on the process	90%	Artists: 42% Primary sitters: 33%
Professional filmmaker hired	1	1
Video produced	1 x 1 hour	1 x 19 minutes
Condensed video produced and loaded on Facebook (one video of up to 7 minutes length)	1 x 7 minutes	Used the 19-minute video above
Number of artworks produced (12, one by each artist)	12	13
Exhibition to be on display during the 16 Days of Activism at Civic Centre	Yes	Yes
Act of Love Film to be uploaded on the City of Charles Sturt website and to be a resource for community awareness and education	Yes	Yes, plus provided to 14 other community or local government organisations
Number of local media attending launch	Not Specified	0
Number of attendees for launch	150	180
Number of members of parliament attending launch	1	1

⁴ Four portraits included other family members.

It turned out to be unrealistic to make a 1 hour film. Instead, a 19-minute video was produced. The number of sitters was higher than the number of artists, because several sitters requested that family members also be included in the portrait. The launch was better attended than expected, and attendees included the city's mayor and CEO, the Director of the Office for Women, the Chair of Our Watch, and a councillor from the City of Adelaide. However, it was disappointing that no members of the local media attended. In future, strategies need to be identified to attract local media coverage. One metric that was not initially included was the number of people attending the exhibition (8,949).

All four of the sitters who provided feedback recommended the project. One said the project was "a great initiative", another said the experience was "empowering and enlightening", while a third described it as "positive". Another sitter said that being part of the project meant that she had made herself "visible...as a DV survivor". This "surprised" her because she had "lived with the shame for such a long time".

One sitter said that the project had helped her relationship with her partner. She also realised that she was ready to begin healing work with a trauma specialist. Another said that sharing the experience of DFV with other people "felt therapeutic and less isolating". A third reported that working with the artist had allowed them both to "talk about life".

The sitters felt well supported by the project staff. One sitter said they were "very nice and approachable", while another said, "I didn't expect the organisers to check in to see if there was anything I needed." She added that the check-in was very moving, and reminded her of "how long I've spent coping on my own". One sitter recommended that the organisers provide the interview questions prior to the interview, so that the sitters can be better prepared and to reduce nerves, anxiety and stress.

The five artists who provided feedback all recommended the project. Most of them said that involvement in the project had increased their awareness of DFV, including its prevalence and impact, and the need to speak out.

I have learnt that there are many of us who carry a story of domestic violence around with them and how important it is to share our stories so we all become aware at how widespread it is in the community.

I have learnt about how prevalent DV is in every community.

I have learnt of the shocking reality of how extremely prevalent and dire the issue of domestic violence is in Australia today, and the impact it has... I learnt of the importance of noticing...and to speak out and offer help and support... The importance of empowering women, men and children to leave a situation that is not valuing their worth, their life and their very being, to understand their worth and that there is help out there and they are not alone in this, and do not and should not ever have to tolerate any form of violence.

It was nice to learn that there are good support groups out there and so many nice people raising awareness and trying to minimise this horrible behaviour in our society.



Sharing the experience of DFV with other people "felt therapeutic and less isolating".

One artist reflected on the way the project taught her about being an artist:

Sometimes it is better to sit back and take a softly, softly approach. You don't always have to fill situations with talking. Take your cue from your sitter.

The project had a substantial impact on several of the artists' understanding and response to DFV and the future direction of their work:

I would like to be involved with a charity or support service in my own way with what I can offer.

Meeting some inspirational people who told their stories about DV...made me reflect on what I am doing to support those who are experiencing this. It also opened me up to conversing about it with friends and family and discussing and thinking more in depth about the issue.

It made me think more of my worth and what I will and will not put up with...in the form of physical, mental, sexual, object and financial abuse. [I became] much more aware of situations around me. To not be afraid.

It was a life highlight and privilege to have been part of the Act of Love project and to have worked [with] the beautiful souls involved.

It has made me seek out other social justice projects. It's really put a fire in my belly for art that stands for something.

The project team used a formal selection process to engage artists with high artistic merit who were passionate about the project. This approach paid off because the artworks themselves were of a very high quality. The sitters were happy with the art works and were pleased to take them home.

In hindsight, if the project was done again, it would be good to ask the participants not to take their portraits home straight away. This is because other councils and galleries wanted to tour the exhibition, but the team had already committed to letting the sitters collect their work at the end of the exhibition. There would, however, be greater value in travelling the exhibition as it will create excitement in the communities to which it goes.

Conclusions

The City of Charles Sturt's use of the arts as an entry point to raise awareness about the impacts of DFV on our local community has been very successful. The project manager had a strong track record of working in the arts as a form of community development and capacity building. Using that knowledge and experience in a DFV prevention art project contributed to the positive outcomes. In addition, the project resulted in the formation of friendships between participants, and the production of a collection that had the potential to be exhibited more widely, thus multiplying the impact of the project.

The creative arts provide a forum for community engagement...

The art project evaluated in this report was undertaken as part of the DSS *Local council domestic and family violence prevention toolkit* trial. For other councils using the toolkit, this project provides a tried and tested model for using the arts to engage the local community in non-confrontational discussions about DFV. All aspects of such projects need to be carefully planned, communicated and organised, since they involve a large number of participants.

In future, the City of Charles Sturt could use this model to raise awareness of various other social issues, such as homelessness, gambling and racism. It is a safe, non-threatening and inclusive way to engage the community on sensitive topics. The creative arts provide a forum for community engagement additional to more common contexts, such as sports activities, and can add much to the cultural life of the city.

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2. Community partnerships as a vehicle for raising awareness of family violence prevention



LIAM BANTOCK, PROJECT OFFICER – FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION TOOLKIT,
LATROBE CITY COUNCIL



Summary

Latrobe City Council (LCC) identified local community groups as a key setting for family violence prevention activities. LCC sought to support these activities through providing funding and sharing its expertise in family violence prevention. This report explores the action research approach used for the delivery of information sessions to community groups seeking to apply for funding to undertake family violence prevention initiatives. The research showed that these information sessions were an effective way of providing information to community groups to assist them in delivering prevention activities.

Lessons learned

The key lessons learnt from this project were:

- Providing family violence information and specific examples of primary prevention activities is beneficial for community groups looking to undertake prevention activities.
- Understanding the participants' motivation for attending information sessions is an important part of the session planning process.
- Asking respondents to identify specific items of knowledge about family violence and primary prevention activities would be more relevant for program planning and evaluation than asking participants to self-rate their knowledge.
- There would be value in broadening understanding of the difference in community interest in gender equality initiatives as opposed to family violence prevention initiatives.

Introduction

The Latrobe City local government area has the highest per capita rates of police attendance at family violence incidents in Victoria, three times the state average (Victorian Crime Statistics Agency [VCSA], 2019). Since the mid-1990s, Latrobe City has undergone a shift in its social and economic make up, largely driven by the privatisation of electricity power generation, a decline in traditional manufacturing jobs, cheap housing and recent moves to a lower carbon intensity economy. While there has been long-standing work for the prevention of violence against women undertaken by a number of local agencies, there has historically been a lack of coordination and broad partnerships for its delivery within the municipality. In addition, there is a lack of knowledge across the municipality of prevention of violence against women frameworks.

LCC has undertaken a variety of initiatives to respond to and prevent violence against women since 2015. LCC provides paid family violence leave and trains staff to provide referrals for other staff experiencing family violence. LCC's *Preventing Family Violence Plan 2016 – 2020* has a range of actions that the organisation has committed to implementing both internally and with the community (Latrobe City Council, 2016). The plan has four key priorities: work towards a more gender equitable community; develop the workforce; educate the community; and strengthen partnerships.

LCC's work with community groups identified a lack of understanding of the gendered drivers of violence and primary prevention of violence against women as a distinct area of practice. Public support for gender equality and practical examples of initiatives to promote gender equality have not been readily visible across Latrobe City. Anecdotal evidence from prevention practitioners working across the municipality report resistance to gender equality work in some sectors of the community.

LCC undertook a project to provide funding to community groups to undertake primary prevention activities. The action research activity on which this report focuses involved delivering information sessions to community groups interested in applying for the funding. Attendance at an information session was a requirement of the funding. The intention was to provide to groups a base level of understanding of violence against women and primary prevention theory to assist them in planning and delivering their project.

This report explores the action research process used to deliver the information sessions. It explains the planning process and how the sessions were delivered, examines the evaluation data that was collected and discusses what was learnt through the process.

Planning the information sessions

The information session aimed to give attendees a base level of understanding of family violence and its causes as well as primary prevention theory and possible actions. The sessions were planned and delivered by the toolkit trial project officer.

Information on family violence was gathered from a range of sources, including statistics from Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (2017) and the Victorian Crime Statistics Agency (2019). The legal definition of family violence from the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) was employed. The *Change the story* framework formed the basis of the information on the gendered drivers of violence against women and primary prevention theory (Our Watch et al., 2015). Examples of programs undertaken by councils were taken from the toolkit (Australia. Department of Social Services, 2018) and the Municipal Association of Victoria's 'Promising Practice Portal'.¹

It was assumed that participants would have no pre-existing knowledge of family violence or primary prevention. As the session had a prevention focus, only a cursory amount of information was provided on the prevalence and experience of family violence. The key messages were that family violence was prevalent in the local community and involved more than physical violence, and the need for prevention programs.

The application process required groups to identify which specific driver from *Change the story* (Our Watch et al., 2015) they were addressing. The purpose of this requirement was to help applicants conceptualise their project within the national framework. The examples from the toolkit were intended to give groups some practical examples that would demonstrate how the conceptual framework could be implemented. Finally, the session covered the funding requirements and application process and concluded with a time for questions.

The key messages were that family violence was prevalent in the local community and... the need for prevention programs.

¹ <https://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/promising-practice-portal>

Act: Implementing the information sessions

Three publicly advertised information sessions were held as well as two one-on-one sessions with groups unable to attend the public sessions. The public sessions were held at Latrobe City Council venues with one session in each of the major towns within Latrobe City (Moe, Morwell and Traralgon) across morning, afternoon and evening timeslots. The schedule aimed to address both geographic and time availability barriers to make the sessions as accessible as possible.

The sessions were attended by nine community members representing three community groups, two neighbourhood houses, two community support organisations and an individual with no organisational affiliation. One attendee disclosed personal experience of family violence, one attendee's organisation provides services to family violence victim-survivors and one attendee had experience working for an organisation providing services to family violence victim-survivors. The community groups and neighbourhood houses had not previously undertaken activities to prevent family violence.

The project officer used a PowerPoint presentation to assist with visualising the information during the session, which included:

- an acknowledgement of country;
- a reminder about self-care and referral information;
- the context for Latrobe City Council's involvement in preventing violence against women;
- family violence statistics and the legal definition;
- the *Change the story* framework (Our Watch et al., 2015), including the gendered drivers of violence against women, reinforcing factors and the essential actions to prevent violence against women;
- information on primary prevention and its relation to secondary and tertiary prevention;
- examples of prevention activities undertaken by councils and community groups;
- information on the funding requirements and application process; and
- a question time.

The attendees demonstrated good engagement with the material presented and no resistance to the information.

Collecting the data

Attendees at the session were provided with a pre- and post-session questionnaire that was developed by the project officer with assistance from ANROWS. The questions were intended to align with the purpose of the information session and measure the effectiveness of the information presented. A mix of knowledge self-rating and attitudinal questions were used.

The pre-session questionnaire asked the attendees to rate their level of agreement with the following statements on a five-point scale:

1. I know a lot about family violence
2. I know a lot about specific actions to prevent family violence

3. Preventing family violence is best left up to the police and specialist agencies
4. Our community group has an important role to play in preventing family violence
5. I know of many actions my community group could take to prevent family violence (only to be answered if the attendee agreed with question 4)

The post-session questionnaire statements were:

1. My knowledge of family violence increased a lot as a result of this presentation
2. My knowledge of actions to prevent family violence increased a lot as a result of this presentation
3. Preventing family violence is best left up to the police and specialist agencies
4. Our community group has an important role to play in preventing family violence
5. I know of many actions my community group could take to prevent family violence
6. The information presented today was highly relevant to my work

Attendees were also asked to identify their three key learnings from the presentation and if there was any information on the topic they would have liked to have known that was not covered.

The survey responses were entered into an Excel spreadsheet to assist with analysis. The rating responses were averaged and the per cent agreement with the statement analysed. The three key learning responses were coded into themes.

Analysing the data and reflecting on the results

The data collected from the evaluation surveys are presented below. The attendees were asked to rate their level of agreement with the question on a five-point scale, with 1 indicating disagree and 5 agree. The average is the mean score for all nine responses. The agreement percentage is the percentage of participants who scored a 4 or 5 in response to the question.

There was a range of pre-session levels of knowledge of family violence (Table 1), with three attendees rating their agreement to knowing a lot about the issue at 5 and two rating it at 2. The pre-session knowledge of specific prevention actions was less, with three rating their agreement at 5 and four rating it at 2. Less than half the attendees felt they knew a lot about specific actions to prevent family violence.

Table 1 Participant knowledge questions (pre-session)

	Average	Agreement
I know a lot about family violence	3.8	67%
I know a lot about specific actions to prevent family violence	3.3	44%

Table 2 Attitudinal questions (pre- and post-session)

	Pre-session average	Post-session average	Pre-session agreement	Post-session agreement
Preventing family violence is best left up to the police and specialist agencies	1.9	1.6	11%	0%
Our community group has an important role to play in preventing family violence	4.2	4.7	78%	100%
I know of many actions my community group could take to prevent family violence	3.4*	3.9	56%	63%

* Participants were asked to answer this question only if they rated the previous question at a 4 or 5. However, eight responses were received to this question.

Table 3 Session effectiveness questions (post-session)

	Average	Agreement
My knowledge of family violence increased a lot as a result of this presentation	3.9	67%
My knowledge of actions to prevent family violence increased a lot as a result of this presentation	3.8	63%
The information presented today was highly relevant to my work	4.4	88%

The attitudinal questions all showed the desired change in post-session average and agreement (Table 2). After attending the session no one agreed with the notion that preventing family violence was best left up to the police or specialist agencies while everyone agreed that their community group had an important role to play.

Despite a range of specific examples being provided during the session, only 63 per cent of attendees agreed that they knew of many actions their community group could undertake to prevent family violence (Table 3). While both the average and percentage agreement increased post-session, looking at the specific responses further clarifies the results. In the pre-session questionnaire, four attendees rated their agreement at 5, one at 4, two at 3 and one at 1. In the post-session questionnaire, two attendees rated their agreement at 5, four at 4 and three at 3. This suggests that the information presented in the session demonstrated to some attendees that their pre-session knowledge was not aligned with the national framework and different, evidence-based actions were required to prevent family violence.

The majority of attendees agreed that their knowledge of family violence, as well as actions to prevent it, increased a lot as a result of the presentation. The three attendees did not

agree that their knowledge increased a lot as a result of the presentation had pre-session knowledge self-ratings of 4 or 5. In other words, they thought they knew a lot beforehand. Overall, the lower the attendee's pre-session knowledge rating, the more likely they were to agree that the session had increased their knowledge of family violence. Each attendee's level of agreement that the presentation had increased their knowledge of actions was identical to their response to the knowledge of family violence question, except for one attendee, who rated it as a 4, as opposed to a 5. The session was intended to provide a base level of knowledge on family violence and primary prevention. Therefore, the results showing that people with a higher level of pre-existing knowledge did not increase their knowledge as much as those with a low level of knowledge was expected.

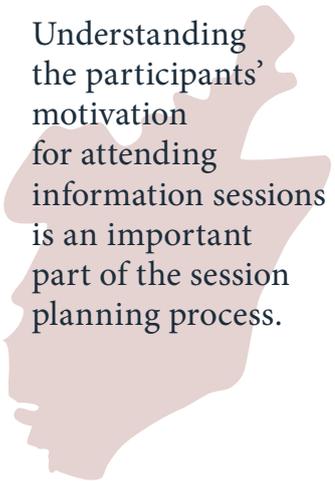
Only one attendee did not agree that the information presented was highly relevant to their work. In the comments section on the evaluation form, the attendee stated that their organisation has not previously focused on "social issues" but that they were open to it in the future. It is reasonable to infer that their response to this question focused on their organisation's current work. The high level of agreement with the relevance of the information presented in the session is to be expected for a group of people who attended a session for the purpose of finding out about funding for preventing family violence.

It is possible to compare the effectiveness of the information session in increasing knowledge of family violence with the effectiveness of another training program delivered as part of the toolkit project, MATE Bystander Intervention. The focus of MATE training is to both increase knowledge of violence against women and to increase participants' skills in using a bystander approach. The sessions were delivered to Latrobe City Council staff and staff from other workplaces and community organisations. Eighty-nine participants attended a MATE session during the toolkit project, with 82 per cent reporting an increase in knowledge of violence against women as a result of the training.

The higher percentage of MATE session attendees reporting an increase in knowledge compared to attendees at the funding information session is understandable due to the different audiences. Attendees at the information sessions were members of community groups that were interested in applying for funding to undertake initiatives to prevent family violence. It is reasonable to infer that they would have some understanding of the issue of family violence and the need for the community to take action. Attendees at MATE training were attending sessions organised by their workplaces, and while some level of interest in taking action to prevent family violence is required, the level of intent is lower than for the information session attendees. This demonstrates that understanding the participants' motivation for attending information sessions is an important part of the session planning process.

The key learnings from the session that participants identified were in three broad themes: family violence information and statistics; the National Framework and primary prevention; and project-related information.

The evaluation data shows that providing information to community groups prior to them developing an application for project funding is an effective initiative. Seven groups were



Understanding the participants' motivation for attending information sessions is an important part of the session planning process.

represented at the information session and five progressed to submitting an application for funding. Of the five applications, four demonstrated a high level of adherence to a primary prevention approach.

While participants reported a high level of pre-session knowledge, the evaluation was limited in its ability to objectively assess that level of knowledge. When evaluating participant knowledge of family violence and prevention activities it is recommended to not rely only on self-assessment. An example would be the Gen Vic Action to Prevent Violence against Women quizzes, which ask respondents to identify the key drivers of violence against women as well as primary prevention activities from a list of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention activities. This would assist in gaining a broader understanding of the knowledge level of participants.

It is not possible to evaluate why only nine people attended the information sessions. It could reflect poor promotion of the sessions and of the funding opportunity, or the relatively small amount of funding being offered. It may be due to a lack of understanding within community groups of the important role they can play in preventing family violence. If undertaking the funding program again there could be value in promoting it using “gender equality” terminology rather than “preventing family violence” terminology. This would allow some comparison in interest levels.

Conclusions

The action research project undertaken by LCC involved the delivery of information sessions to community groups interested in applying for funding to undertake initiatives to prevent family violence. The purpose of the sessions was to provide groups with a base level of understanding of violence against women and primary prevention theory to assist them in the planning and delivery of their project. The evaluation of the project showed that attendees found the information presented at the session was highly relevant to their work. The projects that sought funding demonstrated an understanding of a primary prevention approach to preventing family violence as outlined in *Change the story* (Our Watch et al., 2015). Overall, this project demonstrated the effectiveness of councils working with community groups to raise knowledge of family violence and primary prevention activities to address the issue within their community.



This project demonstrated the effectiveness of councils working with community groups to raise knowledge of family violence and primary prevention activities.

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3. Partnering with an external training organisation to deliver domestic and family violence awareness and bystander training for managers and executives

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Summary

This paper documents the process of working with an external training organisation to deliver domestic and family violence (DFV) awareness and bystander training. It describes the process of identifying a suitable organisation and preparing, delivering and evaluating the training. The analysis draws on data from questionnaires completed by participants as well as records from the project officer's journal about the processes involved.

Lessons learned

The key lessons learned from this project were:

- Successful implementation of training for all staff on DFV prevention requires particular effort to engage male managers and increase male staff participation.
- Scheduling sessions at various times of the day provides attendance opportunities for a wide range of staff, including those who work outdoors.
- While there are numerous questionnaires available to test knowledge of, and attitudes towards, bystander action, the most useful results can be achieved by tailoring the questionnaires to the specific context.
- Evaluation of training should cover learning outcomes as well as the quality and focus of the training sessions.

Introduction

Mackay Regional Council (MRC) is located in North Queensland and comprises the city of Mackay and a number of towns and localities along the coast and in the hinterland. MRC has an estimated population of 117,064 and an area of 7,622 square kilometers (MRC, 2018). Approximately 5.1 percent of the population identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018), while a similar proportion are of South Sea Islander descent (MRC, 2012, p. 10). The main economic activities in Mackay are agriculture and mining, with the latter subject to fluctuations in activity levels.

In 2017–18, 753 domestic violence orders (DVOs) were lodged with the Mackay Magistrates Court, and 497 incidences of breaches of a DVO recorded. In addition, charges were lodged for 139 DFV offences and 20 strangulation offences (Queensland Courts, 2019).¹

Prior to the trial of the *Local council domestic and family violence prevention toolkit* (the toolkit) (DSS, 2018), MRC had been active in addressing and raising awareness of DFV. In particular, the mayor had established a DFV taskforce in 2017 to talk about DFV issues

¹ The DVOs lodged at the Mackay and Sarina Magistrates Courts represent 2.50 percent of all such lodgements in Queensland in 2017–18 (Queensland Courts, 2018, p. 51), while the MRC's population is about 2.30 percent of the Queensland total population.

in the community and identify how to tackle those problems. The taskforce comprises business and education leaders in the community along with MRC staff. The mayor also hosted a leadership forum in May 2017 to raise awareness about DFV in the community. Over 100 community leaders attended this forum. In conjunction with this forum, the Mayor launched the “Mackay draws the line” campaign, which included a declaration that “DFV stops here”. MRC developed a DFV leave policy, which allowed 20 days of paid leave for people experiencing DFV. The organisation also has contact officers in different departments who can be a point of contact for any staff experiencing or concerned about DFV. The contact officers have received training to better understand DFV and ways to respond to disclosures.

MRC has been working towards White Ribbon accreditation, and conducted a White Ribbon survey on DFV knowledge within the organisation. There was a 38 percent response rate to this survey, and the results demonstrated a concerning lack of awareness of DFV in the organisation.

While trialling the toolkit, the project team had also administered a questionnaire to the DFV taskforce to obtain baseline data on knowledge of DFV. The results showed that many taskforce members were unable to identify the key gendered drivers of DFV as set out in the *Change the story* framework (Our Watch, et al., 2015). Therefore, it was decided to conduct training with the DFV taskforce. Since awareness training is required as part of White Ribbon accreditation, and the need for bystander training was identified by the mayor and DFV taskforce, the MRC managers were also included in the training.



The need for bystander training was identified by the mayor and DFV taskforce.

The aim of the action research reported here was to identify the effectiveness and impact of the awareness and bystander training on managers and DFV taskforce members’ understanding of DFV and bystander action and managerial practices. The research also explores managers’ perceptions of the impact of the training on their own practices and their success or otherwise in changing the behaviour of their staff in the medium term (4 months after the training). The next sections describe how the project team planned, delivered, collected and analysed data about the training. The report then provides some reflections on the effectiveness and impact of the awareness and bystander training and discusses the lessons learned.

Planning the training

The project team planned the training with the council’s People and Culture team’s lead for the White Ribbon accreditation and with Learning and Development, the team responsible for training. First, the participants were identified. The focus on managers and taskforce members was based on the concept of starting at the top and having the knowledge trickle down. Once the managers were on board, it was assumed they would promote the DFV training and bystander action within their teams.

Training was delivered by En Masse, with whom the council had worked previously to deliver other forms of training. It was anticipated that engaging an external organisation instead of delivering the training in-house would reduce the risk of backlash towards any particular

staff member. The project team discussed with En Masse its existing bystander training modules and compared it to the information provided in the toolkit. A number of similarities were identified and therefore it was decided to use the pre-existing training module.

The training was promoted via email to managers and the taskforce. The email sent a strong message that this was an issue on which the organisation needed them to work. This message was reinforced through several follow-up emails. The emails were sent by the People and Culture team's lead for White Ribbon accreditation. Staff members were able to register for the training through the organisation's online system.

Conducting the training

The leadership team, including the CEO and mayor, attended the first day of the training. Three 2-hour sessions were then run on each of the next four days at major council offices throughout MRC, including the Civil Precinct and Paget Depot. A maximum of 20 people could attend each session and most of the sessions had ten or more participants. Some sessions commenced at 6:30am for staff who work outside of the main offices and who usually have an early start.

Overall, 55 men and 35 women attended the training (excluding the senior leadership team training). Fifteen male and 14 female managers and contact officers attended. Of the contact officers who attended, four were female and one was male. Of the managers, ten women out of 12 female managers (83%) and 14 out of 22 male managers (64%) attended. The remainder who attended were supervisors and team leaders, of whom 40 were men and 21 were women.

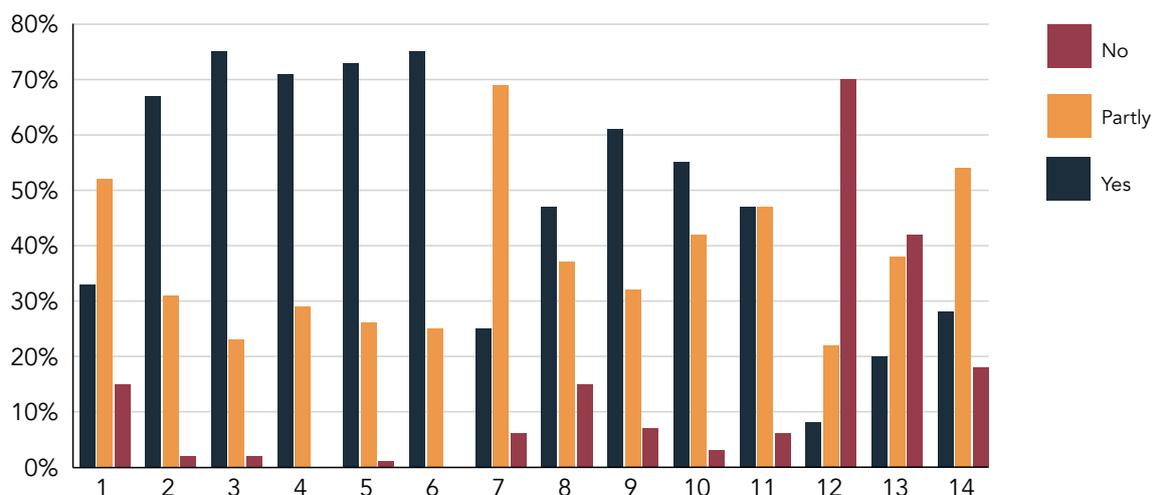
There was some variation in the training content depending on the audience. The session for contact officers was a refresher course on responding to disclosures of violence and vicarious trauma and using a safety plan. It provided bystander intervention tips and tools and an opportunity to engage in reflective practice. The session for Mackay's senior leadership team provided practical tools for handling DFV issues in a respectful and low-risk way, and information on vicarious trauma and the use of safety plans. Eight 2-hour sessions were held for the remainder of the organisation's management. They included an overview of issues surrounding DFV, ways to respond to disclosures, everyday ways to prevent DFV, and techniques and information for referring people to relevant support services (En Masse, 2018). The ten sessions were all held in one week and conducted by a single trainer.

Collecting the data

Journal keeping and written questionnaires were the main forms of data collection used in this project. The project officer kept a written journal of the process and took notes of any feedback received from the training. Three questionnaires were used:

The pre-training questionnaire assessed managers' knowledge and behaviour prior to the training using an adaptation of the "Motivated leaders' checklist" (VicHealth, 2014,

Figure 1 DFV awareness and bystander training pre-training questionnaire results (managers' knowledge and understanding)



p. 24). This questionnaire focused on staff self-assessment of their knowledge of sexist, discriminatory and harassing behaviour, their practices for addressing such behaviour, and their knowledge and use of bystander action. The pre-training questionnaire was completed by 118 people.

The post-training questionnaire recorded managers' perceptions of current staff behaviour. It was administered at the end of the training, once the managers had been provided with clear explanations of the types of behaviour concerned. The questionnaire was developed from the "Checklist to monitor team behaviours" (VicHealth, 2014, p. 34). Eighty-six participants completed the post-training questionnaire.²

The 4-month follow-up questionnaire was developed by combining certain questions from both the pre- and post-training questionnaires. The aim was to gather data on managers' perceptions of changes in their own management practices and their staff's behaviour. This questionnaire was created using Survey Monkey, and an email link was sent to training participants 4 months after the training sessions. Forty-six participants completed the follow-up questionnaire.

Responses to each question on the questionnaires were tallied and the data entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Response frequencies were calculated and displayed in bar graphs. The main areas the organisation and DFV Taskforce needed to improve were identified from the data.

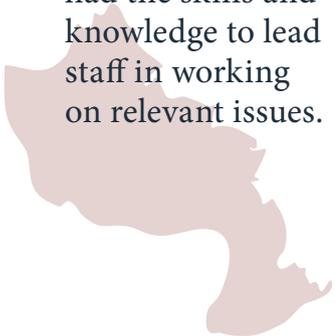
Analysing and reflecting on the data

The results of the pre-training questionnaire are presented in Figure 1. Corresponding questions in the pre-training questionnaire:

1. Do I understand the term bystander action?
2. Can I easily identify sexist, discriminatory and harassing behaviours?
3. Do I know the impacts of sexist, discriminatory and harassing behaviours could have on staff?

² The anomaly between the number of surveys completed and the number of participants is thought to have resulted from incorrect administration of one survey during one session. This points to an important monitoring task for future sessions – that the correct survey is delivered at the right time.

Nearly 70% of managers felt that they only partly had the skills and knowledge to lead staff in working on relevant issues.



4. Do I know the impacts of sexist, discriminatory and harassing behaviours could have on the workplace?
5. Am I clear about my responsibility to set the standards of behaviour for staff?
6. Do I role model appropriate workplace behaviours at all times?
7. Do I have the skills and knowledge to lead staff in working on these issues?
8. Have I talked with staff about the behaviours expected of them at work?
9. Do I provide feedback to staff about their behaviours?
10. Do I actively monitor my work environment?
11. Do I know what to do when I become aware of sexist, discriminatory or harassing behaviours at work?
12. Have I discussed bystander action with my staff?
13. Do I show my staff I support bystander action?
14. Do I know what to do when a staff member discloses domestic and family violence?

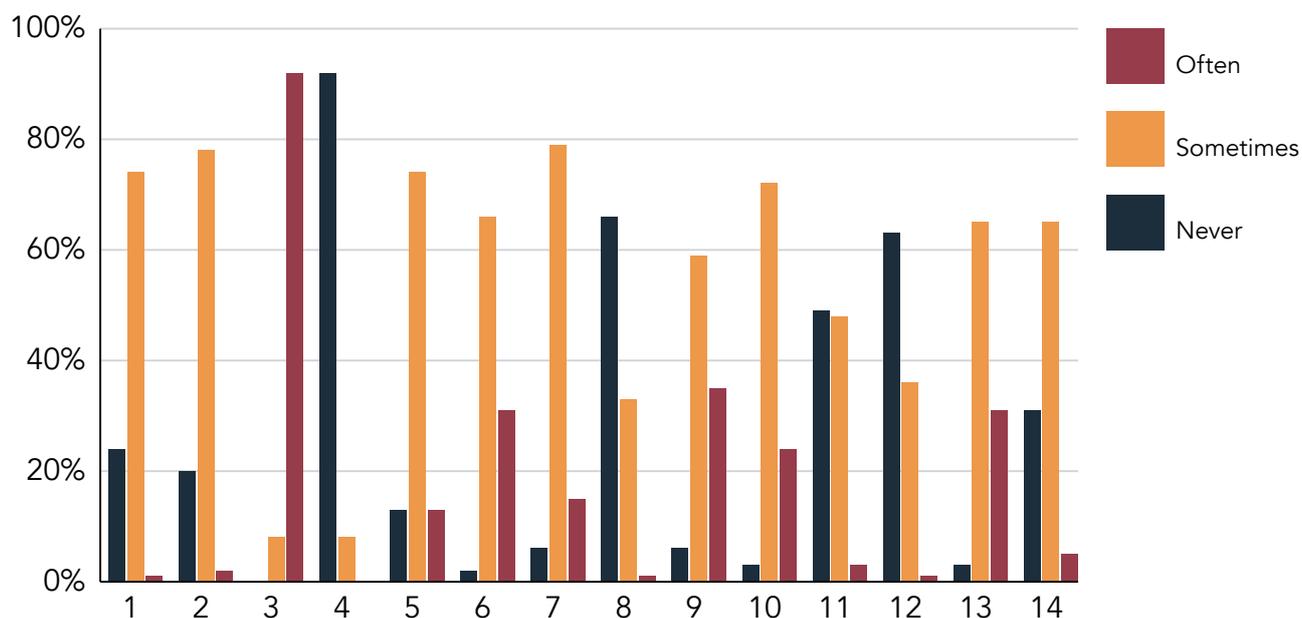
The project team identified the following areas of concern:

- The lack of understanding of the term of “bystander action” (Q1).
- Managers only partly model appropriate workplace behaviours (Q6), whereas they should be modelling appropriate behaviour at all times.
- Nearly 70 percent of managers felt that they only partly had the skills and knowledge to lead staff in working on relevant issues (Q7).
- A large majority of managers have not discussed bystander action with their teams (Q12).
- Only 20 percent said that they consistently show their staff they support bystander action (Q13).³

The results of the post-training questionnaire are presented in Figure 2. The corresponding questions are listed below the figure.

³ Despite the fact that some respondents may have completed this survey twice, the results still show substantial differences between the existing knowledge and behaviours and those considered desirable for managers.

Figure 2 Bystander training checklist post-training questionnaire results (managers' perceptions of current staff behaviours)



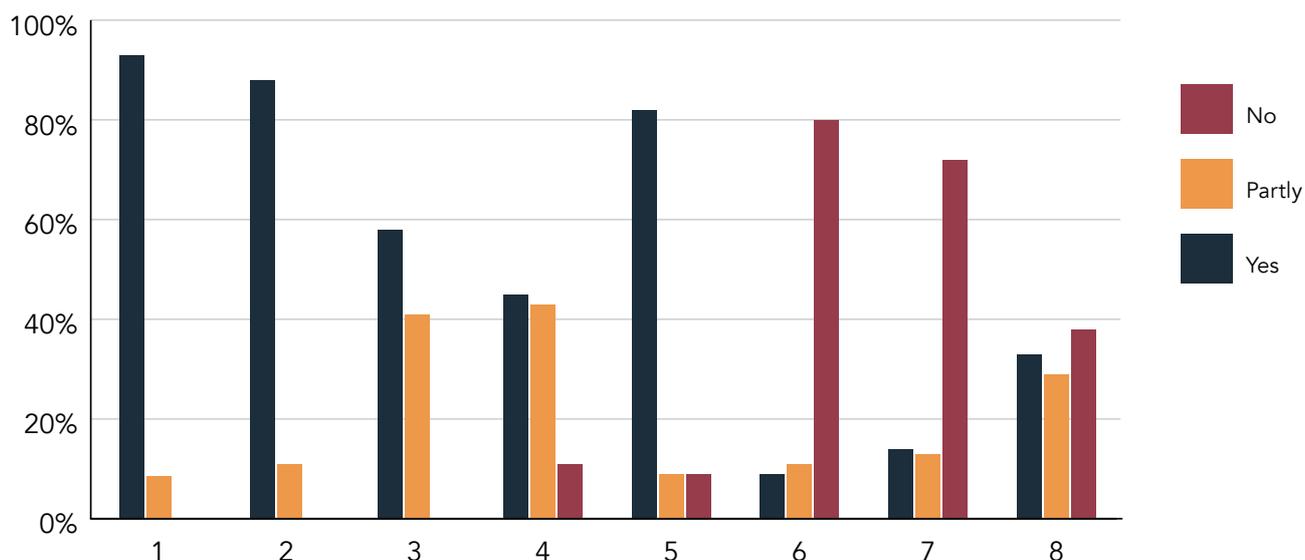
Questions in the bystander training checklist post-training questionnaire asked participants to report how often they have observed:

1. Staff commenting on the weight of staff.
2. Staff engaging in sexual banter or jokes.
3. Staff working well together on a project/task.
4. Staff making jokes about domestic and family violence or sexual violence.
5. Staff members dominating meetings.
6. Staff giving constructive feedback to each other.
7. Staff withdrawn or quiet during meetings.
8. Staff making homophobic jokes or comments.
9. All staff contributing during a meeting.
10. Staff members gossiping about other staff.
11. Staff members being unfairly excluded.
12. Staff disclosing experiences of sexist language, sex discrimination or sexual harassment.
13. Female staff referred to as ladies, girls or equivalent.
14. Staff speaking up against a sexist joke or taking other constructive bystander action.

Although the survey identified several areas of concern, the organisation identified two main results for future action:

- The considerable occurrence of staff engaging in sexual banter or jokes (Q2).
- The vast majority of staff only sometimes or never speaking up against such sexual banter or jokes (Q14).

The 4-month post-training questionnaire was a combination of the pre-training and post-training questionnaires, focusing specifically on some of the questions with the most troubling results. The results are shown in Figure 3, while the questions themselves are listed below the figure.

Figure 3 4-month post-training checklist results

The 4-month post-training questionnaire items were:

1. Do I understand the term bystander action?
2. Do I role model appropriate workplace behaviours at all times?
3. Do I have the skills and knowledge to lead staff in working on these issues?
4. Have I discussed bystander action with my staff?
5. Do I show my staff I support bystander action?
6. Have I recently observed staff engaging in sexual banter or jokes?
7. Have I recently observed staff speaking up against a sexist joke or taking other constructive bystander action?
8. Have I recently observed staff supporting the use of bystander actions?

Results for Questions 1–5 show an increase in “yes” responses and a decrease in “partly” and “no” responses. This shows that the training improved the knowledge and discussion of, skills in and support for bystander action among the respondents. Furthermore, managers reported being more aware of modelling appropriate workplace behaviours.

In the post-training survey, nearly 80 percent of managers said they sometimes observed staff engaging in sexual banter or jokes (Figure 2). However, after four months, 80 percent of managers reported they had not recently observed such behaviour (Figure 3). This latter figure may provide a reason why managers had not recently observed staff speaking up about sexist jokes to the degree they had previously reported (Q14 in the post-questionnaire versus Q7 in the 4-month post-training questionnaire).

The results for Question 8 show that staff are using bystander action and this, along with the other results, suggests that the training has been effectively passed on to staff by the managers. However, it should be noted that the number of respondents to the 4-month questionnaire was a little over half of the number who completed the post-training questionnaire. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that rolling out the training to all staff will reinforce these messages and increase the occurrence of positive behaviours.

In addition to the questionnaires, a number of participants provided verbal feedback after the training. Participants reported they had developed a “more in-depth understanding

of DFV and bystander action after the session”, “learnt a lot of new information that will be adapted into my leadership”, “feel I have the knowledge to take bystander action”, and that the training “raised everyone’s awareness levels of DFV and shows we’re moving in the right direction”.

Constructive feedback received from participants included that “the information was quite basic and needs to be adapted more to our council”, the training could be improved with “even smaller intimate groups” and longer sessions “for further discussion” because “some parts felt rushed”. The training will be adjusted to take account of this feedback when it is undertaken by all staff. Members of the project team also noticed that the trainer, who conducted all of the sessions herself, became tired by the end of the week.

A number of lessons were learned during this project. First, organisation is key for training that involves co-designing and partnering with other teams. All the partners need to be on the same page and understand the process and activities. For example, the project team could have ensured that the correct questionnaire is delivered at the beginning and end of the training. This could be improved by having different coloured paper for the various questionnaires.

Second, some of the male participants felt they were being attacked and consequently demonstrated slight resistance. The project team will assess how to improve the training package to get all participants engaged and on side.

Third, the project confirmed that questionnaires need to cater to specific environments and audiences. A standardised questionnaire may not be appropriate for all activities or audiences. The project team adapted the checklists for the training and all of the questions were appropriate. When the training is rolled out to all staff in the organisation the questionnaires will be revised, since the questionnaires used to date focus on leadership and management, which will be less relevant for all staff.

Fourth, in future the project team plans to evaluate the session itself, not just the learning outcomes of the session. This would provide the project team with information about the venue, session times, the presenters and perceptions of any further knowledge desired by participants.

Fifth, the recruitment strategy for the workshops needs to be refined to encourage male managers to attend. One strategy would be to ask the CEO or mayor to make a statement about the importance of the training for relevant staff. It may also be possible to mandate attendance, demonstrating that the knowledge and skills are essential to performing managerial functions.

Sixth, the training had less emphasis on primary prevention than the project team intended. In future, the training could focus more on primary prevention, including the gendered drivers of DFV and the reinforcing factors. In that respect, it might be pertinent to separate the awareness training from the bystander training.

It may also be possible to mandate attendance, demonstrating that the knowledge and skills are essential to performing managerial functions.

Finally, it was useful having several different sessions, so that managers could attend at a time that suited them. However, in the future it would be wise to have a second trainer or to spread the sessions over a longer time period so the trainer(s) do not become fatigued.

Conclusions

The aim of the action research was to identify the effectiveness and impact of the awareness and bystander training on managers and DFV taskforce members' understanding of DFV and bystander action. Overall, the managers reported that the training increased their knowledge, skills, understanding, use and support for bystander action. The next step will be to roll out the training to all staff. Then analysis can be undertaken of staff perceptions of the value and impact of the training, and these findings can be compared with the managers' perceptions.



Overall, the managers reported that the training increased their knowledge, skills, understanding, use and support for bystander action.

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4. Working across the council organisation to maximise the response rate for a gender attitude survey



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Summary

The City of Mandurah has not previously undertaken domestic and family violence (DFV) prevention or response work prior to its involvement in the *Local council domestic and family violence prevention toolkit* trial. Therefore, it undertook a gender attitudes survey to obtain baseline data on employees' awareness of gender equality over three categories: the self, colleagues and the organisation. Partnerships with two other organisational units, Corporate Communications and Human Resources, ensured the survey was delivered effectively and sensitively. A comprehensive communication plan was developed to achieve buy-in from leaders and to ensure employees took the time to fill out the survey. The response rate of 336 employees out of 692 (48.6%) provided a large amount of data to interpret and analyse. This process was time-consuming as the software used did not include analysis tools. Instead, all analysis needed to be done manually. The high response rate ensured the next steps in the project were tailored to the needs of the City of Mandurah's employees.

Lessons learned

The key lessons learned from this project were:

- Cross-organisational partnerships can ensure the development and implementation of high-quality and effective communication plans when addressing gender equality and DFV issues.
- A carefully developed and systematically implemented communications plan can achieve a high degree of buy-in from managers and a substantial response rate to a gender attitudes survey.

Introduction

Mandurah is Western Australia's largest regional city and has experienced substantial population growth over the past half century. It has about 84,000 people with a growth rate of 1.85 percent per year. The City of Mandurah is part of one of five local governments that makes up the Peel Region. It currently suffers from high unemployment (10.9% in 2018) compared to the WA average (7.8%) (National Growth Areas Alliance, 2019).

WA Police data from 2016 show that of 21,162 instances of DFV in Western Australia, 12.7 percent were within the Peel Region. The rates of DFV are increasing (Peel Says No to Violence, 2017). In recent years, DFV prevention in Mandurah has mainly been driven by the Peel Says No to Violence community alliance. This network comprises a local youth organisation, a women's refuge, a counselling service and a legal service. The Department of Social Services (DSS) selected the City of Mandurah as one of five national trial sites to implement the *Local council domestic and family violence prevention toolkit* (DSS, 2018).



Cross-organisational partnerships can ensure the development and implementation of high-quality and effective communication plans when addressing gender equality and DFV issues.

Prior to trialling the toolkit, the City of Mandurah had not been involved in DFV prevention or response. The trial was led by the organisation's Community Development team.

The City of Mandurah first wanted to better understand individual employees' attitudes towards and perceptions of gender equality, employees' perception of gender in the workplace and the organisation's response to gender inequality. An action research approach was used that involved surveying employees to identify areas for change, so that the organisation could work towards becoming more gender equitable. By making the organisation more gender equitable, the organisation expected to contribute to DFV prevention in the workplace (Our Watch et al., 2015).

The next section describes how the action research was planned and implemented, and how the data were collected and analysed. Finally, the report draws conclusions on the significance of the research to the organisation and suggests some future steps in Mandurah's DFV prevention journey.

Planning the gender attitudes survey

In order to obtain the required information, the Community Development team established the need to conduct a gender attitudes survey. The *Equal footing* survey provided in the toolkit covered all areas of interest and was considered appropriate to use (VicHealth, 2015). Corporate Communications and Human Resources were identified as the key internal teams to deliver it.

Corporate Communications helped to deliver the message about the reasons for the survey, the significance of the survey to employees and how employees could get involved. Corporate Communications was the avenue for distributing the survey as per the city's protocols. Human Resources was considered an important contributor to the project because of their knowledge of the policies and procedures to deal with backlash and disclosures. In addition, the project team planned to distribute the survey under the names of both the Community Development and Human Resource managers, so as to increase the survey's credibility and response rate. Previous organisational surveys have not achieved high response rates. Therefore, the project team aimed for a rate of at least 30 percent.

The other major planning activity designed to maximise the response rate was to establish a communications plan. Corporate Communications' own communication plan template was used, rather than the plan provided in the toolkit. A series of meetings was held with the two teams to draft a plan. The elements of the plan included objectives, key messages, methods and outcomes. The specific methods used were:

1. The circulation of a discussion paper to the executive leadership team (ELT), followed by a project presentation.
2. A memorandum of key messages sent to managers.
3. A briefing for the CEO to advise employees of the upcoming survey.
4. A preamble email to introduce the survey and inform participants of the ethical aspects.

5. An email with a link to the survey as well hard copies sent to the outside workforce who do not have web access.
6. An email reminder to complete the survey.
7. A final email to thank participants.

One challenge was to communicate the project in a positive way, given that trialling a DFV prevention toolkit could affect perceptions of the community and the culture within the organisation. To overcome this challenge, the teams decided to present the project in a positive light and to emphasise the benefits of the work to employees, organisation and the community.

Implementing the communication plan and survey

The discussion paper drew on ideas found in the toolkit about the role of local government in DFV prevention, as well as ideas about the drivers and contributing factors to violence against women in the national framework, *Change the story* (Our Watch et al., 2015). The discussion paper was circulated to the ELT. A presentation was delivered to the ELT, and then the management team discussed with the ELT the reasons this is a local government issue, in order to gain buy in for the gender attitude survey and the project as a whole. Immediately after the second presentation, a memorandum of key messages was sent to the leaders to help cascade those messages to their teams. The memorandum was followed up a week later with a preamble, which introduced the gender attitudes survey to employees and established a timeframe for completion. Thus, the ELT, managers and employees all received information about the project and survey on two separate occasions.

The survey was sent out via email from the Corporate Communications team and was open for two weeks. Reminders were sent out one week into the survey period and the day before closing. Although only one reminder was planned, a second reminder was sent out just before the survey closed to increase the response rate. After the survey closed, employees were sent a final email to thank them for their participation and to maintain the visibility of the project.

Collecting the data

The *Equal footing* questionnaire was entered into Microsoft Forms, while maintaining the original format of the survey. This software was chosen so that the data collection method conformed with organisational requirements to store survey data on an internal server. This regulation precluded the use of free or commercial online survey platforms such as Survey Monkey, which would have simplified data analysis.

The data were exported into an Excel spreadsheet and graphs constructed to display the data. The level of agreement was calculated as a percentage for each question and disaggregated by gender, age and job status. Priority questions were identified and will be further explained below. The survey results and the identified priority questions were presented to the ELT for their consideration.

Assessing the response rate and applying the findings

A total of 336 out of 692 employees (48.6%) completed the gender attitudes survey. Of the 414 females in the organisation, 240 (58.0%) responded to the survey. One-third of males in the organisation (33.8%) responded to the survey. More than two-thirds of survey respondents (71.4%) were female.

The project team had multiple meetings over a 1-month period to complete the analysis and interpretation of data before a presentation to the ELT. In this process, the areas in which skills and knowledge could be most improved were identified as “priority questions”. The priority questions determined the focus of the next half of the project and ensured that the initiatives chosen were relevant and targetted to the needs of employees. The toolkit was utilised to help identify appropriate follow-up initiatives.

Microsoft Forms was not an effective way to collect a large amount of data as it had to be manually exported and analysed. Microsoft Forms does not offer any tools that assisted with this process, unlike other software, such as Qualtrics and Survey Monkey. The data collected were highly valuable as they not only established which areas to improve, they also helped to justify the need for the project moving forward.

The data collected were highly valuable as they not only established which areas to improve, they also helped to justify the need for the project moving forward.

Conclusions

Convincing employees to fill out a survey took careful planning and buy-in from leaders. The communication plan and cross-organisational partnerships ensured that the project was well known across the organisation. This maximised the response rate and ensured the initiatives that followed were targetted to the needs of the employees and the organisation.

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5. Undertaking a gender audit of a performing arts program

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Summary

This research involved undertaking a gender audit of productions by Parramatta Council's Riverside Theatre over a 3 year period, and reflecting on both the process and the results. In particular, the research examined the representation of women among the productions' key creatives, including as directors/choreographers, writers and producers. The results showed that the level of representation of women varied from year to year, and equalled or slightly exceeded the latest (2019) national figures for theatre productions by major performing arts companies. However, the research also revealed that the Riverside Theatre had no system or process for ensuring or monitoring the representation of women in their productions. In addition, the theatre purchases some of its offerings from other production companies. Therefore, the results were partly impacted by the productions available for purchase rather than by an intentional policy.

Lessons learned

The key lessons learned from this project were:

- Ensure the officer conducting the gender audit is highly familiar with the sector and how gender disaggregated data are usually managed in that sector and use a similar method so that valid comparisons can be made.
- Integrate gender data collection systems into everyday practice so that annual audits can be done efficiently and comprehensively.
- Obtain buy-in from key managers so that gender audit data can be used to improve practice and promote gender equality.

Integrate gender data collection systems into everyday practice so that annual audits can be done efficiently and comprehensively.

Introduction

The City of Parramatta Council is a large metropolitan council that has seen unprecedented growth in recent years. The City has a diverse population of 230,000, with 52 percent of residents speaking a language other than English at home. The local government area (LGA) has a significant population of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women with non-permanent residency status, such as women on working visas and international students. The LGA also has two large business centres, and several corporate and government agencies have a significant presence. A number of courts are based in Parramatta, including the Family Court.

The council has approximately 1,000 employees. Along with corporate and community services, the council provides cultural infrastructure and cultural development programs. Riverside Theatre is an important part of the City of Parramatta Council's cultural infrastructure.

The rates of domestic and family violence (DFV) tend to be under-reported in this culturally diverse community. The region has an active interagency network of not-for-profit services that offer secondary and tertiary services. This network participates in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign (hereafter, “the 16 Days of Activism”) and White Ribbon activities. The services have also taken measures to support vulnerable CALD women. Several local services have developed specialty knowledge on the intersection of migration and DFV.

The City of Parramatta Council has a commitment to preventing violence. Its *Delivery program and operational plan 2018–2021* outlines the council’s commitment to undertaking DFV work using a primary prevention framework (City of Parramatta, 2018, p. 142). The council has a DFV policy and paid DFV leave. A presentation about the DFV policy and the issue of DFV are conducted at every new employee induction. The session is run by the Community Capacity Building Team.

The council has undertaken several measures to support primary prevention work in the community. It developed a partnership with Cumberland Council to develop a primary prevention forum and coordinate training by Our Watch for the council and the wider network. The partnership with Cumberland Council also worked towards improving coordination of the local interagency network and its action on International Women’s Day, the 16 days of Activism and White Ribbon Day.

In the past, the aim of the work within council has been to improve support mechanisms and processes for staff experiencing DFV, rather than for primary prevention. The DFV policy working group has focused on policy implementation and training.

While undertaking the trial of the *Local council domestic and family violence prevention toolkit* (the toolkit) (DSS, 2018), the role of the DFV policy working group changed as it became the “champions” group for the toolkit project. Members of the working group were invited to participate in various parts of the trial and were used as a reference group for guiding some of the trial implementation. The members also constituted a majority of the community-facing services, such as Recreation Services, Library Services, Riverside Theatre and Community Care. The working group believed that toolkit implementation could have a substantial impact on the community through interaction and engagement at these sites.

This report presents an analysis of the action research conducted with Riverside Theatre on gender bias within their program. The program includes plays, theatre workshops, movies and music. A report from almost a decade ago (Lally Miller in 2012) indicated there was substantial gender bias in the performing and creative arts in Australia. Between 2001 and 2011, 52 percent of major performing arts group (MPAG) theatre company productions had “at least one woman in a creative leadership role” (Lally & Miller, 2012, p. 4). Twenty-one percent had a female writer and 25 percent had a female director. In addition, there had been little progress in the representation of women in such roles over the previous decade. However, a report that appeared after this current project’s data had been collected indicated that a substantial shift had occurred in the arts in Australia in the ensuing years



The working group believed that toolkit implementation could have a substantial impact on the community.

(Howard, 2019). In 2019, 67 percent of major performing arts groups will have at least one female in a creative role. In addition, women make up “47 percent of playwrights and 58 percent of directors”.¹

The following sections outline the action research process undertaken for the audit. First, the planning and implementation of the gender audit are described and the data collection methods explained. Next, key reflections on the results are provided, along with a critical analysis of the process of undertaking the audit and collecting the data. The final section identifies further steps to take, explores some of challenges in the work and reviews the lessons learned.

Planning the gender audit

Planning began by approaching the existing working group members about their team participating in the gender audit. The plan was to use the *Gender analysis tool* (Latrobe City Council & Gippsland Women’s Health, 2017) and *Change the story’s* poster on the gendered drivers of violence against women (VAW) (Our Watch et al., 2015). The project worker implementing the toolkit commenced the task by approaching the people on the working group who already understood the concept of the gendered drivers of VAW. Working group members who were interested in participating in the gender audit spoke to their teams and then invited the project worker to speak to the team. One of the teams that engaged was Riverside Theatre.

Undertaking the gender audit

The project worker spoke to the front-of-house coordinator for Riverside Theatre, who was a member of the working group. The coordinator identified the programming team as the best group of people to talk to for the gender audit. She pitched the audit to the team. They were interested in working with the project worker and agreed to meet with her. The director of the theatre was not able to join the meeting.

At the meeting, a presentation was made by the project worker on the gendered drivers of violence. The idea of undertaking a gender audit of their work was discussed, as well as the reasons and methods for doing so. The team also shared their perceptions about the gendered nature of the market for productions and their perspectives on the extent to which the market is male-dominated. They stressed that this gender bias impacts their purchasing capacity. They talked about the data they needed and appropriate data collection methods. They decided to collect data about the gender of creatives for their programs, that is, directors, producers, choreographers and writers. Data were obtained from their last two seasons and the current incomplete season (2018).

¹ Howard (2019) does not clarify whether “47% of playwrights” means 47 percent of all plays have at least one female playwright, or 47 percent of all playwrights are female (some plays may have more than one writer, so the number of plays may not equal the number of playwrights).

Collecting the data

The programming team collected the names of creatives for all programs from the 2016 and 2017 seasons and part of the 2018 season from the website, theatre programs handed out to audiences and current planning documents. The team then identified the gender of directors, producers, writers and choreographers. They discussed the influence of other creatives on the outcomes of the production. For example, they had to decide if the lighting team should be included as creatives when lighting was crucial to the production. In the end, they decided that individuals credited in the audience program would be counted as creatives. As a result, the list of creatives varied to some extent from show to show. The raw data comprised the names of the creatives and was collated in an Excel spreadsheet by type of creative and by gender. In the absence of knowledge of whether any of the creatives identified as an alternative gender, the creatives were categorised as “female” or “male” based on their name or the program team’s knowledge of the individual.

Data were collected for the main theatre season, the children’s program, music performances and movie screenings. Due to time constraints and capacity issues, the most complete dataset was for the main theatre program. That data are analysed and discussed below.

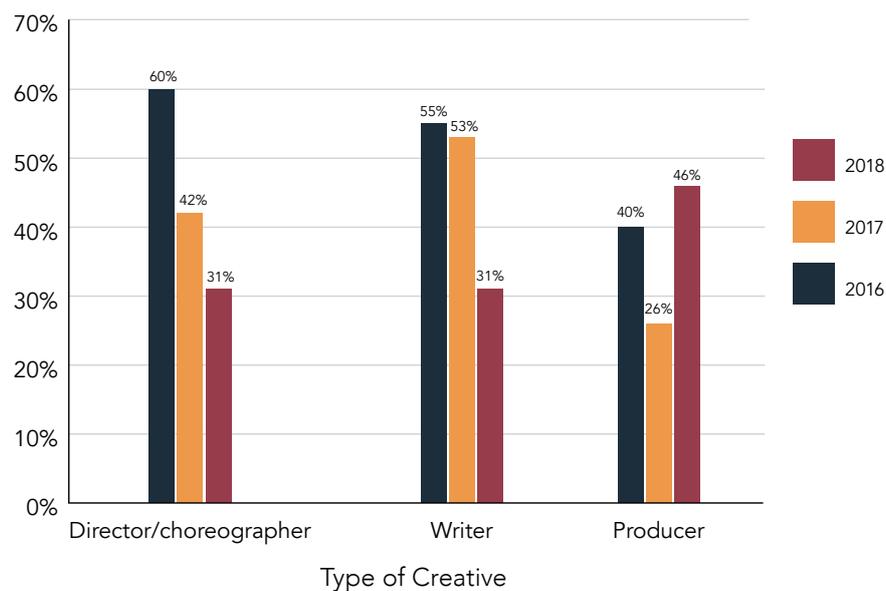
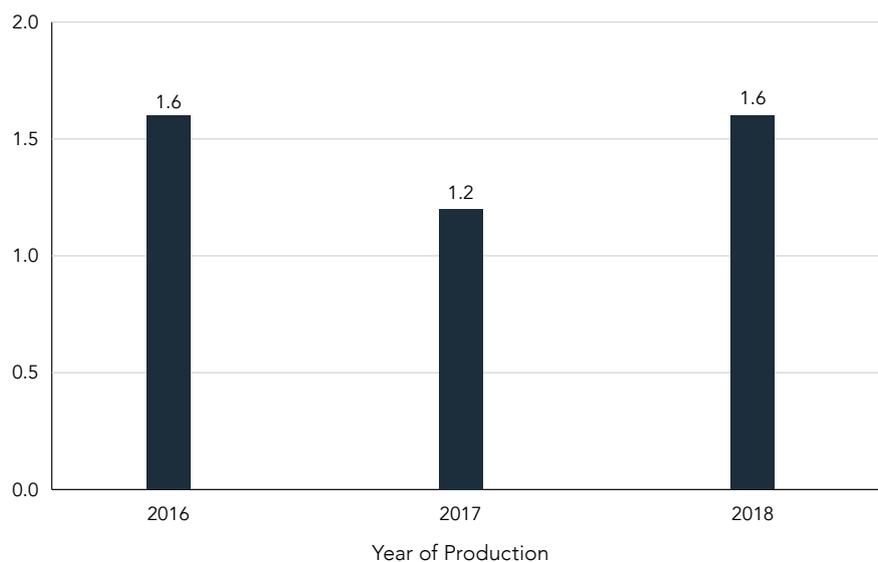
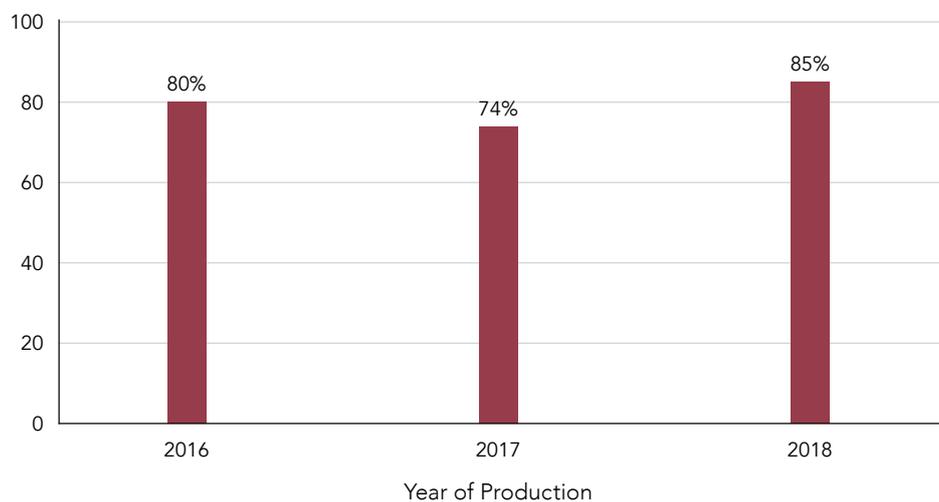
Reflecting on the data

A graph setting out the percentage of productions with at least one female creative (graphed by type of creative by year) is presented below (Figure 1). Note that the 2018 data are not for a complete year. This graph shows that the percentage of productions with a female director and choreographer is declining over time. The percentage of productions with at least one female writer appears to be relatively stable for 2016 and 2017. However, it was significantly less for 2018. Overall, the percentage of productions with a female producer has fluctuated, with the highest representation of women in 2018.

Figure 2 shows the ratio of female creatives per production in the given year. It appears that the ratio has been relatively steady, with a slight dip in 2017. Figure 3 shows the percentage of productions with at least one female creative in each production year. The level of engagement appears relatively steady over the period of audit.

The results show that the number of productions with a female playwright has exceeded the 2019 MPAG figure of 47 percent in two of the last three years (2016 and 2017). On the other hand, the figure for directors/choreographers only exceeded the 2019 MPAG figure for directors (58%) in one year, 2016. Although the inclusion of choreographers in the Riverside Theatre analysis may skew these figures to some extent, there is still evidence of a decline in female representation in this category of creative that should be of concern. The results also show that over the three-year period Riverside Theatre has had a higher proportion of productions with at least one female creative than the proportion for the MPAGs in 2018 (between 74% and 85% for Riverside Theatre compared to 67% for MPAGs in 2018) (Howard, 2019).

If the gender audit is initiated by an officer from a team outside of the area being audited... the officer will need to become familiar with the nature of the sector in which the audit is being undertaken.

Figure 1 Percentage of productions with at least one female creative, by year and type of creative**Figure 2** Ratio of female creatives involved per production**Figure 3** Percentage of productions with at least one female creative

A number of lessons were learned as a result of undertaking this gender audit and analysing the data. First, if the gender audit is initiated by an officer from a team outside of the area being audited (e.g. an officer from the community capacity building team undertaking a gender audit in arts, recreation and sport or libraries), the officer will need to become familiar with the nature of the sector in which the audit is being undertaken. Second, before collecting data, it is important not only to identify categories that seem sensible for that sector and its work, but also to determine how gender data are collected and categorised in that sector on a state-wide or national level (e.g. through a review of relevant literature or discussion with people in the sector). This approach will allow valid comparisons to be made.

A third lesson concerns the need for sections within council to systematically collect gender data. There were gaps in the Riverside Theatre data because no system existed and, consequently, certain pieces of information were not available. As a result, it was not possible to extend the gender audit to other programs in Riverside Theatre. This is a lesson that can be expanded to those areas of council that do not regularly and systematically collect data disaggregated by gender.

Finally, there were lessons about the importance of managers' participation in the process undertaken in this gender audit of the Riverside Theatre program and their value to the sustainability of the effort. Although the programming team participated well and contributed significantly to the success of the exercise, participation of staff in management roles was limited due to vacancies and workload. This may present a challenge to the programming team if they wish to schedule the audit as a regular exercise or to leverage the results to improve the representation of women in productions. That is, the team may have limited scope to use the results of this action research project to initiate new actions to improve practice and increase gender equality.

Conclusions

This paper has presented an analysis of the action research conducted with Riverside Theatre in order to identify gender bias within their programs. Analysis of data on the gender of the main creatives showed a generally high proportion of females involved, although it varied from year to year. Reflections on the gender audit process revealed that the theatre itself does not systematically gather this data. Furthermore, the high proportion of female creatives resulted from the nature of the productions purchased rather than an intentional policy outcome. It is recommended that Riverside Theatre builds on this work by applying a gender lens to all its future programming practices and continues to track the representation of women creatives in its programs.

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