

3.1 CREATING AWARENESS

Creating awareness about the links between violence against women and gender inequality in the community is an important part of preventing violence against women. This section will look at different ways of creating awareness about the need to promote equality between women and men to prevent violence against women in the community. These include:

- Ideas for using fact sheets, posters and checklists.
- Examples of posters.
- Examples of checklists.

Example from the community on creating awareness:

Anglicans Promoting Respectful Relationships for Violence Prevention – Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne has introduced a number of activities and strategies to create awareness about violence against women, violence prevention and respectful relationships to clergy and lay leaders as part of *Anglicans Promoting Respectful Relationships for Violence Prevention project*.

The Diocese has created a poster with facts and figures about violence against women and ways to prevent it. Church leaders have been invited to display the poster in church buildings.

Another way that the Diocese has created awareness is by producing a monthly bulletin about the prevention of violence against women. This is sent to all clergy and lay leaders in the Diocese.

The fact sheets in Section 2 could be inserted into community newsletters or distributed as flyers to increase community knowledge about family violence and violence against women and its causes.

Posters can be displayed around your place of worship.

Some important messages to include on posters are:

- **Violence against women is unacceptable:** Send a strong message that violence against women is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- **Faith leaders are committed to promoting gender equality as a way to prevent violence against women:** Show a commitment to gender equality in your community. This is important because faith leaders are role models who can have a positive influence in the community.
- **Show links between gender inequality and violence against women:** Identify the link between violence against women and gender inequality. Consider using examples of how we can address inequality between men and women.
- **What makes a respectful, equal and healthy relationship:** Display a checklist about what makes a respectful and equal relationship. See the checklist at the end of this section.
- **Lists of services and helplines:** Make sure any information you display has a list of phone numbers for services who support victims of family violence. It may encourage someone who has experienced violence to ask for help. Use the List of Services and Organisations in Section 5.1 to get this information.

Faith pledge / declaration to prevent violence against women by promoting gender equality

Creating a faith pledge or declaration to prevent violence against women is one way that you can raise awareness and show your community's commitment to achieving gender equality.

You could adopt this common understanding and display it in your community.

We recognise:

- Family violence is any behaviour that is physically or sexually abusive, emotionally or psychologically abusive, threatening or coercive or in any other way controls or dominates the family member.
- Family violence is a gendered crime. This means that most of the perpetrators are men, while the majority of victims are women.
- The primary causes of violence against women are unequal power between men and women, violent social norms and attitudes and cultures of violence.
- Promoting equality between men and women is important in stopping violence against women before it occurs (primary prevention).

We declare:

- Violence against women is wrong and unacceptable.
- Violence against women is to be resisted, taught against, abhorred, and rejected.
- All faith traditions should see every human being as valued and important and equal. All should be treated with respect and equality.
- Any abuse of sacred texts that try to justify violence against women by misquoting aspects of those ancient religious writings is unacceptable. Authentic religion will use its sacred text with reverence and awe, not as a tool to justify imperfection and failing, but as an inspiration to live a better way.

- Any appeal to “cultural traditions and ways” as an excuse to justify violence against women is unacceptable. Authentic religion will rise above cultural traditions and norms, expose the ones that are lacking or sinful, and aspire to live to a higher way.
- Our faiths affirm that love, respect, and living well together are ideals to aim for.

We are committed to:

- Creating awareness and having conversations about the roles of men and women and the importance of promoting gender equality in our communities.
- Taking action to change or challenge structures, practices, beliefs and misuse of sacred texts in our communities that justify violence against women and foster inequality between men and women.
- Developing partnerships with other faith communities and community organisations to work together to advocate for change.
- Above all, promoting equality in our communities.

Examples of declarations from Australia and overseas include:

Religious for Peace – European Council of Religious Leaders

<http://www.regionalinterfaith.org.au/upload/sarajevao-restoring-dignity.pdf>

National Declaration by Religious and Spiritual Leaders to Address Violence Against Women

www.faithtrustinstitute.org/take-action/declaration

Faith Communities Council of Victoria – Faith communities condemn violence against women

www.faithvictoria.org.au/news-a-articles/95-violence-against-women