

Together For Equality and Respect Strategy 2025-2029

Preventing Gender-based Violence in Melbourne's East




Women's Health East and the Together For Equality and Respect partnership acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We affirm that sovereignty was never ceded, and that colonialism and racism continue to impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and can contribute to the high rates of violence that might be experienced. We recognise the strength, resilience and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and communities and express our hope for reconciliation.

Acknowledgements

Women's Health East would like to recognise and thank:

- The many people with lived experience of discrimination and violence who, through their tireless activism, lead and inspire social change. We honour the women whose voices we do not hear because their lives have been taken through violence.
- Partners of the Together For Equality and Respect partnership and the Executive Governance Group for their leadership, commitment and dedication to the partnership and this work.
- The support of the Victorian Government.

 An electronic version of this publication can be found at: www.whe.org.au/tfer

For further information, please contact us at health@whe.org.au

Suggested citation

Women's Health East 2025, Together For Equality and Respect Strategy 2025-2029: Preventing gender-based violence in Melbourne's east, Women's Health East, Melbourne.



Introduction

The Together For Equality and Respect (TFER) partnership is a cross-sector collaboration of organisations working together to advance gender equality and prevent gender-based violence. Since 2012, we have collaboratively worked in Melbourne's east, a region that is home to around 23% of Victoria's population¹. In 2025, TFER includes 34 partner organisations - local councils, community health services, specialist and community organisations – providing services and programs to diverse communities who live, work, play and learn in Melbourne's east.

TFER has a long history of innovative primary prevention work and a strong reputation for guiding evidence-informed practice tailored to communities in Melbourne's east.

This strategy is guided by evidence and frameworks about the primary prevention of gender-based violence, systems change, partnership practice and place-based approaches. Important policy and environmental changes occurred during the previous strategic period 2021-2025 and continue to influence our work. These include:

- an expanded range of national evidence-based primary prevention of gender-based violence frameworks and related resources. These include: *Change the story* (second edition, 2021), *Changing the landscape* (2022) and *Pride in Prevention* (2021)².
- Leadership from Respect Victoria and Safe and Equal in prevention workforce development and training, prevention campaigns and resources.
- The introduction of the Gender Equality Act 2020 in Victoria resulting in increased efforts by defined entities - including councils, public sector organisations and universities - towards greater gender equality in their workplaces
- The Respect Ballarat model, an Australian-first initiative, brings a new level of resourcing to a whole of community approach that builds on the strengths of existing primary prevention place-based and partnership work.

We find ourselves in a critical moment as a partnership and the role we must play. Preventing gender-based violence and advancing gender equality are deeply connected. Shockingly, nearly one woman is killed by family violence every fortnight in Victoria³ and nearly 1 in 4 women have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15. Even more alarmingly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disabilities, refugee and migrant women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community – experience higher rates still.⁴ The impacts on victim-survivors, children and families, workplaces and communities continue to be far reaching and significant.

To achieve our vision and prevent violence before it starts, we must strengthen our partnership, relationships and collaborative work. This strategy highlights our role in advocating for primary prevention and the value of place-based partnerships to achieve meaningful change.

This strategy is informed by consultations with members of the partnership held between February and July 2025. Women's Health East thanks all partners for their immense contributions, insights and continued commitment as we seek to realise a world that is truly free from violence, for everyone.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) and ABS Estimated Resident Population (2024) from .idcommunity. Accessed from: <https://profile.id.com.au/>
- Our Watch (2021), *Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention for violence against women in Australia* (second edition); Our Watch & Women with Disabilities Victoria (2022), *Changing the landscape: A national resource to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities*; Rainbow Health Australia (2021), *Pride in Prevention Messaging Guide: A guide for communications and engagement to support primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities*.
- Victoria State Government, Victorian Budget 2025/26, Gender Equality Budget Statement, p 16
- Safe and Equal (2023), *Fast Facts on Family and Gender-based Violence*.

Our vision

Melbourne's east is equal, safe and respectful: a place where everyone can thrive, free from violence and discrimination. Everyone takes action to ensure women, girls and gender-diverse people have equal status, rights, opportunities and representation.

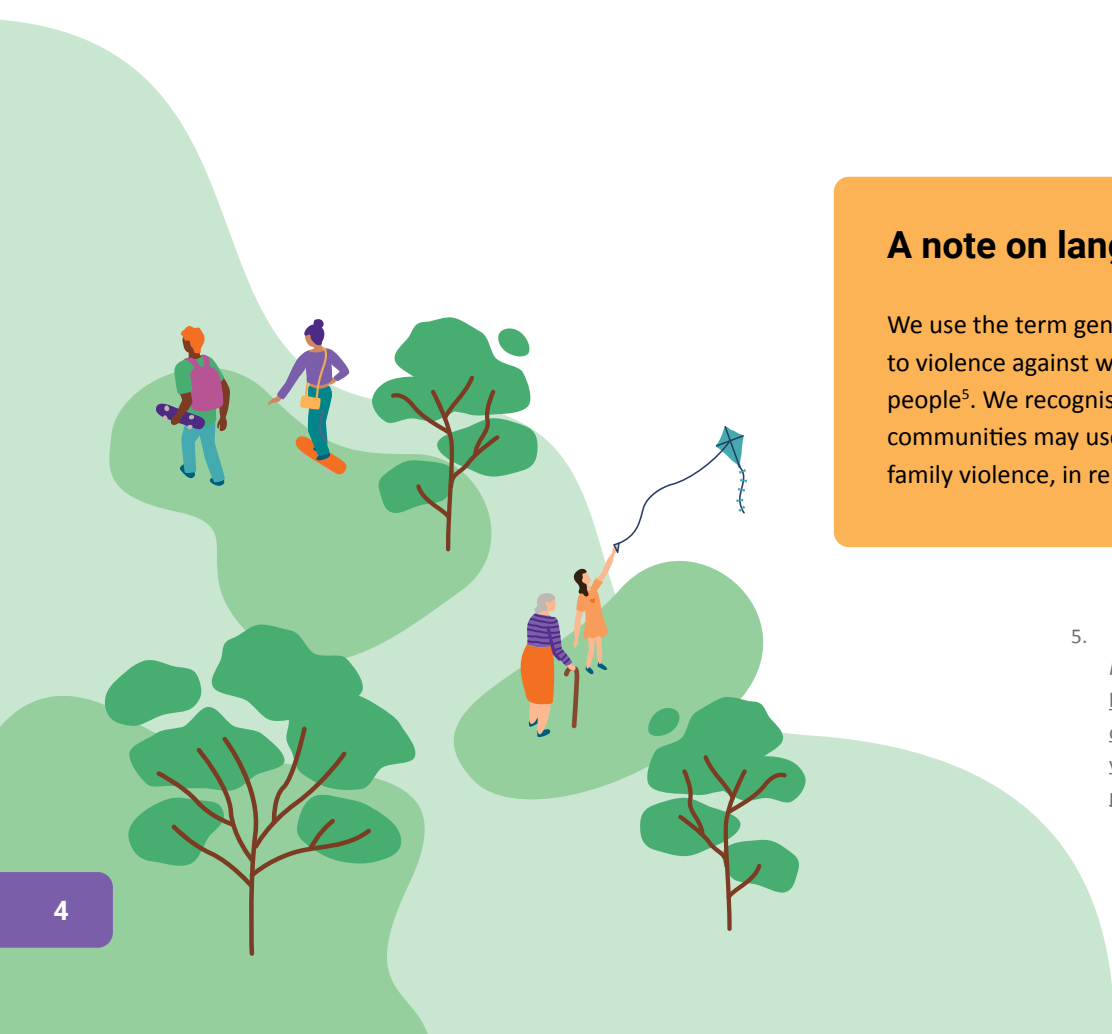
Our purpose

We collaborate across Melbourne's east to influence and improve systems that advance gender equality and prevent gender-based violence where we live, work, learn and play.

A note on language

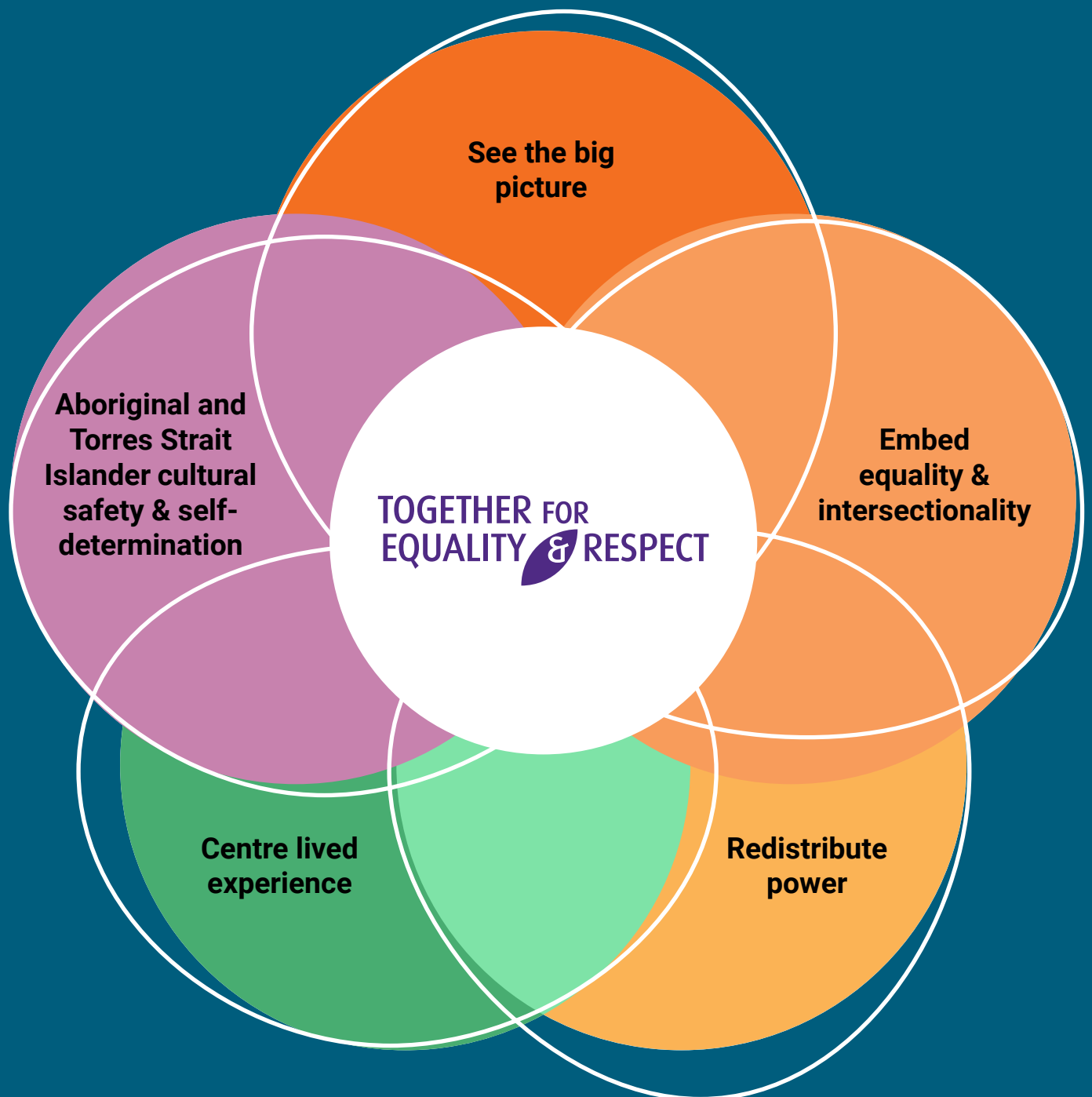
We use the term gender-based violence to refer to violence against women and gender diverse people⁵. We recognise that some partners and communities may use other terms, including family violence, in relation to primary prevention.

5. Rainbow Health Victoria, *Pride in Prevention: Messaging Guide*, 2021, https://www.rainbowhealthvic.org.au/content/2_queer-family-violence-sector-network/prideinpreventionmessagingguide.pdf.



Our Partnership Principles

We are guided by and hold ourselves accountable to these five principles in both our partnership and our work.





See the big picture

This principle requires us to hold complexity and remain focused on making long-term change. It involves identifying strategic leverage points for interventions and adjusting to changes in the larger context, in the people and groups involved, and in our own way of working. We need to be brave in our aspirations and plan for resistance and backlash, while working together strategically to contribute to long term change.

We commit to being responsive to context, learning as we go and testing new ways of working. We will do things differently to support the changes we want to see. We will trial small-scale changes and use what we learn to guide our next steps.

Embed equality and intersectionality

We work to advance gender equality while recognising how other forms of systemic discrimination — including colonialism, racism, ableism, ageism, homophobia and transphobia — intersect and compound inequality. An intersectional approach ensures our work centres equality and engages respectfully with communities of diverse religions, faiths, languages and cultures in the Melbourne's east.

Redistribute power

Inequality is maintained through structural imbalances in power. In our partnering and in our gender equality and primary prevention work, it is important to explicitly consider who holds power and privilege, surface assumptions and consciously shift decision-making and resources across all levels of the partnership and in the community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety and self-determination

We recognise the intergenerational trauma and ongoing impacts of colonisation and systemic racism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Family violence prevention and response work must be led by and be accountable to First Nations communities. We commit to listening and supporting cultural safety, self-determination and leadership of Aboriginal organisations and communities, and aligning our work with the Eastern Regional Dhelk Dja Action Group.


Centre lived experience

We deeply respect the expertise that comes from lived experience. We commit to elevating these voices to determine priorities, policies and practices within the partnership. We will learn from lived experience advocates, promoting their leadership in the work to prevent gender-based violence.

Our Strategic Priorities


1

Investing in
our partnership



2

Making gender equality &
preventing gender-based
violence everyone's business



3

Learning &
innovation



Investing in our partnership

Why this is important:





Gender equality and preventing gender-based violence are complex social issues that require coordinated efforts to make changes across communities, structures and systems. Long-term population-level prevention work is only possible when we work together.

Partnerships are dynamic requiring focus in how organisations work together, not only what they do together. Partnership is the foundation of the work we do in TFER. The partnership values the breadth of members and their immense contributions; leading with integrity and fostering collaboration.








Investing in our partnership as a priority will support us to increase trust, commitment and grow the diversity of experiences and expertise.

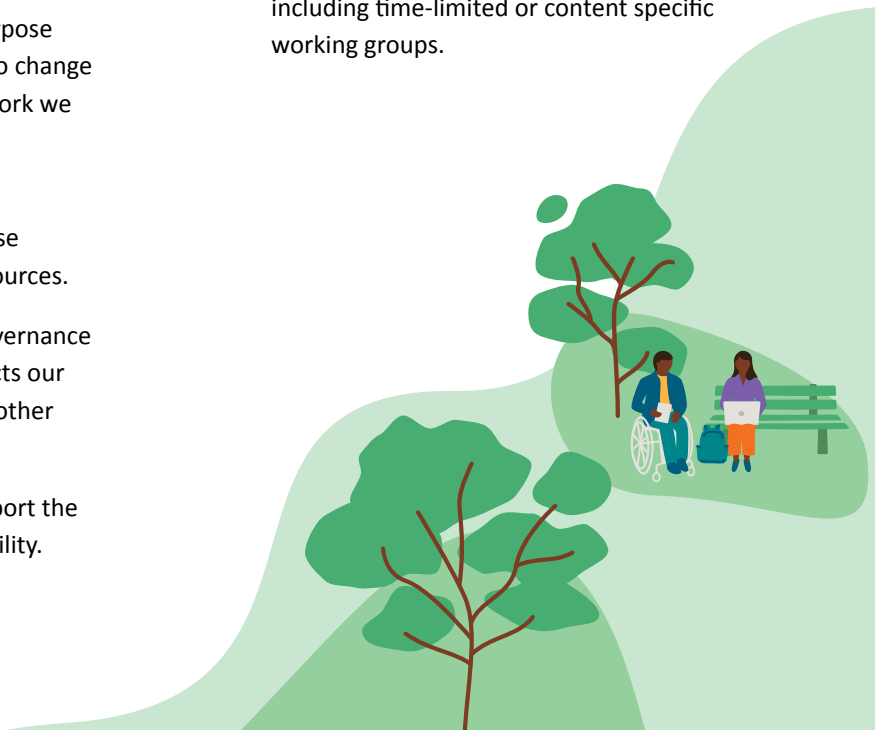
We recognise the ongoing importance of TFER champions: staff who are connectors and enablers in the partnership and demonstrate strong personal commitment. We value their expertise and encourage wide staff engagement from different roles and levels in member organisations, extending the reach and strong connections of the partnership.

We will achieve this by:

-  Enhancing a visible, valued and fit-for-purpose partnership that is inclusive, responsive to change and enables and sustains the collective work we do.
-  Ensuring that members are engaged and contribute in ways that reflect their diverse strengths, experience, capacities and resources.
-  Delivering a transparent and inclusive governance structure that is fit-for-purpose and reflects our principles, including working groups and other shared decision-making mechanisms.
-  Undertaking reflection and action to support the partnership's health, trust and accountability.

We know we are successful when:

-  There are strong, trusting and meaningful relationships within and among member organisations whose contributions are valued.
-  Other organisations are invited in and our connections are shared within -and beyond- the partnership.
-  Membership expectations, commitments and shared accountabilities are reviewed and updated.
-  Women's Health East brings leadership, coordination and technical expertise, balancing its dual role as member and backbone organisation with transparency.
-  There are spaces for diverse members – including associate members and smaller organisations - to engage with and contribute to the partnership.
-  Senior leaders in TFER member organisations create enabling environments for the partnership and its work.
-  Champions in TFER organisations in practitioner and manager roles are active and engaged, including time-limited or content specific working groups.



Making gender equality and preventing gender-based violence everyone's business

Why this is important:

Preventing gender-based violence and advancing gender equality are deeply connected.

One of the TFER's strengths is that partners work across the gender-based violence continuum; from primary prevention to early intervention, response and recovery. We will harness opportunities to build the connections and collaboration across this continuum, to strengthen our impact. We will build on TFER's strong reputation to amplify our influence in the region and beyond.

As systems thinkers and leaders driving community outcomes, we aim to transform the systems, structures and practices that drive inequality. In this strategy there is increased attention to partners working collaboratively to ensure these benefits are realised.

We will achieve this by:

- Increasing visibility and action on gaps in violence prevention (e.g. sexual assault, elder abuse, violence against trans women, in disaster preparedness and response) and seeking opportunities to integrate primary prevention work in response and recovery activities.
- Meaningfully collaborate to create, plan and deliver joint initiatives and collective efforts.
- Embedding approaches to address intersectional discrimination and structural inequalities including racism.
- Ensuring that TFER member staff and communities understand that everyone has a role to play in preventing gender-based violence.
- Building momentum to keep our work moving forward, celebrating along the way and holding the long-term vision and timeframes needed.

- Uniting our efforts across the region to learn and innovate beyond usual ways of doing things.
- Reviewing and improving systems, structures, policies, programs and services to embed gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence.

We know we are successful when:

- Partners are engaged in whole-of-organisation efforts to address the drivers of violence across the workforce.
- Partners see the results of building the capability and confidence of all staff to communicate and act to address the drivers of violence in their community-facing work and services.
- Partners share diverse and complementary resources (e.g. specialist expertise, in-kind support, funding, connections and links to communities and wider networks) that enable us to do more together – what no one of us could do alone.
- Partners recognise the importance of and act on lived experience expertise.
- We work with community champions, advocates and changemakers, in community-led prevention work in multicultural and refugee communities, First Nations communities, LGBTIQ+ communities and people with disabilities.
- There are diverse cohorts of committed, confident and capable men as active partners in prevention.
- We work in ways that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultural safety in our workplaces and services, learn from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and support the self-determination and leadership of communities in Melbourne's east.

Learning & innovation

Why this is important:

Preventing gender-based violence is complex and changes in practices, norms and structures take time. Our progress will be accelerated by openly sharing experiences about how we apply evidence-based frameworks in practice, sharing our successes and learning from our failures. We can expand what we think is possible by developing different ways of collaborating. This is essential to ensure our aspirational vision can become a reality.

Peer reflection and support will help us to advance our work strategically in Melbourne’s east. This involves working together to develop monitoring and evaluation processes that are developmental in nature and centre our learning. This will enable us to adjust and develop our work as we go, monitoring for early indications of change or progress. These approaches complement existing organisational monitoring, evaluating and reporting processes.

We will achieve this by:

- Creating a culture of critical reflection, evidence-informed practice and shared learning that enables us to experiment, innovate and do things differently.

We know we are successful when:

- We share our experiences, our successes and challenges, and reflect on the quality of our work to inform ongoing reflection, learning and application of learnings in practice.
- We effectively support lived experience experts and allies to advance gender equality and preventing gender-based violence.

- There is an increase in the cultural competence of the non-Aboriginal workforce to embed practices and processes that respect and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge. This includes aligning with *Dhelk Dja Safe Our Way* agreements and action plans.
- We review and monitor our effectiveness in achieving change.
- We highlight, celebrate and connect the work of primary prevention champions in our workforces and communities.

Strategy monitoring

Each year we will design, implement and evaluate actions including:

- actions we each do in prevention.
- actions we do together in prevention.
- actions that strengthen the partnership.

TFER is deeply committed to the successful delivery of this strategy, involving partner organisations across all levels. Annual Action Plans will be designed to maximise collaboration, progress and achievement of TFER strategic priorities.

The TFER Executive Governance Group oversees the monitoring and implementation of this strategy.

Together For Equality and Respect partners

In October 2025, we are 34 partners across two levels of membership.

Implementing partners

- Access Health and Community
- Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service
- City of Boroondara
- City of Monash
- Department of Education and Training
- Eastern Community Legal Centre
- Eastern Health
- FVREE
- healthAbility
- Knox City Council
- Manningham City Council
- Maroondah City Council
- Whitehorse City Council
- Women's Health East
- Yarra Ranges Council

Associate partners

- AusWISE
- CHAOS (Community Houses Association of the Outer East)
- Doncare
- EACH
- IndianCare
- Jesuit Social Services
- Knox Infolink
- Migrant Information Centre (MIC) - Eastern Melbourne
- Network of Inner Eastern Community Houses (NIECH)
- North Eastern Public Health Unit (NEPHU)
- Regional Family Violence Partnership (RFVP) - Eastern Metropolitan Region
- Relationships Australia (Victoria)
- The Orange Door – Inner East
- The Orange Door – Outer East
- Temple Society Australia
- Whitehorse Manningham Libraries
- Yarra Valley Water
- Your Library
- Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)



Women's Health East acknowledges the support of the Victorian government.



TOGETHER FOR
EQUALITY & RESPECT