

# Voices for Change:

**A Media Advocacy Program  
for the Prevention  
of Violence  
Against Women**

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## Acknowledgements

*Voices for Change: A Media Advocacy Program for the Prevention of Violence Against Women* builds on the pioneering work of safe steps (formerly Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service), Women's Health East and the Centre for Non-Violence.

We thank all of the women who freely shared their ideas, knowledge, skills and resources. Their contributions - whether as participants, workers or trainers of these programs - have informed the contents of *Voices for Change*.

Their hard work, dedication and courage to speak up will empower more organisations and women across Australia to become advocates to prevent violence against women.

The *Voices for Change Implementation Guide* and *Voices for Change Training Manual* were produced by Women's Health East with generous and valuable contributions from:

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# A message from Natasha Stott Despoja, the Our Watch Chair

Natasha Stott Despoja

Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls  
Our Watch Chair



## **The media has a critical role in changing community attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence against women.**

How issues are reported can either reinforce the old stereotypes that justify, excuse, downplay or hide violence against women, or open up the nation's eyes to what is really going on behind closed doors and what we can do to prevent it.

The advocacy of Rosie Batty, named Australian of the Year in 2015, has been a shining example of how to raise community awareness and build momentum for change. Now that the media spotlight is focused on violence against women as a national priority, we must not let it trail away.

The challenge ahead is enormous and generational. The National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey released in September 2014 shows that nearly 80% of people find it hard to understand why women stay in violent relationships, and 51% think most women could leave if they really wanted to.

If we want the media to tell the whole story of violence against women – that it is preventable – then the voices of women who have experienced violence are key.

We need to shift the national conversation from one that condones, excuses and trivialises violence against women and their children, to a community-wide message of respect and non-violence.

Journalists at a local, regional, state and national level are increasingly seeking out women to tell their powerful stories, secure in the knowledge that the women will be safe and supported in the process. Media Advocacy Programs are a way of doing just that: supporting women in their journey of recovery and becoming powerful advocates to stop the violence.

Through the effective use of Media Advocacy Programs we can help eradicate the culture of silence that keeps intimate partner violence in the private realm instead of framing it as the result of widespread gender inequality.

Please join Our Watch and our partners in this important work. Only by working together can we change the culture that leads to one Australian woman every week being killed by a current or former partner.

The violence must stop – and it must stop with our generation.

**Natasha Stott Despoja**

# About Voices for Change:

***Voices for Change: A Media Advocacy Program for the Prevention of Violence Against Women* provides organisations with a step-by-step guide and the resources to plan and develop their own Media Advocacy Program with one unequivocal goal: to end violence against women.**

Women who have experienced family violence live in every community, suburb and town – and we need their voices to be heard to help end the cycle of violence.

Media Advocacy Programs enable women who have experienced violence to share their stories in the media and through other advocacy opportunities, such as speaking at public events, meeting with politicians or providing input into consultations and policies. Media Advocacy Programs support women in their journey of recovery while informing public discussion on violence against women and its prevention. Importantly, they can help reframe reporting of violence against women from isolated events to a community-wide issue that is preventable.

The *Voices for Change Implementation Guide* shares the practical experience of organisations in Australia that have pioneered media advocacy work (see case studies in [Section 2.2.1](#)). It outlines how to establish a Media Advocacy Program that can be shaped to your organisation, with women from different backgrounds and with different experiences of violence.

A companion resource is the *Voices for Change Facilitator Training Manual* on how to run media advocacy training sessions with women who have experienced family violence or sexual assault. It includes practical tools and resources that can be used as a part of the training sessions.



## About Our Watch

Our Watch has been established to drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that underpin and create violence against women and children.

- Our vision is an Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence.
- Our mandate is to stop violence before it happens.
- Our purpose is to provide national leadership to prevent all forms of violence against women and their children.
- Our work will always be based on sound research and strong and diverse partnerships.

Our Watch received funding from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to develop and implement the National Media Engagement Project, which includes Voices for Change. See Section 2.1 for more information on the project. The project is being developed as an initiative under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022.<sup>1</sup>

## About VicHealth

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) is a pioneer in health promotion – the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health. Over the last 10 years VicHealth has invested in research, training and programs to prevent violence against women before it occurs. VicHealth research shows that violence is more damaging to the health of Victorian women aged 15–44 years than any other preventable risk factors, including high blood pressure, obesity and smoking.

As part of the VicHealth Action Agenda 2013–2023, VicHealth's work to prevent violence against women has entered the integration phase. Building on almost a decade of investment in program activity in workplaces, local government, sports and other settings, VicHealth is working with a range of partners and stakeholders to transfer knowledge and resources in prevention.

## About Women's Health East

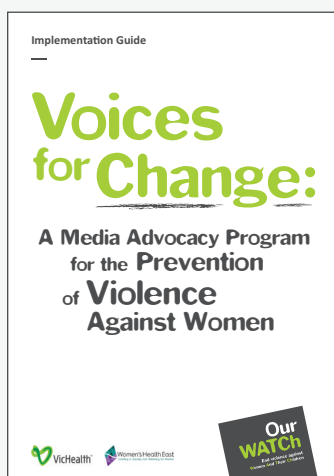
Women's Health East is a regional women's health promotion agency working to improve the health and wellbeing of women living in the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne.

Our vision is equality, empowerment, health and wellbeing for all women. Working within a feminist framework, Women's Health East addresses the social, political and environmental factors impacting the health, safety and wellbeing of women. We do this through leading, partnering, shaping, informing and delivering responses that address the needs of women. We work to build the capacity of services and programs in the region to address issues affecting women.

Preventing violence against women is a core health promotion priority for Women's Health East. We work towards ending violence against women by addressing the key underlying determinants of violence against women – gender inequality and adherence to rigid gender stereotypes. This priority is shared by all nine regional and three statewide Women's Health Services in Victoria.

Women's Health East is the lead agency for *Together for Equality & Respect: A Strategy to Prevent Violence Against Women in Melbourne's East 2013–2017*. The Strategy and its associated Action Plan provide an integrated approach to the planning, delivery and evaluation of primary prevention initiatives across the region. Women's Health East has coordinated the Speaking Out: Media Advocacy to End Family Violence and Sexual Assault Program (previously the Eastern Media Advocacy Program) since its inception in 2011 and was engaged by Our Watch and VicHealth to develop Voices for Change in July 2014.

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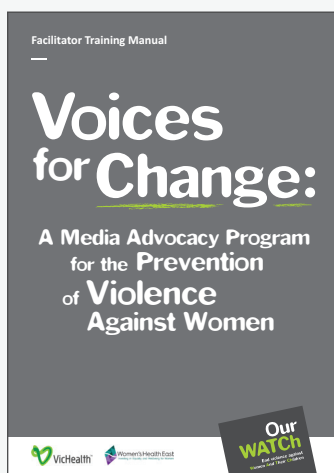
Section 5: Program planning

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# 1 Introduction

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Too many Australian women experience violence every day. The emotional, physical and social cost is enormous.

But while violence against women generates daily media coverage in Australia, what is sometimes missing is an understanding of the links between sexism, gender inequality, community attitudes and gendered violence. In fact, some reporting perpetuates attitudes and myths that give rise to the violence in the first place.

VicHealth's 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey<sup>2</sup> showed that the majority of Australians believe:

- Violence against women is unacceptable.
- Women should be supported when escaping violence at home.
- Coercive and controlling behaviour constitutes violence.

However, some troubling attitudes were also evident:

- Around one in four think that 'domestic violence is a private matter', contributing to a culture of silence.
- Around one in five believe a woman is partly responsible for rape if she is intoxicated.
- Around one in five believe violence can be excused if the offender later regrets it.
- Around one in six support the notion women say no to sex when they mean yes.

While these attitudes are in the minority, they show that victim blaming and a tendency to excuse or downplay violence still exists.

The media have an important role to play in helping shape these attitudes. More informed media commentary will help promote respect, equality and non-violence, and ultimately lead to changes in public perceptions and public policy.

The responsibility for improving media reporting does not lie with the media alone. Violence prevention agencies and people with expert knowledge and personal understanding of the issue can encourage journalists to report in an ethical and balanced way and include context on the drivers and prevention of violence.

There is growing willingness in the media and the community to understand and prevent violence.

The voices of women who have experienced violence, supported by Media Advocacy Programs, can help drive this change.

Assisting agencies to develop Media Advocacy Programs for women who have experienced violence to contribute to the debate in a confident and safe manner is an important part of a national, coordinated strategy to prevent violence against women.

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***Journalists, editors and others working in the media are in a unique and powerful position to reach a wide-ranging audience, many of whom will be victims of violence themselves.***

Megan, Media Advocate

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***Too often the expectation remains that victims and survivors of sexual violence will stay silent. As a community we don't expect to hear victims' voices and we aren't accustomed to taking them seriously.***

***But media advocacy offers us a way to change this. Media advocacy challenges our habitual approaches to victim survivors and insists that we do better. Media advocacy says to the community: these voices, these stories matter. Media advocacy says: listen and take seriously what victim survivors have to tell us.***

***When we listen to rape survivors tell their stories we see where the problem lies. Gender inequality, the power gap between perpetrator and victim and the abuse of trust to create a situation where exploitation and abuse can be enacted become all too clear.***

***To hear from survivors of sexual violence, to really hear what we have to say, is to recognise that things need to change. It is to learn where we have gone wrong, as individuals, as families, as communities and cultures and systems. It is to accept that we are not doing enough and that it is time all of us stepped up to take responsibility for creating a culture of equality, respect and safety for all.***

***If through the media we can honour and respect the voices and stories of women then we will also, as a community, learn to do so in our courts, in our police stations, in our homes, in our workplaces, in public and in our parliaments.***

Kate Ravenscroft, Media Advocate

Our Watch has, therefore, partnered with Women's Health East and VicHealth, two organisations with experience in the development of Media Advocacy Programs, to create *Voices for Change: A Media Advocacy Program for the Prevention of Violence Against Women*. The Centre for Non-Violence and safe steps, two other organisations with significant experience of running media advocacy programs, have shared their knowledge and experience.

Together, we aim to shift the national conversation on violence against women in the media. We hope the public will recognise that violence against women is an urgent social issue and that we all have the power to help prevent and end violence against women.

## **1.1 What is a Media Advocacy Program?**

Women directly affected by violence have a unique understanding and insight into what needs to change in order to end violence in our society. A Media Advocacy Program enables women who have experienced violence to share their stories with the public through the media and community advocacy engagements. The program trains and supports women in this important advocacy role. It assists women to be able to understand their experiences in the context of a society-wide, preventable issue.

Media advocacy is about actively engaging journalists and media organisations to transform the reporting of violence against women in the media.

To ensure that women's stories are shared in a safe, sensitive and responsible way, Media Advocacy Program staff act as an intermediary between media or community advocacy organisers and the women. This guarantees appropriate matching of opportunity to advocate, responsiveness to the media or organiser's needs, the maintenance of the advocate's privacy and attention to her physical and emotional wellbeing. Women are supported through all stages of the advocacy; before, during and after their media or community advocacy engagement.

Advocacy engagements can include interviews with the media, speaking at public events, meeting with politicians, contributing to family violence or sexual assault enquiries and submissions, or other forms of activism.

Throughout the *Voices for Change Implementation Guide*, the term 'community advocacy opportunities' is used to describe and encompass opportunities that do not directly involve speaking to the media but may be reflected in the media.

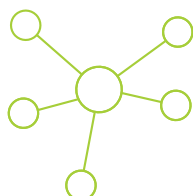
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***"Media advocacy shifts the focus from the personal to the social, from the individual to the political, from the behaviour or practice to the policy or environment."***<sup>3</sup>



# Key roles in a Media Advocacy Program

## Role of organisations



- To form partnerships and relationships that enable the program's success
- To provide direction to the planning and delivery of the program
- To provide media and public speaking training to all advocates prior to any advocacy engagement
- To provide training and information on the evidence base relevant to violence against women and its prevention
- To employ appropriately skilled program staff
- To ensure policies, procedures and practices are in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of advocates and program staff
- To protect the confidentiality and privacy of advocates at all times.

## Role of advocates



- To attend media and public speaking training prior to any advocacy engagement
- To provide accurate information, to the best of their ability, about violence against women when acting as a volunteer advocate
- To liaise with the Media Advocacy Program coordinator in the preparation of speeches and media engagements
- To attend scheduled media interviews, public speaking engagements and other commitments as agreed.

## Role of program coordinators



- To adequately prepare and support advocates to engage with the media or speak publicly about their experiences of violence
- To provide ongoing support to advocates who actively engage with the Media Advocacy Program
- To facilitate access to debriefing for advocates
- To act as the intermediary between advocates and the media or event organisers and others organising advocacy opportunities
- To support the media to report in a timely, ethical and sensitive way.

## References

- 1 Council of Australian Governments 2011, *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, retrieved 11 August 2014, [http://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05\\_2012/national\\_plan.pdf](http://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/national_plan.pdf)
- 2 VicHealth 2014, *Australian's attitudes to violence against women*, retrieved 5 October 2014, <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-violence/2013-National-Community-Attitudes-towards-Violence-Against-Women-Survey.aspx>
- 3 Wallack, L 1994, Media advocacy: A strategy for empowering people and communities, *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 15 (4), 420-436.

# 2 History and current context

## 2.1 History

In Australia, the increased attention on preventing violence against women has been greatly influenced by the groundbreaking work of VicHealth. In 2003, VicHealth put its research focus on violence against women, its impacts, costs, drivers and effective interventions. This work highlighted the most significant drivers of violence against women as:

- the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women
- an adherence to rigidly defined gender roles.

VicHealth's National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey, conducted in 1995, 2009 and 2013,<sup>2,3</sup> highlighted the many harmful attitudes and beliefs held by Australians about violence against women.

In 2007, *Preventing Violence Before it Occurs: A Framework and Background Paper to Guide the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women in Victoria*<sup>4</sup> put violence against women on the agenda as a public health issue.

Meanwhile, a rural partnership, also in Victoria, began to raise concerns with the way the media was reporting the issue. In early 2004, Child & Family Services Ballarat and Pact Community Support established the Family Violence in the News Project to address the portrayal and misrepresentation of family violence in the media. Together they developed a media toolkit, strategic framework and research into the reporting of family violence.<sup>5,6,7</sup>

*Family Violence Reporting: Supporting the Vulnerable or Reinforcing Their Vulnerability?*<sup>7</sup> published in 2009, analysed articles about family violence in five Australian newspapers over 15 weeks, and raised concerns over the way the issue was being reported.

It was through this partnership that Media Advocacy Programs in Australia had their early beginnings. The partnership engaged Dr Lisa Waller to deliver a workshop to a small group of men and women who had experienced family violence, some of whom later went on to be involved in public speaking activities.

Over 2007 to 2012 VicHealth provided funding to a range of projects to implement and evaluate activities to prevent violence against women under their Respect, Responsibility and Equality Program.<sup>8</sup> This included two projects of particular relevance: funding to the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service (now safe steps) for a Media Advocacy Project and seeding funds to Domestic Violence Victoria (DVVic), in partnership with the Victorian Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) Forum and No to Violence (NTV), for the Eliminating Violence Against Women Media Awards (EVAs). The EVAs honoured journalists for excellence in the reporting of violence against women and celebrated news media contributions to the prevention of violence against women. The funding from VicHealth built on the earlier work of the Family Violence in the News: Strategic Framework, developed by Child & Family Services Ballarat and Pact Community Support with funding from the Helen Macpherson Trust who initiated the first EVAs. The seed funding from VicHealth was followed by funds from the Victorian Department of

Human Services from 2010 to 2013 during which time the Victorian Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) Forum joined as a partner.

In 2012 the *Victoria Print Media Coverage of Violence Against Women in the Media*<sup>9</sup> study was published by VicHealth and the University of Melbourne and focused on how violence against women has been represented by parts of the Victorian print media. The study found that Victorian media coverage of the issue rated well from a global perspective in terms of accurate and responsible reporting, and identified opportunities to improve community understanding of the drivers and opportunities to prevent violence:

- Media professionals could incorporate statistics on the prevalence of violence against women, or include comments from violence against women experts in all reports.
- Media outlets should communicate that violence against women is a serious and systemic social problem that is preventable.
- Reports should always include information on victims' services when reporting cases of domestic violence and sexual assault.
- Media professionals are encouraged to mention the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator when legally able to do so. Where the relationship is unknown, it would be useful to state this explicitly.<sup>9</sup>

At a national level, another influence on the development of media strategies to address violence against women has been the work of MindFrame. MindFrame developed a successful range of resources and guidelines for media professionals and for journalism education on the sensitive and responsible reporting of mental illness and suicide.

The MindFrame approach was picked up by the New South Wales Government to educate journalists about the impacts their reporting could have on victims. *Respectful Reporting: Victims of Violent Crime Media Strategy 2011–2012*<sup>10</sup> included training for journalists and journalism students to instil greater awareness of the re-traumatisation of victims through media reporting.

Internationally, the DART Center for Journalism & Trauma, a project of Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism School, is educating journalists about what they need to know to ensure the sensitive reporting of family violence and sexual assault. They aim to support news organisations to put violence against women and its prevention onto the public agenda.<sup>11</sup>

Action to prevent violence against women is now supported at the state and national level of government, with a number of projects aimed at addressing media representations of violence.

*The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*<sup>12</sup> illustrates Australia's long-term commitment, with improving media representations of violence against women listed as a prevention action in the First Action Plan phase. The Second Action Plan<sup>13</sup> identifies a range of activities to improve media engagement with the use of Media Advocacy Programs, the establishment of national media awards that would build on the EVAs, and the development of training and reporting guidelines for journalists as priority actions. The third Action Plan is due for release in 2016.

The media activities that are identified in the *National Plan* now sit with Our Watch as part of their National Media Engagement Project, including the national successor to the EVAs, the Our Watch Awards for exemplary reporting to end violence against women, administered by the Walkley Foundation.

Our Watch's role is to provide national leadership to prevent all forms of violence against women and their children and its work is based on sound research and strong and diverse partnerships. In 2015 it published *Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women and their Children in Australia*.<sup>14</sup> *Change the Story* was developed in partnership with VicHealth and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS). It builds on the VicHealth framework and is the first national framework of its kind in the world. It outlines a consistent and integrated national approach to preventing violence against women and their children.

*Change the Story* brings together the international research and nationwide experience on what drives violence against women and what works to prevent it. It presents a shared understanding of the evidence and principles of effective prevention, outlines ten broad actions that should be taken, and provides a guide to assist governments and other stakeholders to develop appropriate policies, strategies and programs to prevent violence against women and their children. The need to address the attitudes and beliefs that drive violence through positive engagement with the media, who play a powerful role in shaping or reinforcing these beliefs, is mentioned.

In 2016, Our Watch and ANROWS conducted a study on the representations of violence against women and their children by the Australian media to establish a baseline to inform future strategies for change.<sup>15</sup> Findings from the report established the powerful role of the media and identified a number of ways that the media could more accurately reflect the reality of women's experience of violence and contribute to prevention. [Section 7](#) provides more information on the findings of this report, and on responsible reporting of violence against women.

The National Media Engagement Project and the *Voices for Change* media advocates training align with the overarching principles of effective practice described in *Change the Story*.

## The National Media Engagement Project

- Key elements of the National Media Engagement Project include:
- media capacity training for both future and practising journalists
- a website portal with resources for journalists
- the Our Watch Awards, administered by the Walkley Foundation, to recognise and encourage exemplary reporting to end violence against women.

Supporting and informing these initiatives are:

- a national toolkit for the sector to guide engagement with the media in the prevention of violence against women
- a media advisory group to inform the National Media Engagement Project and act as champions for change
- formative research to develop an evidence base on the media representation of violence against women and their children.

## 2.2 Current context

### 2.2.1 Case studies of Media Advocacy Programs

The use of media advocacy to prevent violence against women is relatively new in Australia and predominantly Victorian-based. At the time of development of *Voices for Change*, there are three Media Advocacy Programs at a statewide, metropolitan and regional level:

- Media Advocacy Project – safe steps Family Violence Response Centre
- Speaking Out: Media Advocacy to End Family Violence and Sexual Assault – Women’s Health East
- Loddon Campaspe Media Advocacy Project – Centre for Non-Violence.

#### 2.2.1.1 Media Advocacy Project – safe steps Family Violence Response Centre

##### Overview

This statewide project was established in 2007 at a time of growing awareness by governments and agencies of the seriousness and prevalence of family violence in Victoria.

safe steps (formerly Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service) has led the Media Advocacy Project for almost eight years with funding from the Victorian Government and VicHealth.

The project provides training and ongoing support to women with a lived experience of family violence, equipping them with the skills to effectively engage with the media and be spokespeople for media interviews and at public events. It ensures that the voices of women who live with or who have survived violence are heard in a range of public settings to influence social attitudes, behaviours and beliefs.

As the statewide service in Victoria for women and children experiencing violence and abuse from a partner or ex-partner, another family member or someone close to them, safe steps has traditionally been a point of contact for media comment with frequent requests to speak with survivors of family violence. The project not only meets this need but empowers women to share their story.

Survivors interested in the project are sensitively screened and interviewed to ensure readiness as volunteer advocates and to ensure there are no legal issues pending. Not every woman is suitable. Interested survivors either self-refer or are referred by various agencies across the state.

The project consists of a three-day training program that focuses on:

- building confidence
- how to tell your story
- staying safe
- exploring the social and political drivers of violence against women
- key messaging
- preparing for an interview
- how to engage with media – responding to and deflecting questions, establishing boundaries.

A crucial element of the project is the level of one-on-one support each advocate receives, which includes:

- initial contact to discuss engagement opportunity
- media brief
- connecting volunteer advocate with media



- attending the engagement with the advocate
- debrief following media engagement
- debrief with media
- follow up wellbeing check.

#### *Project aim*

The project aims to educate the public through the media to create social change in attitudes and behaviours and to promote gender equality and respectful relationships to end violence towards women and their children.

#### *Partnerships*

safe steps has trained survivors from various local government areas and has assisted in establishing programs with Women's Health East and Centre for Non-Violence.

#### *Outcomes*

Advocates found that the training was an empowering experience that helped them to overcome nerves about speaking out, and encouraged them to say yes to advocacy opportunities. Some advocates have gone on to a career in training and public speaking.

The involvement of advocates in media reports has improved reporting on family violence. Reports featuring advocates are more likely to include information on support services, and rather than focusing on one act of violence, they look at the bigger picture of power and control. The media is slowly making the connection between gender inequity and violence against women.

The media has reported more extensively on issues of family violence since the project's inception. safe steps advocates have been featured in a myriad of local, metropolitan, statewide and national papers, television, publications and radio. An example is the *Herald Sun's Take A Stand* campaign in 2013. Three years ago it would have been unthinkable that a tabloid newspaper would have given as much attention to the issue.

The project was independently reviewed in December 2013 with the findings validating its success and future directions to:

- continue to develop the capacity of journalists and media to produce more commentary and stories about the broader issue of violence against women and its drivers and prevention over only reporting on single events
- expand social media strategies to further generate community conversations in response to media and violence against women issues
- partner with relevant organisations to design and implement education programs on responsible reporting and approach to working with advocates
- recruit Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse advocates to support the project

- train a 'senior' advocate to take on the role of peer advocator to mentor new advocates across the state
- continue to train advocates and expand the broader community engagement opportunities
- develop a community of advocates statewide including sector partners, survivor advocates, other advocates and empowerment literature.

### **2.2.1.2 Speaking Out: Media Advocacy to End Family Violence and Sexual Assault – Women's Health East**

#### *Overview*

Established in 2011, the Speaking Out Program (previously the Eastern Media Advocacy Program) is the only program to be designed with two specialised streams – one for women who have experienced family violence and one for survivors of sexual assault.

Speaking Out provides training and support to women to speak at public events, in the media and at a range of other advocacy opportunities at a regional level, with some state and national advocacy work. The training portions of the program are Media Advocacy Training – Speaking Out to End Sexual Assault and Media Advocacy Training – Speaking Out to End Family Violence.

Speaking Out was developed using a health promotion approach and framed within a primary prevention of violence against women framework. The program includes a prevention focus in the advocate training, and in public speaking and media opportunities. Messages about gender inequality are used alongside raising awareness of the impact of violence.

Speaking Out has also trained workers in Melbourne's east on how to work with journalists to encourage responsible reporting on violence against women and its prevention.

#### *Program aim*

The aim is to shift the public discourse on violence against women, and its prevention.

#### *Partnerships*

Women's Health East, one of nine regional women's health promotion organisations across Victoria, is the lead organisation for the program. Women's Health East is committed to working to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of women in Melbourne's east by addressing the social, political and environmental factors impacting women.

Partnerships have been key to the inception and success of Speaking Out. Speaking Out grew out of discussions at the Preventing Violence Against Women working group of the Regional Family Violence Partnership in 2011 when Jane Ashton, advocate and project worker from safe steps (previously Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service), was invited to speak about its media advocacy project.

A collaborative decision was made to develop the Speaking Out Program based on the safe steps model, with Women's Health East identified as the lead.



Key partners are the Eastern Domestic Violence Service and the Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault, who are represented on a steering committee, participate in the recruitment, screening and training of advocates and provide follow up counselling for advocates as required. Advocates also participate in the steering committee.

Women's Health East leads and coordinates Speaking Out through employment of a program coordinator who is responsible for development and evaluation, liaison with media and advocates, and the provision of ongoing support for advocates.

Speaking Out is also an integral part of *Together for Equality & Respect: A Strategy to Prevent Violence Against Women in Melbourne's East 2013-2017*,<sup>16</sup> and the corresponding Action Plan, which involves partner organisations across the eastern region of Melbourne undertaking complementary work in primary prevention. The shared and integrated approach to the planning and evaluation of primary prevention initiatives has brought a stronger regional focus to the importance of listening to the voices of women and the value of working with the media in the prevention of violence against women.

#### Outcomes

While originally established as a time limited project, the effectiveness of the program, including the positive outcomes for women and a continual flow of advocacy opportunities, has led to it becoming an ongoing program of Women's Health East. The lack of dedicated funding has meant that the time devoted to it has varied depending on competing organisational priorities.

Since its inception Speaking Out has worked with 33 advocates and currently supports 20 active advocates. Speaking Out has supported advocates in 69 community advocacy opportunities and 59 media opportunities across print media, television and radio from August 2011 to April 2015. Advocacy activities have included local media stories, online articles, White Ribbon Day events, community health days, involvement in relevant steering committees and a range of consultations including with politicians.

Advocate messages were used in a broad regional social media and social marketing campaign for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in 2013 and 2014 – 'Listening to and Learning from Women'. The campaign messages are subject to ongoing demand, with organisations in Melbourne's east continuing to share the messages via posters at organisational events and workplaces, and on social media sites.

An independent evaluation of the Speaking Out Program<sup>17</sup> in December 2013 also showed that the program has been successful in supporting the advocates' empowerment and personal development. It found that the media produced with input from the program fared well when compared to responsible reporting guidelines. Recommendations from this evaluation included the need for the development of an advocacy community. The report is informing the ongoing development of the Speaking Out Program (see [Section 6.2.7](#)).

### 2.2.1.3 Loddon Campaspe Media Advocacy Project – Centre for Non-Violence

#### Overview

The Loddon Campaspe Media Advocacy Project was established in 2014 and has engaged local and regional women survivors of violence, the media and the community in developing a media advocacy project and key messages to talk about violence against women. One of the key aims is to develop a rural and regional model of media advocacy representing rural and regional women's experiences of family violence.

The project recruited a broad and diverse group of women as media advocates, providing training in working with the media, public speaking and community education. Advocates are trained and supported to use the media to talk about their experiences of family violence and to develop key messages to work towards the prevention of violence against women. The project enabled the development of rural and regional key prevention messages and has a strong rural and regional focus that reflects the experiences of the women involved.

Recruitment guidelines included that women are aged over 18 years and are not experiencing current or recent incidents of violence (over the previous 12 months).

#### Program aim

The aim is to:

- empower and support local survivors of family violence and sexual abuse to become advocates for change
- develop and implement a rural and regional model of media advocacy from rural and regional women's experiences of family violence
- develop partnerships and training to build the skills, knowledge and capacity of women's specialist family violence services to effectively use the media to raise awareness of violence against women and its prevention (Media Support Workers)
- raise community awareness about gendered representation and support media in accurate reporting of family violence and sexual abuse, with every media contact and advocacy request taken as an opportunity to provide information, education and promote responsible reporting of violence against women guidelines
- contribute to the knowledge and evidence base for the prevention of violence against women in the media.

### *Partnerships*

Led by the Centre for Non-Violence based in Bendigo, the project works in partnership with Annie North Women's Refuge and Loddon Campaspe Centre Against Sexual Assault.

The Centre for Non-Violence has services across the Loddon Campaspe region, a large rural and regional geographical area in Victoria, with women and children's rights, safety and empowerment at the centre of its work.

It provides a range of support programs for women and children experiencing family violence and/or homelessness and risk of homelessness, and programs for men who use violence against family members. There is a strong emphasis on women and children's safety and men's accountability.

The Loddon Campaspe Media Advocacy Project was implemented by the Centre for Non-Violence in consultation with and through funding support from the Central Victorian Prevention of Violence Against Women in our Community Project Plan in 2013, supported by a project worker. Safe steps supported the implementation of the project and provided guidance by sharing their tools and resources. The project was supported by senior representatives from the Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Consortium, a representative from safe steps, media, communication and local government representatives and an internal working group, to develop tools and resources and deliver training.

This approach has helped build relationships and the shared vision across all of the partner agencies, and increased the confidence and skills within all groups. Commitment from partners and Media Advocate Support Workers help sustain the project.

### *Outcomes and key learnings*

The work of the project is consistent with best-practice frameworks and is informing the state and national vision for the most effective ways to work with the media to prevent violence against women.

Fourteen advocates have been trained to speak or develop their stories about their own experiences and promote a broader focus in the media on the prevention of violence against women. Advocates participated in a three-day education and training program, focused on gender equity, working with the media and public speaking.

The key learnings from working with advocates are:

- The safety and wellbeing of the advocates is the most important consideration. Risk and safety assessment, establishing guidelines and boundaries for privacy, confidentiality and technology safety are important considerations.
- It is essential to have in place a comprehensive screening process, including ongoing assessment of advocates' safety and wellbeing and trained support workers for media advocate support.
- Using the Power and Control Wheel to explore tactics of violence in the training, it was identified that some of the advocates were still experiencing risk through contact with the perpetrator of violence (through contact with children), even though the relationship had ended.
- An identified gap in the training was the potential use of social media as an advocacy tool and the risk for rural and regional women in regard to technology safety.
- Working with key media and community stakeholders in training and education is a key part of the work to educate and ensure that advocates are treated respectfully.
- Media and community need to understand there is a strong focus on violence prevention, rather than just women sharing their stories.
- The advocates need opportunities for support and to come together to share their experiences in advocacy work.

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**Voices for Change:**

A Media Advocacy Program for the Prevention of Violence Against Women

# 3 Why a Media Advocacy Program?

## 3.1 Violence against women is serious and prevalent

Men's violence against women is widely recognised as a global problem and one of the most widespread violations of human rights.<sup>1</sup> Research indicates that since the age of 15, one in five women have experienced sexual violence and one in three women physical violence, and over half of all women have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup> The impact of violence has profound consequences for women, children, families and whole communities.

In Australia, on average one woman per week is killed by a current or previous male partner and intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and ill health in Victorian women aged 15-44 than any other preventable health risk factor.<sup>3,4</sup> Evidence demonstrates that family violence and sexual assault are gendered issues, predominantly perpetrated by men against women, with 77% of reported family violence experienced by women or girls, while the overwhelming majority of perpetrators are men. Furthermore 92% of reported rape incidents are perpetrated by men against women and girls.<sup>5</sup>

Compared with male victims of intimate partner violence, women are:

- five times more likely to require medical attention or hospitalisation
- five times more likely to report fearing for their lives
- five times more likely to be killed by an intimate partner.<sup>6</sup>

While violence against women is serious and prevalent, the evidence tells us that it is preventable.<sup>7,8</sup>

## 3.2 Violence against women is preventable

### Understanding the gendered drivers of violence against women (from *Change the Story*)<sup>8</sup>

Violence against women is serious, prevalent and driven by gender inequality. Research has found that factors associated with gender inequality are the most consistent predictors of violence against women, and explain its gendered patterns. These factors are termed *gendered drivers* of violence against women (figure 1).

To prevent violence against women, we need to address these drivers to stop it from occurring in the first place. This is known as primary prevention.

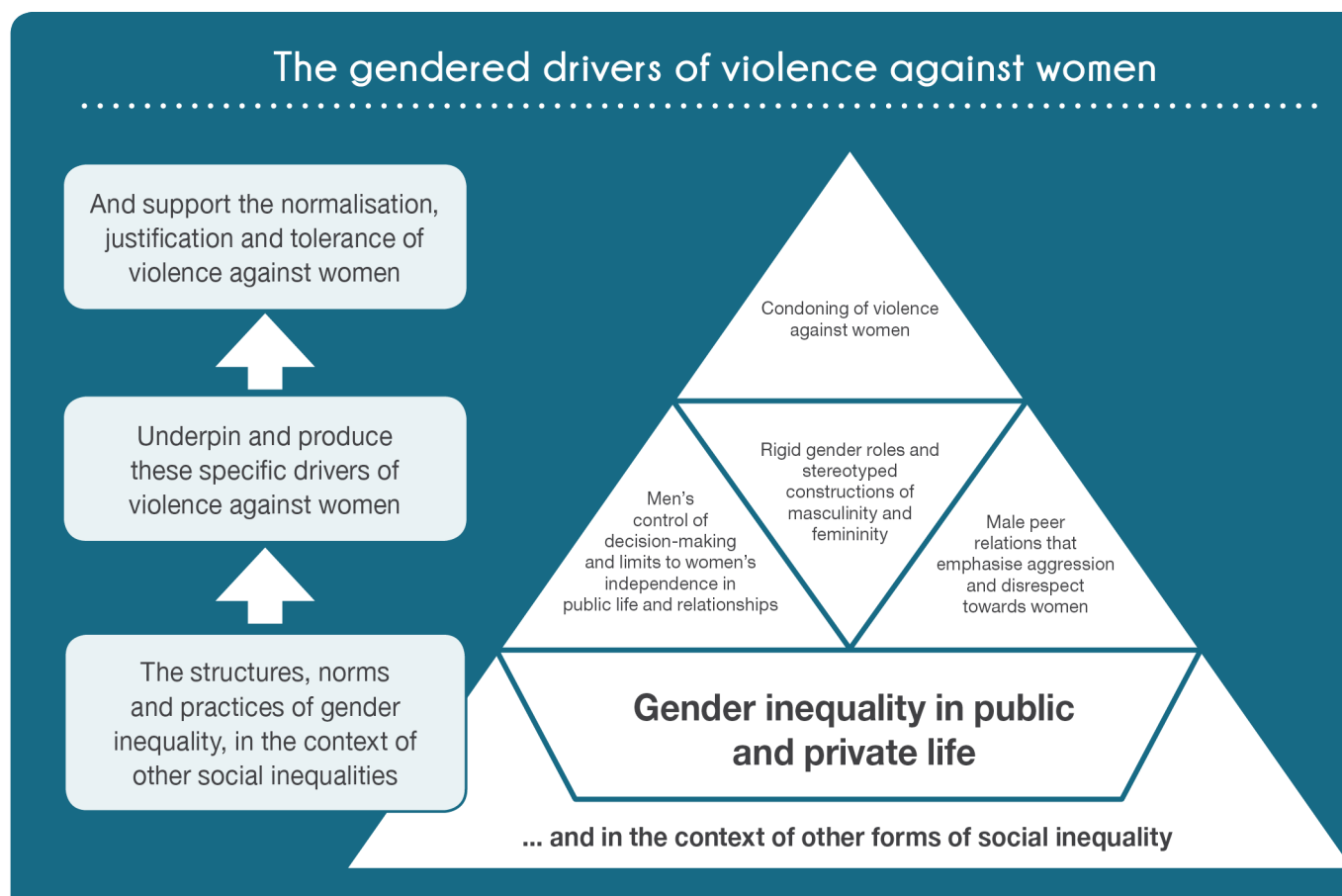
The following particular expressions of gender inequality have been shown in the international evidence to be most consistently associated with higher levels of violence against women:

- condoning of violence against women
- men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence
- rigid gender roles and identities
- male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

**This section provides a rationale for media advocacy work to prevent violence against women. It helps make the case for establishing a Media Advocacy Program.**

***It strengthens your resolve to fight back and stand up for women's rights and for families and children and not just accept the societal norms at the moment.***

Speaking Out advocate



*Figure 1. The gendered drivers of violence against women<sup>8</sup>*

If we address these gendered drivers through our work, we are most likely to have long-term impact on the prevalence of violence against women in Australia. Addressing these drivers of violence is the focus of *Voices for Change*.

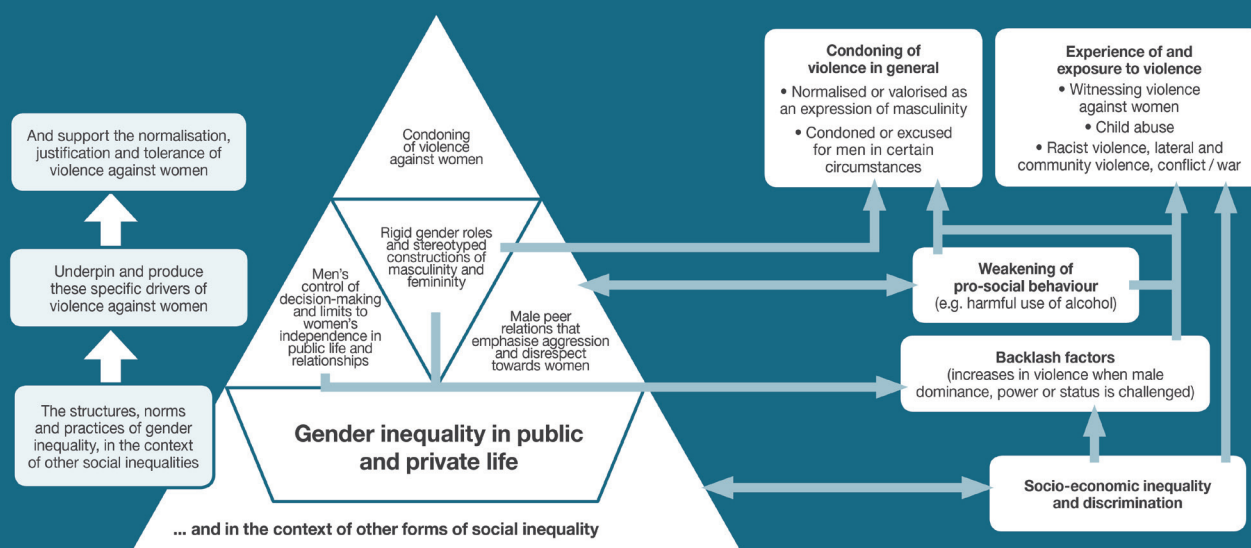
*Change the Story* also articulates the factors that reinforce the gendered drivers (figure 2). While not sufficient in themselves to predict violence against women, they can interact with the gendered drivers to increase probability, frequency or severity of such violence. These reinforcing factors are:

- condoning of violence in general
- experience of, and exposure to, violence
- weakening of pro-social behaviour, especially harmful use of alcohol
- socio-economic inequality and discrimination
- backlash factors (when male dominance, power or status is challenged).

## What drives and reinforces violence against women?

The triangle represents the gendered drivers of violence against women

Factors outside the triangle can reinforce the gendered drivers to increase the probability, frequency or severity of violence against women



The socio-ecological model (figure 3) is a useful way of both understanding individual behaviour in a social context, and illustrating the dynamic interrelations between relevant factors located at the individual, organisational and community, and systemic and societal levels. The model highlights that in order to prevent violence against women we need to act at all levels of society.

It is also known that to prevent violence against women we need to address norms, practices and structures across our society that reinforce and maintain gender inequality. These include for example, social norms such as the belief that women are best suited to care for children, practices such as differences in childrearing practices for boys and girls and structures such as pay differences between men and women.

Figure 2. The interactions between gendered drivers of violence against women and the reinforcing factors<sup>8</sup>



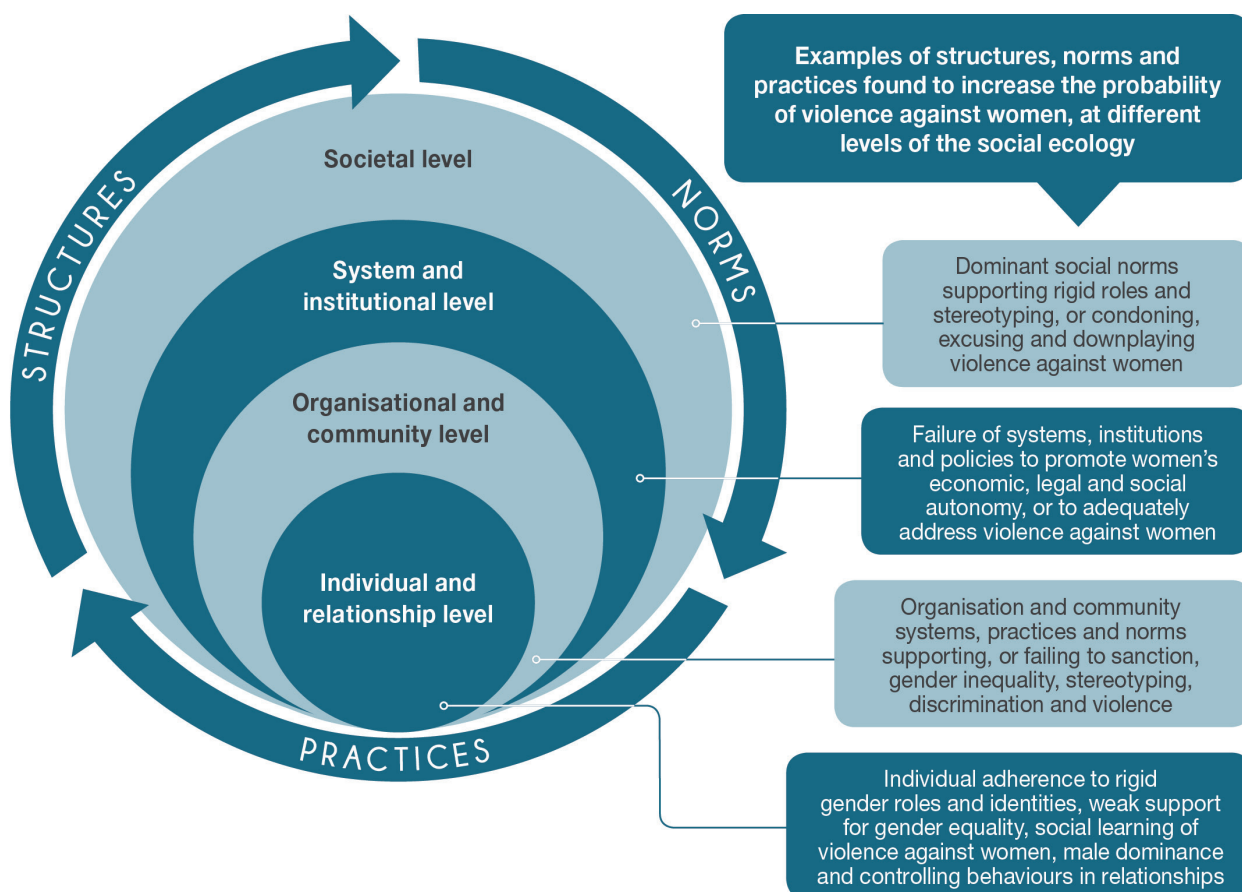


Figure 3. A socio-ecological model for individual behaviour<sup>8</sup>

Prevention initiatives will be most successful when they reach all levels of society: individuals, communities, organisations and institutions.



Mutually reinforcing actions that promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life are needed through legislation, institutional, policy and program responses:

- by governments, organisations and individuals
- in settings where people live, work, learn and socialise
- tailored to the context and needs of different groups.





Violence against women affects all sections of the community. The probability of violence against women is higher when gender inequality intersects with other forms of inequality and discrimination, such as racism, discrimination against people with disabilities, or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Women's experiences of violence are also shaped by factors such as race, class, religion, Aboriginality, migrant or refugee status, age or disability. All efforts to prevent violence against women need to address gender equality, however in many cases other forms of discrimination will also need to be addressed.

### 3.3 The media is a valuable advocacy tool

Media advocacy has been successfully used to target public health issues such as road accidents, breast cancer and tobacco control.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

The media offers a powerful avenue to provide information and education about health issues to a broad and varied audience. The media's reach into the community cannot be underestimated. It has enormous potential to shape what is perceived as 'news', and thereby influence public perceptions and attitudes, and the agenda of public policy.<sup>12</sup>

Media advocacy works with the media (papers, television, radio, social media) to draw attention to a public health issue and to find solutions.<sup>13</sup> Community members with firsthand experience of an issue who are able to speak out are important advocates for change to public health policy.

### 3.4 Media Advocacy Programs are effective in the prevention of violence against women

Influencing the way violence against women is reported, in particular emphasising the drivers and what we as a society can do to 'stop it before it starts', is an important part of prevention. Women who have experienced violence are uniquely positioned – with the right support – to help influence this change.

Media Advocacy Programs focused on the prevention of violence against women promote the use of women's voices in the reporting of violence against women, support and promote accurate and sensitive discussions of violence and widely disseminate messages about prevention.

Media Advocacy Programs address myths and stereotypes and offer a powerful way of challenging violence supportive attitudes, behaviours and societal norms.<sup>7</sup>

Media Advocacy Programs have the potential to challenge gender norms and gender inequality at all levels of society, and promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.

Through women speaking out publicly about their experiences and by breaking down misconceptions that act to shame and blame women, media advocacy programs can also encourage other victims of violence to come forward.

Women with a lived experience of violence can identify the changes needed to end violence against women. Media Advocacy Programs that engage women who have experienced violence are a powerful way to work with the media to raise awareness of violence against women, promote equal and respectful relationships, and lobby for action that will keep women safe and importantly, prevent violence against women in the future. For example, Rosie Batty's advocacy assisted in the reversal of national funding cuts to the legal assistance sector across the country, including Community Legal Centres who provide help to women experiencing family violence.

By sharing their experiences, advocates put a human face to the statistics about violence against women, and highlight the gendered nature of violence in our community. When the community can see and hear women tell their stories they are more likely to empathise and engage with the issue.

Media Advocacy Programs therefore aim both to influence behaviour of individuals and to create change at a societal level. The media's interest in women's stories gives a platform to address the underlying drivers of violence. Through women's stories, a Media Advocacy Program is able to link individual experiences of violence with the broader context of violence, and what we can do as a community to prevent it. Effectively making these links is vital to the prevention of violence against women, as it is through doing so that the wider community will be able to understand and address the underlying, societal drivers of violence.

Independent evaluations of the Speaking Out Program and of the safe steps Media Advocacy Project in 2013-2014 found that both had positive impacts on the mental wellbeing of individual advocates, improving their self-confidence, knowledge and skills and enabling empowerment and additional skill development. The programs assisted all advocates to move forward in one way or another on their personal journey. For example, advocates have reported new career directions, taking up study and writing a blog as examples of activities that have flowed from their Media Advocacy Program involvement.

Evaluations of existing Media Advocacy Programs (see [Section 2.2.1: Case studies of Media Advocacy Programs](#)) show that they had many positive impacts on local print media's knowledge, attitudes and reporting practices. The news articles that have been guided by these Media Advocacy Programs have demonstrated accurate and sensitive reporting evaluated against responsible reporting guidelines.<sup>14</sup>

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***What I've found is when you tell people you've become an advocate and you are a survivor of family violence... you get friends' friends, friends' relatives who are in that situation, ...want(ing) you to speak with them.***

Speaking Out advocate

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***As an advocate you can impact on different levels... policy makers, the system and personal friends.***

Speaking Out advocate

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***I found it quite empowering to have my experience validated and feel like you're not the only one who's been through difficult things....***

Speaking Out advocate

## Community myths and misconceptions

Media Advocacy Programs work with advocates to increase their confidence to recognise and challenge myths and misconceptions about violence against women.

The 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey<sup>17</sup> found that in relation to sexual violence:

- 2 in every 5 Victorians believed that rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex.
- 1 in 6 believed that, in relation to sex, ‘women often say no when they mean yes’
- almost 1 in 5 believe that if a woman is raped while drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible.

Many of these attitudes are based on gender stereotypes and the different roles that society attributes to men and women. These stem from culturally and historically held beliefs about gender; male sexuality is primal and irrepressible, men are unable to control their actions and sexual behaviours, and violent behaviour is excused under the belief that ‘boys will be boys’.

Women are held accountable for protecting their modesty and femininity, and are expected to dress and behave in ways that the public erroneously believe will prevent violence. While men are lauded as trustworthy and respectable, rigid attitudes render a woman’s voice as ruled by emotion and therefore unbelievable and unreliable. These are among the many community misconceptions about violence against women that advocates may challenge.

## 3.5 Media advocacy can support trauma recovery

The quotes from media advocates themselves highlighted throughout this section demonstrate the important role that involvement in a Media Advocacy Program can play in the recovery process for women who have become advocates.<sup>14,15</sup> A positive impact on mental wellbeing, support in their personal journey of recovery and an increased feeling of empowerment are documented in evaluations of current programs.

This impact on recovery is supported by the literature on trauma recovery. Drawing on her own research and a vast array of literature, psychiatrist Judith Herman’s work on trauma and recovery after violence outlines the stages of recovery<sup>18</sup>, the last of which is reconnection. This stage involves survivors of violence reconnecting with meaningful activities that can help them to heal and grow. Social action is discussed as a common way in which people use their experience to create a greater awareness of violence in the wider public sphere through sharing their personal stories with the community in order to influence educational, legal and political efforts to prevent violence, and stop others from being victimised.<sup>19</sup>

Ensuring that women are progressing through the stages of recovery is important in recruiting women to a Media Advocacy Program. See [Section 6: Working with advocates](#) for more on recruiting advocates.

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***I think what I’m doing, and hopefully I’m successful in getting done, will help the next generation in some way.***

Speaking Out advocate

### 3.6 A Media Advocacy Program can benefit your organisation

By strengthening relationships and connections with the local media, a Media Advocacy Program will increase access to the media for other advocacy purposes and issues that may be important to your organisation's vision and priorities.

Implementing a program grows your organisation's reputation and profile as experts in the prevention of violence against women, and places you in a prominent position to provide comment on future articles that include reference to violence against women.

Media Advocacy Programs are helpful in strengthening partnerships with organisations within your area and potentially allow you to connect with organisations that you may not otherwise have the opportunity to work with.

#### Overcoming common objections to developing a Media Advocacy Program

##### **Doesn't running a media advocacy program take too much time and resources?**

Like any program or project, implementing and running a Media Advocacy Program does take work and commitment by organisations, but implementing your program in partnership can mean that responsibilities are shared.

See [Section 5: Program planning](#) for more information on the information and tools needed to start planning your Media Advocacy Program.

##### **Isn't it risky for women who have experienced violence to talk publicly about their experiences?**

Actually the opposite – involvement in a Media Advocacy Program increases the support for women as they are encouraged to speak out safely about their experience of violence.

The safety of advocates is central to the program. Speaking out about their experiences can be emotional for women who have experienced violence, but a Media Advocacy Program is run in such a way that the advocates are fully supported at every stage.

Media Advocacy Programs have thorough support systems in place to minimise and handle the risk of further perpetration of violence because of an advocate speaking out.

As detailed in [Section 3.5](#), engaging in meaningful opportunities such as telling their stories to the public can contribute towards recovery for advocates.

##### **Doesn't this type of program contribute to a greater media focus on individual incidences of violence, rather than looking at the bigger picture of the drivers and how to prevent it?**

Not so. Media Advocacy Programs are designed to provide training to advocates on the underlying drivers of violence and how to prevent it. This assists them in making the links between their individual experiences of violence and the broader social issue, enabling them to advocate for societal change to address and prevent violence.

##### **Isn't there a risk of re-traumatisation for advocates involved in the program?**

Yes, however advocates face the risk of re-traumatisation in their everyday lives. Through the media advocacy training, advocates learn skills to manage situations where there is a risk of re-traumatisation. This helps them in formal advocacy activities and in daily life.

By participating in the program, advocates have access to debriefing and support mechanisms before, during and after advocacy opportunities to be able to safely tell their story. Thorough screening and recruitment strategies ensure that the women are adequately progressed in their trauma recovery to participate in the program.

Safety planning is a key feature of Media Advocacy Programs and advocates have talked through what they are and are not comfortable to talk about and do, giving them control over the media advocacy opportunities that they are involved in.

[Section 6: Working with advocates](#) provides further important information on advocate safety and support.

## Summary of positive outcomes of Media Advocacy Programs

For women who have experienced or are currently experiencing violence:

- Provide opportunities to take on supported advocacy roles
- Support individual advocates' trauma recovery (see Section 3.5)
- Assist women who are at risk of violence to recognise early warnings signs
- Encourage women who are experiencing violence to come forward for help and support, and report their experience of violence
- Erode the stigma attached to being a victim of violence.

For the media:

- Encourage and support sensitive and accurate media reporting of violence against women
- Provide access for interviews to women who have experienced violence, knowing that they are supported and their safety is not being compromised
- Encourage media articles to draw on women's lived experiences of violence and of what needs to change to keep women and children safe, and to prevent violence in the first place
- Encourage media articles and campaigns that focus on gender inequality and stereotypes as a driver of violence against women.

For your organisation:

- Support organisational goals and directions
- Raise your profile as experts in the prevention of violence
- Increase your access to the media and build strong relationships
- Strengthen partnerships in your community.

For the wider community:

- Connect incidences of violence against women to the broader context of gender inequality
- Build recognition of gender inequity and adherence to rigid gender stereotypes as the key drivers of violence against women
- Facilitate increased knowledge, awareness and discussion of equal and respectful relationships
- Promote non-violent norms in the community
- Promote community awareness of violence against women, and supportive responses to women who have experienced violence, including attributing the responsibility for violence to perpetrators
- Identify systems and public policy changes to keep women safe and end violence against women
- Prevent violence against women.

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# 4 Is Media Advocacy for You?

## 4.1 General considerations and challenges

Ensuring the physical and emotional safety of the women involved in advocacy is critical to delivering a successful Media Advocacy Program. Organisational systems also need to be in place to support worker wellbeing, as working with advocates can provoke strong emotional and physical responses (see the 'Worker safety' box in [Section 5.3](#)).

Other considerations include the diverse set of worker and organisational skills and the resources needed to run an effective program.

A challenge is promoting messages of gender equality in the media – a traditionally male dominated field.<sup>1</sup> This is covered in [Section 7.3.3: Gendered nature of media](#). For more information on how to work effectively with the media, see [Section 7.2: Engaging and working with the media](#).

**This section provides an overview of the organisational requirements to successfully run a Media Advocacy Program and will help you decide whether it is for you.**

## 4.2 Fit with your organisational purpose and values

Is a Media Advocacy Program a good fit with your organisation's purpose, culture and values? Your organisation needs to have:

- a commitment to the prevention of violence against women
- a depth of knowledge about violence against women and its prevention
- the ability to support women who have experienced violence
- a feminist framework underpinning its work
- an interest in influencing the public debate and public policy on violence against women and its prevention.

## 4.3 Capacity to support advocates

The safety and wellbeing of advocates is of upmost importance and your organisation's capacity to ensure this is vital.

The ability to respond to the support needs of advocates individually and an advocate program more generally will vary between organisations. For example, family violence or sexual assault support services are well placed to understand safety issues and to provide counselling and support to women. However, due to the crisis focus of their work, they may struggle to prioritise ongoing support to an advocacy program and could benefit from partnering with an organisation to share the time pressures.

Similarly, organisations that do not provide direct counselling or case management services, but have capacity to provide non-clinical support to the program, will need to think about how they can partner with organisations that do.

[Section 6: Working with advocates](#) provides greater detail on meeting the needs of advocates and is vital reading for any organisation implementing a Media Advocacy Program.

## 4.4 Capacity to support program staff

Program staff will face a range of issues in their role supporting vulnerable women. Your organisation will need to provide or organise access to appropriate debriefing, supervision and support to workers involved in working with advocates.

For example, workers may be exposed to vicarious trauma through hearing the experiences of advocates and have difficult decisions and interactions to manage. These may vary from decisions over which advocate to match to a media opportunity or how best to provide feedback to an advocate after an advocacy engagement.

Organisations that do not have these structures in place need to consider how they can provide support to their workers. For example, do you have adequately skilled staff to provide this level of support, can partner organisations be engaged to provide support or do you need to contract external supervision and support? For more information on worker safety, see the 'Worker safety' box in [Section 5.3](#).

## 4.5 Skills and knowledge

A varied skill and knowledge set is required to effectively deliver a Media Advocacy Program (see 'Skills and knowledge required' box below). If you don't have these skills in-house, you need to consider recruitment, training or partnerships with other organisations that do (see [Section 5: Program planning](#)).

### Skills and knowledge required include (but are not limited to):

- Depth of knowledge of violence against women and its impacts on women, children, families and communities
- Understanding of the primary prevention of violence against women and health promotion
- Understanding of the gendered nature of violence and the feminist underpinnings of responses to violence and its prevention
- Skills in provision of support and counselling
- Understanding the media cycle, forms of media, and ways of working with the media
- Understanding what represents sensitive and quality media representation of violence against women
- Skills in communications and public speaking to be able to support advocates
- Community development skills
- Advocacy skills and knowledge
- Experience in evaluation
- Skills in relationship building
- Project management skills
- Flexibility
- High-level communication skills.



## 4.6 Resources – staffing and program costs

### 4.6.1 Staffing

In establishing a Media Advocacy Program, you are committing your organisation to being responsive to media requests which are often at short notice, may be after hours and require a prompt response. This requires a high level of flexibility, particularly for staff involved in the program.

The role of coordinating a Media Advocacy Program can be difficult to fill. It requires a person (or people) with diverse skills including media and communications, the ability to support advocates, knowledge of violence against women and its prevention and community development skills. An understanding of the pace of the media cycle is key. The program worker or workers will be responsible for the day-to-day development and coordination of the program, working with and supporting advocates, and liaising with the media and other stakeholders wishing to engage advocates.

The role of the project worker ideally requires flexible working hours to accommodate media requests such as out of office hour interviews and events, and the worker needs to be a reliable contact in order to respond to media requests in a timely manner.

Your organisation will need to work out how much staff time will be committed to the program. This will depend on the number of advocates you have and the media opportunities that come your way. Conversely, the amount of staff time and flexibility you dedicate will also define the capacity of the program – the more responsive you are able to be, the greater the stream of requests.

Consider how this will be managed prior to program implementation. Key questions include:

- If your organisation is only able to commit a limited number of hours to the program, how can media requests be dealt with in a timely way? Is this best achieved through a spread of hours across the week or responsibilities being shared by a couple of workers or organisations?
- How will worker leave be covered? Media requests will not stop because your staff member is on holiday.
- Will you respond to advocacy requests that are outside working hours?
- Can partnerships be formed and agreements made with other media advocacy projects to share media requests?

### 4.6.2 Program costs

#### Advocate training

Advocate training costs can be significant and must be considered in your planning. Due to the specialised nature of the training provided, it is likely you will need expert external trainers for at least part of the training. Additional costs may include venue hire, catering, training materials and funds to enable advocate participation such as reimbursement for child care or transport expenses. See the Voices for Change Facilitators Training Manual for further details on planning for advocate training.

#### Worker training

Program workers will need skills in responding to the media, building relationships, writing media releases, pitching stories and handling interviews, as well as a robust understanding of violence against women and its prevention. If they do not already have these skills, training will be essential. Some of these skills can be gained through the workers' participation in the advocate training sessions. Another cost effective way is to share media training with other organisations in your region or community that may be interested in learning more about working with the media. You may also want to run whole of organisation training so that all staff are equipped with some media skills.

#### Other costs may include:

- mobile phone for program workers for communication with media and advocates, and for safety purposes when out of the office
- travel costs for workers – petrol or public transport
- volunteer budget – becoming an advocate with an organisation is a volunteer role and you should consider reimbursement of costs that are involved as part of an advocacy opportunity. It is up to each organisation to consider how they will recognise the women involved, however compensating advocates is highly recommended and could include (at a minimum) reimbursement of travel costs, meals or snacks, or child care.
- ongoing program costs for training and supporting advocates including:
  - providing refresher training to practise their media and public speaking skills, develop key messages and access up-to-date statistics to strengthen their advocacy work.
  - establishing an advocate community through meetings for advocates to share learnings and stories and practise their key messages.

### Questions to think about that may affect your budget:

- Are there organisational funds available to set up a Media Advocacy Program?
- Are there any grants that your organisation could apply for to develop the program, or for individual training sessions?
- Do you have staff capacity to run the program, or will you have to hire an additional staff member?
- Do you have a volunteer budget?
- Will you need to employ facilitators to deliver advocate training?
- Do you have an appropriate venue for advocate training and get togethers, or will you have to hire one?
- Will you charge a fee for public speaking engagements to cover some of the program costs?
- Are there other ways the program might generate income to cover costs such as reimbursement by advocacy organisers, donations, fundraising, or corporate partnerships?

For some examples of how the existing Media Advocacy Programs are funded, please see the case studies in [Section 2.2.1](#).

## 4.7 Partnerships

### 4.7.1 Reasons to partner

As a time intensive program that needs a diverse range of skills, expert knowledge and timely responses to media advocacy requests, it makes good sense to consider partnerships. Bringing together a combination of people with the right skills and knowledge may ensure the success of your program.

Partnerships can be an effective way to fill gaps in your organisation's capacity, extend the program's reach and build networks. It is wise to think about the ideal mix of partners for your program and start conversations with them early.

### Benefits of partnerships include:

- Assistance with promoting the program to wider networks
- Sharing of program staffing commitments
- Expertise in the prevention of violence against women
- Access to experts to facilitate advocate training
- Recruitment and screening of potential advocates
- Counselling and support for advocates throughout the program

### 4.7.2 Potential partners

Depending on your organisation and its profile, and where you operate, potential partners could include:

- organisations with a gendered health promotion capacity such as women's health services
- sexual assault and family violence support organisations
- local media organisations
- local government
- community health or primary health care organisations
- funding providers
- philanthropic organisations
- other organisations running Media Advocacy Programs.

Depending on the women you are working with, organisations such as local Aboriginal organisations or organisations that work with women from culturally diverse backgrounds may play an important part in your recruitment and support of advocates, or in the delivery of training. [Section 5.1.2.1](#) provides further information on the diversity of advocates.

Other potential partners are media organisations themselves. Ensuring that you have developed relationships with the media is essential for placing advocate stories.

### 4.7.3 Types of partnerships

Partners can be involved in your Media Advocacy Program in a variety of ways, whether as a guest presenter at your advocate training or a member of a program steering committee.

For an example of the importance of partnerships and how they have helped shape Media Advocacy Programs, please see the case studies in [Section 2.2.1](#).

The VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool<sup>2</sup> is a useful document to establish, develop and maintain partnerships.

## References

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# 5 Program Planning

## 5.1 Defining your program

### 5.1.1 Goals and objectives

As with any new program or project, the first step is to set your goals and objectives. These will vary from one organisation to another, depending on your vision and strategic directions and the changes you are hoping to bring about.

You may decide to focus on women who have experienced a specific form of violence, for example, family violence, or a specific group of women, such as women with a disability. This will be reflected in your program objectives. The important part is to be clear from the outset what you are setting out to achieve. An example goal and objectives are shown below.

### Example Goal and Objectives

<b>Goal</b>	To influence public policy by reframing the public discourse on violence against women, its drivers and strategies for prevention.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>At the completion of training, all participants will have developed the skills to effectively advocate for the prevention of violence against women.</p> <p>By [insert date] the Media Advocacy Program has generated [insert number] media opportunities involving [insert number] advocates.</p> <p>By [insert date] the Media Advocacy Program has generated [insert number] public speaking or community advocacy opportunities involving [insert number] advocates.</p> <p>[insert number] % of event organisers who use an advocate from the Media Advocacy Program in their event or advocacy opportunity report that there are benefits of engaging an advocate for the audience in attendance.</p> <p>[insert number] % of media articles written after engaging with an advocate satisfy the requirements of the Responsible Reporting Guidelines.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>By [insert date of evaluation], [insert number] % of advocates report benefits to self-esteem and an increased confidence to advocate for the prevention of violence against women as a result of participating in the Media Advocacy Program.</p>

This section will help you plan a Media Advocacy Program and keep it on track. Identifying stakeholders, risk management, communication, evaluation and sustainability are all key considerations.

### 5.1.2 Program scope

It's important to carefully identify what is in and out of scope for your program as this will have implications for all levels of planning.

Factors to consider include:

- What forms of men's violence against women will your program address? Is it women who have experienced intimate partner violence? Adult women as survivors of child sexual abuse? This will impact on your partnerships, recruitment, and the content of your training. See *Preparing for media advocacy training in the Voices for Change Training Manual* for more information on this.
- What populations of women will you work with? Do you want to work with a particular cultural group or a particular demographic of women? This will have significant implications on all aspects of the program including partnerships, screening, training, media outlets and support. See [Section 5.1.2.1: Diversity and its impact on your program](#).
- What forms of media advocacy will you focus on such as print media, radio, television, social media, or public speaking? Each of these will require your advocates to have varying skills. Online media including social media has some specific challenges, particularly around safety for women online. See the 'Social media and safety for women online' box below.
- Will you have any geographical or catchment boundaries on where you recruit women from and where you respond to advocacy requests? Or are you keen to reach further? Will there be increased privacy issues for your advocates if you are only responding to local media – this may particularly be an issue in rural communities. See [Section 5.1.2.2](#) for more information on rural communities.
- How much time will your organisation or partnership dedicate to this program? Will you respond to after-hour requests, or events on evenings and weekends? This will have implications for your program staff and staffing budgets.
- Be clear on what the program is NOT. For example, Media Advocacy Programs are not designed to be, or replace, counselling services for women who have experienced violence.

#### Social media and safety for women online

Social media can be a useful avenue for advocacy, potentially connecting to a large audience, who can interact directly and in real time. However there are a number of challenges and safety considerations if you decide your program will include a social media or online component.

There is a significant and pervasive presence of gendered hate towards women who have a voice online. For women who have experienced violence, online harassment may trigger previous trauma and may not be helpful to their personal health and wellbeing.

If you are planning to encourage individual advocates to use social media, they will need specific training on the effectiveness and safety of using social media. You should also include this in your risk management analysis.

You might also choose to use your organisation's social media to share the messages of advocates. This is less risky to the women, though your organisation will need social media policies. If you do this, make sure you ask advocates if they are comfortable with their voices being shared online.

Regardless of choices about social media, advocates should be made aware that many media publications are also available online. It is very difficult to control how widely articles will be seen, and how the voice of advocates will be received online. It is important to remember that in many cases online comments cannot be moderated or deleted and there is limited opportunity for the program worker to step in to control the situation.

For more information on advocate safety, see [Section 6.2.1](#).

### 5.1.2.1 Diversity and its impact on your program

Women who have experienced violence come from all walks of life and from a broad range of backgrounds. While gender inequality lies at the heart of men's violence against women, the understandings, contributing factors, experiences and contexts of violence can vary for different groups of women and across different communities. The prevention of violence against women will always include addressing gender inequality, but for some groups of women there will be a need to also address other intersecting forms of discrimination they may face such as racism, ageism and discrimination based on ability. The *Voices for Change Implementation Guide* and *Voices for Change Training Manual* are generalist resources that provide a basic foundation for addressing violence against women. They can be adapted to meet the needs of, and be relevant to, specific groups of women and population groups.

Being culturally safe<sup>1</sup> and relevant to the women involved should be done by, or in partnership with, organisations working with the specific groups of women and in consultation with women from these communities.

Regardless of whether your program will primarily focus on a particular group of women, it is important to consider how your Media Advocacy Program will accommodate diversity and be meaningful to young women, older women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds, women with disabilities and others who may be participants.

It is critical in the planning process that you consider the makeup of your advocate profile together with your goals. To ensure the appropriateness and relevance of your program, consider:

- **Partnerships**  
Who do you need to partner with to ensure you meet the needs of the advocates you plan to work with? Who can provide guidance on how to tailor the program to the specific needs of the group and ensure it is delivered in a culturally safe way?
- **Recruitment**  
How will you do this if you wish to get a mix of women with different backgrounds, or women with some specific experiences? Will you recruit first and then see who responds, or aim for a particular mix of women? How will you manage this? Can your partner organisations assist you with recruitment? Many women will not feel comfortable in a group if they feel they are in the minority, such as the only woman from an Indigenous background, or the only woman with a disability. Where possible, it is good practice to include at least two women from a similar minority background in your program.<sup>2</sup>
- **Advocate training**  
Training content and training providers will need to be responsive to the women and their experiences. In order to be culturally safe, the training and its providers will need to acknowledge and respect the associated definitions, concepts, beliefs and drivers of violence against women for participants from different backgrounds (see 'Contexts of violence' box below). An understanding of the intersection of gender inequality and various forms of discrimination faced by marginalised women and their specific barriers in accessing services and in working with the media is imperative. The myths and stereotypes around violence against women that are addressed in training will differ for different groups of women. For example, for women from different cultural backgrounds it would be important to cover stereotypical beliefs about violence in families from immigrant backgrounds so that the advocates are confident in addressing this if raised in interviews.
- **Advocate support**  
Does your organisation and all program workers have the necessary knowledge and skills to support advocates from varying backgrounds in a culturally safe way? Are there any training needs? Can you engage others to assist?
- **Other specific supports or requirements**  
Consider translated training materials, bilingual workers, accessibility of training venues and advocacy venues and culturally appropriate catering.
- **Media and community advocacy opportunities**  
You may need to consider cultural safety when organising advocacy opportunities and proactively promote your program to alternative advocacy and media sources including non-English speaking media. Having processes in place for checking the content and context of the article to ensure the advocate's voice is appropriately represented is very important.

Organisations running a generalist program need to explain to women from diverse backgrounds how the program will run for women to decide if they feel comfortable participating.<sup>3,4,5,6</sup> For your program to be responsive to the needs of participants you should ask the women themselves what they might need.

Some women will choose to undertake a specialist program run by and for women with similar circumstances. Hopefully some of these programs will soon exist. The 'Contexts of violence' box below provides more information on the contexts of violence for different populations of women.



## Contexts of violence for different populations of women – some examples

### Indigenous women

Indigenous definitions of ‘family violence’ are broader than those commonly used in the wider community. The Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force defines family violence as: ‘An issue focused around a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities. It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of Indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide.’<sup>3</sup> Family violence within the Aboriginal community should also be viewed within the context of the influence of colonisation and intergenerational trauma. Addressing gender equality within Aboriginal communities requires a whole of community approach. Strategies to prevent violence against women in Aboriginal communities are most likely to be successful if they are led by Aboriginal communities.<sup>4</sup>

### Immigrant and refugee women

Prevention activities targeting immigrant and refugee women should be delivered in a culturally sensitive way, recognising the unique experiences, beliefs and structural barriers that immigrant and refugee women face. Prevention approaches need to consider the varying expectations of women’s roles across cultures, and the way in which cultural norms and traditions might influence your approach. Women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds also face racial discrimination and barriers that may limit their independence and prevent them from seeking support for violence. These may include a variety of immigration and settlement issues, language barriers, financial limitations, lack of extended family support, and fear of police and the court system.<sup>5</sup>

### Women with disabilities

The rates of family and sexual violence are much higher for women with disabilities than for other women. Violence against women with a disability needs to be viewed within the context of the intersecting forms of discrimination that they face including gender based and disability based discrimination. The power imbalance between women and men may be amplified for women with disabilities. Women with disabilities experience the same forms of violence as other women but may additionally experience disability based violence by the perpetrator. Barriers to assistance are also numerous for women with disabilities. Barriers can include physical access issues, lack of information in appropriate formats, lack of appropriate accommodation alternatives, fear of removal of children from their care, and previous negative experiences of services.<sup>6</sup>

### 5.1.2.2 Rural communities – challenges and opportunities

There are specific issues that women from rural areas face as they become advocates in the prevention of violence against women.

Advocates and workers from the Loddon Campaspe Media Advocacy Project (case study in [Section 2.2.1.3](#)) identified a number of challenges and opportunities, which are detailed below along with other considerations for those implementing a rural program.

#### Opportunities

- The closeness of a small community can mean that messages from women have a more powerful impact.
- The local community can put a face or rural perspective to the experience – the issue of violence can become more ‘real’ and help debunk myths and misconceptions.
- The whole community may be encouraged to rally behind the advocate and the issue.
- A rural program can engage experts from within the region to be involved with various parts of the program and local media and community members can be encouraged to participate in the reference group, training and practice sessions, thereby also increasing their understanding of violence against women.
- A rural program has the opportunity to engage positively with the local media and encourage and support accurate reporting of violence against women.
- Advocates are able to be involved in advocacy opportunities in different geographical areas from where they live, assisting with issues relating to privacy, confidentiality and the impact on women and children when the perpetrator may live in the same geographical area and have ongoing contact.

#### Challenges

- The advocate’s privacy can be more difficult to protect. She can be more easily contacted, tracked and harassed through small community relationships, may experience privacy issues in accessing services and support, and there is a heightened possibility of contact being made by local media directly outside the program guidelines.
- Social isolation and a lack of community understanding and support in relation to violence against women are common experiences of women who have experienced violence living in a rural area.
- The community may know the perpetrator, or he may be identified through the story, causing an escalation of risk for the advocate (and her children).



- The safety of the advocate’s children or family could be at risk when an advocate speaks out about violence, as, in a small community, some may ‘take sides’ with the perpetrator.
- The advocate may be expected to be the ‘voice’ for all public speaking and advocacy opportunities.
- Community attitudes can be unhelpful as they may expect the woman to stay in an abusive relationship, and can contribute to further victim blaming.
- The perpetrator could be in a position of power or high status in the community and use these means to further victimise or discredit the advocate.
- Rural programs often have a large geographical area to service and seek diverse representation of advocates, amplifying the following challenges:
  - the difficulty for all advocates to attend training, which is dependent on their location and where the training is held as the venue needs to be accessible
  - limited car parking, public transport and available child care
  - the benefits of holding training in a larger rural town can mean anonymity for advocates – if it were held in a smaller town, advocates may not be as willing to attend.

### 5.1.3 Tasks, responsibilities and timelines

It is important from the outset to think about the tasks, responsibilities and timelines involved in the planning and implementation of a Media Advocacy Program. You need the right mix of skills and knowledge, and organisational resources to deliver the program. Everyone involved needs to be aware of their responsibilities and timelines. For more information see [Section 4: Is media advocacy for you?](#)



## Example Task List

Task	Responsibility	Timeframe
Formalise partnerships	Program manager lead organisation, Program managers partner organisations	Month 0 – 2
Establish steering committee	Program manager lead organisation	Month 2
Recruit and appoint program worker	Program manager lead organisation and representatives of partner organisations	Month 3
Develop program guidelines	Program worker	Month 4 – 5
Identify and book suitable trainers	Program worker	Month 5
Recruit advocates	Partner agency A	Month 5
Implement training	Program worker, Partner agencies A and B	Month 6
Promote program	Program worker and steering committee	Month 6
Meet with individual advocates to formalise their role	Program worker	Month 7
Commence taking media advocacy requests	Program worker	Month 8

## 5.2 Identifying key stakeholders

When setting up your Media Advocacy Program, consider who has an interest in or could be affected by it – these are your key stakeholders. Questions to ask to ascertain who key stakeholders are:

- Who is the Media Advocacy Program for?
- Who will benefit from the program?
- Who has a role to play in your program?
- Who would be interested in the results of the program?

See the ‘Potential stakeholders’ box below.

Consider the needs and interests of each stakeholder and any actions or communication that you will need for them to support it. It is important to identify and engage stakeholders who might interact with your program, whether it is in using or promoting your program, services who may experience an increased demand because of your program, a potential funding body or a community member that you are trying to reach or influence.

Identifying your stakeholders will also help you identify partners and develop your key messages and a communication plan. See [Section 5.4](#) for more information on developing a communication plan.

### Potential stakeholders for a Media Advocacy Program

- Organisational staff
- Funding bodies
- Advocates
- Wider community
- Media
- Event organisers
- Local councils
- Community health services
- Schools
- White Ribbon Day organisers
- Sport associations
- 16 Days of Activism organisers
- Women’s health organisations
- Community groups
- Universities
- Domestic violence services
- Sexual assault services
- Migrant information centres and other culturally specific organisations

## 5.3 Risk management plan

Assessing the risks involved with implementing a Media Advocacy Program – and ways to minimise or avoid them – is critical to consider from the outset. Some of your risk management strategies will be closely linked to the sustainability of your program (see [Section 5.6: Sustainability](#)).

### Example risk management assessment outlining some key considerations for a Media Advocacy Program

Risk	Mitigation strategies
Re-traumatisation of advocates	Screening and recruitment strategies to ensure women involved in the program are adequately progressed in their trauma recovery. Training covers strategies for staying safe when speaking out, how to deflect or re-direct questions, asserting boundaries, self-care and importance of debriefing before, during and after advocacy opportunities.
Increased safety concerns for advocates as a result of advocacy opportunities	Screening and recruitment results in women involved being in relative safety. Keeping safe included in training. Safety an ongoing issue discussed by advocates and worker prior to each advocacy activity.
Duty of care requirement of organisation questioned	Inclusion of safety documented in screening tool, and training outlines. Program worker to maintain case notes for each advocate to document discussions of safety and offers of debriefing.
Privacy and confidentiality breached for advocates	Privacy and confidentiality policies and procedures in place. Program worker has clear documentation of confidentiality requirements for each advocate (eg contact details, use of name, etc.) Privacy procedures include secure storage of any advocate information, speeches, case notes.
Program worker experiences vicarious trauma	Debriefing, support and supervision mechanisms in place. See 'Worker safety' box below.
Program worker fails to provide adequate support to the advocates	Support and supervision mechanisms in place for worker and advocate. Clear position description and program guidelines for program worker outlining responsibilities. Feedback and complaint mechanisms in place and advocates aware of these.
Risk of litigation	Recruitment and ongoing support mechanisms to include consideration of potential legal proceedings for advocates. Ensure advocates are formal volunteers of your organisation and covered by your insurance. Police checks should be a part of your volunteer policy. See 'Police checks' box for further information.
Lack of program worker due to leave or resignation	Back up worker trained, multiple workers sharing the role and able to cover each other. Agreement with other Media Advocacy Programs to assist in covering advocacy opportunities when worker on leave.
Inability of organisation to respond in a timely way to media requests	Position description of program worker to include a need to prioritise media requests over other work. Seek funding to increase the EFT of the program worker. Agreement with other Media Advocacy Programs to share media requests as needed.

## Worker safety

Supporting advocates to have their voices heard is rewarding work, but it can provoke strong emotional and physical responses in program workers.

It is essential that program workers are supported by their organisation to look after and manage their own safety and wellbeing. Organisational strategies to support program workers can include:

- Develop safety planning – This is just as important for workers as for advocates. Identify possible risks to worker safety and implement a plan and appropriate supports to mitigate these risks.
- Always ensure that your organisation knows where you are when attending a media advocacy opportunity, how to contact you and when you are expected to return. It is recommended to always check in with a manager or supervisor after an opportunity to let them know you are back safely.
- Familiarise yourself with the event location, including the availability of safe parking, access to and from public transport, emergency exits and who will be present.
- Consider whether the program worker should attend alone with the advocate or with another worker for support.
- Consider what equipment program workers may need to support their safety, such as a mobile phone with essential numbers stored in it, access to a work vehicle or public transport or taxi vouchers.
- Ensure equipment checks and procedures are in place, such as mobile phones are fully charged and checked prior to leaving the office, work vehicles are maintained at more than half a tank of petrol and have an up-to-date first aid kit.
- Have an emergency plan that includes what to do in case of an emergency and a plan for the organisation on how to support the worker.
- Know your organisational policies and procedures – How do they support and protect worker safety? What are the lines of reporting? If a program worker is concerned about safety with whom and how do they take up their concerns?
- Reporting and evaluation – In the case of an incident, ensure it is reported appropriately and evaluate incident response and opportunities to improve safety planning.

For the emotional safety and wellbeing of workers it is important that organisations foster a culture that supports employee health and wellbeing and promotes self-care. Workers should be provided access to regular supervision and access to an employee assistance program and/or counselling or debriefing. Self-care, accompanied by appropriate professional supports such as supervision, can prevent potential risks to worker safety and wellbeing such as secondary trauma.

Opportunities for program staff to collaborate and build networks with other people working in this space can facilitate peer learning, the sharing of knowledge and resources and can prevent isolation. Being able to debrief informally with colleagues and share the challenges of the work can also make a positive difference for workers.

## Police checks

Advocates should be inducted as volunteers into your organisation. Depending on your volunteer policy, this may require a police check.

It is important to be clear about why a police check is required. Police checks are generally recommended for any volunteers who will be dealing with vulnerable people. This is certainly the case for advocates who may come across other women who have experienced violence through their advocacy. There is also the risk of any previous police record somehow becoming public (for example, through a vindictive perpetrator) when the advocate gains a public profile. The check therefore protects both the organisation and the advocate.

It is also important to be clear about what your organisation's policy requires if someone does have a police record. This could mean assuring them that having a police record does not necessarily mean they are excluded from the program, but will be discussed with them to decide what is best for the advocate and the organisation.

## 5.4 Communication plan

To effectively engage and communicate with your key stakeholders your communication plan should detail:

- your communication objective – what do you want to accomplish?
- your audience
- the messages you want to communicate
- the ways in which you will communicate
- timelines for communication
- indicators of success.

When considering communications, refer back to your list of key stakeholders. Think about why and how others may be interested in or impacted by the program.

For example, it is important to recognise that your Media Advocacy Program may result in a flow on effect outside of the program. There may be increased media interest in violence against women and therefore an increase in requests for comment from family violence and sexual assault services. Services may also get an increased demand from women in the community who are prompted to seek help as a result of the program. It's important that these agencies understand that this increased demand may occur.

Other stakeholders might just be interested to know how the program is going and how to engage an advocate should they wish.

Your communication strategy should outline key messages to communicate to the general public about your program and the prevention of violence against women.

It is beneficial to communicate these messages with a range of stakeholders to promote consistent and coordinated messaging on violence against women and its prevention in your community.

## 5.5 Evaluation

Evaluation of your Media Advocacy Program will be different for every organisation, because it depends on your goals and objectives. Evaluation can include both impact and process evaluation.<sup>7</sup>

Process evaluation is focused on program development and delivery. This type of evaluation would be useful for evaluating parts of your advocate training, such as whether you have been able to attract the participants you hoped to and whether the presentations effectively communicate the content and skills.

Impact evaluation is used to measure whether the changes you have described in the objectives have been realised. For example, whether media reports that are published following involvement with an advocate from your program conform to the responsible reporting guidelines<sup>8</sup>, or how they compare to reporting that does not involve advocates.

Below are some suggestions of when, how and what to evaluate to judge the success of your Media Advocacy Program. Sample evaluation tools have also been provided and can be replicated and used in your own program if appropriate to your objectives. A sample evaluation framework has been provided as part of this guide.

### Suggested evaluation methods for various activities

#### Advocate training

Evaluation of advocate training could include questions to assess an increase in advocate knowledge and skills, confidence to take on the role of an advocate and how well the training program was run and facilitated. Qualitative and quantitative data can be collected to provide a richer overview of the training days.

See the *Voices for Change Training Manual* for more detail on advocate training, including suggested objectives and sample evaluation forms for the three days of training.

#### Sample program objective

At the completion of training, all participants will have developed the skills to effectively advocate for the prevention of violence against women.

#### Media articles

Media Advocacy Programs seek to influence and change the way in which the media reports on issues such as family violence and sexual assault through the voices of women who have experienced violence. Therefore reviewing media articles and stories that have used advocates is an important part of your evaluation. To enable evaluation, it is recommended that you collect any media articles that feature your advocates.

The number of media stories involving advocates is also a potential program evaluation measure. This can be as simple as keeping a spreadsheet with the details of each article, keeping hard copies of newspaper articles or downloading and storing articles. A sample of a simple spreadsheet for keeping track of your media opportunities has been provided as part of this guide.

You may like to set your own targets each year for the number of articles, events or opportunities involving advocates you hope to generate. This will depend on the program resources including number of advocates and time dedicated to the program.

### Sample program objective

By [insert date] the Media Advocacy Program has generated [insert number] media opportunities involving [insert number] advocates.

To assess the quality of articles involving your advocates you can review them against the media reporting guidelines developed by Our Watch for the reporting of domestic or sexual violence.<sup>8</sup>

### Sample program objective

[insert number] % of print media articles written after engaging with an advocate satisfy the requirements of the responsible reporting guidelines.

For a more detailed analysis of the quality of reporting of your program, you can compare the media articles on violence against women that have involved an advocate to those which have not, and compare articles before and after the commencement of your program.

For more information on working with the media see [Section 7: Creating and managing media advocacy opportunities](#).

## Community advocacy opportunities

Community advocacy opportunities are a significant part of a Media Advocacy Program. These could include advocates speaking at events, meeting with politicians and community leaders, contributing to public inquiries and other public discussions, and contributing to relevant campaigns.

It can be difficult to measure the impact where advocate voices have been used as part of submissions, or in meetings with politicians, however it is useful to keep track of the frequency and number of all advocate engagements by using an opportunity register similar to the one used in tracking your media articles.

A spreadsheet similar to the media opportunity spreadsheet (which has been provided as part of this guide) can be used to record all community advocacy opportunities. You may even keep a record of speeches by advocates (kept securely and with their permission) as part of this spreadsheet. You may also wish to collate qualitative information. Example questions could include what did the advocate contribute to the enquiry, how was the advocate's presence responded to at a meeting with a politician, was any feedback received after the meeting?

### Sample program objective

By [insert date] the Media Advocacy Program has generated [insert number] public speaking or community advocacy opportunities involving advocates.

If evaluating a public speaking event where an advocate has spoken, consider how you measure the impact of the advocate's speech on the knowledge or attitudes of the audience about violence against women and/or gender equality. While this can be done at an individual participant level at smaller presentations and events, often large public events make this difficult, if not impossible. Although not as rigorous as individual feedback, seeking feedback from the event organiser or asking them to complete an evaluation of the advocate presentation is an option.

This might include asking the event organiser to take note of, and provide feedback about, whether the presentation:

- helped dispel myths and stereotypes
- challenged common understandings about the issue
- highlighted facts about prevalence, the nature of gendered violence and the impact that it can have on women and the wider community
- made the link between gender equality and violence against women
- highlighted the key drivers of violence against women and how targeting these can lead to prevention.

Another valuable component to evaluation is gaining feedback from the event organisers regarding their experiences in engaging an advocate. Examples of questions could include:

- Was the advocate presentation what you were expecting?
- Would you use an advocate again or recommend using one to others?
- How did the inclusion of the advocate add to your event? What were the benefits?

A sample evaluation form for event or community advocacy organisers can be found in the appendices.

### Sample program objective

[insert number] % of event organisers who use an advocate from the Media Advocacy Program in their event or advocacy opportunity report that there are benefits of engaging an advocate for the audience in attendance.

### Advocate involvement

You will need to collect qualitative data to explore and understand how your Media Advocacy Program is impacting your advocates. What are the benefits and challenges they may have experienced as an advocate? Gathering narrative, quotes and stories from advocates provides rich and descriptive data on the impacts of the program.

This evaluation could be conducted through a survey (hard copy or online), semi-structured interviews or focus groups, or a combination of all three. You may wish to consider making surveys anonymous (by using Survey Monkey or similar) or engaging an independent third party to conduct an evaluation. The benefits of this are that advocates may feel more comfortable providing feedback about things that did not go so well for them.

Possible questions could include:

- Tell me about your experience as an advocate.
- How has being involved impacted you and others?
- Can you tell us about any social connections you have made as a result of being in the Media Advocacy Program and how this has impacted you?
- What aspects of the Media Advocacy Program have been positive or negative?
- What has/has not worked, and what could be done better?
- Are there any other issues that you would like to raise?
- Can you share your experiences of working with different types of media and other advocacy opportunities?

## 5.6 Planning for sustainability

Sustaining your Media Advocacy Program for the long term should be considered in your planning. Here are some tips on how to do this.

### 5.6.1 Ongoing support for advocates

Think of how you can provide ongoing opportunities for advocates to strengthen their competencies to engage with media and build confidence at public speaking events. There are a number of options available to do this:

- Run refresher training for advocates to practise their media and public speaking skills, develop key messages and keep up-to-date on statistics, policies and issues on the prevention of violence against women.
- Support the development of an advocate community (see [Section 6.2.7](#)) which might include bringing advocates together to share stories and learnings, and to practise their key messages and speeches with one another and the program worker. Discuss this with your advocates. It could be a regular coordinated event, or set up by the program worker for the women to run themselves.

### 5.6.2 Need for new advocates over time

The role of an advocate is different for everyone. Some women feel that through their involvement in a Media Advocacy Program they become an 'advocate for life'<sup>9</sup>; for others it could be a stepping stone to move onto other activities, or they may have healed sufficiently and feel it is time to move on. See [Section 5: Working with advocates](#) for more information on supporting advocates.

It is also a reality that the media like to see new faces and hear new stories over time. It is important to explain this aspect of how the media works in your advocate training.

In order to accommodate these points, you should be aware of the need to recruit advocates on a regular basis and plan for future advocate training and induction.

### 5.6.3 Ongoing investment in staff

As discussed in [Section 4: Is media advocacy for you](#), staff time and commitment is an important resource and vital part of sustaining the project. You will have to assess whether you have the staff capacity to keep the initiative going. Do you have the funds to cover the cost of a program worker in your organisational budget? Do you need to consider applying for a grant or seeking alternative funds to enable a worker on an ongoing basis?

Another sustainability strategy is to build the capacity of other workers within your organisations to be able to manage media requests and attend events and media opportunities with advocates. This might mean including other staff members in the advocate training sessions to increase their understanding of the program and for the advocates and other staff to get to know each other. Building



capacity of other workers is also a risk management strategy. See [Section 5.3](#) for a sample risk management plan.

Upskilling of staff can be achieved through shared media training with other organisations in your region that may be interested in learning more about working with the media.

### **5.6.4 Managing advocate requests**

The process of managing advocate requests is important for the ongoing sustainability of your program.

Having a structured process that is followed for each media advocacy opportunity is important. Developing a written procedure that can be followed by a variety of staff in your organisation may be useful, particularly for busy times when your worker is on leave. For more information on this, see [Section 7: Creating and managing media advocacy opportunities](#).

Requests for advocates will fluctuate depending on the external environment. In particular, media interest in violence against women can ebb and flow depending on a number of factors including current events, other news stories and the public's response to the issue. Sometimes you will be able to plan for these and sometimes you will not.

For example, the 16 Days of Activism including White Ribbon Day, is a time of the year which is likely to be busy, and for which you can plan. You are likely to also get a number of advocacy requests after a violent incident in your region, or a high profile person speaking out about prevention. These will be less easy to prepare for in advance. It is important to develop a process that considers these fluctuations.

Other considerations when managing advocate requests include ensuring timeliness and consistency of response to media, and keeping good records of requests to support future evaluation. Your ability to be responsive to the media's needs will also build the likelihood of them using your program in future. For more information on how the media works, see [Section 7.2: Engaging and working with the media](#).

### **5.6.5 Ongoing promotion and relationship building**

You also need to consider strategies to build interest in your program if you are not getting a regular flow of requests. The ongoing promotion of your Media Advocacy Program is essential to keeping people aware of the availability of advocates for media stories and public speaking opportunities.

Some tips for building your program's profile include:

- send a quarterly newsletter to relevant stakeholders with an update on recent advocate media and event opportunities and program contact details
- equip your staff to promote the program within their networks
- enlist partner organisations to share a program flyer within their networks
- use advocates within your own organisation – have an advocate speak to your board of governance or to all staff or at your annual general meeting.

For more information on promotion, see [Section 7: Creating and managing media advocacy opportunities](#).

## 5.7 Media Advocacy Program – stages of implementation

Your planning is now complete! Look at this simple implementation flow chart to see if you are ready to implement your program and where in the *Voices for Change Implementation Guide* you can find the help you need.

Key stages of implementation	Section/s of Guide
<b>Step 1:</b> Decide if a Media Advocacy Program is for you	<b>Section 1:</b> Introduction <b>Section 2:</b> History and current context <b>Section 3:</b> Why media advocacy? <b>Section 4:</b> Is media advocacy for you?
<b>Step 2:</b> Develop a program and evaluation plan with partners. Confirm staffing	<b>Section 5:</b> Program planning
<b>Step 3:</b> Develop and implement ongoing support mechanisms for advocates	<b>Section 6:</b> Working with advocates
<b>Step 4:</b> Recruit advocates	<b>Section 6:</b> Working with advocates
<b>Step 5:</b> Deliver advocate training	<i>Voices for Change Training Manual</i>
<b>Step 6:</b> Create and manage advocate opportunities	<b>Section 7:</b> Creating and managing media advocacy opportunities
<b>Step 7:</b> Foster an advocate community	<b>Section 6:</b> Working with advocates
<b>Step 8:</b> Sustain your Media Advocacy Program	<b>Section 5:</b> Program planning <b>Section 6:</b> Working with advocates

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# 6 Working With Advocates

## 6.1 Advocate recruitment

Advocate recruitment should be tailored to the needs of your program – your local environment, program structure, organisational capacity and partnerships. Creating a safe and supportive environment and earning the confidence of potential participants is essential.

### 6.1.1 Eligibility and target groups

Before starting recruitment, you need to establish eligibility criteria. Your organisation's focus and purpose will influence who you recruit (see [Section 5: Program planning](#)). For example, you may decide to work with women with disabilities who have experienced violence.

Your organisation may have geographic boundaries that require advocates to live in your catchment.

Media Advocacy Programs require participants who do not have barriers to speaking out publicly about personal experiences of violence and for whom the consequences of speaking out will not create an unacceptable threat to their safety or wellbeing.

For these reasons, it is important to develop eligibility criteria.

#### Eligibility criteria may include:

- being over 18 years of age
- being in a position, both physically and emotionally, to safely engage in media advocacy
- not engaged in ongoing legal matters related to the experience/s of violence
- being ready to go public and be recognised as a survivor of men's violence against women
- having established support networks and links to services to assist with managing the potential impacts of media advocacy
- able to attend all three media advocacy training days.

Participation in a Media Advocacy Program is not advisable for women who have current involvement with the legal system as speaking publicly could compromise court proceedings and be in contempt of court, potentially affecting the outcome of a court hearing.

There is also the risk that your organisation is seen to be attempting to influence the case. Women involved in legal matters should be directed to seek advice from their legal representative before considering participation in a Media Advocacy Program.

**This section provides important information on how to recruit, support and maintain the safety and wellbeing of advocates participating in a Media Advocacy Program. Many of these features are non-negotiable and advocates should be made aware of this, such as development of a safety plan in consultation with the program worker, the worker's attendance at events with the advocate and review of the advocate's speech.**

### 6.1.2 Recruitment and screening processes

Once you have established your target population and eligibility criteria you will need to recruit participants. This is where your partnerships will be helpful. See [Section 4: Is media advocacy for you](#).

If your organisation is not a local family violence or sexual assault service, a partnership with one is recommended as they will have a good knowledge of how prepared their clients might be to participate. You will also know that the women are linked in to services that can provide them with support.

#### Other recruitment strategies could include:

- targeted mailouts
- brochures or posters
- electronic and internet media such as television, radio, website, email and social media
- newsletters
- referrals from relevant professionals
- working with relevant organisations, programs or groups to promote the program.

It is important to have a clear understanding of how many participants your program can accommodate. The *Voices for Change Training Manual* recommends a maximum of 12 participants for training and no fewer than eight, to run group activities effectively. Once your program is established, you may run additional training and continue to grow your advocate base.

Helpful materials at the recruitment stage include:

- an overview of the program (aims and objectives)
- information about what is involved in being an advocate
- information about the training (dates, location, content)
- an Expression of Interest form (an example is provided as part of this guide).

You will need to assign a contact person for recruitment who can answer any questions or enquiries. This is most likely your program worker.

A **four step recruitment and screening process** should be followed and involves:



It is important that women who express interest understand that it is not until these four steps are completed that they become a part of the program, as not all women will progress through all four steps.

### Step 1: Expression of Interest



The Expression of Interest form prompts women to provide information on their interest in media advocacy, their experience of violence or abuse, their support and their involvement in legal proceedings. It is important to be clear whether everyone who expresses interest will be interviewed or not. The form needs to be submitted prior to an interview. It is also important to specify who will have access to the completed Expression of Interest form and how privacy will be protected.

### Step 2: Interview



This works as an orientation and screening process and is an opportunity for the applicant and organisation to see whether media advocacy is the right fit. It is also an opportunity to present and discuss media advocacy, the program and the advocate role. As the interview is exploring sensitive information about experiences of violence and abuse, there is the potential for advocates to experience strong emotions. The interview must be undertaken by, or in partnership with, an organisation that provides direct services to women experiencing violence.

### Step 3: Advocate training program



Following the interview, all applicants will need to be contacted. Not all applicants will be accepted into advocate training. Some applicants may opt out during the recruitment process and it is likely that some applicants are in a vulnerable emotional state and perhaps not yet ready for media advocacy, or that the messages the participant is seeking to promote are not in line with the program or the organisation's values. The confirmation process is best conducted by the same workers who carried out the interview.

It is vital to consider how you will manage this process and support those applicants who do not become part of the program. For example, it may be important to link applicants back into support services.

For those applicants who become part of your program, you will need to include information about the training and what to expect. Program eligibility must be restricted to those applicants who can commit to the entire training program.

### Step 4: Post training meeting



Once participants have completed the training, the final step is to meet with each woman and have a discussion about whether the program is the right fit for them, from both the point of view of the advocate and your organisation.

Due to the thorough screening process undertaken before the training, it is likely that most women will be suitable. It is possible however that some women may decide at this point that they are not ready to become an advocate, or the program worker may feel that the woman's expectations do not fit with the program. While this is unlikely, it is important to consider this possibility in your planning and ensure that these women are linked back into support.

The program worker will meet with advocates to explore their expectations, concerns and readiness. The questions below will assist this process. There is no right answer to these questions.

## Questions for potential advocates

- Am I ready to tell my story?
- Is it safe for me to share my story publicly?
- Are there any ongoing risks posed by the person who abused me?
- Do I really want to share my story or am I feeling that I should?
- Are there people in my life who need to be aware of my decision to share my story publicly?
- How might my children or family feel about my decision to speak out? What might the impacts of this decision be for them?
- How might my community feel about and react to my decision to speak out? How might this response impact me?
- What would happen if someone I know, who doesn't already know I survived violence, hears me speak?
- What if my children, boss, colleagues or family members found out this way about my experiences?
- What if I am triggered when telling my story?
- What if someone reacts negatively or judgmentally to my story?
- What if I'm not happy with how my story is reported or responded to?
- How will I manage the emotions associated with sharing my story publicly?
- What information am I ready to share and what information do I want to keep private?
- What would happen if information I wanted to keep private about my experience was made public (eg uncovered by a journalist or shared by someone who knows me)?
- Am I involved in any ongoing legal proceedings that may be jeopardised by speaking out publicly?
- Are there any potential legal consequences from sharing my story?

The program worker will document this conversation as part of a safety plan, which will be regularly revisited and reviewed. Together, the advocate and program worker will decide the best approach to safety planning.

This meeting is also an opportunity to orient the advocate to your organisation, their role as an advocate, their rights and responsibilities and any relevant organisational policies or procedures. It is recommended that a number of formal processes are completed at this stage to ensure safety of advocates and to establish a clear and mutual understanding of the media advocacy process between the organisation and the advocate.



## Forms to use in formalising the advocate position

### Position description

Sets out the roles and responsibilities of an advocate and the roles and responsibilities of the organisation. See sample position description which is provided as part of this guide.

### Volunteer application form

For applicants to formalise their interest in becoming advocates and to ensure important information about advocates is collected and stored. By becoming volunteers of your organisation, advocates have an official role, their work is recognised and they are covered by organisational policies and insurance. Each organisation needs to ensure that they have volunteer policies and procedures and that their insurance has adequate volunteer coverage.

### Consent form

For advocates to confirm whether they provide permission for their image, voice and/or name to be reproduced in material or publications relating to media advocacy. This is a clear way to establish individual advocate boundaries and preferences and a vital step in the safety planning process. See sample consent form provided.

### Police check

This is recommended to minimise risk to the organisation however it may or may not be necessary depending on your organisational policies and volunteer application procedures.

### A personal profile

For applicants to indicate what they are interested in speaking about or sharing as an advocate. You may decide to make this form optional as not all advocates will be comfortable writing about or sharing personal and sensitive information in this way. However it is a useful way to gauge readiness for media advocacy as well as understanding how applicants wish to tell their story, what topics are relevant to them and how they would like to approach media advocacy. It can also assist in matching advocates to advocacy requests. See sample personal profile provided.

## Setting clear advocate expectations

Every advocate will have their own approach to media advocacy, their own goals, values and messages they want to promote and their own expectations and understandings about the work they are doing. There is the potential for advocates and organisations to find that their understandings, values and expectations differ.

It is very important that, from the outset, the organisation clearly communicates the advocate role, the aims of media advocacy, the values and philosophy of the program and the expectations and limitations of being an advocate. From recruitment, through the training and then into the process of becoming an advocate, establishing a shared understanding of media advocacy and the advocate role is essential.

This will assist in making sure that conflicts of interest or different understandings or expectations can be readily identified and resolved. An advocate position description and an organisational induction will help to develop shared understandings, expectations and the responsibilities of the advocate and organisation.

Nevertheless, as advocates develop their skills and confidence in media advocacy, they may take these skills in their own direction. Advocates may begin to organise their own advocacy opportunities. This is to be celebrated! However, you should ensure that boundaries about when advocates are speaking as part of your Media Advocacy Program, and when they are speaking independently, are well understood and agreed upon by both parties.

Similarly, you may find that advocates apply their media advocacy skills to create a platform for issues that diverge from your organisational values, for example advocates may promote their business or organisation, or promote a particular route to healing from violence. Reflecting on how you want to approach these situations and anticipating the potential for different approaches to and understandings of the advocate role are important considerations when establishing a Media Advocacy Program.

**Taking the time to agree upon boundaries to the role and to develop a common understanding of when advocates are speaking as part of the Media Advocacy Program will help avoid confusion.**

## 6.2 Supporting advocates

The provision of appropriate, individualised support to advocates is essential to a successful Media Advocacy Program. Support for the physical and emotional safety and wellbeing of advocates should underpin every stage of media advocacy; from recruitment, participation in training, to deciding to move on from the program.

The demands of media advocacy are always changing and every advocate is unique. Every advocacy opportunity will be different, as will every advocate's situation. Advocates will each have varying hopes and expectations. They may wish to share their story and experiences in order to raise community awareness about men's violence against women. They may wish to speak out about gaps and challenges to the family violence or legal systems or ways in which we can create a society where the next generation of women do not have to experience violence. They may wish to share ways in which they have managed to remove themselves from a violent situation.

It is important when working with advocates to acknowledge women as the experts in their lives and their situation. Media Advocacy Program workers should take the approach that each woman is best placed to make decisions about what her key messages will be and what she needs to stay safe.

Therefore, what is involved in supporting advocates may vary from advocate to advocate and over time, and program workers need to be responsive to changing circumstances.

Creating regular opportunities for feedback is important to make sure that advocates feel appropriately supported and to identify opportunities to improve support mechanisms.

### 6.2.1 Safety and support planning

Deciding to become an advocate is an intensely personal choice. Speaking out about experiences of violence and abuse can provoke strong emotional and physical responses. While many advocates describe feeling strong and empowered after telling their story publicly, some describe feeling emotionally vulnerable after speaking out.

Creating a safe, supportive environment for advocates and processes that protect and promote their physical and emotional safety is of central importance to a successful Media Advocacy Program.

Planning for media advocacy opportunities is a continual process between the program worker and the advocate. Every media advocacy opportunity is different and advocates' situations are constantly changing, therefore ensuring the safety and wellbeing of advocates involves an ongoing conversation between worker and advocate.

It is the program worker's responsibility to ensure that safety planning occurs and is discussed for every advocacy engagement. While the worker may need to discuss some organisational responsibilities and considerations, it is also important that the safety planning process supports the empowerment of the advocate by adhering to the safety planning principles in the 'Key safety principles' box below.

Organisational responsibility lies in working with advocates to ascertain and discuss their needs and concerns, to prompt consideration of any concerns the advocate may not have considered, and develop strategies to support and maintain advocate safety and effectiveness throughout their participation in a Media Advocacy Program.

#### Key safety principles

The following principles create an important foundation for any Media Advocacy Program and will help program workers and organisations to create a safe and supportive environment for advocates.

- Accept advocates are the experts in their own lives, including in their experiences of violence, in defining their role as advocates and in keeping themselves safe.
- Honour and respect the autonomy and self-determination of advocates.
- Ensure advocates are in control of the process as much as possible.
- Respect and protect the privacy and confidentiality of advocates at all times.
- Always provide a way out and specify how the advocate can leave a situation or decline an opportunity. Advocates must always be able to say no and/or exit a situation if they feel unsafe or uncertain about an opportunity.

A number of factors need to be taken into account and explored with each advocate:

- **Naming**  
Does the advocate want to use their own name or do they want to remain anonymous? If using their own name, is it first name only or is their full name ok?
- **Image**  
Is the advocate happy to have their image published and/or recorded?
- **Voice**  
Is the advocate happy to have their voice recorded?
- **Medium**  
Is the advocate happy to participate in all forms of media advocacy (online, print, television, radio, public events) or are there some she would like to avoid?
- **Contact**  
Does the advocate have preferred methods of contact? Which methods of contact are safe and confidential for the advocate? Is it okay to leave phone messages?
- **Location**  
Are there particular locations which the advocate does not want to speak or be published in? Advocates must be made aware that print media articles are often also published online, so geographical reach can often not be controlled.
- **Risks**  
Are there known risks to safety the advocate is aware of and that need to be managed?
- **Privacy**  
Is there information the advocate wants to protect?
- **Family and children**  
Are there people the advocate needs to protect from the possible consequences of speaking out?
- **Community**  
How might the community respond to the advocate speaking out and how might this impact the advocate?
- **Legal matters**  
Is the advocate involved in any ongoing legal matters that may be jeopardised by participation in media advocacy?
- **Supports**  
Does the advocate have support networks in place to help them manage the potential impacts of media advocacy?

Strategies the program worker can employ to ensure advocates maintain control of the process include:

- Never disclose an advocate's details. Where third parties wish to contact an advocate, their contact details are collected and passed on to the advocate, along with the necessary information. It is then up to the advocate to determine how she contacts the third party and how the program worker can support her to do so. For more information on this, see [Section 7: Creating and managing media advocacy opportunities](#).
- Never assume what an advocate needs to feel safe. Always ask.
- Provide advocates with enough information and time to make an informed decision about which opportunities they take up. Never put advocates on the spot for a decision.
- Always ask advocates where they would like to set the parameters on their participation.
- Ensure that advocates are aware that opportunities are always optional.
- Ensure that advocates are aware that they are never in this process alone.
- Liaise with those engaging an advocate to ensure they are aware of the steps they can take to engage safely and sensitively with advocates.

### 6.2.2 Support to prepare for media advocacy opportunities

The program worker's role is to receive all requests for advocates to share their story and find out as much information as they can about an opportunity before contacting advocates. This is vital to enable the advocate to make an informed decision about whether they will accept or decline the request. For more information see [Section 7: Creating and managing media advocacy opportunities](#).

Once a media advocacy opportunity has been accepted by an advocate, the program worker will help ensure she feels equipped, safe and supported. This may involve support with draft speeches, developing and practising key messages, preparing for an interview and/or practising interviews or speeches.

It is also a chance to work with the advocate to consider how best to contribute to the program's aims of preventing violence against women. It is not the place of the program worker to tell the advocate what to say, but preparation often involves jointly drafting and refining key messages. Experienced advocates may need little support to prepare, however it is still expected that they discuss their preparation with the program worker for feedback and consider how they can tell their stories effectively, safely and in ways that will help create change.

The program worker will also talk to the advocate about what she will need on the day of the presentation and discuss safety and support. Together they will make a plan that includes travel to the event, what to do during the event and how to handle anything unexpected. The program worker should also explore with the advocate how she anticipates taking care of herself after the event.

#### Other considerations in preparing for a media advocacy opportunity

- Does the program have a budget to cover out-of-pocket expenses incurred by advocates, such as travel, parking, child care and meals?
- Does the organisation engaging the advocate have a budget? Are they paying other speakers or participants? Will they be offering any payment to advocates?
- How will you ensure that the contribution and expertise of advocates is recognised? What steps can you take to ensure this happens?

It is also important to reassure advocates that they can say no to any opportunity, and on a case-by-case basis.

### 6.2.3 Support during media advocacy opportunities

The program worker should attend media advocacy opportunities as a support to the physical and emotional safety of the advocate, and to ensure the advocate is in control of her participation as much as possible. The program worker is also a liaison and will act as an intermediary between the advocate and the media or event organisers, the public and other people present, where desired by the advocate.

If the program worker is unable to attend, it is important that a representative who is known to the advocate attends and is aware of the safety plan and other preparations that have been put in place.

The role of the program worker during the media advocacy engagement is to be decided in consultation with the advocate. No two advocates and no two media advocacy opportunities are exactly the same. See the 'Supporting advocates during media advocacy engagements' box below for tasks the program worker may undertake to support the advocate.

Not all media advocacy engagements will go as expected, and occasionally, the agreed plan may need to change. For example, a situation may arise where the worker feels that the advocate's health and welfare is at risk, such as an unreasonable question from an interviewer or audience member, an aggressive response to an advocate from an interviewer or audience member or repeated questions an advocate does not want to answer. The worker may feel a need to step in to support the advocate and interrupt in order to manage the situation and deflect attention from the advocate. This should be planned with advocates as a possible, but unlikely, scenario.

### Supporting advocates during media advocacy engagements

- Travel to the media advocacy opportunity with the advocate.
- Know the parking situation and ensure the advocate has access to a safe and convenient parking space.
- Introduce the advocate to all relevant people.
- Orient the advocate to the venue – entrances, exits, toilets, where they will be sitting or speaking, where audience will be.
- Ensure the advocate has access to what they require for their presentation – a projector, lectern, glass of water, an interpreter etc.
- Plan for a code word or signal that can be used during the event to alert the support person that the advocate wants help or is feeling overwhelmed or concerned.
- Stay close by and/or in the line of sight of the advocate.
- Take relevant resources, such as information about family violence or sexual assault services.
- Have a backup copy of the advocate's speech, notes or other preparation.
- Manage difficult situations, for example intervene in response to difficult audience members, unexpected photos or disclosures from the audience.
- Respond to anyone seeking help, referrals and/or information in response to the advocate's presentation.
- Prevent photos or recordings being taken of the advocate (where required).
- Ensure a swift exit from the media advocacy opportunity, if the advocate desires.

### Handling disclosures

Where an advocate is addressing a community group or the general public directly, it is vital to consider the possibility of other women sharing their own experiences of violence.

They might approach the advocate after the event or come forward within their own community for the first time. It is important to discuss this possibility with the advocate and how best to manage it. Handling disclosures is covered in Day 1 of advocate training.

It is also worth discussing this with the organisers of the advocacy opportunity so that they have considered how they will respond. Ensuring you have a supply of resources about where and how women experiencing violence can seek support for taking to advocacy opportunities is valuable, as well as ensuring this information is mentioned in the presentation.

#### 6.2.4 Support after advocacy opportunities

Many advocates describe feeling strong and empowered after telling their story publicly, however some advocates also describe feeling emotionally vulnerable and exhausted after speaking out. Be prepared for strong responses and the potential for feelings of vulnerability.

After each advocacy engagement the program worker should check in with the advocate. This is a chance to debrief about the opportunity, to find out how the advocate is feeling and to feed into the safety planning process.

This is also a chance to find out whether the advocate would like any extra support. It is highly recommended that the Media Advocacy Program provides or has a relationship in place with an organisation that provides timely counselling and support services to advocates. Where an advocate would like access to extra support beyond what the program worker or their own support networks can provide, having prompt access to a counselling service with expertise in supporting women who have experienced violence is essential.

The program worker should also check in a few days later to see how the advocate is going and pass on any feedback or evaluation received from the media advocacy opportunity. This is also an opportunity to ensure the advocate has copies of any materials, publications or media coverage generated from the media advocacy opportunity and is aware of any feedback or outcomes that emerged.

### **Strategies to support advocates after each media advocacy opportunity**

- Make sure there is a safe, comfortable, quiet place to head to after the media advocacy opportunity.
- Informally debrief with the advocate about how she is feeling.
- Provide positive feedback.
- Acknowledge what the advocate has achieved by speaking out and the courage it took.
- Offer the advocate something to eat or drink.
- Check the advocate gets safely to their car or transport.
- Confirm the advocate's plans for afterwards. How will she look after herself? Does her plan need to change? Is there a support person available to her today? What can you do to support her?
- Check in as to whether the advocate would like extra support such as professional counselling or debriefing. If so, ensure this is organised.
- Ensure the advocate has someone to call later on for support if needed.

### **6.2.5 Safety for specific populations**

While safety is a vital consideration for all women considering media advocacy, some women encounter different or additional risks or threats to their safety and wellbeing. These may include women from rural communities, immigrant and refugee women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with a disability, and trans women.

For example, women from smaller rural communities may be more easily identifiable, other community members may react negatively to the advocate's decision to speak out, or the perpetrator may inadvertently be identified through the story. Working with advocates from rural communities will require consideration of specific safety concerns. [See Section 5.1.2.2.](#)

Similarly for immigrant and refugee women or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, thinking through the impacts for their community, and for themselves in terms of their relationship to their community, are important.

Advocates from these communities or populations may encounter an additional layer of fear and stigma related to societal views about their identities and/or communities. Working with advocates to consider what this means for them and their decision to speak out and what supports would be beneficial in negotiating and managing any foreseeable impacts is vital. This may necessitate building relationships with organisations and support services engaged with these communities.



In safety planning, the same key principles apply: follow the advocate's lead and honour them as the experts in their situation and how best to manage it. It is also important for workers to think through what practical supports they can put in place to assist advocates, for example ensuring accessibility for advocates with a disability, interpreters for advocates for whom English is a second language, linking in to community organisations who may be able to provide specialised support and assistance to advocates and/or the program worker in supporting the advocate.

### 6.2.6 Support through recognition

Sharing personal stories of surviving violence can take an emotional toll on advocates as well as have real world costs such as time off work, child care, time taken to prepare for and attend the event, and travel costs. Finding ways to recognise, and where possible recompense, the costs and contributions made by advocates are important for organisations to consider.

This may be through your program budget and/or through support from people or organisations engaging an advocate. At a minimum, ensure that out of pocket costs are covered. Refer to [Section 5: Program planning](#) for ideas on how to do this.

Your organisation should also ensure that it acknowledges and recognises the contribution and expertise of advocates. Communicating to people enquiring about advocates that they are experts can be one way to validate the work advocates do. Similarly, taking the time after each media advocacy opportunity to thank advocates, to appreciate and affirm what they have just done and the courage, determination and hard work that it takes, is simple but important to remember.

### 6.2.7 Fostering an advocate community

Supporting advocates is not limited to before, during and after media advocacy opportunities. The program worker has a role in providing regular communication and engagement with advocates. This might include a regular newsletter that shares achievements of advocates and new resources, information and developments in the prevention of violence against women.

Opportunities for advocates to come together as a group for peer learning, to exchange advocacy experiences, ideas and resources and to support each other is another important way of developing an advocate community.

Planning regular opportunities for advocates to develop and practise their skills and broaden their knowledge is also an important support. Refresher training in public speaking skills, access to relevant professional development, up-to-date data, statistics and research, and opportunities to hear from professionals or experts in the areas of prevention, the media or media advocacy are equally important support mechanisms.

Inviting advocates to public events where another advocate is delivering a speech, and where they might hear from others presenting on violence against women, can help advocates update their knowledge, and develop confidence. It can also be beneficial for the advocate delivering the speech to have a familiar face in the audience, and someone with understanding of the advocate role. Before making advocates aware of such events you should first check that the advocate who is speaking is comfortable with this.

### 6.2.8 Moving on from media advocacy

Media advocacy can play an important role in recovery for women who become advocates. Some advocates describe their involvement in media advocacy as being 'for life'<sup>1</sup>. For others, media advocacy will be one stage in their recovery and therefore, at a certain point, they may choose to end their participation in the program.

While in most situations the decision to leave will be made by the advocate, there may be situations where the organisation may need to initiate a conversation with an advocate about their ongoing role with the program. This may be when the advocate's messages are no longer in line with those of the organisation or the program, or when the advocate's circumstances have changed such that it is no longer safe or appropriate for her to continue, for example when new legal proceedings occur.

Some women may choose to leave the program if advocacy opportunities lessen. Unfortunately, once an advocate's story has been heard by particular audiences, media and event organisers often wish to hear from someone 'new'. This is a reality of media advocacy work, and it is very important to be up front about this with advocates in the training. You should make advocates aware that other types of advocacy opportunities will still be available, such as providing feedback to consultations or meeting with politicians.

It is important to have processes in place to manage a situation of an advocate moving on, and to provide support to her. This should include linking the woman back into her support services, or making her aware of other volunteer opportunities outside of media advocacy. It is worthwhile to include a feedback process such as an exit interview or survey in your processes.

Ideally, moving on from the program would occur in a planned and collaborative manner, regardless of whether the decision to end involvement with the program was initiated by the advocate or the organisation. It is important to consider whether it will be possible for the advocate to re-enter the program, if they want to, and provide this information to them.

Organisations should consider how they will recognise the contribution and achievements of advocates leaving the program. Ways to do this could include a farewell event such as a morning tea with other program participants, an acknowledgement and thank you letter, a certificate or a gift.



## References

- 1 Patrick, R & Kyle, A 2014, *Eastern Media Advocacy Project Evaluation Report*, Women's Health East, Melbourne, Australia.

# 7 Creating and Managing Media Advocacy Opportunities

Media advocacy involves engaging in an eclectic and varied range of activities, opportunities and events. As well as working with the media, it can include public speaking, involvement in community campaigns, contributing to public consultations and many other activities.

## 7.1 Promoting a Media Advocacy Program

Media and community advocacy opportunities complement each other and, together, will generate more interest in your program and a greater call for advocates' voices on the issue of violence against women.

Good promotion of your program and building strong relationships with those active in addressing violence against women will ensure a wide variety of opportunities for advocates. It will assist in sustaining a successful Media Advocacy Program that contributes to changing the way we understand, talk about, act in response to and prevent violence against women.

A planned approach to building and maintaining awareness of your program is critical. Strategies for promotion might include creating an online presence (on your organisation's website, a program website or through social media), a launch event, media releases, promotional flyers, advertising and word of mouth through organisational networks and relationships. Your communication plan will assist you to plan your promotional activities.

**This section covers the two important factors to be considered when responding to media enquiries: meeting advocates' needs and meeting the media's needs. It provides direction on how to approach media advocacy work effectively while keeping advocates safe. It also provides suggestions on how to promote your program to ensure a variety of advocacy opportunities are available for advocates.**

### Key elements to communicate in promoting your Media Advocacy Program

Advocates are:

- women from the local community who have experienced sexual assault or family violence
- speakers and advocates who are ready to share their personal experiences with the community
- community members with compelling and powerful stories to tell
- not trained in what to say, but in how to tell their stories effectively and safely.

Advocates will:

- tell their personal stories of surviving violence
- use evidence to challenge myths and misinformation about violence against women
- inform the community about the prevention of violence against women.

How to engage an advocate:

- what is the process
- who to contact.

It is important to consider if and how you will promote individual advocates. Examples include a media release that profiles an individual advocate, or details about an individual advocate on a website or promotional flyer. See [Section 6: Working with advocates](#) for more information on an advocate personal profile.

Sharing personal stories of surviving violence can be emotionally demanding, and interviewing women who have experienced violence can cause a variety of ethical concerns for the media. It is important, therefore, to ensure that program promotion highlights the fact that advocates are supported in such a way that makes it possible for them to tell their stories and speak out, while staying physically and emotionally safe. Additionally, the support and training given to advocates helps to ensure the information they share is evidence based.

A sample promotional flyer and media release are provided as part of this guide.

## 7.2 Creating advocacy opportunities

In addition to responding to media and community advocacy requests, a successful Media Advocacy Program involves seeking out and creating opportunities for advocacy on the prevention of violence against women.

In creating advocacy opportunities ensure that they are appropriate and safe for advocates and will further your program goals. A communication plan that allows you to plan and prepare for how you want to approach media advocacy will ensure you develop clear goals, strong messages and effective strategies for getting your messages picked up in the media.

### Communication plan

A communication plan provides the following information:

- **The goal**  
What you want to achieve and how you will know when you have been successful
- **The challenge**  
What is the challenge that must be met if the work is to be successful and identification of any barriers to achieving goals
- **Target audiences**  
Who needs to receive the messages and which media to target to reach these audiences
- **The messages**  
The key messages to be communicated to achieve goals
- **Strategies**  
How we will get there, how we will reach the target audience, how we will overcome barriers and list of approaches, tactics and tools to achieve goals
- **Implementation plan**  
What needs to be done, who will do what and when, including how the key messages will be delivered to target groups, what are the most appropriate communication vehicles and tactics, and activities and deadlines, tracking and evaluation mechanisms.

Source: adapted from *Veronica McGowan (communications consultant)*

Being aware of events and other activities in your community on this issue, having good relationships with community organisations, local governments and other partners and keeping track of any public policy changes or consultations will all assist in keeping advocacy requests coming in.

Creating other community advocacy opportunities may involve pitching stories or ideas for an advocate's involvement in events to other organisations. It may also involve creating campaigns, for example, a social marketing campaign, to share advocates' voices. Anything that allows for the contribution of advocates' voices to the public conversation on violence against women can be considered part of media advocacy.

Strong networks and an investment in building and maintaining good relationships with the media, community organisations and those active in the prevention of violence against women are key to ensuring that advocacy opportunities are identified and capitalised on and that when you do pitch stories or create opportunities, they are picked up.

Creating media opportunities and getting your story in the media requires creativity and a solid understanding of what is news. Journalists need an 'angle', a side to the story that others don't have or that makes the story interesting. They also need to be comfortable that the story will have relevance and interest for their audience.

### Pitching your story

Answer the following questions before pitching a story to a media outlet:

- Why is this news?
- Who does it affect?
- What's new or interesting about it?
- What's concerning or unique?
- Why should this be reported?

Creating media opportunities can be approached many ways. Some strategies or approaches you can consider include:

- pitching a story about an advocate's personal journey to coincide with a state or national story or event, or promoting your Media Advocacy Program and the difference it is making locally
- 'hitching a ride' by capitalising on an existing story that is getting coverage and add something new to it, perhaps a story about a local, single incident of gendered violence and adding your voice about how this links to the broader social issue of violence against women and its prevention
- creating great photo opportunities that communicate your message, remembering that pictures can communicate important messages as well
- building stories around days of significance, such as White Ribbon Day
- releasing new data or evidence on violence against women such as new research or police data.

## 7.3 Engaging and working with the media

### 7.3.1 Building effective media relations

Media Advocacy Programs are primarily concerned with the news media including newspaper, online publications, television, radio, magazines and social media.

It is essential to understand the media in order to work effectively with them. Get to know and understand your local media including journalists, editors, broadcasters and producers, along with their deadlines, processes, target audience and what they consider to be news.

Building strong relationships with your local media and understanding the news cycle will go a long way towards developing effective media relations and a successful Media Advocacy Program. Similarly, you need to be familiar with the coverage of your issue. Consider the following questions:

- How is violence against women covered by the media outlet you hope to work with?
- Does your local media report about violence against women in a respectful manner? Ask yourself the same question about particular journalists –some might be pushing agendas that you do not agree with while some may be particularly helpful allies.
- What aspects of the issue are reported?
- What's missing?
- What language is used?
- Who is quoted as a source?
- Where do the stories sit in the paper or broadcast?
- Is coverage sporadic or frequent?

Knowing the answers to these questions, and keeping track of media reporting of violence against women, will help you pitch your stories at the right time and in the right manner. It will focus your efforts on the changes you want to see.

## Media representations of violence against women

Although violence against women and their children has almost daily media coverage in Australia, what is often missing is informed analysis and understanding of the links between sexism, gender inequality, community attitudes and this violence.

In worst-case scenarios some reporting or commentary actually perpetuates or excuses precisely the kinds of attitudes and myths that give rise to the violence in the first place.

As part of its wider program of work, Our Watch commissioned Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety to undertake a study of Australian media reporting of violence against women and children in print, broadcasting and online reporting.<sup>1</sup>

According to the study findings:

- The vast majority of reporting on violence against women was incidence based, and failed to draw attention to the broader social context in which violence against women occurs.
- 15% of incidence based reporting included victim blaming references, and 14% offered excuses for the perpetrator.
- Only 4.3% of articles included help seeking information, such as 1800RESPECT.

In addition:

- One third of women in the general community do not know where to go for outside help to support someone experiencing violence, demonstrating the importance of including service information.<sup>2</sup>
- An empirical study in the US found that exposure to news articles endorsing rape myths made participants far more likely to side with the defendant and dismiss the victim's claims of sexual assault.<sup>3</sup>

## What is news?

What is news or newsworthy differs widely depending on the media outlet. However, the list below provides some guidance. When reviewing this list, it is important to be aware that what is sometimes considered news by a media outlet may or may not match how you would like the article to be framed. For example, you may actively seek to avoid media opportunities that would sensationalise the experience of an advocate.

News is often:

- now – immediate or imminent
- local, or a national or international story with a local link
- affects people, preferably locals or people like us
- new or exclusive
- interesting, unusual, shocking, unique or bizarre
- has pictures
- -est – largest, biggest, oldest, youngest, fastest, mostest
- a human interest angle with bigger stories told through the individual, hitching a ride on another's story
- what the editor or producer says it is.

Source: adapted from *Veronica McGowan, communications consultant*

Media training will help your organisation build essential skills such as knowing how to contact the media, respond to and meet media requests, handle an interview, be a good source and pitch stories. See [Section 5: Program planning](#) for more information on potential media training for your organisation.

The following tips will help you work effectively with the media, but is not an exhaustive list or substitute for media training or recruiting staff with media expertise.

### **1. Develop or purchase a media list.**

This list will include:

- media in your local area that you might want to target
- journalists who regularly cover issues relevant to or related to violence against women
- media who reach your target audience
- media who are leaders on this issue.

Update your media list regularly as information goes out of date quickly.

### **2. Understand the media outlet's audience.**

Target your story or media release to this audience. Media like to be treated as individuals and receive tailored stories and news angles so it is rarely productive to send the same media release or story to all your media contacts.

### **3. Build relationships with the decision makers.**

Where possible, get to know producers and editors as well as journalists. Inform them of your Media Advocacy Program and what your organisation has to offer in terms of both advocates and expertise in the prevention of violence against women. Aim to build relationships that will make your organisation a 'go-to source' on violence against women and its prevention.

### **4. Provide feedback.**

If you notice good quality, responsible reporting on violence against women, get in touch and let the journalist know. Tell them what you thought was good about their article and how they demonstrated responsible reporting. Let them know about the Our Watch national media awards scheme and encourage them to apply and be recognised for their work. Consider writing a letter to their editor or producer thanking them as well. Similarly, if you see inaccurate or irresponsible reporting on violence against women, or reporting that does not contribute to the development of community attitudes that are helpful in stopping violence, get in touch and let the journalist know. Provide constructive feedback that addresses the concerns you have.

### **5. Make the journalist's job easier.**

Write media releases as though they are news stories, provide all the information required, such as up-to-date and accurate statistics and data and supporting materials, provide times, dates, locations and directions, link journalists to experts and other people for them to contact for other comments or angles. Ensure that you are succinct and relevant. Journalists are time poor, and cannot wade through pages of material. One page is sufficient, or a succinct email is best. You can provide links to further information.

### **6. Be reliable and responsive.**

Deliver what you promise, know your material, be a good source, be available, be accurate and be prompt. Most importantly, meet deadlines!

### **7. Do your homework.**

Be prepared, know your message and your material, know what you can say yes to and when you will say no. Consider photo opportunities and let journalists know about them. Stories with a photo are not only more likely to be picked up and reported on, they are also more likely to get a better position in a publication or broadcast. Always consider your advocates and their safety before offering photo opportunities.

### 7.3.2 Responsible reporting

Responsible reporting is about ensuring that ways we talk about violence against women in the media contribute to a culture that is preventative. It also shows respect for the victim, ensuring not to imply she is somehow to blame or minimize or sensationalize her experiences.

The media play a powerful role in informing public attitudes, knowledge and understanding about violence against women. Responsible reporting guidelines<sup>4</sup> have been developed by Our Watch to support the media to report on both instances of violence against women and the broader social issues underlying the violence, accurately and ethically.

Research has shown that media reporting on violence against women can have a range of impacts including victims feeling either increased or decreased vulnerability and stigma, the issue seeming rare and isolated or systemic and prevalent, an increase or decrease in public awareness and understanding, and a strengthening or weakening of community responsibility towards the prevention of violence against women.<sup>5,6</sup> Responsible reporting guidelines have been informed by research into trends in media reporting of violence against women and aim to address concerns with the way the issue has been reported historically.

It is important for program workers to be familiar with the recommendations of responsible reporting guidelines (outlined below), as advocating for them is an important part of working with the media for the prevention of violence against women. Wherever possible, stories about violence against women should be encouraged to adhere to these guidelines:

- **Name it**  
Use legal terminology and avoid language that trivialises or downplays violence.
- **Safety comes first**  
Report on an issue in a way that does not compromise the advocate's safety.
- **Know the law**  
Be aware of the legal parameters that outline what you can and cannot report about a situation.
- **Violence is never okay**  
The perpetrator is always solely responsible for a violent situation. Avoid using language or framing the story in a way that suggests the survivor of violence was in any way to blame for what happened to her.
- **Violence is serious, highly traumatic and life threatening**  
Never report on violence in a way that sensationalises or trivialises it.
- **Acknowledge that this crime has both a victim and a perpetrator**  
Emphasise that someone perpetrated the violence and that it was a crime.
- **Take the emphasis away from stranger danger**  
Don't misrepresent violence against women as a crime perpetrated by a stranger as most violence against women is perpetrated by somebody known to them.
- **Use sensitivity and good judgement when reporting an advocate's story**  
Make sure you do all you can to report on violence in a way that upholds the advocate's dignity.
- **Contextualise the story with statistics**  
Use local, national and international statistics on violence against women to frame the story.
- **Violence has a significant gendered dimension**  
Acknowledge that violence against women is a systemic social issue, not simply a one off incidence, and that it occurs in a broader context in which power and resources are distributed unequally between genders, and in which women are much more likely to be victims of violence than men.
- **Humanise the story with appropriate terminology**  
Where possible, and only where consent has been given, refer to the survivor of violence by name.
- **Call on community experts for comment**  
Community experts on violence against women will be able to put the issue in context.
- **Always include information about available support options for women who have experienced or are experiencing violence.**



### 7.3.3 Gendered nature of media

Research suggests that media coverage of public health issues, like violence against women, has an influence on both public policy and public opinion.<sup>7</sup>

When considering how we engage and work with the media, it is important to reflect on who the media are and how they work. 'The media' is not a neutral entity. News media in Australia is a highly gendered industry, renowned for its macho culture and male-dominated leadership.<sup>8,9,10,11</sup>

There is a relative absence of women in senior roles or in influential editorial decision-making roles, particularly in the print media.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, there is also a significant gender gap when it comes to by-lines and the sources used by journalists, with both overwhelmingly dominated by men.<sup>11</sup> As in many industries, women working in the news media experience a significant gendered pay gap and promotion for women journalists is less likely today than it was 16 years ago,<sup>9</sup> despite women dominating enrolments in journalism education for the last three decades.<sup>9,10</sup>

Research into the Australian media has also highlighted high levels of discrimination and sexual harassment of women working in the media, with one study finding that female journalists experience sexual harassment at twice the rate of women in the general workforce.<sup>10</sup> The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now the Australian Human Rights Commission) identified within the Australian media 'a culture of disrespect towards women, led by the way they are portrayed in the media (that) normalises and encourages sexual harassment'.<sup>12</sup> Other Australian studies of the culture of the Australian news media have similarly identified a culture of sexual harassment, systemic inequality and disrespect towards women.<sup>9,10,13</sup>

Evidence shows that our news media is written predominantly by men, with women journalists and stories about women less commonly represented. Where women are represented, they are more often featured in topics such as relationships, arts, education and health.<sup>14</sup> Sources of expert opinion in articles are most likely to be men.<sup>15</sup> These are all challenges for a program which is aiming to promote messages of gender equality, respect and non-violence through the use of women's voices.

What this analysis makes clear is that some segments of the Australian news media still relegate women and women's voices to the margins and view women's stories as less important and less relevant. Making women an equal partner in our public conversations and media coverage of social issues remains an important and needed shift if we are to challenge and change the structural inequality in both the news media and society more generally.<sup>11</sup> Media Advocacy Programs that support women to tell their stories and advocate for change are a powerful way to highlight women's voices and stories, provide journalists with access to female sources, and encourage reflection on the need for gender equity.

However, one of the most likely ways women make the news is as a victim.<sup>16</sup> For a Media Advocacy Program profiling and highlighting women's experiences of violence, this stereotype can facilitate the likelihood of media seeing these stories as newsworthy but repeat the gendered stereotypes and gendered limitations we are seeking to break down.

Finding ways to challenge this stereotype are important. This can involve discouraging the use of 'victim', encouraging and supporting journalists to link individual stories to broader social patterns of violence against women and its prevention and linking journalists to other female sources, such as researchers, academics or experts on violence against women. See the Our Watch Media Resources for more responsible reporting guides for journalists.<sup>4</sup>

Finding ways to challenge gender inequality in media organisations may not be at the forefront of your interactions with journalists, which are more likely to be focused on providing information, asking questions and meeting deadlines. However, a preparedness to identify and take up opportunities to challenge gender inequality or advocate for gender equity is essential if this work is to contribute to the broader goal of preventing violence against women.

## 7.4 Preparing for advocacy enquiries

Any activity that allows advocates' voices to contribute to, influence and inform the public conversation about violence against women can be an important part of advocacy. Even if your community advocacy opportunities do not result in media coverage, they can be powerful ways to challenge community attitudes and raise awareness in your community about violence against women.

### Community advocacy can involve:

- public speaking
- participating in community projects and organisations, for example through steering committees
- meeting with politicians and community leaders
- contributing to public inquiries, for example Senate inquiries or Royal Commissions
- contributing to academic research
- addressing schools, businesses, organisations and other community groups
- participating in public events, community forums, conferences and other public discussions
- contributing to campaigns.

As your program worker will not always be available, it is essential that all staff in your organisation who might answer the phone know what to do if a call is received from the media or advocacy opportunity organiser. Staff should know who to refer an enquiry to for an organisational comment, and if that person is not available, what initial steps to take in response to a journalist's enquiries.

As Media Advocacy Program workers will attend all media advocacy opportunities, they need to know whether they can speak to the media on behalf of the organisation and, if so, what their organisational message is. It is best if Media Advocacy Program workers are media trained and prepared to be spokespeople as an invitation to comment is possible during media advocacy opportunities.

**There is no such thing as an 'off the record' comment.** When program workers speak to the media what they say may be reported. It is important for organisations to prepare Media Advocacy Program workers for this possibility.

Being prepared also involves having at hand materials that may be useful to support the advocate during the media or community advocacy opportunity, and to ensure quality reporting by the journalist. This might include:

- a copy of Our Watch's Responsible Reporting Guidelines to share with the journalist if the journalist is not aware of these
- a list of relevant services available to support women experiencing violence.
- statistics, data or evidence you could share with the advocate or the journalist to support the story
- a list of other Media Advocacy Programs in case you need to seek their assistance to identify an advocate
- a list of other potential experts that you can refer the media to if they are looking for additional sources for their article which might include people within and external to your organisation.

1800 Respect is a national sexual assault and domestic violence counselling service that provides information and support to women who have experienced violence. Women in emergency situations should be directed to ring 000. It might also be relevant to include telephone numbers of local services dependent on the story and media outlet. Providing service information for a journalist to include in their story is important as Our Watch's research into media coverage of violence against women found that only 4.3% of articles included information about services, such as crisis and support phone numbers. This is equally important for community advocacy organisers due to the possibility of women disclosing experiences of violence after an advocacy event on violence against women. [See Section 7.3.2, step 2](#) for more information on disclosure.

For more about working with advocates to prepare for media advocacy engagements see [Section 6: Working with advocates](#).

### 7.4.1 Responding to media enquiries

Your organisation will need to develop a media protocol – this will differ for each organisation, depending on its structure and the people responsible for engaging with and responding to media. The following steps can be used as a guide to develop a simple protocol for handling media enquiries.

An essential element is letting the journalist know whether or not you can meet their request within their deadline, and allow enough time to find and prepare an advocate.

#### Step 1:

**Ask questions before responding to questions**



#### Step 2:

**Respond to a request**



#### Step 3:

**Follow up**

## Step 1:

### Ask questions before responding to questions

When receiving a media request you should find out as much as possible about what the journalist is seeking in order to assess the request and determine whether or not you can or will meet it.

Ask a range of questions (see 'Questions' box below) to determine what the journalist is after, whether your program and advocates can meet that request, whether it is appropriate and safe to put advocates in this position and whether responding to the request will help achieve your goals. You may also need to determine whether you need more time and/or information and may need to advise the journalist that you will get back to them to confirm your response.

#### Questions to ask a journalist to assess whether you can or will meet their request

- **What is your story?**  
What is their position or angle?
- **When do you need our response? What is your deadline?**  
Be responsive, but ensure there is enough time to find an advocate and for them to prepare.
- **Who else have you spoken to or are you speaking to?**  
Are they individuals who are likely to agree or disagree with your stance? Could their involvement compromise your involvement? Are there other people you could refer the journalist to?
- **What do you need?**  
To speak to an advocate? Statistics? A good quote? A referral to another source? A picture?
- **When and where will the story be published or broadcast?**
- **How would an advocate be involved?**  
An interview? A photo?
- **Are there specific questions you are seeking answers to?**  
This helps to appropriately prepare an advocate.

#### Other considerations

This is also a good time to talk to the journalist about whether there will be a photograph used with the article. Photographs can be a powerful and effective addition to a story; however they can be problematic at times if the photographer is not aware of the full content of and background to the article. It is vital that the journalist or the program worker make sure that the photographer is sensitive to the advocate's story and is not reinforcing gender stereotypes or vulnerability of women in photographic imagery. Photographers must also be aware of privacy and confidentiality when taking photos. It is likely to be important that the photograph does not identify an advocate's home address.

You may need to negotiate where the media interview will be conducted. A quiet, safe place is important. If the interview is for television or a newspaper, consider taking advantage of opportunities to communicate positive messages through the location of your interview, such as incidental signage of your service or adding positive images to the background. Think also about what resources or additional support material you can provide to encourage appropriate coverage of the issue.

#### Declining a media request

You do not have to agree to all media requests. You may decide an opportunity is not right for your program or advocates or is at odds with your objectives. For example, a journalist intent on taking a sensationalist approach to a story on violence against women may be a request you decide not to accept, as may be a request where you feel there is no opportunity to be fairly represented or to adequately protect your advocate. In those cases, saying no and clearly explaining to the journalist why you are declining is the best course of action. Saying no is a better choice than putting an advocate in an inappropriate or unsafe situation and/or compromising your goals.

Alternatively, you may want to suggest they reconsider their angle. You could also inform the journalist of the kind of requests you can meet and encourage them to contact you in future.

## Step 2: Respond to a request

Once you decide to accept a request, let the journalist know that you will arrange for an advocate who can answer their questions. Ensure that you fully understand the journalist's deadlines and availabilities. Let them know you will get in touch with the advocate and then get back to them to confirm a time. Explain to journalists that you will not disclose an advocate's personal contact details but that you will act as the liaison. This is for the advocate's safety.

You will then need to consider which advocate is best placed for this opportunity or whether you will offer it to all advocates.

### Matching advocates to opportunities

When a media advocacy opportunity comes in you will need to have a process for offering that opportunity to an advocate. The process of matching advocates to opportunities could consider:

- **How much time you have**  
Media enquiries often have very short turnaround times, so it is important to know which advocates are available at short notice and how comfortable they are with limited time to prepare as this will not suit all advocates.
- **The topic requested**  
Often requests are seeking someone to speak to a specific experience such as legal experience reporting a sexual assault or a partner who breached intervention orders.
- **Where it will be shown or published and how public the opportunity is.**  
Advocates might feel very differently about a story in the local paper or radio compared to speaking on the television news.
- **Where and when the opportunity is.**  
Convenience will be a factor for advocates.

- **Who else is involved?**

Are other speakers involved and are they likely to support or contradict an advocate?

- **What is being requested?**

Is it an interview, or a comment? Is it for television, radio, print or online?

Many of these questions will have been discussed ahead of time with advocates so program workers know who is comfortable with which kind of opportunity. For more information, see [Section 6: Working with advocates](#).

Based on this, you may decide to approach an advocate who is suited to the opportunity, and often if turnaround is brief, this can be best. Alternatively, especially where there is more time available, you may decide to contact the advocates as a group and see who is interested.

However when you match or offer opportunities to advocates, the most important things to keep in mind are providing as much information and transparency to the advocates as possible and ensuring they have some time to think over the request and decide if it is right for them.

When a media opportunity has been accepted and you have considered which advocates the opportunity is best suited to, the following steps are key to communicating with an advocate about a potential media opportunity:

- Contact the advocates and provide as much information as you have about the opportunity.
- Specify the process for accepting and declining the opportunity and always remind advocates that every opportunity is optional, and that they can change their mind at any point.
- Advocates learn about the pace of the media cycle as a part of their training and will be aware of the need to be able to respond in a timely way, however it is important to provide advocates with time to think over the opportunity and decide whether they want to take it up. Never put advocates on the spot, regardless of deadlines. Always allow them to reflect and get back to you.

- When an advocate accepts an opportunity, discuss how they would like to handle the request and any concerns or requirements they have about their involvement. Together make a plan about how you will support the advocate's participation.
- Let the advocate know that you will get back to the journalist to confirm the process and what will happen. For more information about supporting advocates during a media opportunity, and ensuring their safety and wellbeing, see [Section 6: Working with advocates](#). Ensure that both the journalist and the advocate know that you will be accompanying the advocate during the media opportunity.

If there are no advocates interested or available for the request, consider whether there is another Media Advocacy Program that may be able to take up the request. Let the journalist know as soon as possible. Apologise for any inconvenience and find out if there are any other ways you can support their story, such as referring them to another trusted source of information about violence against women in your community or provide them with factual information.

It is good practice that the program worker, or someone from your organisation, is present at every media opportunity to support the advocate, ensure the agreements you have made with the journalist or outlet are met, and to know what follow-up information needs to be provided. See [Section 6: Working with advocates](#) for more information on supporting advocates before and during their media advocacy opportunities.

## Step 3: Follow up

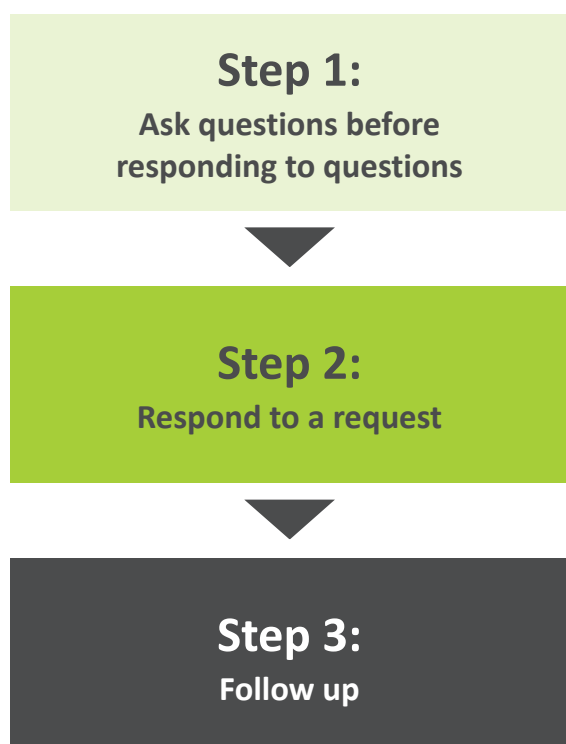
After a media engagement, the program worker should follow up with the journalist to confirm that they got what they needed and find out whether they have any further questions or requests. Thank the journalist for the opportunity and encourage them to contact you in future for stories on violence against women and its prevention.

Gather all media coverage resulting from the media opportunity and provide feedback to the journalist. Give the advocate an opportunity to provide feedback on the media coverage, and pass this on to the journalist. If you have concerns about the resulting coverage, offer polite and constructive feedback that highlights your concerns and how they could be addressed. You want to maintain a relationship with the journalist and you also want to encourage the journalist to report responsibly. Provide all media coverage to the advocate and congratulate them on their work.

Keeping a record of media engagements and articles is also important. See the evaluation section of [Section 5: Program planning](#) for more information on how to do this.

## 7.4.2 Responding to community advocacy enquiries

Community advocacy opportunities can be quite different from media engagements. They usually have a greater lead time, which means more time to gather information, recruit an advocate and prepare. However, this will not always be the case and knowing how you will handle and respond to enquiries quickly remains important. A prompt response may not be as critical for these kinds of opportunities as it is for the media, but clear, efficient processes will ensure you make the most of opportunities and requests as they arise.



### Step 1: Ask questions before responding to questions

When receiving a community advocacy request you should find out as much as possible about the activity and its purpose. Sometimes, the organisers will not be clear, or know what they want, and this is an opportunity for you to make suggestions about how to best involve an advocate and provide solutions. Gaining clarity about the opportunity might take several conversations.

Gather information including:

- what type of advocacy opportunity is proposed, when and where it is taking place, the purpose of the advocacy, who else is involved and who the audience is
- whether the advocate is expected to present and/or to engage interactively such as take questions or provide comment
- if it is desired that the advocate take questions, whether it possible for these to be provided to the advocate before the engagement
- if relevant, how the advocacy opportunity is being promoted (you may want to have some say in this) and what is expected of the advocate.

The program worker must also consider the physical space or venue where the engagement will be held and discuss this with the organiser. This is important for both the advocate and the audience. The venue must provide a feeling of safety and comfort for the advocate with easy access to exits, be light, airy and not confined. This may also be an important consideration for the audience at a public speaking event, as it is likely that there will be women in the audience who may have experienced violence, or members of the audience for whom the advocate's speech may be triggering.

Given that you are likely to have a greater amount of time to respond to this type of request, it is useful to ask those organising the advocacy opportunity to consider and respond in writing to these questions to inform your understanding of the request. See example Advocacy Request Form in the appendices.

### Declining a community advocacy opportunity

Not all requests have to be accepted. After finding out what the opportunity entails, you may decide it is not appropriate or safe for advocates or that it will not contribute to your program goals. Provide a clear explanation of why you are declining, along with information about the sorts of opportunities that are appropriate for advocates and your program.

However, community advocacy opportunities are often more flexible so you may be able to negotiate or provide suggestions to the organiser about ways in which the engagement may be made safe or appropriate for advocates. Many organisations will welcome advice and assistance in this regard.



## Step 2: Respond to a request

After accepting a community advocacy request, consider how best to offer the opportunity to advocates. This will likely depend on timelines and the nature of the request. See Matching advocates and opportunities earlier. Most of the steps for communicating with an advocate about a potential community advocacy opportunity are the same as those listed in [Section 7.3.1](#) step 2 – see this section for more information.

The diversity of community advocacy opportunities often means there are considerations which may differ from media engagements, for example, if it is an invitation to sit on a steering committee, is this a role that the advocate is familiar with?

- Tease out exactly what is expected of an advocate and whether particular knowledge or skills are required so that you can adequately support and prepare the advocate. The program worker will need to discuss this with both the person requesting the advocate and the advocate themselves, to ensure that access to any training, support or assistance required for the advocate's safe and meaningful participation is provided.
- It is the role of the program worker to work with both the advocate to ensure she is prepared for advocacy opportunities and with the person requesting the advocate to ensure her participation will be safe and meaningful.
- If the request involves addressing a community group or organisation it will be important to consider how well the audience is prepared to hear about the topic of violence against women. This can have a significant impact on how the advocate is received and how the audience responds.
- Whether the audience will be expecting to ask questions of the advocate and whether the advocate will be meeting with the audience before, during or after the event can also impact how the advocate and program worker will prepare. They can also influence an advocate's decision to take up the opportunity or not, so considering these things ahead of time is critical.
- It is important for the program worker to consider the possibility of disclosures being made to the advocate, and have a plan for how to handle them. See 'Handling disclosures' box in [Section 6: Working with advocates](#) for more information on disclosures.

## Step 3: Follow up

After an advocacy opportunity, the program worker is advised to follow up with the organiser to obtain feedback and find out how the event or opportunity went from their perspective. This is a great opportunity to undertake evaluation and find out any impacts that arose from the advocate's involvement. Recording all your community advocacy opportunities is also important. See the evaluation section of [Section 5: Program planning](#) for more information on how to do this.

Thank the organiser for the opportunity and encourage them to contact you in future for opportunities related to violence against women or gender equality. Make sure to gather any media coverage, publicity or responses to result from the advocacy opportunity. If you have concerns about anything that occurred as part of, or after, the opportunity, offer constructive feedback that highlights your concerns and how they could be addressed. If you have positive feedback, be sure to pass that on too. Ensure that all feedback, evaluation or coverage is also provided to the advocate and congratulate them on their work and the result.



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# 8 Appendices

## Media Advocacy Program – Request for an advocate (Public Speaking/Events)

### Organisation details

Organisation Name:

Purpose/mission of Organisation:

Address:

Phone:

### Contact details

Contact Name:

Title:

Phone/Mobile:

Email:

### Event information

Event date and time:

Time of advocacy opportunity:

Location (incl. room, level etc.):

Purpose of event/main themes:

Is this advocacy opportunity linked to any other activity eg. White Ribbon, fund raising project etc.?

Please provide detail about any other presentations at the same event (i.e. presenters, themes):

Please specify equipment available ie laptop, screen etc.:

How many people do you anticipate will attend?

Who is the intended audience for this event/activity (e.g. community, service providers etc.)?

### Event promotion

How are you promoting this event/activity?

Do you agree to provide [*insert name of organisation*] with a copy of any publicity material?

Are you inviting the media or putting out a press release? If yes, do you agree to inform [*insert name of organisation*] of any media? Do you agree to seek approval from [*insert name of organisation*] and the advocate PRIOR to photos/media being organised etc?

## **Advocate support**

Does the organisation plan to offer remuneration/ reimbursement to the advocate?

Are the audience aware that they will be hearing from an advocate?

## **Other**

How did you hear about the [insert name of your program]?

Is there any other relevant information to assist the advocate in preparing for this opportunity?

**Thank you for completing the request for an advocate form. We look forward to working with you on this community advocacy opportunity!**

Please return this form to:

*[Insert Program worker contact details]*

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## Survivor Advocate with the *Speaking Out Program* – Position Description

### Summary

<b>Position title</b>	Speaking Out Program Survivor Advocate (Volunteer)
<b>Hours</b>	Casual hours as negotiated with Women's Health East
<b>Reports to</b>	Chief Executive Officer via the Speaking Out Program Coordinator
<b>Location</b>	1/125 George St, Doncaster East, Victoria, 3109

### About Women's Health East

Women's Health East (WHE) is the Women's Health Service for the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) of Melbourne, covering the municipalities of Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges.

Working within a feminist and human rights framework, WHE addresses the social, political and environmental causes of gender inequities impacting the health and wellbeing of women in the region, through research, advocacy for systemic change, training, and external capacity building. WHE aims to represent all women in the East adopting a non directive approach that is respectful of cultural, political and religious beliefs. All board, staff and volunteers, are expected to work within this philosophy.

Our current priority action areas are Promoting Mental Health - Prevention of Violence against Women, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Gender Equity for Health Outcomes. These priority areas will be subject to ongoing review and change as the organisational strategic directions, and focus change in line with women's health needs in the EMR.

### About the Speaking Out: Media Advocacy to End Family Violence and Sexual Assault Program

The Speaking Out: Media Advocacy to End Family Violence and Sexual Assault Program ensures that the voices of women who have experienced family violence and sexual assault are heard through the media and public events. Led by WHE, in partnership with the Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (ECASA) and the Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS), the program seeks to influence a change in community attitudes and to promote the prevention of violence against women.

Established in 2011, the program's main objectives are:

- To provide opportunities for women who have experienced violence to undertake advocacy;
- To recognise the importance of women's voices and ensure that the voices of survivor advocates are heard;
- To contribute to a more accurate, sensitive and gender equitable public discourse on violence against women;
- To contribute to changing community attitudes and behaviours towards violence against women.

## Volunteer Advocate Position Description

The Volunteer Advocate position is appropriate for women survivors of sexual assault and/or family violence in the EMR. The role involves telling your story and bringing a human face to help stop violence against women. This may involve talking to the media or at public events.

Volunteer Advocates use key messages to tell their story and link it to the broader context of violence against women. In telling their personal story, advocates give clear messages to the media and the public about what violence against women really is and discredit the misinformation that continues to surround this issue. Advocates receive media and public speaking training prior to taking on the role, along with ongoing support from WHE and partner organisations, to ensure advocates have the skills, knowledge and support to speak publicly about their experience.

## Responsibilities of the Volunteer Advocate

- To provide accurate information, to the best of their ability, about violence against women when acting as a Volunteer Advocate;
- To liaise with WHE Speaking Out Coordinator in the preparation of speeches/media;
- To attend scheduled media interviews, public speaking engagements and other commitments as agreed or to provide adequate notice of inability to attend;
- To be alert to potential conflicts of interest and to alert WHE to any potential conflicts of interest;
- To respect the privacy and confidentiality of others and to abide by the WHE Code of Conduct and the WHE Privacy Policy;
- To act in accordance with all WHE Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures;
- To complete a Police Check in line with WHE Volunteer Policy;
- To at all times treat WHE staff and volunteers with courtesy and respect.

## Responsibilities of WHE

- To provide media and public speaking training to all Volunteer Advocates prior to any advocacy engagement;
- To provide training and information on the evidence-base and on feminist and human-rights frameworks relevant to violence against women and its prevention;
- To adequately prepare and support Volunteer Advocates to engage with the media or speak publicly about their experiences of violence;
- To provide ongoing support to Volunteer Advocates who actively engage with Speaking Out;
- To provide access to debriefing to Volunteer Advocates who actively engage with Speaking Out;
- To protect the confidentiality and privacy of Volunteer Advocates at all times;
- To act as the intermediary between Volunteer Advocates and the media or event organisers;
- To cover travel and out-of-pocket expenses incurred by Volunteer Advocates when participating in advocacy opportunities where appropriate and in accordance with WHE policy;
- To at all times treat Volunteer Advocates with courtesy and respect.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## MEDIA ADVOCACY CONSENT FORM

I am comfortable and give permission for my:

Image YES / NO

Voice YES / NO

Name\* YES / NO

**\*Please specify your name preference:** (eg. full name / first name only / pseudonym / other)

---

To be used for the purposes of media advocacy.

I \_\_\_\_\_ of

---

(insert address)

do give my permission for my **image, voice, name as specified above** (delete as applicable) to be reproduced in publicity material or publications associated with the *[insert name of Program]*. I understand that my picture may also appear and my voice may be used in a wide variety of media not under the control of the organisations involved in the program, including but not limited to publications of *[insert name of Program]*, on the internet, and in public media (television, print).

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witnessed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



[illegible]

## Evaluation Questions for Event /Community Advocacy Organisers

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### Event Organiser Details:

Name:

Position:

Organisation:

### Event Details:

Name:

Date of event:

Purpose of event:

---

### Questions

1. Was the process of booking an advocate and engaging with this program clear and simple?
2. Do you have any suggestions in regard to how this process could be improved?
3. Why did you chose to have an advocate speak at your event?
4. What worked best about having an advocate speak at your event?
5. Was there anything that didn't work well about having an advocate speak at your event?
6. What feedback (if any) have you received in response to using an advocate at your event?
7. Did the presentation address themes identified in your initial request for an advocate to speak?
8. Did the presentation touch on any of the following topics:
  - Highlight facts about prevalence, the nature of gendered violence and the impact that it can have on women and the wider community?
  - Help dispel myths and stereotypes around violence against women?
  - Challenge common understandings about the issue?
  - Make the link between gender equality and violence against women?
  - Highlight the underlying causes of violence against women and how targeting these can lead to prevention?
9. What do you think was the major impact of involving an advocate in your event?
10. Would you use an advocate again and recommend one to other organisations?
11. Do you have any further comments that you would like to make in regard to the Media Advocacy Program?

**Thank you for your feedback!**

## Expression of Interest

### Media Advocacy Training - Preventing Sexual Assault

*We recognize that much of the following information is both personal and sensitive. The following information will assist us in the effective delivery of the media advocacy training. You do not have to answer all of the following questions.*

*Women's Health East is committed to ensuring that your information is confidential. If you would like more information about our Privacy Policy, please contact us (details below).*

## Contact details

Name:

Address:

Phone/Mobile:

Email:

## Emergency contact

Name:

Relationship to you:

Phone/Mobile:

## Background information

Age group (please bold or circle):      18-24    25-34    35-44    45-54    55-64    65+

How would you describe your cultural background?

## Project information

What is your interest in the Media Advocacy Project?

What key messages about your experience as a survivor of sexual violence would you like to get across?

## Background information

What relationship did the perpetrator have to you? (i.e. partner, father, family member, carer etc.)

How long is it since the assault?

Do you have any ongoing support and/or counseling services in place?

Are you involved in any current legal proceedings?

### Additional information

Are you currently working or studying?

Have you had any media and/or public speaking experience?

What are your expectations of your participation in the Media Advocacy Program?

Do you have any limitations on being able to make media comment? (NOTE: An alias can be used and no image, if required. This will be discussed further in training.)

### Availability and transport

Training will be held on 27 June, 4 July and 11 July 2014 from 9:30am-4pm. Are you available to attend all three days?\*

☐ Yes

☐ No

*\*Only those who can attend training will be considered for a place.*

**Transport:** We are located at 1/125 George Street, Doncaster East on the 279 bus route.

Ample free parking is available.

**Disability access:** The premises are wheelchair accessible.

### What happens next?

Women's Health East will forward all expressions of interest to the Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (ECASA) who will then contact you to arrange a time for interview. The interview is an informal conversation and an opportunity to discuss the program, for us to meet you and for you to meet us. After the interview process, ECASA will confirm with you whether you have a place in the program. As there are limited places available not all those who express interest will be offered a place.

**Thank you for completing this expression of interest!**

Please return this form to Kate Gibson at Women's Health East by **5pm, Wednesday 4 June 2014**.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Kate Gibson at Women's Health East on **9851 3700** or [kgibson@whe.org.au](mailto:kgibson@whe.org.au) or at 1/125 George Street, Doncaster East, 3109.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_



**Women's Health East**  
Investing in Equality and Wellbeing for Women

and partners



# SPEAKING OUT

## Media Advocacy to end Family Violence and Sexual Assault

The **Speaking Out** Program provides an opportunity for the community to hear from women who have experienced sexual assault and/or family violence.

Women who have experienced violence are supported to share their own stories, provide insight into how we prevent violence against women and highlight the need for systemic change. Advocates can contribute to, influence and inform the conversation about violence against women in many ways including (but not limited to):

- Public Speaking & Events
- Media Interviews (print, television or radio)
- Committee Participation
- Meetings with Politicians
- Involvement in Campaigns

To find out more or to book an advocate contact Kate at Women's Health East on 9851 3700, 0405 606 545 or [kgibson@whe.org.au](mailto:kgibson@whe.org.au)

**WWW.WHE.ORG.AU**



Women's Health East acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government

**12 November 2014**

**For immediate release**

1/125 George Street  
Doncaster East, VIC 3109

**E** [health@whe.org.au](mailto:health@whe.org.au)

**P** (03) 9851 3700

**F** (03) 9848 3160

[www.whe.org.au](http://www.whe.org.au)

ABN 72 895 788 372

## **Speaking out to end violence against women**

One in three Australian women experience physical violence in their lifetime. One in five Australian women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 years. The statistics are horrific – but they don't have to be that way.

Women across the East are speaking out to end violence against women in our community. The women, who have themselves experienced violence, are advocates in Women's Health East's Eastern Media Advocacy Program, which has trained the women to work with the media and speak to the public about violence against women and its prevention.

The Program provides an opportunity for the community to hear from women who have experienced sexual assault and family violence and to learn about the role we can all play in ending violence against women in our community. Advocates can share not just their own stories of survival but insight and expertise on how we can prevent violence against women.

The key message that the Program seeks to promote is that violence against women is *preventable* by targeting the underlying causes of violence against women. "Evidence shows that gender equality is key to preventing violence against women," says Women's Health East CEO Kristine Olaris. "The Program draws on the strength and expertise of women who have experienced violence to talk to the media and community about how they can help end to violence against women."

Kate, a participant in the Program says "To hear from survivors, to really hear what we have to say, is to recognise that things need to change. It is to learn where we have gone wrong, as individuals, as families, as communities and cultures and systems. It is to accept that we are not doing enough and that it is time all of us stepped up to take responsibility for creating a culture of equality, respect and safety for all."

To speak with an advocate contact Women's Health East on 9851 3700.

–Ends –

**Media enquiries: Kate Gibson, Health Promotion Officer, 9851 3700**  
**Kate Gibson and advocates from the Eastern Media Advocacy program, are available for interview.**

Women's Health East acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government



# Women's Health East

Investing in Equality and Wellbeing for Women

1/125 George Street  
Doncaster East, VIC 3109

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## Links and further information

- To find out more about the Eastern Media Advocacy Program, visit [www.whe.org.au](http://www.whe.org.au)
- Download the Women's Health East 'Violence against women' Fact sheet for more information on this important issue: <http://www.whe.org.au/newsite/documents/2012-12-13%20Violence%20Against%20Women%20Fact%20Sheet-%20new%20logo.pdf>
- Please includes s link to 1800 Respect on your media article. 1800 Respect is a National counseling helpline, providing information and support on sexual assault and domestic violence 24/7. <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>



## Personal Profile for Advocates

Occasionally Women's Health East may be contacted by a journalist or presenter looking for a particular angle on a sexual assault story eg a particular relationship between survivor and perpetrator, or an assault that occurred recently/a long time ago, or someone who has/hasn't reported/been through the legal system.

Sometimes we may be contacted regarding a speaking opportunity at a specific forum. This might mean that it is useful to know if there are advocates with a connection to this area/event/group.

Women who have experienced sexual assault may have things in common, but the key messages which we want to promote will be informed by the very individual experiences of women who have survived violence.

Some additional information may help us ensure that you are comfortable with some of the topics/forums which may arise and ensure that media and public speaking opportunities for advocates can be responded to effectively and appropriately.

## Your wellbeing and safeguards

Please bear in mind that this is about providing details that you feel comfortable talking about generally and publicly. It is about only providing information that allows you to stay in control and keep yourself safe – avoiding themes that may act as triggers.

## Completing this form

***All of the following questions are optional.***

***It is not a requirement to complete this form in order to become an advocate, however if you can provide us with some information about yourself, your experience of surviving sexual violence and the topics you are comfortable discussing, this will assist us to match you to appropriate advocacy opportunities.***

***Please only answer the questions you feel comfortable answering and with only as much information as you wish to provide. All information provided is confidential.***

***Women's Health East is committed to ensuring that your information is confidential. If you would like more information about our Privacy Policy, please contact us.***

***Please read all questions through quickly first to get a feel for the topics.***

**1. Your name:**

**2. Where have you lived?**

*Sometimes we receive requests for advocates to speak about services or issues affecting a particular area. This information will help us match advocates to appropriate opportunities*

Timeframe (approximately)	Area (eg Eastern suburbs of Melbourne)	Please indicate if the area was Remote, Rural, or Urban

**3. Are there any geographical areas you do not wish to attend events or be involved in media? If yes, please list below:**

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**4. Which agencies did you attend following the assault and how was your experience with those agencies?**

*eg CASA, police, legal services, GPs, other services.*

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**5. Did you disclose to friends and/or family following the assault, and how did this impact on your experience?**

*eg. I disclosed to my mum shortly after the assault. She believed me and helped me to contact CASA.*

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**6. If relevant, please provide a few brief details in relation to any contact with police.**

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**7. Did you have contact with the legal system? If yes, please briefly describe your experience/s.**

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**8. What other areas of your life have been impacted on since the assault?**

*eg. I was a teacher and worked hard with the children in my school to promote happy, healthy relationships and families. I hid what happened to me well.*

*eg. I worked in a supermarket with a lot of other young mums, the girls at work knew something had happened and were very supportive of me.*

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**9. Were there any community or support groups available to you following the assault? If yes, did you connect with a group, and how helpful was this group?**

*eg. I joined a support group for survivors. This helped me to feel less isolated and to accept that I was not responsible for the assault.*

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**10. Status of Perpetrator?**

*Without going into detail, but to help us keep you safe, can you please tell us if the perpetrator is dead or alive, living interstate or overseas, far from you or still in your community. Is there any current legal action taking place?*

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**11. Challenges that still lie ahead?**

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**12. Things you have achieved?**

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### 13. Ambitions or goals for short and/or long term?

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### 14. Key Themes

This is based on issues and topics covered during the media advocacy training – please indicate the themes which you feel comfortable speaking about as an advocate.

Key Themes	Yes or No
Sexual Assault	
Family Violence	
Violence Against Women (more broadly)	
Prevention	
Community Attitudes	
Courts and the legal system	
Impacts on Children	
Bystander Action	
Other	

**Thank you for completing this profile.**



## Sample evaluation framework

	Evaluation Methods	Example for MA program	Comments
<b>Goal</b> The long term change the Program is designed to achieve	Outcome evaluation  Answers the question: Did we bring about the change described in the goal?	To influence public policy by reframing public discourse on violence against women, its causes and strategies for prevention.  Does the public policy environment now include discussion on prevention and is it informed by the voices of women who have experienced violence?	This may never be measured at the Program level, as there will probably be many other things going on outside the context of this program that will also contribute to achieving this goal.
<b>Objectives</b> Smaller changes the Program hopes to effect, contributing towards the long term change described in the goal.	Impact evaluation  Answers the question: Did we bring about the change described in the objective?	<b>Objective:</b> By [insert date] the Media Advocacy Program has generated [insert number] public speaking / community advocacy opportunities involving [insert number] of advocates.  Measured by: Audit of records of program activities at timeline  <b>Objective:</b> As a result of participating in the Media Advocacy Program, advocates report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits to self-confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>• Improved media advocacy skills</li> <li>• Increased confidence to advocate for the prevention of violence against women</li> </ul>	Is measured at the Program level.  Measures change.  If you are finding that the objectives are too difficult to measure then they may be too ambitious and you should probably consider redrafting the objectives.  It is important to consider how the objectives will be measured at the time of planning.

		<p>Measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey/questionnaire</li> <li>• 1:1 Interviews</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> </ul> <p>Conducted pre and post training and at regular intervals throughout the program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exit interviews</li> <li>• Questionnaire</li> </ul> <p>Conducted with any participants who choose not to continue in the program</p>	
<p><b>Strategies</b></p> <p>What you will do to bring about the changes described in the objectives?</p>	<p>Process evaluation</p> <p>Answers the questions: Did we implement the Strategy as planned?</p> <p>Were there any unintended benefits or challenges?</p>	<p><b>Strategy</b></p> <p>Engaging with partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did we engage partners as anticipated?</li> <li>• Do we have a shared understanding of the determinants of violence against women and the purpose of the program?</li> </ul> <p>Measured by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steering Group reflections</li> <li>• Survey using a partnerships analysis tool</li> <li>• Review of minutes of steering Group meeting minutes</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategy</b></p> <p>Facilitate an advocate training program.</p>	<p>Note that not all participant feedback needs to be</p>

		<p>Did you get people attending the program as anticipated?</p> <p>Measured by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance review</li> <li>• Profile of participants matching with expectations e.g. if you were hoping to include women from a range of cultural backgrounds did this eventuate?</li> </ul> <p>Did the program run as intended?</p> <p>Measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator observations and reflections</li> <li>• Participant feedback</li> </ul> <p>Did the content of the program make sense to participants?</p> <p>Measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post training surveys</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategy</b></p> <p>Establish contact with local journalists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have we engaged with all the relevant journalists as per the Program plan?</li> </ul> <p>Measured by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of program records</li> <li>• Analysis of articles reported</li> </ul>	<p>collected via formal methods. Informal discussion over morning tea or lunch or comments at the end of the day is important to record as well as the information gathered via more formal mechanisms such as interview or survey.</p>
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