

Safe and Inclusive Sport:

Preventing Gender-Based Violence



Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community on gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence. As First Peoples, Aboriginal Victorians are best placed to determine a culturally appropriate path to gender equality in their communities.

We recognise that self-determination is the vital guiding principle for all Victorian Government actions to address past injustices and to create a shared future based on Aboriginal sovereignty. We are deeply committed to Aboriginal self-determination and to supporting Victoria's Treaty and Truth-telling processes.

Thank you

Safe and Inclusive Sport: Preventing Gender-Based Violence was developed by Sport and Recreation Victoria in partnership with Family Safety Victoria.

Sport and Recreation Victoria thanks everyone who shared their time, expertise and experiences with us to develop this resource. Our work is deeply strengthened as a result of these contributions, partnerships and collaborations.

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Contents

Joint Ministerial Foreword	4	Guiding Principles	21
About the Guide	5	1. Establish a case for change	22
Who is the Guide for?	5	2. Commit to adopting a whole-of-sport approach including leadership support	25
How to use the Guide	6	3. Take an intersectional approach	27
Key messages	8	4. Work in partnership with other organisations and experts	30
Gender equity or gender equality in sport?	10	5. Embed strong planning and evaluation	32
Applying a gender lens	13	6. Engage men while ensuring women and gender diverse people are central to the work	35
What's sport got to do with the prevention of gender-based violence?	14	7. Develop and implement appropriate responses to instances of disrespect and violence towards women and gender diverse people	38
		8. Expect and prepare for resistance	41
		9. Share knowledge and learn from experts and peers	43
		10. Celebrate Successes	44
		Endnotes	45

Joint Ministerial Foreword

Message from the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Community Sport



VICKI WARD MP
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence



THE HON ROS SPENCE MP
Minister for Community Sport

Sport plays a crucial role in preventing and addressing gender-based violence.

While significant steps have been taken over the past 10 years to create safe and inclusive environments for all people to participate in sport, we know that sexism and discrimination are still very much part of the sporting world.

Preventing all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination is a team effort and we all have a role to play.

Supporting the community sport sector to champion equity and respect has benefits that reach far beyond the ground, court or pitch. Equity and respect in community sport will contribute to a Victoria that is free from violence.

Through our new *Safe and Inclusive Sport: Preventing Gender-Based Violence* resource we recognise the influential platform that sport provides to drive social change, and create an environment where gender stereotypes are challenged, gender-based violence and discrimination are unacceptable, and gender equality is actively promoted and modelled.

This new resource is designed to help organisations such as state sporting associations, women's health services, regional sports assemblies and local councils to form strong partnerships, and keep gender equity and the prevention of gender-based violence front and centre in our local clubs, leagues and associations.

It includes a range of real-life examples of Victorian Government-backed partnerships and projects that are driving cultural change and contributing to the prevention of gender-based violence where people work and play sport.

Community sport is a valuable environment for children and young people to see respect and equality in action, so they can develop the skills to recognise and challenge inequality, abuse and discrimination. By engaging, educating and equipping sports clubs and organisations with the tools to prevent gender-based violence, we can make a positive difference in our community today and for generations to come.

For this reason, we encourage organisations to use this resource as a starting point in your work to make community sport inclusive and safe for every Victorian.

Together, we can continue to progress gender equality, support better outcomes for women, girls, and gender diverse people across Victoria and change the attitudes and behaviours that lead to gender-based violence – to stop it before it starts.

About the Guide

Whenever we work to create a more fair, equal, and inclusive society, we are contributing to the prevention of gender-based violence.

Sport plays a valuable role in preventing gender-based violence. It is an important setting for championing equality and challenging gender inequality.

Sporting clubs are influential leaders within local communities, especially in regional and rural areas, providing a valuable point of connection and belonging. They are well placed to influence the attitudes and beliefs the community has around gender, inclusion, respect and belonging.

Sport settings are places where people gather as players, coaches, administrators, officials, spectators, families, and volunteers.

They provide a strong platform for cultural change by setting the standards and expectations from those connected to their club and sport.

Sporting organisations that prioritise and engage in gender equity and the prevention of gender-based violence, position themselves as safe and welcome settings where people want to play and connect.

Safe and Inclusive Sport: Preventing Gender-Based Violence (the Guide) has been created as Victoria moves towards a gender equal State, free from violence.

While this Guide is primarily focused on community sport, many of the principles, resources and key learnings can apply to active recreation settings. Sport and active recreation organisations provide a workplace where all employees deserve to be treated with respect regardless of their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, age, or ability.

The Guide has been informed by the work of projects funded by the Victorian Government's Preventing Violence Through Sport grants program – many of which feature in the case studies.¹

Gender-based violence is a community issue and we must work together to address it.

1. The case studies in this document feature the work directly supported by Preventing Violence Through Sport grants program, with the exception of the work of the Mount Alexander Falcons Football Club and the Fitzroy Stars Football Club.

Who is the Guide for?

The Guide supports sporting organisations to act as leaders in their communities to create safe, inclusive, equitable and welcoming sporting environments, and contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence.

This resource has been designed for use by organisations such as:

- National Sporting Organisations (NSOs)
- State Sporting Associations (SSAs)
- Regional Sports Assemblies
- Active Recreation Organisations
- Local Councils
- Women's Health Services
- Community Health Organisations

The Guide is a tool for these organisations to work more effectively with a range of community sporting organisations including governing bodies, associations, clubs and volunteers to drive cultural change in community sport.

The Guide supports compliance with the [Fair Access Policy Roadmap](#) and the [Gender Equality Act 2020 \(Vic\)](#), and aligns with existing responsibilities under the [National Integrity Framework](#) and [Child Safety Standards](#).



How to use the Guide

The Guide provides an evidence-based set of 10 guiding principles and related case studies about how to practically embed gender equity in community sport, and in doing so, contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence.

Every sport, organisation and club is different. The Guide, therefore, is not designed to be prescriptive but rather to help inform gender-based violence and preventative approaches through sport settings. Actions should aim to be long-term, sustainable, and embedded in the organisation through the sports and club's policies, culture, and everyday actions. This is particularly important in community sport, where there is a high turnover of administrators, players, and volunteers.

This is an emerging area of practice and the evidence base for this work is continuously expanding.

CASE STUDY

Football Victoria Making Change

Football Victoria is committed to prioritising gender equity in all current and future planning, policy development and service delivery. It has made a goal to have 50/50 gender balance in all aspects of the sport by 2027. The organisation understands that by committing to gender equity, it will create a safer, more inclusive sporting environment that will contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence. Football Victoria has formed several partnerships to support their gender equity priority.

The Change Makers project was developed by Football Victoria in partnership with Victoria University. The project aimed to facilitate grassroots change by empowering and supporting clubs through a process of evidence gathering, education, collaborative goal setting and transformative action. Regional Sport Victoria (the peak body which supports the Regional Sports Assemblies across Victoria) joined the partnership in 2022 to extend reach and provide expertise.

Community football clubs who engaged in the Change Makers program were guided by a dedicated mentor through a series of workshops. These helped individual clubs develop the knowledge and skills to create tailored, practical, and sustainable solutions to improve the experience for women and girls. It led to positive change for women, girls, and gender diverse people at community clubs throughout Victoria. For example, Sale United Football Club focussed on positive leadership and purposefully engaged a woman as club President. The club also worked to have better representation of women and girls through local media outlets.

Recognising gender equity as more than just being a women's issue and demonstrating the need to engage in purposeful leadership, Football Victoria began work with the Men's Project. The aim was to build the capacity of staff to be more gender inclusive, facilitated through a community of practice (CoP). The CoP sought to build the motivation and capacity of men within Football Victoria to positively influence gender equity within their organisation and on the field. The CoP explored topics such as: understanding the drivers of gendered violence, promoting positive change, and the role of football in driving gender equality. Football Victoria furthered this work through the co-design² of gender equity training programs for coaches and players of the National Premier League Men and Junior Boys clubs.

2. Co-design (or **human-centred design**) is a processes to develop products, initiatives and strategies that puts the people you are designing for at the centre of the process.

OVERVIEW OF THE 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES



1.



Establish a case for change

2.



Commit to adopting a whole-of-sport approach including leadership support

3.



Take an intersectional approach

4.



Work in partnership with other organisations and experts

5.



Embed strong planning and evaluation

6.



Engage men while ensuring women and gender diverse people are central to the work

7.



Develop and implement appropriate responses to instances of disrespect and violence towards women and gender diverse people

8.



Expect and prepare for resistance

9.



Share knowledge and learn from experts and peers

10.



Celebrate successes

By working towards gender equality in community sport, we can create inclusive, equitable, healthy, and safe environments for everyone; women, men, girls, boys, gender diverse and LGBTIQ+ people. This helps to prevent gender-based violence.

Key messages

- Gender-based violence is a national epidemic. Almost 1 in 3 Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15.¹ Gender inequality is a driver of gender-based violence, and gender equality is at the heart of the solution.
- Sport is a highly influential part of Australian society and can reach a large number of Australians. On and off the field, sport provides the opportunity to reinforce positive community standards about respect and equality.
- Community sport settings have great potential to drive social change and prevent gender-based violence by creating inclusive, equitable, healthy, and safe environments for women, girls, trans and gender diverse people.
- Gender equity and the prevention of gender-based violence must be a whole-of-sport approach. National, state and community sporting organisations (including leagues and associations) have a role to play by taking a strong leadership position on this issue and ensuring their sport is safe, inclusive, and equitable for all.
- Sport should show leadership by setting the standard of zero tolerance towards sexist attitudes, language, and discriminatory behaviour. Sporting organisations should have clear policies and procedures for complaints to support people impacted by discrimination and gender-based violence, whether this occurs within the sport setting or outside the club. The policies and procedures should be guided by the governing body and made relevant and useable for all levels of its sport, including for community clubs.
- Sport should provide opportunities and pathways for women, girls, and gender diverse people to work and participate at all levels and promote their voices and needs equally.
- Environments that focus on gender equity for women and girls, can also be safer and more inclusive for gender diverse people and those from LGBTIQ+ communities as these environments foster understanding and acceptance of people of all genders and sexualities.
- Men and boys have an important role to play as allies for gender equality in sport. Collectively and individually men and boys will benefit from gender equality.
- We all have a role to play to help create a Victoria free-from gender-based violence. Sport can be supported through partnerships and existing networks to prevent and address gender-based violence.



GENDER DIVERSE

Gender diverse is an overarching term for a range of genders. There are many terms gender diverse people may use to describe themselves. Language in this area is dynamic and always changing. Some examples include genderfluid, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, agender, bi-gender and non-binary.² Read more, including definitions, through this [LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language guide](#).

FIRST NATIONS SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination is an 'ongoing process of choice' to ensure that First Nations peoples can make decisions about matters that affect their lives.³ First Nations people should be involved from the start in any programs, services or policies that impact them.

CASE STUDY

Active recreation settings and the prevention of gender-based violence

Merri Health, a community health service, teamed up with Active Merri-bek (a partnership between YMCA and the Merri-bek City Council) to support 6 leisure centres and swimming pools to:

- Complete a gender audit of culture, governance, leadership, facilities, and practices.
- Develop and implement a one-year gender equity action plan.

Working with their project partner, Women's Health in the North, Merri Health also:

- Facilitated a network of project partners to promote collaboration and shared learning
- Linked the Active Merri-bek leisure centres with training and resources
- Delivered capacity building activities such as gender equity and the prevention of gender-based violence training to Active Merri-bek leadership staff at every centre
- Provided specialist advice around planning and strategy, community engagement, grant writing, data collection and communication
- Provided tailored information and connection to relevant capacity building opportunities, news and grants
- Ensured the gender equity action plans were informed by local communities, and priority groups including: women and gender diverse people, young people, multicultural and multi-faith people and communities, LGBTIQ+ people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Key actions in the gender equity action plans included:

- Supporting staff to identify, discourage and prevent disrespectful behaviour through active bystander/upstander training
- Leadership staff developing internal resources with practical tips on gender equity and violence prevention for casual/junior staff
- Supporting members and visitors to feel welcome and safe through policy, procedure and resource changes. For example, new resources that communicated facilities supporting women, girls and gender diverse people (such as all gender bathrooms and prayer rooms)
- Increasing participation of priority or targeted groups (for example, Aboriginal women, Arabic-speaking women, refugees and asylum seeker women and girls) through relationship development and co-design to help meet their needs (for example, contributing to the development of a calendar of activities)
- Increasing community and member engagement of leisure centre programs, for example engaging an Arabic speaking women's group to deliver bi-lingual activities in the [This Girl Can](#) campaign.
- Practical actions such as having sanitary bins in men's facilities for men who menstruate.

[Creating Safe and Inclusive Public Spaces for Women, Equal Access to Public Aquatic Facilities, Inclusion Guidelines for Public Aquatic Facilities](#) and [Gender Equity in Design Guidelines](#) are great resources to support a gender lens on key active recreation settings such as leisure centres, parks and walking paths.

Gender equity or gender equality in sport?

We know that women, girls' and gender diverse people's participation in community sport is increasing. There is, however, still more work to do to ensure sport is safe, inclusive and respectful, and is equipped to address gender inequality.⁴ To do this we need to focus on practical actions to drive gender equality at all levels of sport.

Gender equality focuses on the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men and gender diverse people. Equality does not mean that everyone will become the same, but that people of different genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

To reach equality, we need to take an equitable approach.

Gender equity is about acknowledging that we all start in a different place because of social and cultural factors and historical and ongoing injustices. It entails the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities on the basis of gender.⁵ Put simply, some people have more than others, some have less, and these imbalances need to be identified and addressed for there to be a level playing field.

Women, men and gender diverse people have different needs and experiences that need to be acknowledged and accommodated. Equity is essential to achieving true equality.

Gender equality and inclusion in sport is not about women, girls and gender diverse people fitting into boys' and men's sport. Rather, it is about everyone in sport working together to ensure it has an inclusive culture that is safe for people of all genders.

Gender inequality is not experienced in the same way by everyone therefore our equity approach will differ. We need to take an **intersectional approach** to gender equality. Taking an intersectional approach means we explore the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, age, sexuality, ability and gender as they apply to an individual or a group. We then need to try to understand how they create overlapping forms of discrimination or disadvantage. [Guiding Principle 3](#) expands on how to do this.

Consultation for equity – listening to women, girls and gender diverse people

It is important to consult with people who are underrepresented in sport about what they need to achieve equality. Giving women/girls and men/boys equal treatment, resources and opportunities (for example, equal prize money or allocation to grounds) is fair and appropriate at times, but equal treatment will not always reach the same outcomes for men and women due to their different starting positions. This is why an equity approach and consultation are important.

For example, in some clubs, girls will want the opportunity to train with boys as an opportunity to normalise respectful relationships on and off the field. Others will want girls only skills or training sessions to develop skills they have not had the chance to develop due to fewer opportunities being available. This will depend on the individual and sport, but it is important women, girls and gender diverse people are consulted and their needs understood and fully considered. Consultation can involve a range of methodologies including surveys, focus groups, gender audits or informal conversations.

TREATING EVERYONE THE SAME



AN EQUITY APPROACH



EQUALITY



GENDER INEQUALITY IN SPORT



Almost 50% of girls drop out of sport by the age of 17.⁷ Gender stereotypes such as 'girls should not play sports traditionally dominated by boys' contribute to young women dropping out.⁸

Women participate in organised community sport at nearly half the rate of men.⁶



Only 15% of sports news coverage in Victoria was focused on women's sport in 2022-23.⁹



In 2023, 22% of CEOs and 25% of Board Chairs, across 65 Australian Sports Commission funded National Sporting Organisations, were women.¹⁰



80% of Australians have experienced or witnessed homophobia on the sporting field.¹¹

70% of LGBTIQ+ people do not feel sport is safe and welcoming and 50% transgender people avoid playing sports they would like to play.¹² Gay men are most likely to feel unsafe and less likely to play team sports.¹³



In an Australia-wide study, 82% of survey respondents said they experienced violence while playing community sport as a child. Women reported high rates compared to men of psychological and sexual violence. Men reported higher rates of physical violence than women. Non-binary people experienced higher rates of several types of violence than both women and men combined.¹⁴

Gender inequality includes inequality experienced by women because they are women, but it also includes negative behaviours and attitudes toward those who do not conform to dominant gender stereotypes or rigid gender roles.

Examples of this could include men and boys being actively discouraged from playing sports dominated by women and girls, such as netball, or experiencing bullying after expressing their emotions or preference for something seen to be 'feminine'.

Rigid attachment to and promotion of gender stereotypes that reinforce the idea that there are only 2 genders are also harmful for gender diverse people.

Why are we talking about gender equality?

By addressing gender inequality there will be multiple benefits and positive impacts for the whole community. By undertaking actions to support gender equity, we move towards a gender equitable society where people are not disadvantaged or rewarded based on conformance to strict or traditional gender norms.

There are numerous benefits of gender equality in community sports which include:

- **Women's, girls' and gender-diverse people's lives will improve:** Action on gender equality will improve the lives of women, girls and gender-diverse people by ensuring they are supported, included and have a sense of belonging in sport. It also increases participation rates, both on and off the field, which in turn can build skills and confidence, as well as contributing to improved health and wellbeing.
- **Preventing gender-based violence:** Research has shown there is a link between gender equality, building respectful relationships and preventing gender-based violence. Gender inequality drives gender-based violence. Addressing the gendered drivers will prevent gender-based violence.
- **Breaking free from dominant masculine stereotypes will support men's and boys' wellbeing, as well as prevent gender-based violence:** Gender equality can also result in better outcomes for men and boys. Men and boys will feel more comfortable to express parts of their identity that may not align with traditional ideas of masculine stereotypes (for example, men/boys playing netball or other sports traditionally dominated by women/girls). Challenging dominant stereotypes around masculinity is an important part of safeguarding men and boys' health, including mental health, and ensuring they are safe and respected in their chosen sport and club roles. Challenging dominant masculine stereotypes will also contribute to greater gender equality and safety for women and gender-diverse people as there is a strong link between gender inequality and men's use of violence.

- **Fulfilling community expectations:** Most Victorians (98%) expect their local community sporting clubs to provide an environment that is welcoming and inclusive to girls and women, and 89% expect clubs to educate men about appropriate behaviour towards women. 86% believe that local sporting clubs should play a community leadership role by encouraging respectful relationships between men and women.¹⁵

Embedding gender equity in community sport keeps the sector in line with community expectations, and aligns with broader progress being achieved in schools, workplaces and the media. As leaders within their communities, it is important that sport continues to adapt and innovate in this changing environment.

- **Creating clubs and organisations people want to be a part of:** Embedding gender equality within a sports club creates a stronger club that reflects the wider community and builds a sense of connectedness. Clubs that take gender equality seriously may be more effective in attracting and retaining more volunteers, paid staff and members. Clubs that have gender diversity in leadership normalise gender equality and supports healthy and respectful relationships.
- **Diverse skills, leadership and ideas:** Having gender diversity in club leadership positions such as committee members, coaches, players, umpires, referees and officials can bring different skills, expertise and views. A diversity of voices makes decision-making more robust, and ensures the club has access to the best ideas in challenging and rewarding times. Evidence shows that having more women in decision making is good for financial management and governance.¹⁶



Learn more about gender equality and sport here:

- **Change Our Game** is working to level the playing field for Victorian women and girls in sport and active recreation.
- Our Watch's **Promote gender equality to sports leaders** resources have been developed to enable people working in sporting organisations to tell the story of why gender equality is important to sport, and how the sporting community can take action to prevent gender-based violence.

Applying a gender lens

Applying a gender lens is a strategy for understanding and addressing gender inequality.

Applying a gender lens means looking at policies, practices, programs through the perspective or lens of how it impacts men, women and gender diverse people.

While it is good to start with small initiatives, real change happens when a strategy applies to all elements of your organisation. One-off initiatives without substantive and ongoing support behind them can be considered tokenistic and do not support equity.

Gender equality in sport is more than just focusing on participation and numbers. Whilst setting gender targets or quotas can be used as an important tool towards gender equality within a sport, that alone is not enough.

Preventing gender-based violence in and through sport requires recognising that every policy, practice, and decision has the potential to challenge or reinforce existing gender stereotypes and inequalities. As such, a gender perspective should be considered at each stage of policy and program development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Putting a gender lens on your sport or organisation requires you to ask questions about who is being excluded or included and how. This will involve consulting with women, girls and gender diverse people about their experiences of sport and taking action to address any discrimination and inequality. A gender lens is also about looking at boys and men and considering how they may be negatively impacted by decisions e.g., no baby change facilities in areas that can be accessed by parents/carers who are men.

We need a gender lens to ensure our work does not inadvertently disadvantage people based on gender. Applying a gender lens is not about excluding men and boys but rather including everybody.

Undertaking a gender impact assessment

Undertaking a gender impact assessment (GIA) is one way of applying a gender lens. Under the [Gender Equality Act 2020](#), local councils and other defined entities are obliged to conduct [Gender Impact Assessments](#) to understand how policies, programs and services can impact people of different genders in different ways, and ensure inequalities aren't being reinforced. While sporting organisations are not obligated under the Gender Equality Act to conduct GIAs, these can be a useful tool to ensure a gender lens is applied to policies, programs and services.



Learn more about applying a gender lens and undertaking gender impact assessments:

- The Gender Audit Tool template on Sport and Recreation Victoria's (SRV) [website](#) will support work with clubs to put a gender lens on their facilities, culture, leadership and governance, participation, and promotion and recruitment practices.
- The [Fair Access Policy Roadmap](#) is a great example of applying a gender lens to a policy, and is being delivered through the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation in partnership with SRV and VicHealth. The Fair Access Policy Roadmap provides resources and templates to support local councils to put a gender lens on their access and use policies to ensure that women and girls can fully participate in and enjoy the benefits of community sport, with fair opportunity and access to their local facilities.
- The Victorian Commission for Gender Equality has developed a range of resources to support [gender impact assessments](#) including this [video](#). The templates and resources will be able to support and educate sport organisations on how to apply a gender lens.
- Canadian Women and Sport provide a short overview of [How to apply a gender lens to decision making](#).

What's sport got to do with the prevention of gender-based violence?

Community sport involves people of all ages and backgrounds coming together to do something they love.

Sport settings can help set positive social norms and expectations about equality and respect and provide opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes. The norms and expectations learnt through sport can be translated into everyday life, impacting future generations of children and young people who will see gender equality as the norm.

Sport settings are also places where gender-based violence and disrespect occurs, and sport plays an important role in stopping violence before it starts. It has the potential to be a safe place for people to disclose experiences of violence and support those experiencing it.

Sport tells an important story about what we value, who we cheer for, and the behaviours we support.

Gender-based violence is violence used against someone because of their gender. It describes violence linked to gender-based power inequalities and gender-based discrimination.¹⁷ This includes violence targeted directly at someone specifically because, for example:

- they are a woman
- they identify as LGBTIQ+
- they don't follow socially prescribed gender roles and stereotypes.

While people of all genders can experience gender-based violence, the term is most often used to describe **violence against women and girls**.¹⁸

Some women are more likely to experience violence. The experience of violence is influenced by the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of social injustice, discrimination and oppression. These include racism, ableism, ageism, **cisnormativity, heteronormativity**, class discrimination, intergenerational trauma and – for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women – the impacts of ongoing colonialism.¹⁹

Gender-based violence has many forms and can occur in the home, workplaces, schools, online and in sporting clubs. **Gender-based violence is not just physical** – it includes behaviours that are controlling or which cause psychological, emotional and financial harm. It also includes:

- Domestic violence
- Family violence
- Coercive control
- Sexual violence
- Street harassment.

In a sport setting it can also look like harassment and assault by colleagues, teammates, club volunteers and other community members. People who use violence can be people in positions of power such as coaches, or strangers (for example, women referees experiencing abuse or threats from spectators). Sport is also a setting where people who have experienced violence may seek help (see [Guiding Principle 7](#)).

Most family and gender-based violence is perpetrated by **cisgender** men, and impacts women, children, young people, LGBTIQ+ communities, as well as other men. 95% of men and 94% of women who experienced violence since the age of 15 did so at the hands of a man.²⁰ Men experience violence mostly from men who are strangers to them, in public, and women experience violence mostly from men they know, at home (usually a current or ex-partner).²¹

All violence is unacceptable, no matter who perpetrates it or experiences it. But the scale and nature of gender-based violence requires immediate attention from all Australians. On average, at least one woman is killed by a partner or former partner every 9 days in Australia, and one in three Australian women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15.²²

This is not an inevitable problem. Gender-based violence is preventable.

WHAT IS PRIMARY PREVENTION?

Preventing gender-based violence before it occurs is called **primary prevention**. Primary prevention works by identifying the deep underlying causes of violence – the social norms, structures and practices that influence individual attitudes and behaviours – and acting across the whole population to change these.

Organisations with expertise in gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence can assist sporting clubs and organisations with primary prevention strategies. This could be through evidence-informed training and workshops, resources, and information, and with gender audits and gender equity action plans. Such organisations include the state-wide Women's health services network; Our Watch, the national leader in primary prevention; and Safe and Equal, the peak body for prevention, early intervention and recovery.

What drives gender-based violence?

International and Australian research demonstrates that gender-based violence is driven by gender inequality.²³

There are certain expressions of gender inequality that consistently predict (or drive) higher levels of gender-based violence. Our Watch provides 4 drivers and 8 essential actions to prevent gender-based violence through their [Change the Story](#) resource.

The gendered drivers in sport settings

To prevent gender-based violence we must focus our efforts on addressing the 4 gendered drivers, as well as other forms of discrimination such as cisnormativity, heteronormativity, racism, ableism, ageism, homophobia and class discrimination. The gendered drivers impact our individual experiences as well as shaping the cultures of our organisations, institutions and community more broadly.

Below are examples of the gendered drivers of violence in a sport context (for examples outside of sport see Safe and Equal's [Driving Change: taking action against the drivers of family and gender-based violence](#)).

GENDERED DRIVER 1

Violence against women is accepted, excused and justified.

Examples of what it looks like in a sport setting:

- Sport clubs, organisations and associations not taking instances of violence against women and gender diverse people seriously. Sport Organisations allowing perpetrators of violence to continue playing or working with little or no consequence – putting the organisations/perpetrator's reputation/sporting success first rather than supporting the victim.
- Sport clubs, organisations and associations not using their influence and powerful platforms to take a stand against gender-based violence and educate others to do the same.
- Media placing blame on the victim of violence rather than responsibility resting with the perpetrator, for example, media asking 'why was she drinking with a bunch of football players on a night out?'

How does this drive higher rates of violence?

- Rates of family violence and violence against women are higher when it is excused, ignored or justified by societies, institutions, communities or individuals.²⁴ Men who hold these beliefs are more likely to perpetrate violence against women, and both women and men who hold these beliefs are less likely to take action to support victims and hold perpetrators to account.²⁵

GENDERED DRIVER 2

Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships.

Examples of what it looks like in a sport setting:

- The underrepresentation of women and gender diverse people in leadership positions at all levels of sport, including coaching.
- Men's and boys' teams prioritised over women's and girls' teams including shared resources, prize money, funding ground and changeroom allocation.
- Less media coverage of women's sport at local, state, national and international levels.
- Women and gender diverse people not being involved in decision-making about uniforms resulting in them being designed without the needs of women, girls, and gender diverse people in mind (for example, white shorts), or uniforms that aren't gendered but aren't suited for people of all-genders and sizes.

How does this drive higher rates of violence?

- Sends the wrong message to people of all genders that women, girls, trans and gender diverse people are not as important as men and boys and hold less value in society.
- Contributes to the harmful belief that men should have more power than women and others in public and in their relationships.²⁶
- Social attitudes that normalise men's control over women, or even celebrate it, creating an environment where violence is more common and less likely to be challenged.²⁷

GENDERED DRIVER 3

Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.

Examples of what it looks like in a sport setting:

- Normalising sledging and poor on-field behaviour as just 'boys being boys'.
- Assumptions about who plays what roles at the club, for example, women in the canteen and men as president or coach.
- Men who are aggressive and dominant on and off-the field being rewarded with leadership positions.
- Gender-stereotyped awards at club level, for example, women get vouchers for the beauty salon and men get vouchers for the hardware store.
- Not using people's preferred pronouns and the misgendering of trans and gender diverse people.
- Homophobic abuse used by cisgender heterosexual men against each other as a way of policing masculine gender norms.
- Promotional material and social media communications that reinforce gender stereotypes, for example, a club's webpage using images of men in aggressive play or women only in support roles or dressed up at social events (not actually playing sport).

How does this drive higher rates of violence?

- Throughout the world, levels of violence are higher in societies, communities and relationships where there are more rigid distinctions between the roles of men and women.²⁸ For men, such stereotypes include having to be tough, stoic, dominant and aggressive.
- Rigid stereotypes of masculinity play a direct role in contributing to men's violence against women and gender diverse people.²⁹ Men who hold traditional, hierarchical views about gender roles and relationships are more likely to use violence³⁰ and hold violence supportive attitudes.³¹
- People who don't conform to expected roles can experience violence as a result of this non-conformity.³²
- People who strongly believe in rigid gender stereotypes are more likely to condone violence.³³
- Women who strongly adhere to gender stereotyping may be less likely to identify and report violence.³⁴

GENDERED DRIVER 4

Peer relationships between men and boys that promote aggression and disrespect towards women and girls.

Examples of what it looks like in a sport setting:

- Sporting cultures that view sport as the domain of straight men and boys, and are unwelcoming and hostile to women, girls, LGBTIQ+ people, and trans and gender-diverse people.
- Men using sexist, transphobic or homophobic jokes to bond with each other.
- Leadership allowing sexist, transphobic or homophobic slurs to go unaddressed.
- 'Locker room talk' that disrespects women and is viewed as harmless and normal.
- Ring girls or grid girls who are objectified and seen as sexual objects by men.
- The belief that sexual harassment is a normal part of sporting cultures dominated by men.
- Men bragging about their sexual 'conquests' and men sharing sexual photos of women without their consent as a way to bond with their peers who are men.

How does this drive higher rates of violence?

- When aggression and disrespect are seen as normal parts of being 'one of the boys', it is more likely that violence towards women and gender diverse people will be supported, excused or ignored – by the perpetrator, by the community and by their peers.³⁵
- Adherence to dominant forms of masculinity is likely to increase men's reluctance to take a stand against sexism, homophobia or violence supportive attitudes, and can increase the use of violence itself. This is because men who adhere to these dominant forms of masculinity prioritise being seen as 'masculine' and privilege relationships with their male peers over their relationships with women. An emphasis on aggression and sexual conquest in peer relationships between men may lead to a greater tendency for some men to use or support violence.³⁶

Gender-based violence and LGBTIQ+ communities

Emerging evidence shows there is overlap between the gendered drivers and the drivers of violence against the LGBTIQ+ community.³⁷ Violence can be used to punish individuals who don't conform to the societal expectations of their gender. Rigid gender stereotypes can be particularly harmful to people from the LGBTIQ+ community or gender diverse people. For gender diverse people, identifying, expressing and/or experiencing gender outside the traditional gender binary results in varied forms of discrimination, stigma and exclusion.³⁸

When we work to challenge gender stereotypes and rigid gender norms, including by championing equality and respect, we also contribute to safer environments for LGBTIQ+ people.

To prevent violence against LGBTIQ+ communities we need to address the gendered drivers and actively challenge **cisnormativity and heteronormativity**.

Cisnormativity is the assumption that everyone identifies as the gender they were assigned at birth and that the only 'normal' and 'natural' bodies are those that belong to cis-men and cis-women. Heteronormativity is when it is assumed that everyone is heterosexual and the only 'normal' and 'natural' relationships are heterosexual relationships between men and women.

Rigid gender norms are reinforced by cisnormativity and heteronormativity. For example, the belief that a 'real man' is strong, tough, aggressive, in control, and heterosexual and cisgender.

People with bodies, sexualities and relationships that fall outside of these social norms of cisnormativity and heteronormativity are made to feel like there is something wrong with them, their feelings and their relationships. These social drivers of violence lead to inequality, discrimination and devaluing of LGBTIQ+ people³⁹.

Actions to prevent gender-based violence

Our Watch identifies 8 essential actions to prevent gender-based violence, based on promoting and normalising gender equality in both public and personal relationships. Below are the actions and examples of what these actions can look like in a sport setting.

All actions and initiatives to prevent gender-based violence need to be integrated into standard operations at all levels of sport, rather than in a discrete, short or optional event, for example, a one-off training session. Putting **a gender lens** over all your operations will support this.

Examples of what positive actions look like in a sport setting

1. Challenge disrespect and violence against women and gender diverse people.

- Adopt, implement and regularly review policies and codes of conduct that clearly articulate zero-tolerance for disrespect, violence and harassment of any kind against women, trans and gender diverse people at all levels of the sporting setting.
- Work with leadership to ensure the policies are consistently implemented, victims are supported, perpetrators are held accountable, and prevention is understood and prioritised.
- Actively promote and support campaigns that demonstrate the sport or club's commitment to gender equality. This includes through partnerships with local women's and prevention of gender-based violence organisations or networks, for example, International Women's Day, 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (beginning 25 November annually).
- Leverage the widespread influence of athletes (who are allies) by organising events and using media platforms to promote awareness, emphasising that gender-based violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Raise awareness about the prevalence, impact, and types of gender-based violence e.g., financial abuse, technological abuse, coercive control, or emotional abuse.
- Run active bystander training for all club members that empowers the club to challenge discrimination, transphobia and homophobia.

2. Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships.

- The sport or club creates targets to increase the number of women and gender diverse leaders. Ensure there is a plan to recruit, train and retain women and gender diverse people for leadership roles across all levels and areas of the club such as president, board/committee member and coach.
- Women and gender diverse people are well supported to coach men's/boys' teams as well as women's/girls' teams, for example through mentoring and professional development opportunities.
- Community clubs are supported to annually review how equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive they are for everyone at all levels. This might be via an anonymous member survey distributed to players, staff, leadership, officials, parents, volunteers and members/spectators.
- Community clubs are aware of small grants to showcase and celebrate the role of women and girls in the club, this might include the [Change Our Game Community Activation Grants](#). Clubs can partner with local gender equality and/or prevention of gender-based violence organisations to submit proposals for competitive, impactful and evidence-based initiatives.

3. Challenge gender stereotypes and roles, and support all personal identities not constrained by rigid gender stereotypes.

- Volunteer and paid positions in community clubs do not reinforce gender stereotypes, for example, having women in coaching positions and men in the canteen.
- Promoting the senior netball game time as well as the senior football game time and schedule them to be complementary to maximise spectators.
- Recognise and celebrate transgender and gender diverse people as a part of our sporting communities and our society.
- Language across the sport that does not reinforce gender stereotypes or use gendered language, for example use terms like 'folks' or 'players' instead of 'ladies'/'guys' and avoid phrases like 'you throw like a girl' and 'man up'.
- The club has a commitment to increase the gender diversity of coaches and all senior leaders. It ensures that people underrepresented in coaching and leadership positions know about the support available for them to become accredited coaches or committee members for example subsidising coaching courses for women and gender diverse people.
- The club aims to increase engagement of different genders in all sports associated with the club, including those traditionally dominated by men and boys or traditionally dominated by women and girls.

4. Support men and boys in developing healthy masculinities and positive, supportive peer relationships.

- Engage men and boys in efforts to prevent gender-based violence. For example, take a strengths-based approach that focuses on their capacity to support positive change and the benefits that challenging harmful notions of masculinity can bring boys/men, as well as girls/women and gender diverse people.
- Engage men and boys as allies and focus on positive, practical actions that men and boys can take in their everyday lives with their teammates, families and friends.
- Engage leaders, coaches, players and other role models who are men in sessions that support critical thinking about socially prominent ideas of being a man that emphasise disrespect, dominance and control; and embrace more diverse and positive expressions of masculinity. [The Man Box 2024: re-examining what it means to be a man in Australia](#) and the corresponding [video and fact sheets](#) provide a good starting point for these conversations.
- Run active bystander training regularly at all levels of sport, with people of all genders, providing all staff and members with the tools to call out disrespectful behaviours and attitudes.

5. Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.

- Using the sport and club's social media to share videos and content that emphasises the sports' commitment to gender equity and respectful relationships, such as this [Respect Victoria clip](#) featuring two men talking about their role in gender equity in sport.
- The club gives equal trophies to all awarded players and teams. There are equal displays of pictures, trophies and awards for all recipients.
- The sport or club normalises gender diversity in leadership. For example, organising women role models (internal or external to the club) to speak to all teams/members including the men's/boys' teams.
- Develop partnerships with local media to increase locally driven coverage of women's sport, for example, local radio calling of women's games or roundup segments as typically occurs for men's games.

6. Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice.

- The club recognises First Nations people as the owners of the land that is situated on, includes this recognition on their website, and does an acknowledgment of country at the start of every meeting.
- The sport participates in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week and provides opportunities for education, learning and celebration for local clubs.
- Sport organisations partner with experts such as CMSport, Koorie Heritage Trust, Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association (VACSAL), Proud 2 Play, Regional Sports Assemblies, and Disability Sport and Recreation to build the capacity of staff and club communities to understand how other forms of discrimination (such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism) impact on people's experiences of gender inequality and take action to address these forms of discrimination.

7. Build safe, fair and equitable organisations and institutions by focusing on policy and systems change.

- Sport organisations commit to developing a gender equity action plan and systematically addressing gender inequality in their organisation and support their affiliated clubs to do the same.
- The sport and associated clubs integrate actions and initiatives to prevent gender-based violence into 'business as usual', rather than in a discrete, short or optional event.
- Sport organisations implement educational programming and training with staff, club members, local community, and athletes to raise awareness about gender-based violence including sexual harassment and sexual assault. These convey information about policies, procedures and services and instil principles of respect and equality.

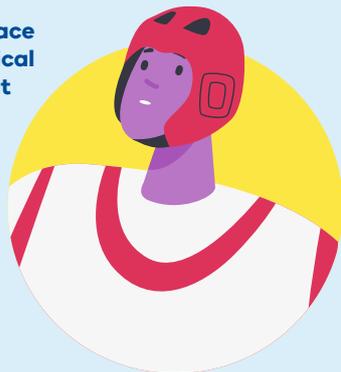
8. Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys in public and private spheres.

- The club provides professionally facilitated gender equity training to all volunteers/players/umpires/coaches on a yearly basis, irrespective of gender. Ideally, the facilitator has connections to the club or local community.
- Club leaders role model respectful and equitable relationships to younger people in the club and talk regularly about values and the code of conduct with them.
- The club identifies and acts on opportunities to promote positive and respectful mixed gender participation where appropriate, for example, doing mixed-gender warm-ups or drills together at training.
- The club delivers respectful relationships sessions to young people in partnership with expert organisations or facilitators.



Rigid and binary ideas about gender drive violence by pushing people into roles and behaviours that limit their lives and their potential, and risk them hurting both themselves and others.⁴⁰

Sport is often seen as a space in which highly stereotypical views are held regarding what it means to be 'masculine' and 'feminine'. There are opportunities to challenge these stereotypes and support people to be individuals free from gendered constraints.



Men and boys benefit from breaking down stereotypes about gender that can hold them back. Men who do not live up to the 'masculine' stereotype have reported feeling intimidated and excluded from sport.⁴¹

Victorian research has found that nearly half of all players heard sexist language used within their sporting clubs, and nearly 1 in 5 men in the study thought it was acceptable to make jokes about LGBTIQ+ people and women if they weren't present in the room at the time.⁴²



Learn more about the prevention of gender-based violence and sports' role in prevention:

- Safe and Equal's [Fast Facts on Family and Gender-based Violence](#) outlines recent evidence and statistics around gender-based violence in Australia.
- Our Watch's [Violence against women: Sport can help change the story](#) video makes clear the positive opportunities sporting organisations and clubs have to play in preventing gender-based violence.
- Our Watch's [Change the Story Framework](#) and [short video](#) explains the link between gender equality and preventing violence against women.
- Our Watch's [Equality and Respect in Sport](#) website helps sporting organisations embed gender equality and respectful relationships into their networks and communities, and build cultures that help prevent violence against women and their children. The resources include useful videos which illustrate the important role that sport can play in promoting gender equality and respect to help change the story about violence against women in Australia.
- Our Watch's [Changing the Picture](#) looks at how the gendered drivers intersect with colonialism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and contains a set of clear actions that are needed to address the many drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- Our Watch's [Changing the landscape](#) examines how violence against women with disability is shaped by the intersection of ableism and the gendered drivers.
- Rainbow Health's [Pride in Prevention: A guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities](#) and [Pride in Prevention Partnership Guide](#) summarise the currently available evidence on the drivers of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ communities and provides essential actions to address these drivers.
- Multicultural Centre for Women's Health's [Intersectionality Matters: A guide to engaging immigrant and refugee communities to prevent violence against women](#) considers how intersections between the gendered drivers and other forms of structural oppression can be addressed to prevent violence against women who are from migrant and refugee communities.

Guiding Principles

The following 10 guiding principles provide a framework to help organisations drive gender equity in sport settings to prevent gender-based violence.



1. Establish a case for change

Provide the sporting community with a clear case for change. That is, a story about why gender equity and the prevention of gender-based violence is important, why change is needed, and a clearly articulated goal for any proposed activities.

Develop a 'key messages' document communicating your case for change which includes key statistics and the benefits of gender equality to their community. This can be developed using the messages from this resource but should be tailored to suit the audience you intend to work with. For example, you might develop one version document for your paid staff and partner organisations, and another for the community club you intend to work with.

Understanding the club or sports' motivation will support you to tailor your messaging. For some clubs, the prevention of gender-based violence will be their main motivation for undertaking work. They may already recognise themselves as potential leaders in this space and understand the impacts of violence on their club and communities more broadly.

Putting together a case for establishing an equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive environment in your sport will help you articulate the benefits it will bring to the sport and clubs.

However, for some clubs that do not recognise their role in prevention of gender-based violence, you could consider focussing on gender equity **before** bringing in the link to the prevention of gender-based violence. This can be useful to gain initial buy-in as clubs may more easily see the relevance and application of gender equity to their setting before understanding their role in the prevention of gender-based violence. Clubs are also familiar with the increase in women's participation in sport at all levels, and work around equitable access to facilities through the [Fair Access Roadmap](#).

Once you've established a relationship with the club and created some wins for gender equity, you can start to incorporate messaging around gender-based violence prevention and response.

The work you do with clubs should always address the drivers of gender-based violence.

You can address the drivers of gendered violence without talking explicitly about violence or prevention. Actions may be:

- Developing pathways for more women in leadership
- Fostering respectful relationships between people of all genders
- Providing opportunities for women, girls, and gender diverse people's participation in sport
- Developing codes of conduct and policies regarding respectful behaviours
- Talking to men and boys about how to be allies for gender equity in sport
- Addressing inequities in resourcing at the club
- Running LGBTIQ+ inclusion workshops.

Action on gender equality will improve the lives of women, men, girls, boys and gender diverse people across Victoria.



CASE STUDY

Building a case for change

Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) has one of the highest recorded rates of family violence across all of Victoria's local government areas. The Council recognises community sport as a key setting to prevent all forms of gender-based violence.

Through their Victorian State Government's Preventing Violence Through Sport project, the Council drew on a range of different data sources to demonstrate the need for an intersectional gender equity approach in clubs and facilities. The Council created partnerships to support this identified need for change, engaging the Mallee District Aboriginal Services as a project partner to establish family and gender-based violence initiatives which connected and had meaning to the local Aboriginal community.

Like all councils, MRCC is obliged under the [Gender Equality Act 2020](#) to undertake Gender Impact Assessments on all new and reviewed policies, services and programs, as well as developing and implementing a [Fair Access Policy](#).

Council staff were supported to make connections between the prevention of gender-based violence, gender equity and sport. Staff, including those in engineering, facilities, and planning-based roles, were also trained to conduct Gender Impact Assessments and apply a gender lens to all business as usual.

Council staff who worked on the project were able to tailor messages to different stakeholders – emphasising gender equity messaging to local clubs, while highlighting the legislative requirements and the importance of preventing gender-based violence to council leadership.



Want to learn more about the benefits of gender equality and developing a case for change?

- VicHealth's [Framing gender equality: Message guide](#), [Framing masculinity: Message Guide](#), Rainbow Health's [Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide](#), and the [key messages](#) within this document will support you to develop messaging for your case for change.
- [Our Equal State](#) is the Victorian State Government's strategy for increasing gender equality. This resource talks about the need for change, outlines the benefits, and provides an overview of gender equity initiatives occurring across Victoria.

CASE STUDY

Understand the club's values and building on them

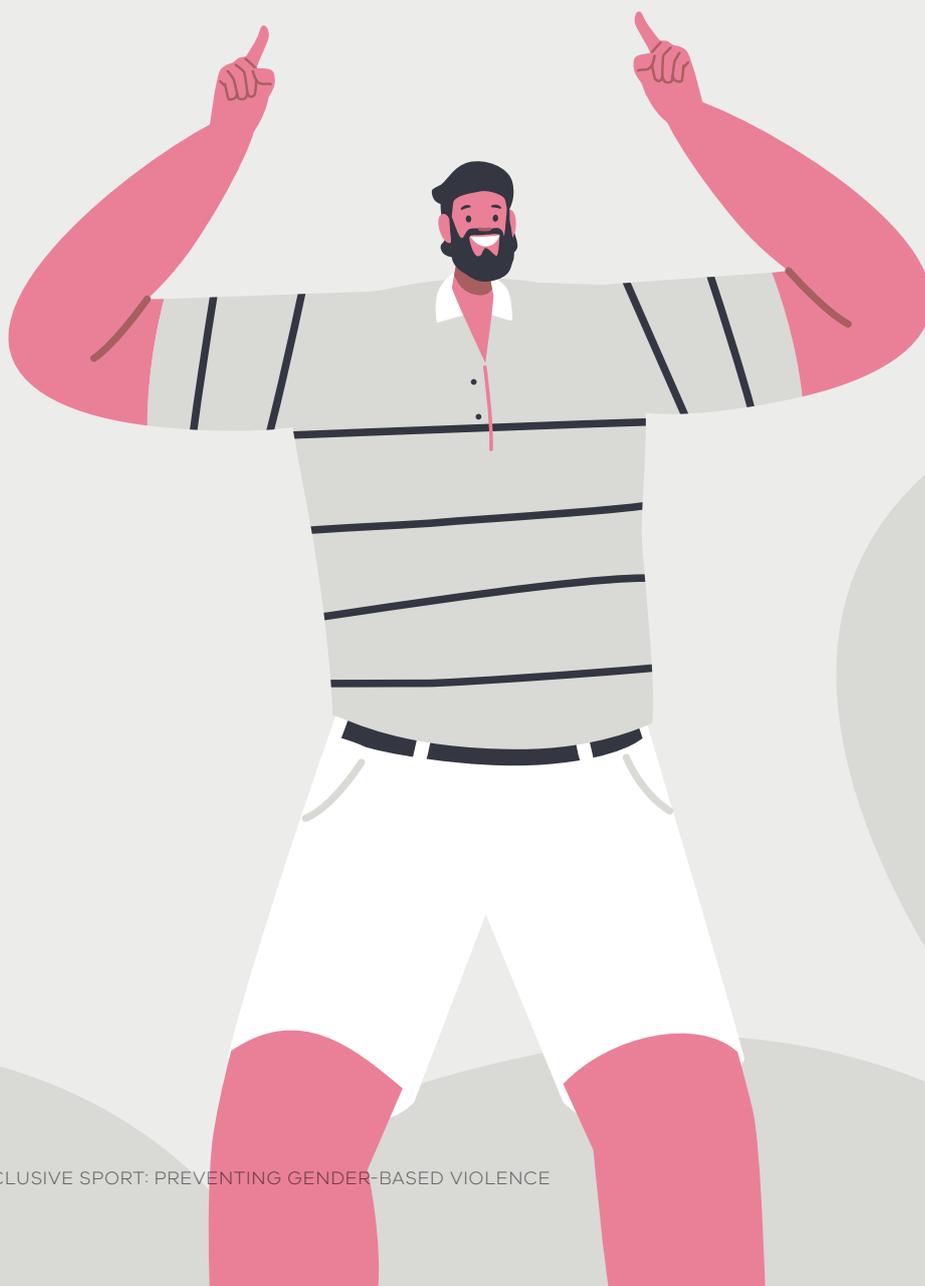
In the project *Shining Stars – Strengthening Indigenous Women Through Sport, Culture and Community*, the Aboriginal Advancement League created a simple slogan for the Fitzroy Stars Football Netball Club, 'what's good for the boys, is good for the girls, is deadly for the club!' This slogan was created to communicate values widely with the club and community, and as a reminder that practices within the club need to be gender equitable.

The slogan reinforced the message that there needed to be the same opportunities for men and women in the club. This slogan was placed on a large poster when entering the club so that both members and visitors to the club could be reminded of the message and values of the club. The Shining Stars project officer stated that the slogan is a great 'call to action' for the club to be consistently reminded of what they are trying to achieve and for the club to question practices. The project officer stated that the slogan, 'really got people to question, "Oh the boys have got a sponsorship package, the girls don't. The boys are paid, the girls aren't. The boys get to go on camp, the girls don't". So that was really important that the call to action existed in a slogan.'



Working with community clubs – getting buy-in from club leadership

- Ensure that people with authority and influence at the club are supportive and advocate for your program. If there is no buy-in from leadership it will be extremely difficult to get the rest of the club or organisation onboard. Communicate the expectation of a club engaging in this work. Be realistic about their commitment and how they will be helped.
- Work with clubs that have a clear vision around equity and inclusion and who are ready to commit to working in this space. Use a strengths-based approach and identify what they are already doing well. Understand the history and values of the clubs and reflect on how the program will strengthen and build on their existing values and accomplishments.
- Present clear and simple messaging to the leaders. Provide a positive vision for their club, identify barriers to achieving this vision and provide options for action. Communicate and demonstrate the support from external leadership such as local council or the sport's governing body.
- Support the leadership group to understand how the gender equity work you are proposing ties into other club obligations and requirements such as the [Fair Play Code](#), [Child Safe Standards](#) and [Fair Access Policy](#).
- Support club leaders to communicate widely about the project, including by providing them with key messages and a simple frequently asked questions (FAQ) document.
- Discuss the possibility of resistance and backlash with the leaders as something they might expect and prepare for. Running a backlash and resistance workshop will support them (see [Guiding Principle 8](#)) and provide a space to practise talking about the benefits of gender equality and the need for change.
- As your work progresses and new clubs are recruited, use past participants to testify about the program and the positive changes it has brought to their club. You can also use professional role models (such as the [Change Our Game ambassadors](#)) to share their experiences of gender equity.
- The Club Gender Audit Tool and Club Gender Equity Action Plan templates on SRV's [website](#) have been designed for project workers to adapt and use with community sport clubs.



2. Commit to adopting a whole-of-sport approach including leadership support

A whole-of-sport approach is a critical part of creating cultural change at all levels of sport.

To work towards the prevention of gender-based violence, all levels of sport and their community partners need to be working towards the same goals. For cultural change to be successful, sporting organisations should adopt a comprehensive and holistic approach that extends from their executive through to players, coaches, staff, supporters, sponsors, members and volunteers.

'It's not just... committee members, or presidents or secretaries, it's about how to engage the whole club... the whole league... every single person that comes through those doors.'

Quote from a Preventing Violence Through Sport program participant

While you might be working at a community sport level, there are plenty of stakeholders that you can involve in the project by drawing on connections at multiple levels.

A whole-of-sport approach includes working with:

- National and state governments
- NSOs
- SSAs
- Regional Sports Assemblies
- Local councils
- Leagues and associations
- Local sports clubs
- Individuals and their relationships (including players, volunteers, parents, fans and spectators).

Leaders at all levels of sport, from CEOs to community club coaches, are an integral part of establishing and influencing a positive sport culture. This is through actively modelling and promoting gender equality and respect and setting standards for acceptable behaviours. Without leadership support from a sporting organisation or club, the initiative will have limited success.

Gender equity should become business as usual and not a standalone piece of work. Sport organisations need to do internal work to ensure they 'walk the talk', putting a gender lens on all their practices, policies, and processes and by addressing the drivers of gender-based violence. It is important that the organisations supporting work at the community sport level first build their own capacity to promote and support gender equality and prevent gender-based violence.

Gender influences all areas of an organisation and staff training is important. Professional development and capacity building opportunities to understand and apply a gender equity lens should be available for staff at all levels, including the board and directors. Competency in gender equity should be built into staff position descriptions.

Staff should also be trained in managing disclosures of violence (see [Guiding Principle 7](#)). The likelihood of disclosures of experiences of violence increases when we begin to talk about gender equity and prevention of gender-based violence.

As part of a whole-of-sport approach, SSAs and NSOs should also consider how gender equity work can be linked to other equity work happening across their sport. This might include Child Safety requirements, All Abilities programs and Reconciliation Action Plans. In taking this approach, sports can address other forms of discrimination and disadvantage that intersect with gender inequality and contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence.

While there is a lot of great work that can happen at community club level, gender equity work must also focus on governing bodies, leagues and associations, and their staff, organisational culture and policies.

Crash the Boards for Gender Equality

Crash the Boards – a play on words of a popular basketball phrase – is a primary prevention program run in Victorian basketball associations. Taking a whole-of-sport approach, the program targeted key change makers such as coaches, players, committee members and referees to address and act on the gendered drivers of violence.

The program consisted of 8 phases for each participating basketball association, with ongoing implementation support provided by the program manager and facilitators:

1. **Gender audit:** Clubs undertake an audit to identify their strengths, priorities and gaps.
2. **Gender equity action plan:** A plan is developed using data from the gender audit as well as surveys, interviews and consultations across the Association. The plan embeds changes to the Associations' practices and policies, and the board and committee are involved in the development of the plan.
3. **Awareness raising of messages:** Posters and other communication materials are displayed around stadiums to promote key messages. A social media schedule is developed to share key program messages, activities and outcomes, and to promote existing campaigns (such as the 16 Days of Activism to Prevent Gender-based Violence).
4. **Coaches' workshop:** Coaches are educated and upskilled to implement respectful relationships training sessions for junior players.
5. **Active learning for junior players:** Junior players (12–19-year-olds) learn about respectful relationships through an 8-week active training program, incorporated into their regular training session. Co-designed with young people and gender equity experts, coaches deliver short interventions through the regular skill-based training drills and activities. The messages delivered in the active training are reinforced through ongoing club communication and visually via the coach's whiteboard at training and games.
6. **Gender equity and active bystander training:** Training is delivered to club leaders and key influencers.
7. **Theme round with senior teams:** A dedicated competition round champions key messages and raises awareness across senior competitions.
8. **Knowledge sharing:** A regular community of practice is held to build collective impact of the program by sharing learnings and challenges.

Violence prevention initiatives can often prompt disclosures of gender-based violence or sexual assault. The Crash the Boards team also developed a response protocol for the Associations, with key staff and volunteers (including the board and committee) trained in implementation of the protocol.



Achieving gender-equal and inclusive workplaces and sporting environments requires a transformative approach that changes systems, structures, and social norms.

3. Take an intersectional approach

Sport has historically addressed inclusion in terms of individual factors in isolation or in silos. For example, gender as separate to race, and race as separate to disability. In reality, our identity is made up of the interplay of many different and inseparable aspects.

Intersectionality is a framework to help us understand how intersecting structures of oppression based on gender, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, religion, race, age or location can compound and interact on multiple levels to create overlapping forms of discrimination and power imbalances. It also provides an important opportunity to acknowledge that everyone has their own unique experiences of power, discrimination and privilege.

An intersectional approach is a way of thinking, reflecting and working, and can be used to better understand and meet the needs of people who are underrepresented or marginalised in sport.

For example, a Muslim woman of colour who wears a hijab may experience both sexism and racism in a sports club. This would make her experience different from a white woman, in the same sports club, who may be experiencing sexism but not racism. Developing a program that only considers gender will not meet all her needs. We must understand her experiences of discrimination and racism. Her Muslim identity is not the issue we need to address or focus on, but rather it is the racism or structures of discrimination that need to be addressed.

An intersectional approach also allows us to understand how men can experience privilege and discriminate in sport simultaneously. While sport settings often privilege 'men' as a group, some men are excluded based on race or sexuality.

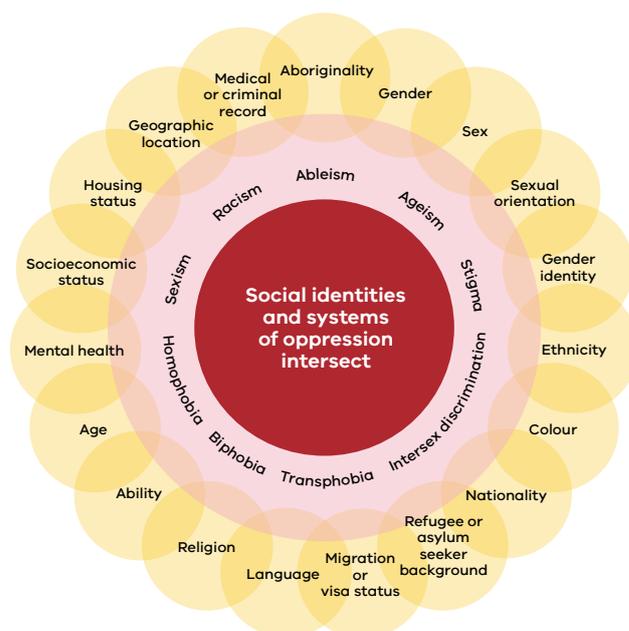
When developing programs and initiatives we need to consider intersectionality to better understand and meet the needs of people who are underrepresented in community sport.

An intersectional approach also helps us to better understand the impacts and nature of gender-based violence.

People who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage may be at an increased risk of experiencing gendered violence. For example, research shows high rates of gender-based violence are experienced by First Nations women and other women of colour, women and girls with disabilities, and transgender and gender diverse people.⁴³ People who experience violence and multiple forms of discrimination may also have greater barriers to accessing help and support.

While gender inequality needs to remain at the centre of efforts to prevent gender-based violence, it needs to be addressed alongside other forms of discrimination such as racism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism.

For many people, the impact of gender inequality is compounded by the way that gender inequality interacts with other forms of disadvantage and discrimination.



Credit: *Everybody Matters: Equity and Inclusion Statement*, Victorian State Government

An intersectional approach in sport will broadly focus on:

- Working with and supporting groups who experience multiple forms of discrimination in the community or sport setting you are working in, and;
- Undertaking activities that address, and challenge, the multiple forms of discrimination and oppression that intersect with gender inequality. This can include changing policies and systems, designing programs, and delivering education to shift discriminatory beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

These questions can support you in applying an intersectional lens to project planning or program design in a sport setting³:

- Have you co-designed your program or project with the people who will be impacted?
- Have you consulted with relevant stakeholders?
- How will you actively involve key organisations, community leaders and/or marginalised community members (for example, young people, women, girls and gender diverse people, people from multifaith/religious backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, LGBTIQ+ community members) in the planning, implementation and evaluation of your initiative?
- Who will you partner with to ensure you have relevant expertise (for example, specialist groups or organisations such as Proud 2 Play, VACSAL, local Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations and regional sports assemblies)? How will you consider 'power' dynamics in partnerships and create meaningful, equal partnerships with community-led and owned organisations?
- How will your initiative address other forms of discrimination and oppression (for example, ableism, racism, homophobia, ageism, transphobia) at the individual, organisational and structural levels?
- What measures are you putting in place to allow you to reflect upon how your unconscious bias? This might include peer learning, peer reflection, or supportive supervision.
- Will your data reflect a range of information on who is or is not participating in your initiative (for example, using disaggregated data to help identify and understand participation of people with differences)?

3. Some questions adapted from Safe and Equal's Prevention in Practice training.

CASE STUDY

Taking an intersectional approach to gender equity

The Mount Alexander Falcons are a community AFL club in central Victoria, and was designed by women and gender diverse people to meet the needs of women and gender diverse people.

One of the first goals of the committee was to develop a Gender and Inclusion Action Plan. They knew they needed to take an intersectional approach to fully understand the barriers to participation and inclusion for all club members.

The committee began the process by doing two things:

1. Holding a gender equity audit session to identify gaps and areas for improvement, where all members were invited to attend.
2. Distributing an anonymous survey to their club community including players, parents, sponsors, volunteers and members.

One of the survey questions was '*Are there any barriers to your full participation in the club or competition?*'. There were two main responses to this question – travel and the cost of petrol, and lack of childcare options.

The data from the survey and audit informed the development of their Gender and Inclusion Action Plan which included actions to address travel and petrol costs (such as ride sharing systems) and lack of childcare options (securing a grant to provide children's sport clinics at all home games for both the home and away teams).

In addition, the Falcons partnered with the local Regional Sports Assembly, Sports Focus, to deliver two workshops to the club community – 'Gender equity and the prevention of gender-based violence' and 'Active Bystander Training'. They also employed the services of **Proud 2 Play**, a specialist LGBTIQ+ organisation, to deliver a 90-minute workshop on the inclusion of gender diverse people in sport.

To support their intersectional approach and inclusion across the club, the committee also developed a **series of policies** including: a First Nations Inclusion Policy in consultation with local Aboriginal Community, a Cultural Safety and Inclusion Policy, and a LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Policy.



CASE STUDY

Working with partners to apply an intersectional lens

Local partners can support sport to apply an intersectional lens to their work.

South West Sport, a Regional Sports Assembly, prioritised an intersectional approach when planning their *Community Sport: An Equal Playing Field* project. Supported by their local partners at Women's Health & Wellbeing Barwon South West, South West Sport formed an internal working group focused on intersectional gender equity. The working group participated in Social Impact Assessment Training and focused on building their capacity to apply an intersectional lens to their thinking, planning, and policy. This allowed the organisation to apply not only a gendered lens to their ways of working, but to consider multiple intersections including rurality, disability, cultural diversity, sexuality, and gender identity. As a result, South West Sport developed an internal Gender Equity and Inclusion Action Plan, to support the organisation to take a holistic approach to progressing intersectional gender equity within sport.

Through their Preventing Violence Through Sport project, Mildura Rural City Council partnered with Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, Welcoming Clubs and Aligned Leisure to run a Sports Inclusion Workshop for local clubs. The partnership combined expertise to share practical ideas about how to create more inclusive and diverse club environments. The workshop was aimed at club leaders including committee members, coaches, captains and managers. Sports represented were Australian Football, Netball, Tennis, Lawn Bowls, Golf and Cricket. Staff from the local gym also attended.

With the support of expert partners, the Council developed a Sporting Club Checklist (also known as a gender audit) to use with sport organisations and leagues. This included statements to prompt leaders to think about intersectionality such as:

- Our policies and procedures consider women, girls and gender diverse people from different social and cultural backgrounds
- Our league has policies and procedures in place, developed in consultation with gender diverse people, disability and cultural groups, to ensure the safety of staff members and volunteers at work and events
- Our league works to ensure that all people can participate in ways appropriate to their culture and faith such as, First Nations rounds and allowing players to wear hijabs or items related to faith
- All our league facilities are accessible to people using wheelchairs and prams

Council also partnered with Mallee District Aboriginal Services to ensure First Nations voices were heard and gender equity initiatives were co-designed with clubs tailored to First Nations people. The project engaged Aboriginal club members as advisories to develop strategies for better cultural inclusion at local clubs.



Learn more about taking an intersectional approach:

- The Australian Sports Commission's [Intersectionality Framework](#) and resource are a good place to start to understand how to take an intersectional lens in a sport setting.
- This [short video](#) explains what intersectionality is using a sport context.
- This [longer video](#) featuring Kimberlé Crenshaw provides an overview of the need for an intersectional approach.



4. Work in partnership with other organisations and experts

The prevention of gender-based violence is a community-wide responsibility and sport does not need to be not alone in taking action.

Working in partnership can be a great way to collaborate, share expertise, and build the capacity of all partners involved. Project partners can support an intersectional approach and ensure other forms of social inequality and disadvantage are also discussed and addressed.

Partners that can support sport include:

- Universities and TAFEs
- Local councils
- Gender equity and prevention organisations (such as Safe and Equal)
- Women's Health Organisations
- Regional Sports Assemblies
- Schools (linking with Respectful Relationships Education)
- Specialist inclusion organisations (such as Proud 2 Play, CMSport, Women with Disabilities Australia, Rainbow Health Australia, Zoe Belle Gender Collective and Minus 18)
- Local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- Organisations with specific expertise in engaging men and boys in gender equity such as the Men's Project.

Evidence shows the sport sector can benefit from working with gender equity and violence prevention experts to:

- better inform policy and guideline development
- facilitate translation of policy into practice across multiple sports and organisational formats
- gain access to up-to-date knowledge and research
- access evaluation expertise
- receive useful education and training.⁴⁴

Partnering with experts and local services shares the workload, expands the reach of projects, and provides a range of expert perspectives.

Partners can also provide access to wider professional networks working towards the prevention of gender-based violence. At a local level, organisations should also consider partnering with other sports, especially if they are using the same local facilities. Similar strategies could be used and learnings shared.

Allow enough time in the planning process to ensure the relevant partners and experts have a chance to contribute.

'As a club, we don't have the answers... we're a sporting club... we do our best to find 14 blokes that run out on a footy field every week. We train them, we educate them, we don't have the answers to some of these bigger societal issues... so we need experts in the field, we need subject matter experts.'

Quote from a Preventing Violence Through Sport program participant



CASE STUDY

Strong partnerships for prevention

After connecting at a prevention of gender-based violence through sport networking event, Women's Health Grampians joined the National Rugby League's (NRL) Voice Against Violence project to support a place-based community approach to prevention. They combined their respective existing gendered violence prevention programs and tailored them to suit the place-based need.

Women's Health Grampian's gender equality and cultural change programs, Communities of Respect & Equality (CoRE) and Act@Play, are delivered in sport and recreation settings in regional Victoria. The programs work closely with club committees and leaders to educate, develop gender equality action plans and implement change club-wide.

Voice Against Violence aims to assist the rugby league community to prevent violence against women and children through workshops for young men that support the incorporation of respectful relationships messaging into on-field drills and activities. Women's Health Grampians identified this project as an opportunity to provide new tools to engage men and boys in prevention work. The NRL recognised Women's Health Grampian's close connection to community, relevant expertise, and ability to support long-term change.

Informed by their prior experience using sport as a primary prevention setting, Women's Health Grampians also partnered with another women's health organisation, GenWest to share expertise, advice, and resources. GenWest led the project: Champions of the West: Western Region Prevention of Violence and Gender Equality Capacity Building Program. This project included partnerships with the Western Bulldogs, Western Football Netball League, Safe and Equal and The Men's Project. It took a whole-of-sport approach to build the capacity of staff and volunteers at multiple levels of sport.



Useful tools to support partnership work:

- Developing a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) at the start of the project can support partners to understand their commitment and responsibilities.
- VicHealth's [Partnerships Analysis Tool](#) is a useful resource for establishing, developing and maintaining partnerships for prevention projects.
- The [Pride in Prevention Partnership Guide](#) is a comprehensive guide for partnerships that support the prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ communities. The information in this guide is transferrable to all partnering prevention projects.



5. Embed strong planning and evaluation

Strong planning, governance and evaluation processes are essential for gender equity initiatives.

Evaluation is the process by which we judge the worth or value of something, and is more than simply measuring success or failure. It should involve asking questions and reflecting on the answers. Evaluation plans should start at the beginning of a project and involve an ongoing process of planning, implementation and reflection against the project's goals and objectives. Understanding your aims and objectives will help to understand what you are trying to find out or test in your evaluation.

There are many ways to use sport to engage in the prevention of gender-based violence. Whatever you do, it must be practical and relevant for your sport and its members. Projects should have a long-term focus with short and medium-term measurable goals, as cultural change takes time.

The prevention of gender-based violence needs to extend beyond just awareness raising and campaigns, and must address a combination (or all) of the gendered drivers. According to a recent Australian study, the most effective prevention work addresses gender inequality across multiple levels of sport organisations and incorporates several interrelated components rather than just one-off activities.⁴⁵

At the outset of your planning, bring your partnership group together to discuss:

- The type of project you want to deliver
- Why the project is needed
- What outcomes the project aims to achieve
- Who benefits from the project
- How the project takes a whole-of-sport approach
- If other project partners should be involved
- What work you are already doing that could have a gender lens applied to strengthen it
- What resources are needed
- What activities will be delivered and when
- What is being measured (evaluated) and how.

This conversation will inform your project plan and evaluation framework.

Respect Victoria's [Monitoring, evaluation and learning toolkit](#) provides you with everything you'll need to identify relevant partners, plan your project, develop a project logic model, and develop an evaluation and data collection plan. It also provides guidance on undertaking your evaluation and disseminating the findings.

In any sport, continuous improvement is a key goal. Evaluation has the same objective and is an essential part of the planning process, from start to finish.

Gender equity projects must include meaningful engagement and input from women, girls and gender diverse people at every stage. This could look like:

- Prioritising women and gender diverse people's leadership in both the governance of the project and in the project itself
- Putting together a gender equity advisory panel to provide advice on the project, which is predominately made up of women, gender diverse people or people who identify as LGBTIQ+
- Engaging in consultation with women, girls, and gender diverse people to learn about their experiences. This could be done through informal conversations, member surveys, gender audits and focus groups
- Creating a safe environment for women, girls, and gender diverse people to share their insights.

CASE STUDY

Evaluating from the start

Led by Merri Health, [We're Game](#) brought together community and women's health organisations, leisure centres, sports clubs, local government, SSAs, research partners and community to take a whole-community approach to tackle gender-based violence, leveraging each stakeholder's unique expertise.

We're Game was evaluated by researchers at RMIT University. This evaluation was built into the program from the beginning.

The project used a mixed method approach, which values different types of data; both quantitative and qualitative. The club gender audit tool, gender equity action plans, and other project documentation were used to assess the effectiveness of the approach within the different settings and communities. Project staff also collected participants' reflections at various project stages including post-project through focus groups with stakeholders to reflect on the relevance of the methodology in their setting.

The project's monitoring and evaluation also included the evaluation of relevant events held by Merri Health and their partners such as information sessions, consultations, workshops, training or capacity building sessions, and community of practice sessions.

Throughout the project Merri Health demonstrated a commitment to sharing the evaluation findings by presenting at relevant sport or gender equity conferences and via the social media pages of all project partners.



Want to learn more about [planning and evaluating gender equity initiatives](#)?

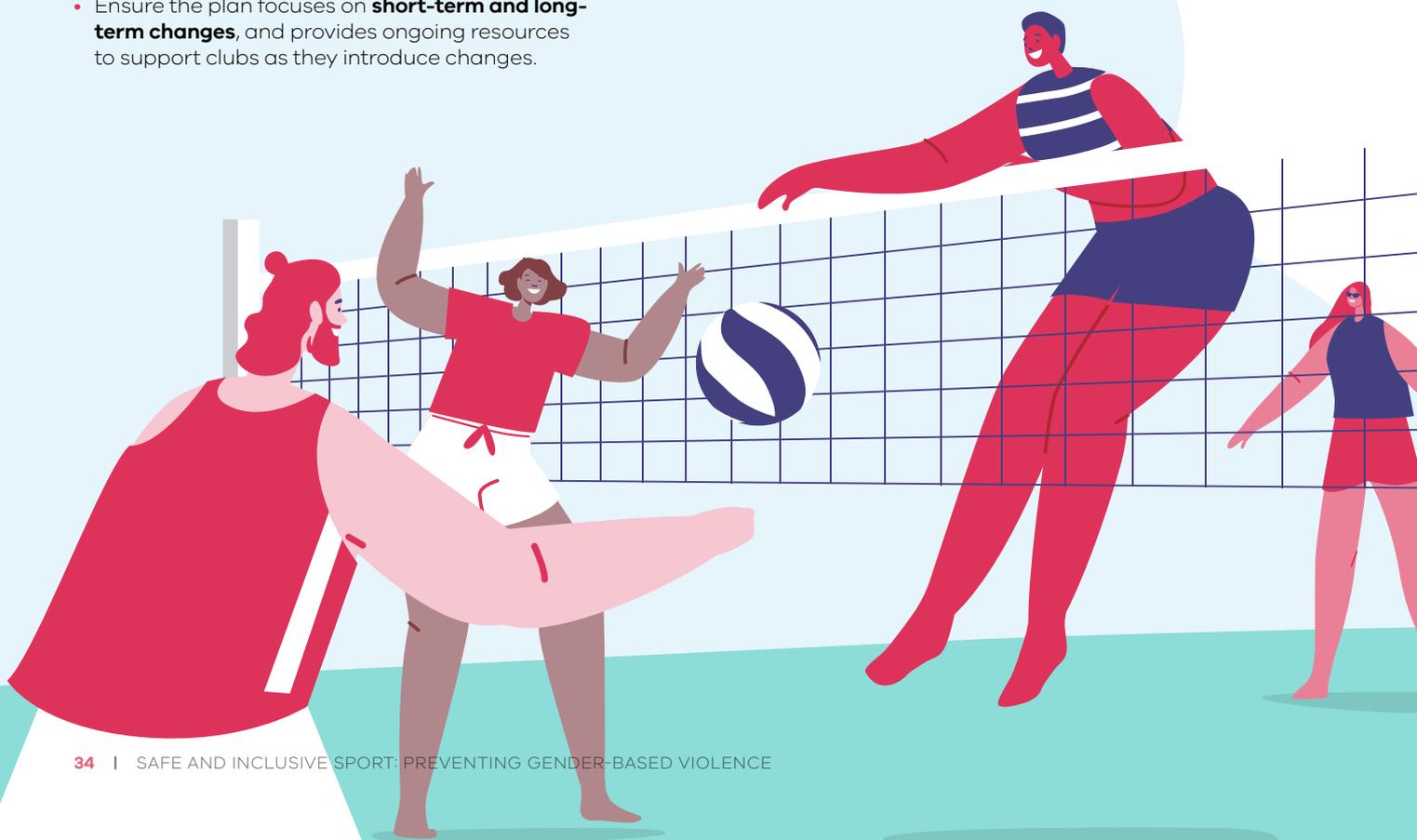
- Respect Victoria's [Monitoring, evaluation and learning toolkit](#) has a wealth of information and resources to help organisations monitor and evaluate prevention projects.
- Our Watch's [Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice](#) resource has been developed for a range of individuals who are engaged in activities that aim to prevent gender-based violence. It provides tips and tools for anyone working to promote safe, equal, welcoming and inclusive cultures.



Tips for working with community sport clubs

Develop a tailored plan of action for the club, making it relevant to their culture and community by considering the following tips:

- Positive and **strengths-based language** about equal and respectful relationships is more engaging than negative messaging. The focus should be on expanding on the club's existing strengths and valuing the skills, knowledge, connections, and potential in the club in visible ways.
- Form a **working group** to help drive the work at the club. The working group should be made up of people varied in age, experiences, background, membership level, skill, and gender to help provide diverse insights into the club and community needs.
- **Gender audits and gender equity action plans** are useful tools for analysing current club environments and informing plans to address gaps and weaknesses. A number of sports and local councils have developed templates that can be used with clubs, or the Club Gender Audit Tool and Club Gender Equity Action Plan template at the end of this resource can be adapted by project workers to use with community sport clubs.
- **Start with small actions** and work up to bigger wins. Build a case for change and create messaging that talks about the vision or goal for the club, the barriers to achieving the goal and actions to take. Identify the 'why' in club culture and community and develop a plan that works for them.
- **Educate** in short, sharp blocks. Conversations or educational training can be incorporated into committee meetings by including gender equity as a standing agenda item, training sessions or regular club dinners. **Keeping things simple** also supports volunteers who are likely time poor, this may include by sharing links where people can learn more and posting short videos or stories on social media.
- Ensure the plan focuses on **short-term and long-term changes**, and provides ongoing resources to support clubs as they introduce changes.
- Focus on both the **recruitment and retention** of women, girls, and gender diverse people; including by creating an environment that supports these cohorts to keep returning to the club.
- Use **social media**, the club's website and local news outlets to build awareness of the program and its successes. Adapt communications to represent and speak to women, girls and gender diverse people in LGBTIQ+, First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- **Peer learning** is important. Clubs benefit from being brought together to talk about similar challenges and learning what strategies are working for others.
- Clubs benefit from opportunities to **hear from the women, girls, and gender diverse people** in their club about their experiences and ideas. A safe learning space needs to be created with an acknowledgment that many of us are unlearning harmful ideas about gender and recognising unconscious bias.
- Use training to empower people to be **active bystanders** to gender-based violence, providing them with the skills to act after witnessing or hearing about an incident of sexist or sexually harassing behaviour. Active bystander training is important and club members enjoy it, however it must be implemented in conjunction with a whole-of-club or sport approach. Further, if members are trained to call out sexism and disrespect, there must also be an authorising environment to do this, avenues to raise issues, and clear dispute resolution processes if the issue needs to be taken further.



6. Engage men while ensuring women and gender diverse people are central to the work

Engaging men and boys is essential for gender equality.

Men play a critical role in calling out sexism and disrespect and building gender equality in their everyday lives with family, friends, teammates and in sporting clubs. The evidence suggests that the most effective gender equity and violence prevention programs engage men and boys from the outset.⁴⁶

As outlined in [‘The Gendered Drivers in Sport Settings’](#), evidence demonstrates a strong link between gender inequality and men’s use of violence. One of the reasons for this is that men and women have often received messages throughout their life about how a ‘real’ man or a ‘real’ woman thinks, feels, and acts. These messages, which are often referred to as gender stereotypes, result in many men believing that they should be strong, in control, competitive, aggressive, hypersexual, and unburdened by vulnerability to be seen as ‘manly’. Not only do these gender stereotypes put pressure on men to behave in ways which may be harmful to others (e.g. by using aggression to assert dominance or control), men who agree with these gender stereotypes have been found to have a greater likelihood of concerning health outcomes such as poor mental health, risky drinking, problem gambling, and engaging in risky behaviour while under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Preventing violence and promoting gender equality requires reducing attachment to these harmful gender norms. Both men and women experience the pressure to conform to these norms, and both men and women need to be involved in programs promoting gender equality and the prevention of violence.

Projects engaging men are more likely to be effective if they explicitly address the harm caused to men by masculine stereotypes (the practices, norms and relations associated with ‘manhood’ or ideas about ‘real men’).⁴⁷ Sport is a key setting where dominant ideas about what it means to be a ‘real man’ are reinforced (for example, strong, athletic, aggressive). These ideals are normalised and valued in sport settings, resulting in sport being perceived as a domain primarily for heterosexual men.

It is important that men can explore and discuss outdated ideas of masculine stereotypes that constrain them and limit their choices. [The Man Box 2024: re-examining what it means to be a man in Australia](#) and the corresponding [video and fact sheets](#) provide a good starting point for these conversations. Additionally, [VicHealth’s Framing masculinity: Message Guide](#) provides a useful tool to use when engaging men in gender equality, and supporting men to consider how outdated masculine stereotypes can negatively affect their lives. One of the guide’s expert tips is to spend more time talking about men’s role in the solution and less time talking about their role in the problem.

Gender equality and violence prevention initiatives must not focus solely on the benefits to men of dismantling gender stereotypes. While focusing on the benefits of gender equality for men can be a good place to start, these conversations need to occur alongside conversations of gender inequality and the ways women and gender diverse people are disadvantaged in the broader community and in sport. Women and gender diverse people must also be equally consulted, empowered and engaged throughout the project.⁴⁸

Gender equity programs that focus solely on women and girls reinforce the perception that gender inequality is a women’s issue rather than a whole of community issue.

Programs that focus on engaging men and boys should consider how they include reflections on men’s understanding and ideas around power, privilege and violence. These reflections can help to highlight how gender inequality and rigid gender stereotypes are harmful for men as well as women, gender diverse people and LGBTIQ+ people.

ACTIVE ALLYSHIP

Being an ally is more than just saying you support gender equality; it must also be actions to drive and support gender equity. It can be hard and uncomfortable work as it involves being willing to confront and regularly check-in on your own assumptions and biases. Keep working on being okay discomfort and keep trying and learning! We know gender equality will make our sports more inclusive and stronger, and we need everyone actively working towards this goal.

This research supports practical ideas and strategies about how men can be active allies for gender equality in sport – [Change Our Game | Men as Allies: supporting women and girls in community sport.](#)

Men who perpetrate violence against women in Australia are in the minority. However, many men hold sexist or violence-supportive attitudes, and many more do not actively challenge other men’s sexist behaviour. Men need to feel empowered to speak up for gender equality and call out other men’s harassment or disrespect towards women, gender diverse people and LGBTIQ+ people. When men don’t speak up, they contribute to creating and maintaining the social context that drives gender-based violence.⁴⁹

CASE STUDY

Men as Allies

Mildura Rural City Council's project, supported by the Victorian State Government's Preventing Violence Through Sport grants program, was run through the council's sport and recreation team. As the project leaders were primarily men, they ensured that they built in processes of accountability to ensure their work was informed by local women, girls, and gender diverse people.

This included:

- Running a regular project advisory group with a number of diverse women experts who also advised on how to take an intersectional approach
- Undertaking consultations, gender audits and member surveys at local clubs to understand women and girls' experiences, and what changes were needed for safer and more inclusive clubs
- Walking with a group of women and girls around the local sporting precinct and listening to their experiences of the space
- Learning about privilege and bias and building reflection processes into their work.

The Council's community development worker and a local gender equity consultant (both women) supported these processes. This short [Respect Victoria video](#) shows the Council's project workers, Thomas and James, talking about their reflections of what it means to be a man learning about gender equity and sport.

CASE STUDY

Talking about healthier masculinities with men and boys

The City of Whittlesea partnered with DPV Health and Whittlesea City Basketball Association to deliver *GE3*, a project aimed to challenge limiting stereotypes and create equal, safe and healthy basketball environments where everyone has the chance to thrive.

The project concentrated on involving men and boys in discussions about how gender stereotypes can adversely affect their health, relationships, and the wider community. It was grounded in the research conducted by Jesuit Social Services' Men's Project, which examines the consequences of strict adherence to gender stereotypes and its connection to violence against women. The responsibility for leading these discussions was given to The Men's Project and Tomorrow Man.

A crucial part of this initiative was the delivery of a three-part workshop series, facilitated by Sport and Life Training, targeting junior boys' representative basketball players (Under 16s, 18s, and 20s). The workshops aimed to progressively build awareness about stereotypes across three distinct themes: mental health, healthy masculinities, and equity. To gauge the impact of these sessions on the young men's attitudes and beliefs, participants were surveyed on their views regarding stereotypes before and after the workshops. The workshops were developed using the [Adolescent Man Box research](#) and focused on the 4 pillars of masculinity that adolescent boys consider their 'Man Box rules', that is constant efforts to be manly, emotional restrictive, heterosexist and engaging in social teasing.

The initial workshop, focused on mental health, was attended by 60 boys, along with several parents and coaches. Prior to the workshops, 56% of the Under-16 boys subscribed to the gendered stereotype that 'a guy should keep his fears to himself' but this figure significantly decreased afterwards with only 22% continuing to endorse this harmful belief. Among the Under-18/20-year-olds, 28% initially agreed with the stereotype 'a guy should always appear strong', but after the workshops not a single participant maintained this viewpoint.

This one-hour session played a pivotal role in demonstrating that conversations can significantly reduce the pressure young men feel to conform to detrimental gendered stereotypes, such as the need to always appear stoic and strong or to suppress their emotions. Challenging these stereotypes not only alters the perceived pressure but also paves the way for increased help-seeking behaviours among young men. These results show the importance of engaging men and boys in conversations around gender norms, a key action in challenging the gendered drivers of violence towards women.



CASE STUDY

Healthy relationships for men

With expertise in both working with men and in primary prevention initiatives, Relationships Australia Victoria adapted their existing work to a sport setting by engaging sport partners where men and boys were strongly represented, such as the Victorian Amateur Football Association, NRL Victoria and Tennis Victoria. This work supported individual clubs and associations to develop their own gender equity action plans.

The organisation also delivered club workshops with content similar to that delivered through Respectful Relationships Education in Victorian schools. The workshops focussed on healthy relationships with people and places, unhealthy relationships via power and privilege, playing a role in gender equity, identifying strengths, building emotional intelligence, coping with stress and challenges, looking out for others, seeking help and exploring further resources.



Learn more about healthy masculinities and engaging men and boys in gender equity work:

- VicHealth provides some [Key Principles and Recommendations for Healthy Masculinities Programs](#).
- Our Watch's [Men in Focus](#) resources are designed to support people to work with men in the prevention of men's violence against women. Our Watch also provides some [guiding principles for engaging effectively with men](#) including being intersectional, strengths based and looking for solutions across all levels of society.
- The [Man Box 2024 report](#) details to what extent Australian men perceive social messages that a "real man" thinks and acts a certain way, whether men personally agree with these messages, and also explores whether men's attitudes predict a range of behaviours and life outcomes.
- Being intentional in allyship work is crucial, both for engaging men in a way that creates impact and to ensure accountability to those most impacted by inequality and gender-based violence. [Working together with men: how to create male allies for gender equity in your community](#) and [Working together with men 2.0](#) provide a clear model and inspiration on how to co-create projects for change, including voices and tips from those who have attempted to do this work together.

7. Develop and implement appropriate responses to instances of disrespect and violence towards women and gender diverse people

Sport is a setting to both prevent and respond to instances of gender-based violence.

Sport organisations have a responsibility to protect employees and participants from gender-based violence. They can do this by ensuring they have policies and procedures to address instances of violence and disrespect and ensure people who experience violence and discrimination (both within and outside of the club setting) receive appropriate support.

While sport may set standards for behaviour, sport organisations have a legal responsibility to address behaviour that offends community standards or is against the law for example, racial vilification, sexual harassment, common assault. This includes meeting legislative requirements such as the Victorian [Child Safety Standards](#).

“Sporting clubs need to be supported so that they know how to respond when they become aware that someone is experiencing family violence or being abusive towards their family members”

Victoria’s Royal Commission into Family Violence 2016

Australia now has a consistent set of policies across all sport. The [National Integrity Framework](#) provides a set of rules that all members of a sport need to follow when it comes to their behaviour and conduct in sport. These policies are best practice and a consistent approach to protecting against integrity threats in sport and outline what types of behaviour are unacceptable in sport.

Sport organisations at all levels should adopt a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate, disrespectful, or aggressive behaviours, no matter where they occur. Community clubs need to be supported to understand and implement this approach and have clear processes for dealing with breaches of the policies and codes of conduct.

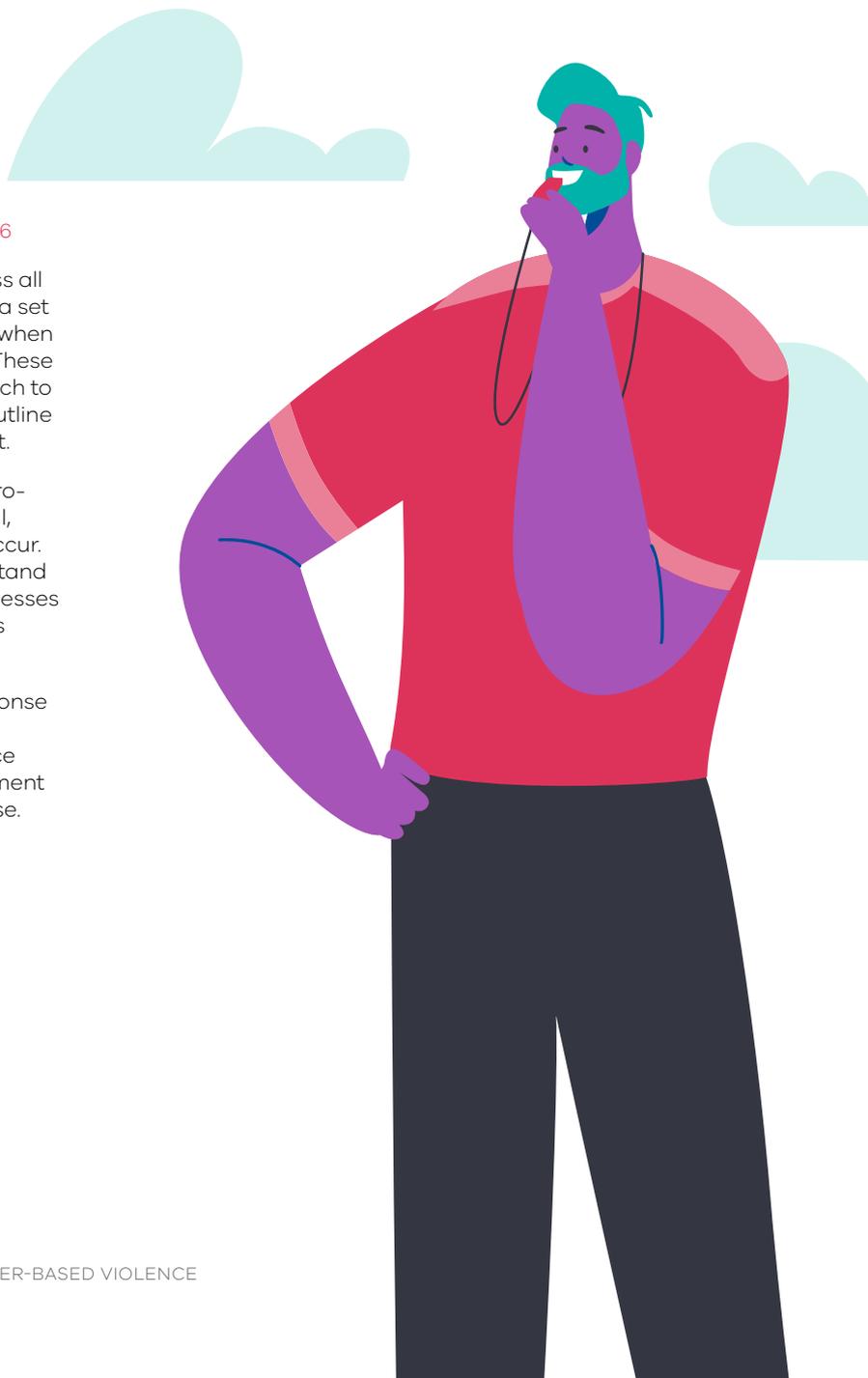
Partnering with organisations such as a local response service e.g., the Centre Against Sexual Assault or The Orange Door, and other gender-based violence advocacy organisations can assist in the development of policies, processes, and training around response.

Sport should develop policies and processes to address gender-based violence and implement them consistently.

Responding to disclosures

When we start to discuss gender-based violence within sport, there is a possibility that someone may disclose that they have experienced violence, witnessed violence, or are using violence themselves. It is important that organisational staff and club leaders feel confident to respond respectfully and safely when they identify instances of violence or receive disclosures of violence.

It is important that individuals are connected to the support system through referral to local family violence and sexual assault services. If there has been a disclosure of someone using violence, they can be linked to the perpetrator intervention services.



SUPPORT SERVICES

Staff and members of the sporting community should be made aware of support and referral services they can access and refer others to. These include:

- **1800 RESPECT** for sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling.
- **Safe Steps** (1800 015 188) – Victoria’s 24/7 family violence response centre for confidential crisis support, information and accommodation.
- **The Orange Door** provides help and support for family violence, as well as to families in need of support with the wellbeing and development of children.
- **Men’s Referral Service** (1300 766 491) – the national counselling, information and referral service for men looking to change their behaviour.
- **Rainbow Door** (1800 729 367) – specialist LGBTIQ+ helpline providing information, support, and referral to all LGBTIQ+ Victorians, their friends and family.
- **InTouch** (1800 755 988) – provides services, programs and responses to family violence in migrant and refugee communities.
- **Djirra** (1800 105 303) – counselling service for Aboriginal people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence.

CASE STUDY

Working with experts to respond to instances of gender-based violence

La Trobe University partnered with the Regional Sports Assemblies, Sports Focus and Leisure Networks, to understand how regional sports could be supported to respond to gender-based violence. La Trobe University also formed an expert specialist advisory panel with representation from Safe & Equal, No to Violence, and Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria.

In 2023, La Trobe University ran a community consultation with local Bendigo sports. The participating sport volunteers said that they wanted to improve the culture and practices of their sports to prevent and address gender-based violence but didn’t feel their sport was equipped to either recognise an incidence of gender-based violence nor respond appropriately following a disclosure of such violence.

Working with an evidenced-based approach and informed by the feedback, La Trobe University led a working group to develop resources to aid awareness and recognition of forms of gender-based violence alongside simple options for appropriate responses at the individual and club levels.

Sport organisations can work with expert partners to develop policies to respond to instances of gender-based violence. For example,

- Collingwood Basketball association were supported by a gender equity expert, to develop a response protocol.
- Whittlesea City Basketball Association were supported by the City of Whittlesea and DPV Health to develop their Family Violence Disclosure Policy and Response Protocols.
- GenWest developed a Champions of the West short booklet for western region football and netball clubs, particularly aimed at young people, that included guidance on responding to disclosures.

Training on responding to disclosures can also be provided to clubs and sport organisations.

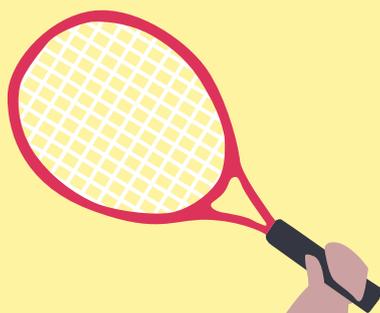


CASE STUDY

Building volunteer's ability to respond safely to disclosures of violence

The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre (the SAFV Centre) developed and delivered a pilot training program, responding to disclosures, as part of their project, *Respect Start Here: Leaders on and off the Field*. Delivered to leaders and members of Ocean Grove Football Netball Club, training focused on building participants' understanding of the forms of violence, gendered drivers of violence and principles of responding to disclosures. It provided information on referral pathways to sexual and family violence support services and supported key club members to develop the skills to stand up against disrespectful behaviors and attitudes, and appropriately respond to disclosures.

As a result, the club incorporated new actions to their gender equity action plan including establishing a wellbeing pillar within the club committee structure, and creating accessible and confidential reporting pathways for members who have experienced inappropriate or disrespectful behaviors. The club also introduced a new position, Culture and Welfare Director, to support players, coaches and members. This position was supported by the Child Safety Officer and a Wellbeing Officer – another new position created because of this work.



Learn more about responding to instances of gender-based violence:

- The Our Watch [Responding to Disclosures](#) document has a number of useful tips and directions for how to respond. There are also specific training packages to upskill staff in recognising and responding to disclosures (see Safe and Equal's [Responding to Disclosures in Prevention](#) training and [Responding to Disclosures](#) training).
- The [Tackling violence against women and girls in sport: A handbook for policy makers and sports practitioners](#) provides practical tools for addressing and responding to gender-based violence. Developed by UN Women, UNESCO and the Spotlight Initiative, it provides an in-depth analysis on what gender-based violence in sport looks like as well as policy responses.
- The [Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework](#) (MARAM) states that professionals across a broad range of services, organisations, professions and sectors have a shared responsibility for identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk, even where it may not be core business. There are a range of [training options](#) for staff to learn more about the MARAM framework and how to apply it in their organisation.

8. Expect and prepare for resistance

There will be many people who support efforts to promote and normalise gender equality, however, some people will be resistant to change.

Resistance here is defined as an active or passive pushing back against progressive programs, policies and perspectives. It may come from individuals or collectively, and from people of all genders. Keep in mind that values and attitudes about gender roles do not split neatly down gender lines.

Resistance to gender equity and prevention of gender-based violence initiatives can come in many forms such as:

- **Denial** – denial of the problem or the credibility of the case for change.
- **Disavowal** – refusal to accept responsibility to address the problem, the gendered drivers of violence or participate in the change process to address them.
- **Inaction** – refusing to prioritise and take action for gender equality.
- **Appeasement** – agreeing to take action to appease people, but not acting.
- **Appropriation** – stimulating change while covertly undermining it.
- **Co-option** – using the language of progressive frameworks and goals for reactionary means.
- **Repression** – reversing or dismantling a change initiative once implementation has begun.
- **Backlash** – a range of deliberate and aggressive behaviours, discourses, practices and structures that undermine primary prevention efforts and gender equality goals.⁵⁰

Backlash against LGBTIQ+ social progress in community sport is also increasingly common, particularly for trans and gender diverse communities. This causes significant harm to LGBTIQ+ communities and reinforces harmful rigid gender stereotypes for everyone⁵¹.

It is likely that people who are resistant to change will be present in the sport or club you're working with, or in your workplace. Rather than allowing the resistance, experts suggest the following ways of addressing it:

- Prepare for resistance early and practise how to respond with your colleagues
- Use positive language when talking about change, focusing on potential gains rather than possible losses
- Share stories about examples of cultural change programs in sport that are working well and highlight role models. For example, elite sports people who stand up for gender equity, inclusion and preventing gender-based violence
- Understand that cultural change is a long-term goal and you don't need to convince everyone at once. Some people will take longer to understand the need and benefits of gender equity. Create spaces where these discussions can occur, and people can share their reservations. Once you understand people's motivations or reservations, it will be easier to address them
- Don't focus on those whose opposition to gender equality is entrenched, at the expense of the broader club or sporting community. Instead, work with people already committed to the cause to support those in the 'moveable middle'. The 'moveable middle' are those people who are unconvinced or curious but open to learning about the benefits of gender equality, and whose thinking and actions may be moved. This principle is relevant for individuals and community clubs when deciding which clubs to work with. Work with the strongest clubs first and use them as examples with the 'moveable middle'.

Not everyone in your sport may be ready for change but it is possible to bring people along with you. You can do this by creating an environment where ideas can be discussed, and knowledge and information shared respectfully. Having a strong case for change, a 'key messages' document and whole-of-staff training will assist with resistance. While resistance is challenging, don't give up! The hard conversations can be a space for change.

If you encounter resistance and are unsure how to cope or deal with it, you can contact your local **women's health service**. Experts in these organisations can assist you to develop possible ways to tackle resistance.



CASE STUDY

Plan for resistance

The Victorian State Government's Preventing Violence Through Sport grants program 12 project leads and their partner organisations attended a one-day [Unpacking Resistance](#) training run by specialist family violence organisation, Safe and Equal.

The training explored types of resistance (from denial to backlash), looked at why some people might resist gender equity work, and provided strategies and skills to respond to resistance when it arises.

Some of the attendees incorporated discussions of resistance and backlash into their projects. For example, City of Whittlesea initiated open conversations with staff regarding resistance and strategies for addressing it. By adopting VicHealth's model of resistance, the staff pinpointed, categorised, and tracked instances of resistance throughout the project. This approach enabled a comprehensive review of the project and council's previous gender equity work in sport settings, understanding resistance as an ongoing and collective experience rather than as one-off isolated events. The project staff will consider this resistance and their strategies to address it in their evaluation and these insights will guide the development of a strategic whole-of-council approach to managing resistance in future gender equity work.

In planning for possible resistance from sporting clubs in their project, GenWest considered their communications and messaging from the beginning. The organisation prepared a clear case for change, a key expectations and messages document and trained former Western Bulldogs AFLM player Tom Boyd as an ambassador for the work. A local artist was employed to develop posters about gender equity to be placed around clubs, and [a small booklet](#) explaining the work was created for young people.



Learn more about managing backlash and resistance when working on gender equality initiatives:

- VicHealth's [\(En\)countering resistance Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives](#) resource draws together some effective tools and strategies to prepare for and respond to backlash and resistance to gender equity initiatives. It is intended to support the people working for gender equality in a range of sectors including education, sport, workplace, local government, health and media.
- Safe and Equal's [Overcoming Resistance and Backlash](#) resource provides tips on effective strategies to overcome resistance and other more extreme forms of backlash.

9. Share knowledge and learn from experts and peers

There are a large number of people working in Victoria with expertise in gender equality and sport.

There is a great opportunity to strengthen your work by seeking support and advice from such experts, understanding the latest research, and learning from peers. Remember this work does not need to be done alone.

Communities of practice can be an excellent way of sharing knowledge and learning from each other. A community of practice is a group of people with a common interest coming together to share ideas and strategies. These groups can be formal or informal. It might be a formal group of people working on similar projects who meet monthly with a facilitator. Alternatively, a community of practice could be an informal group of project workers who meet when needed to workshop challenges or ideas. Clubs and program participants also benefit from being involved in communities of practice and learning from each other.

Workplaces, schools, and community groups are also working towards the same goal of gender equality and there are opportunities to learn from them. Specialist family violence service, Safe and Equal run regular [communities of practice](#) and events through their [Partners in Prevention network](#), and the Municipal Association of Victoria's regular Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence Against Women newsletter provides useful updates or events and resources.

Look for opportunities to share your evaluation findings with peers. It's important we keep learning from each other about what does and doesn't work.

CASE STUDY

Learning together – Men as allies for gender equality in sport

We know men play an important role in making sport inclusive for people of all genders. They also play an important role in the prevention of gender-based violence.

In June 2023, SRV ran an interactive session to give sport and their partners the opportunity to learn more about how men can be allies and leaders for gender equality in sport. The session unpacked how to co-create safer sporting communities for people of all genders and facilitated connections of others working to do the same.

The event combined a panel discussion and presentations that explored how sport settings can challenge beliefs that men must be dominant, controlling and aggressive, and actions men and boys can take for sport to be safe and inclusive for all genders. It facilitated networking opportunities for people to share and create new partnerships and provided recommendations for policy makers and sport practitioners to keep momentum on conversations and actions.

The event attracted attendees from SSAs, NSOs, Regional Sports Assemblies, Local councils, Women's Health and Community Health Organisations, Universities, State Government, and other advocacy and inclusion organisations.

The 21 speakers and facilitators led discussions on active allyship, masculinity and homophobia, intersectionality, men as allies in the prevention of gender-based violence, the rules of [The Man Box](#), systematic gender inequality, and programs and models for working with men as active allies.

Attendees shared ideas for practical actions and strategies to engage men and boys as active allies for gender equity. Evaluation data showed attendees valued opportunities to network, collaborate and found sharing case studies crucial for further learning.



10. Celebrate Successes

Although the work never ends, it's important to recognise each step towards a better and violence free future. Make sure you celebrate your successes, no matter how big or small!

When you have achieved a goal, noticed positive changes or received external recognition for your work, share that with club members and the wider community. Use your organisations or the club's website or social media pages to write a short story about your work or upload a handy resource. Sharing your successes will not only highlight your organisation's work, but it will enhance the sports or club's profile, showcase its strengths and provide ideas and inspiration for others.

Actively promote participation in local or global initiatives that promote gender equality and the prevention of gendered violence. Support clubs to consider hosting forums or celebration dinners to mark events such as the development of gender equity action plans. Develop short case studies of your work and send it to broader networks and media outlets such as the [Clearinghouse for Sport](#). This is a great way to share and support others to learn from your work.

CASE STUDY

Sharing the Orange Round success

GippSport's Orange Round project encouraged Gippsland sporting clubs to raise awareness and take a stand against gender-based violence, sexual assault, and family violence. Working in partnership with Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (GCASA) and Gippsland Women's Health (GWH), GippSport invited junior and senior clubs to take part in a Summer and Winter Orange Round.

Clubs who committed to an Orange Round were supported across 3 components:

- an online session for club committee members to gain leadership buy in
- a face-to-face education session for players and members to make the link between gender equity and gender-based violence, and
- an orange themed playing round to raise community awareness and demonstrate the club's commitment to preventing gender-based violence.

GippSport set a dedicated project goal to share successes and positive messaging about the progress of gender equity and how it benefits the whole community. It developed a social media campaign promoting the Orange Rounds, featuring the global campaign, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, and celebrating International Women's Day. GippSport presented their work at communities of practice across Victoria, and shared good news stories on its website and monthly newsletter, including their [Orange Round Ambassador](#) profiles.

The Orange Rounds were supported with orange-themed merchandise such as arm bands, goal post covers, bibs, signage and information stands. More than 4,000 Gippslanders participated in the Winter Orange Round across 15 clubs and 5 sports.



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