

Fact Sheet 1: Taking action on Family Violence

Whittlesea Community Futures requests State and Federal Government support to prevent and respond to violence against women and children.

Whittlesea Community Futures calls on the State Government to:

1. Invest in a Respectful Relationships education pilot in schools. (Family Violence Fact Sheet 2).
2. Invest in an early-intervention pilot for families at risk of disengaging from early childhood and family services. (Family Violence Fact Sheet 3)
3. Provide additional case-management funding for local specialist family violence services. (Family Violence Fact Sheet 4)
4. Provide funding to increase access to men's behaviour change programs. (Family Violence Fact Sheet 5)
5. Adjust the boundaries of the Heidelberg Family Violence Court to include the entire Whittlesea municipality.

What is happening right now?

The rate of family violence in the City of Whittlesea is at a critical new high at 1249 incidents per 100,000 people, compared to 1071 for Victoria. This is the highest rate of reported family violence in the Victoria Police Northern Division 5ⁱ. Over the past five years the number of incidents reported to police in the Whittlesea LGA has almost doubled (Figure 1) leading to local agencies declaring family violence a critical public health issue for our community and establishing the Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce to address this.

Figure 1
Victoria Police family violence incident reports (offences), City of Whittlesea 2008-2013

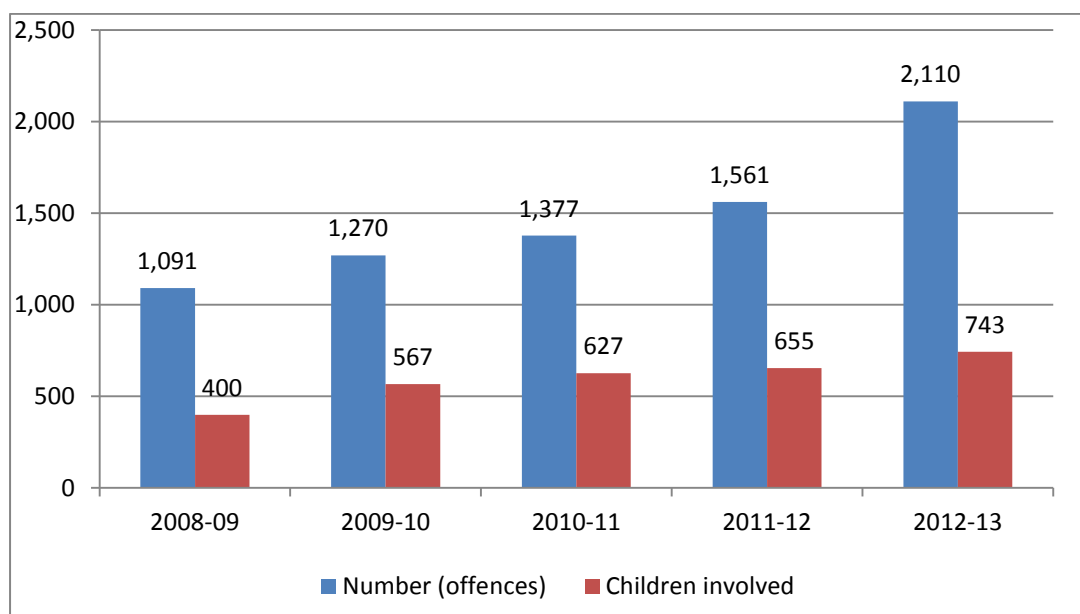
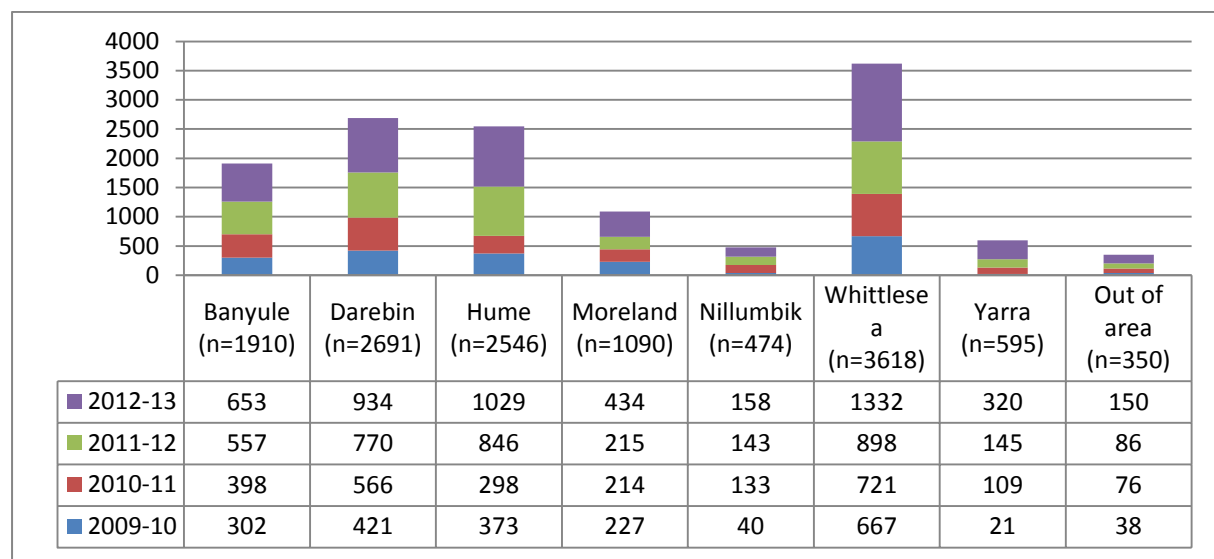


Figure 2: Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service Victoria Police Family Violence Incident referrals



In the City of Whittlesea:

- In 2012-13, 2110 family violence incidents were reported to Victoria Police including one homicide (an increase of 35% on the previous year); In 743 of these incidents children were presentⁱⁱ
- An average of 40 family violence incidents are reported to Victoria Police every week; More than half (56%) of all assaults arose from family violence
- Family violence was the context for 46% of all rapes and 15% of all other sex offences (95% of the victims were female; all of the alleged offenders were male)ⁱⁱⁱ
- Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service receive significantly more referrals for women (3618) from the Whittlesea municipality than from any other municipality in the northern metropolitan region (NMR)^{iv} (Figure 2)
- In September 2013, Victoria Police attended 170 call outs to family violence incidents in the Whittlesea LGA. Of these, 84% were to recidivist addresses (where police have attended three or more times in the past 12 months), the highest number for the Northern Division 5^{vvi}.

The financial cost of domestic violence:

- Access Economics estimate the cost of family violence to the Australian economy is \$8.1 billion (2002-03) and the projected cost to Australia will reach \$9.9 billion by 2021-22
- Victims bear the largest cost burden, estimated at \$4.05 billion, the next largest burden is on the general community (\$1.2 billion)
- The annual cost per victim who has ever experienced domestic violence is \$4,570 (2002-03)
- The total lifetime cost of domestic violence is estimated to be \$224,470 per victim (2002-03)^{vii}.

The Whittlesea municipality has been overlooked by recent funding announcements including the Department of Human Services' *Preventing Violence against Women in Our Community* cluster-councils initiative, Department of Justice *Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children* Grants and VicHealth PVAW demonstration site project, despite an extremely high prevalence of family violence and huge funding shortfalls in existing response-end services^{viii}.

How can we build a better future?

Education and early intervention

Early interventions with children and young people in schools, such as education about gender equity and respectful relationships, can have a lasting effect on their relationships in the future.

Meet the needs of CALD communities

Local evidence reveals existing service responses in the municipality are not meeting the complex needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities experiencing family violence. Thirty-four per cent of residents in the municipality are born overseas and over forty per cent speak a language other than English at home^{ix}. In order to break the cycle of family violence and empower CALD communities to prevent and respond to violence against women, an appropriate mix of prevention and early intervention strategies needs to be adopted.

Behaviour change to reduce recidivism

Family violence occurs in all communities; behaviour change programs for CALD men will have a profound impact on the number of men being held accountable for their violence and ultimately aim to reduce recidivism by engaging these men to change their behaviour.

Additional Specialist Family Violence Services

The local settlement service Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC), reports that from April 2012 to June 2013, 362 individual clients presented at the service experiencing family violence. The majority (79%) of these clients reported to the community legal service and for just under half of these clients (44%) this was the first time they had ever reported the violence. WCC are not alone, many non-family violence specific agencies anecdotally report similar experiences.

How much will it cost?

Element	Costs (per annum)
Adjust the boundaries of the Heidelberg Family Violence Court to include the entire Whittlesea municipality <i>Equitable access for residents in Whittlesea</i>	As determined by the Department of Justice
Respectful relationships education in a school setting <i>Improve connections to resources and support</i> <i>Establish schools and communities that value and support non-violent norms and respectful and equitable gender relations</i>	\$145,000
Connecting children and families in Epping North <i>Build on the local universal Maternal and Child Health service to provide a continuum of support for families that are at risk of disengaging from early childhood and family services</i>	\$150,000
Additional case-managers & brokerage <i>Increase immediate response to police referrals</i> <i>Provide secondary consultations to other services</i> <i>Case-work and therapeutic response for women and children</i>	\$280,000
Men's behaviour change programs <i>Inclusive and equitable access to programs for CALD men</i> <i>Improve partner-contact for CALD women</i> <i>Reduce recidivism rates</i>	\$126,000
Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project <i>Support CALD communities, newly arrived migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to break the cycle of family violence and empower these communities to respond to the challenge of preventing violence against women</i>	\$400,153
TOTAL COST (per annum)	\$1101,153

Key Messages

- Family violence in the City of Whittlesea is at an unacceptably high level and will continue to increase as the population grows. The rate of family violence in the City of Whittlesea is 1249 per 100,000 people, compared to 1071 for Victoria.
- There are high proportions of groups identified as vulnerable in the municipality and this requires a tailored response to meet their needs.
- Immediate increased funding and resources for response-end specialist services is required to ensure fair and equal access to services for outer urban residents.
- Most of our residents are systemically? excluded from court-mandated processes such as counseling orders and participation in behaviour change programs^x.
- It is critical to provide for cultural diversity within specialist family violence services given the highly diverse population, the current and projected growth rate as well as the geographic isolation of some areas due to the urban/rural interface.

How will the community benefit?

The high rate of family violence incidents in the City of Whittlesea requires a comprehensive approach to address the critical issues arising now and as the population continues to grow in the future. Addressing family violence requires significant investment from governments; however the return on investment proves extremely beneficial and cost-effective in the long term^{xi}.

Short-term to intermediate impacts	Long-term benefits
-Improved connections to resources and support for young people, schools and their families -Schools that value and support non-violent norms and respectful and equitable gender relations	-reduced intergenerational transmission of violence and its impacts -communities that value gender equity and respectful relationships -reduced gender inequality -improved interpersonal skills and family and gender relations
-Coordinated response by services within existing resourcing capacity -Improved identification and response to high-risk cases	-Improved integration and partnerships between sectors -Safety for women and children -Reduced violence against women and children
-Immediate response to women in crisis -Provide secondary consultations to other services -Provide case work & therapeutic response to women and children	-Improved response to police referrals and high-risk cases -Safety for women and children -Reduced violence against women and children
-Improved response to police referrals and high-risk cases -Immediate response to women in crisis -Improved response to CALD women and children due to co-location with the settlement services -Provide secondary consultations to co-located services -Provide case work & therapeutic response to women and children	-Improved capacity of non-family violence services to identify family violence in clients due to co-location of services -Safety for women and children -Reduced violence against women and children
-Inclusive and equitable access to behaviour change programs for all men -Improved supports for women and children through partner-contacts for CALD communities -Safety for women and children	-Reduced recidivism by offenders (and costs associated policing, courts) -Reduced violence against women and children
-More equitable access for residents in the Whittlesea municipality	-Increased accountability of perpetrators -Reduced recidivism by offenders

Adapted from VicHealth Preventing violence against women: A framework for action

What objectives does this help us achieve?

Federal Government

- National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children 2010-2022
- National Plan First Action Plan 2010-2013: Building A Strong Foundation

Victorian Government

- Everyone Has A Responsibility To Act – Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children 2012-2015
- VicHealth Framework for the Prevention of Violence Against Women
- Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children

City of Whittlesea

- Council Plan 2013-2017
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017
- Connect: A municipal plan for children, young people and their families 2013-2018
- Building a Respectful Community A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region 2011-2016
- Department of Justice North Metropolitan Region Regional Community Safety Plan 2011

Whittlesea Community Futures

- Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership Action Plan 2011-2016

ⁱ Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik, Whittlesea

ⁱⁱ Victoria Police Family Incident Reports

http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?a=internetBridgingPage&Media_ID=72311

ⁱⁱⁱ Women's Health In the North Family Violence Fact Sheet Whittlesea LGA 2012-2013

^{iv} Police referrals received by NFDVS by LGA Financial Year Comparison July 2009 - June 2013

^v Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik and Whittlesea

^{vi} Conversation with Sergeant Clare Hayhoe, October 2013

^{vii} Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse 2011, The financial cost of domestic and family violence <http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au>

^{viii} City of Whittlesea Human Services Needs Analysis

<http://www.whittleseacommunityfutures.org.au/partnership/strategy.html>

^{ix} Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 Census of Population and Housing

^x Department of Justice have recently included Epping (3076) and South Morang (3752) in the postcodes for court-mandated counselling order (November 2013)

^{xi} Victorian Health Promotion Foundation The health costs of violence: measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence: a summary of the findings VicHealth 2004