*…It’s about looking at it as a community and addressing it ourselves, not waiting for others to do the work. – Community member, Healesville Change the Story*

*As a woman who has spent a huge part of my life being disempowered and then finding my inner strength and growing and empowering myself, it is hugely important to me to see women feel empowered. As a mother of a young daughter I never want for her to feel the way I have, I want her to know that she is strong and can achieve whatever she sets her mind to. Feeling empowered and supporting empowerment in others is such an amazing feeling – community member, Healesville Change the Story*

Jayne Matthews (Healesville Gym), Brian (self-defence and fitness teacher) with participants of the Healesville This Girl Can pilot group.

[Type a quote from the document or the summary of an interesting point. You can position the text box anywhere in the document. Use the Drawing Tools tab to change the formatting of the pull quote text box.]



Josette O’Donnell (Health Promotion), Scott Crawford (Badger Creek School Principal), Steve Biddulph, Sue Hartley (Badger Creek Assistant Principal), Aladdin Jones (Health Promotion)



**Strengthening Women in the Yarra Valley**

**A strategy for the Prevention of Violence Against Women**

**2016 – 2017 Evaluation Report**

**Author: Josette O’Donnell, Senior Health Promotion Officer, Eastern Health**

**Integrated Health Promotion Report 2017**

**Health Promotion**

**Introduction and Project Background**

The prevention of violence against women (PVAW) is an issue of national and critical importance. Violence against women is the single largest driver of homelessness for women and results in a police call-out on average once every two minutes across the country (Our Watch, 2017). The health, administration and social welfare costs of violence against women have been estimated to be $21.7 billion a year (Our Watch, 2017).

Family violence is a well-known issue in the Yarra Valley community. Some townships have shown leadership in faith communities and some service organisations to provide a local response, such as in Healesville, Yarra Junction and Warburton. In 2016 the Royal Commission into Family Violence handed down 226 recommendations to the Victorian government, agencies and community members. These recommendations widely called for system reform, investment in primary prevention and thorough challenges to the normative cultures that condone or support violence (Royal Commission into Family Violence, 2016).

Eastern Health has had a long standing commitment to the primary prevention of violence against women through its commitment to the eastern region Together for Equality and Respect (TEFR) Strategy and Action Plan (Women’s Health East, 2013). It’s responsibilities to improving our hospital response to family violence also escalated with the Strengthening Hospital Response to Family Violence initiative launched in 2016 (Premier of Victoria, 2016). In early 2017 Victoria also launched its statewide strategy – ***Free from Violence*** which establishes a clear framework within which the prevention of violence against women can be achieved (State of Victoria, 2017).

In 2016 – 2017 Health Promotion was guided by the Change the Story Framework in its design of community based, place based prevention activities for this priority area. The Change the Story Framework was released by Our Watch in early 2016. The handbook encourages community “…to change the norms; practices and structures that produce gender inequality and underpin the drivers of violence against women” (Our Watch, 2017). This framework proposed four strategies to prevent violence against women in Australia. Proponents of the framework encouraged workers to implement any aspect of this strategy in any way that was possible (personal communication, Our Watch forum, Melbourne 2016).

The four arms of the framework are to:

* Promote women’s independence and decision making
* Challenge condoning of violence against women
* Strengthen Respectful Relationships
* Challenge Gender Stereotypes

By driving interventions aligned with these strategies, Change the Story hopes to address the following drivers of violence against women in Australia:

* Individual beliefs and social norms that condone or excuse violence.
* Men’s control of decision-making and limits to

women’s independence.

* Adherence to rigid stereotypical gender roles, relations and identities.
* Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect for women.

Health Promotion at Eastern Health chose to embed this framework in the final year of our 2013 – 2017 Integrated Health Promotion Plan, using its evidence and strategy to further develop the health promotion objectives of “increasing the proportion of the community that is exposed to PVAW activities.” The initial focus of the work was to:

* Approach key community leaders, the Family Violence Working Group of the Healesville District Service Provider Network and services in the Upper Yarra to consider the Change the Story Framework and investigate where it could be possible to implement the strategy of *promoting women’s independence and decision making.*
* To look for projects and opportunities where the culture of condoning violence against women could be challenged, such as in the sometimes hyper-masculinized culture of the AFL, or where gender stereotypes could be challenged, such as in early childhood and parenting settings or within school environments. This work was done in partnership with our male PVAW Health Promotion worker.

This report focuses on the impact of Health Promotion’s strategies and interventions to strengthen and promote women’s independence and decision making in the Yarra Valley catchment from 2016 – 2017. This report should be read alongside the Health Promotion Report – Engaging Men in the Prevention of Violence against Women – Yarra Valley.

**Why focus on strengthening and empowering women?**

The evidence and reasoning behind this strategy is clear:

* Women are the predominant victims of family violence (Our Watch, 2016).
* Gender inequity is the key driver of violence against women. Such inequity is evident in many forms and can be seen at various scales, effecting women’s independence and right to live lives safely, with security and with fulfilment (Our Watch, 2017).
* Many women that experience family violence also have children in their care. Supporting women’s empowerment and children’s right to grow up free from violence will benefit both women and children. (Our Watch, 2017)

Working from this framework in practice involved acknowledging at the start of each meeting, the tremendous work of feminist activists that have enabled women in Australia to experience the rights and opportunities they currently have. The approach acknowledges that women’s right to feel safe in the public and private domains is one of the last frontiers of oppression, from which women continue to experience rates of burden and disease and homicide that are unacceptable. The recognition of feminism and the historical legacy of women’s activism create a powerful platform for the significance of women’s existing efforts to prevent further violence.

* A strengths based approach – this approach involves working with existing community resources, capacities, talents and strengths. It views community and individual capacity to transform their own environments and conditions as a fundamentally positive and empowering exercise. This approach is compatible with community mobilization for prevention of violence work, as it brings an empowering and enabling attitude to what is otherwise a very challenging subject (McCashen, 2017). The experience of family violence, violence against women and sexual assault is prolific and under reported. A focus on what we can do, our strengths and capacities enhances our personal, and community sense of “self-belief” that we can effectively “Change the Story”.
* Adaptive Leadership – This model of leadership emphasizes the constraints experienced by leadership in the current Australian context (Aigner. G. & Skelton, L. 2013). It encourages flexibility and adaptation to local community contexts and environments. Creating a society that is no longer governed by rigid gender norms and stereotypes is a society that the Australian community has not yet experienced. We are therefore working “beyond our own edge” in terms of creating new ways of relating and inclusive practices that enable diversity to be cherished and acknowledged. This requires innovation, creativity, compassion and for people to be in inspired and in active states of conscious deliberation. Mobilizing community for the prevention of violence against women is essentially a transformative act, as at every level the restrictions that have been placed on us as gender norms are challenged, revoked or questioned.

The following actions are described in the Our Watch toolkit (2017) as essential to reduce the gendered drivers of violence against women:

* Equalise access to power and resources between women and men, including by strengthening women’s economic security, independence and social, political and economic participation and decision-making in public life.
* Challenge men’s use of controlling behaviours in relationships and the subtle normalisation of male dominance in relationships.
* Promote social and cultural networks and connections between women to provide sources of peer support.
* Support women’s collective advocacy and social movement activism to prevent violence and promote gender equality.
* Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles.

“..Despite significant advances, inequalities for women and girls persist across many areas of Australian life, gender norms and stereotypes remain powerful, and discrimination on the basis of sex and gender still occurs in many contexts.” (Our Watch, 2017). The gender pay gap, unequal representation in politics, unequal representation in business, the superannuation savings gap and time spent caring for children and other people are all reflections on gender inequality in Australia (Our Watch, 2017).

The Eastern Health Health Promotion work has endeavoured to practice its PVAW focus with the following approaches recommended by Our Watch:

Approach 1: Be inclusive and responsive to diversity.

Approach 2: Work in partnership

Approach 3: Challenge masculinity and engage men and boys, while empowering women and girls

Approach 4: Develop and maintain a reflective practice

**Over-arching Principles**

Health Promotion has also delivered this work informed by several theoretical principles and frameworks:

* A feminist framework – Combining health promotion practice with feminism theory is a powerful framework from which to prevent violence (Stewart Lewis, 2011). Feminism acknowledges the deep inequality between men and women, the oppression of women, the historical legacy and impact of such oppression and the ongoing frontiers for which equality in treatment, access and wealth is sought.

* Participatory Action Research –“Participatory action research (PAR) differs from most other approaches to public health research because it is based on reflection, data collection, and action that aim to improve health and reduce health inequities through involving the people who, in turn, take actions to improve their own health. PAR….reflects questioning about the nature of knowledge and the extent to which knowledge can represent the interests of the powerful and serve to reinforce their positions in society. It affirms that experience can be a basis of knowing and that experiential learning can lead to a legitimate form of knowledge that influences practice.”(Baum et al, 2006).

PAR is of tremendous value in community engagement processes for PVAW because it:

* + Empowers participants to self-reflect, allowing them to challenge and investigate their own deeply held norms around gender stereotypes and relationships between men and women
  + It creates an environment where power is shared equally between community members and organizational or research authorities as everyone equally owns the role of “researcher”, “investigator” and “reporter”
  + It facilitates an environment of transformation. Participants see themselves as transformative active agents, recognising the significance of their role in creating and influencing community and societal change.
* Acknowledgement of the impact of the colonial legacy on rates of indigenous family violence and in particular the ongoing lack of recognition, empowerment and respect in many aspects of mainstream relationships with Australia’s first peoples.
* Place based approach – This approach within health promotion essentially allows our interventions to be locally adapted and tailored to the conditions, context and dynamics of the local community that are most likely to create sustainable and inspired change (VicHealth, 2003). The Yarra Valley landscape is characterised by small towns, each with its own set of predominant local organizations, community leaders, community “influencers” and patterns of relationships and service provision. Healesville Hospital & Yarra Valley Health is uniquely placed to facilitate place based primary prevention because of our intimate knowledge of the community through the delivery of community health services to the Yarra Valley community for a number of years. Our relationships with partner organisations and participation in local service provider networks also enhances our ability to support and create community partnerships that are effective, embedded and capable of influencing entrenched community dynamics.
* The engagement of men alongside women – Eastern Health’s approach to PVAW has been unique in that we have equally invested in the engagement of men, to challenge men’s condoning of violence, strengthen respectful relationships and challenge gender stereotypes at the same time as engaging with women to empower and strengthen their opportunities for public and private equality. The establishment of these dual platforms ensures primary prevention is taking place (Our Watch, 2017).

**Program Logic**

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| **Inputs** | → | **Activities / Interventions** | → | **Outputs** | → | **Impacts** | → | **Outcomes** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| * Senior Health Promotion Officer * Male PVAW Health Promotion Officer * Sporting clubs, leagues and organisations * EH staff and management * Community leaders * All participating organisations in collaborative   Eastern Metro Region shared work around gender equity/PVAW   * Healesville Change the Story Group * Upper Yarra – Strengthening Women Partnership |  | 1.Challenging condoning of violence against women – men’s engagement and initiatives  2.Strengthening women – township based partnerships and projects  3.Challenging gender stereotypes – engagement with fathers  4.Strengthening respectful relationships – Schools Focused Projects  5.Supporting and advising on Gender Equity and PVAW internally at Eastern Health  6.Advocating for strategic responses and support for PVAW in the Yarra Valley |  | * Engagement of community leadership within AFL Eastern Region and Yarra Ranges Leagues * Community Partnerships enhanced and developed * Social Marketing Project (challenging violence) * Projects specific to strengthening women seeded and supported * Gender equity project within EH implemented as intended |  | * Increased proportion of target populations exposed to gender equity/PVAW activities * Increased awareness of equal and respectful relationships amongst target populations exposed to PVAW activities * Increased partnership development and collaboration between key partners for PVAW * Increased access by women to community mentors, services and projects that facilitate empowerment, choice and opportunity |  | To reduce violence against women in the EMR |

**Evaluation Design**

Several forms of data capture were used to provide evidence for the evaluation of the first year of this Strengthening Women work, including:

1. Participatory Action Research Meeting Notes – Healesville Change the Story
2. Participatory Action Research Notes – Strengthening Women
3. Focus Group (Together for Equality and Respect) – Healesville Change the Story
4. Focus Group (Together for Equality and Respect) – Voices of Women.
5. Survey – Impact on women involved in strengthening women work in the Yarra Valley
6. Healesville This Girl Can – participant survey and facilitator session feedback.
7. Raising Girls – Steve Biddulph: presentation feedback survey.

Eastern Health Health Promotion would like to acknowledge the support of Women’s Health East and TFER Partners in supporting our independent evaluation processes, particularly the focus group with the Healesville Change the Story Partners and the Upper Yarra Strengthening Women Partnership.

**Key Evaluation Questions**

Impact

* What were the main approaches chosen and why? (e.g. whole of community, schools)
* Which domains of empowerment did the strengthening women’s work focus on?
* What impacts did the health promotion work have on women in the community?

Process

* What was the reach of the health promotion work in strengthening women?
* What are the key learnings around the engagement of women in community based primary prevention in the Yarra Valley?
* What was learned through the strengthening women work about the role of engaging men in supporting women’s’ empowerment for PVAW?

**Summary Table on Activities and Outputs for 2016 – 2017**

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| **Strengthening Women – Healesville Change the Story**  The Healesville Change the Story Partnership consists of several passionate community members and organizations including Healesville Rotary, Healesville Lions, Healesville Interchurch Community Care, Family Liberty Church, Healesville Fitness Centre, Yarra Ranges Council representatives, ANCHOR (Homeless outreach service) and the Eastern Community Legal Centre. | **Women’s Engagement (consultation and event planning )**  In early 2016 the Healesville Family Violence working group of the Healesville District Service Provider Network agreed to change their name to “Healesville Change the Story” and to adopt the primary prevention framework articulated in the Change the Story strategy. One aspect of this strategy is to promote and empower women’s independence and decision making. The partnership involved several key women in the community – including the presidents of local service clubs (Lions, Rotary), representatives from HICCI (Healesville Inter-church Community Care Inc.) and representatives from Yarra Ranges Council. These women informed the design of the strategy for engaging women in Healesville with plans developed to hold a women’s forum. One key community member organised a steering committee of local influential women to drive this process in 2016. This group of women is now being supported by the Eastern Community Legal Centre to deliver a significant women’s event at the Healesville Memo Hall close to International Women’s Day in 2018.  **Family Violence Referral Kit**  Key community women at the Change the Story partnership early in 2016 identified a need to address the capacity of community members to respond to disclosures of family violence and to understand the relevant referral pathways so that they would feel confident to talk about this issue with the community. The group organised for their own local referral kit to be developed and presented to the group by the Eastern Community Legal Centre in mid-2016. This kit helped with the disclosures that community members received informally throughout 2016 and 2017 and was essential step in building confidence around disclosures.  **Healesville This Girl Can program**  Late in 2016, the Healesville Fitness Centre owner heard of the Change the Story Partnership in Healesville and started to attend the meetings. She came to the meetings with an exciting proposal to develop a program that would run from the gym to strengthen and empower young women, a program named **Healesville – This Girl Can! I**n her vision to deliver the program the creator said “*l want to help create strength, community & power within each of these young women to know they don’t have to accept or put up with violence in any way, shape or form…and for this information to be something they can draw on and pass on to friends and family”.*  Health Promotion assisted with the coordination and delivery of the first pilot **Healesville This Girl Can!** in Term 2, 2017. Community Health provided expertise and ran several sessions on healthy relationships, nutrition and women’s health. The program involved ten facilitated sessions with 13 Year 9 students from Healesville High School that had elected to undertake the MAD unit (Making a Difference). The sessions involved an education workshop on select topics such as relationships, emotional literacy, sexual health, nutrition, cyber bullying and self-empowerment combined with self-defence, fitness and mindfulness sessions at the gym. The program was evaluated as successful and has since been delivered by the gym independently in Term 3, 2017.  **Women’s Empowerment Group**  The lack of a support group for women’s empowerment was brought to the attention of Healesville Change the Story in mid 2016 by members of the Family Liberty Church. No local services were providing women’s support groups in Healesville at that time. Healesville Rotary is an active participant of Change the Story and independently funded the delivery of a local women’s empowerment workshop run by two local women facilitators. |

1. **Results**

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|  | The first women’s empowerment program was delivered in Healesville in April/May 2017 to 10 participants. The workshops were held over 5 weeks and were also evaluated as successful by the participants. Rotary has committed ongoing support to the delivery of the women’s empowerment workshops in Healesville. |
| Badger Creek Primary School – Pilot Site for Healesville Change the Story | Members of the Healesville Change the Story Group were keen for the partnership to focus on supporting schools and the engagement of parents in school communities to prevent family violence. This was partly because some of the community members were school teachers, principals, and pastoral carers or had been involved in raising children or families in the community for a long time. There was a deep understanding in the partnership of the way that family violence effects children and families and the group felt it important that the understanding of respectful relationships and challenging of gender stereotypes occurred in the school setting. The following activities occurred in 2016 – 2017.   * Health Promotion drafted a one page proposal for school engagement with the community members. It involved engaging with men and empowering women at the school site, to deliver activities that would specifically empower women and educate parents about respectful relationships. It would start with a process of consultation with parents. * In mid 2016 Health Promotion met with assistant principals and president of the parents and friends association. They held a small focus group to brainstorm priorities for strengthening women at the school and decided on a range of strategies including financial empowerment, relationships and assertiveness education, gardening and wellbeing, artistic expression and support for career planning and parenting. * At the 2016 Christmas concert the male PVAW worker engaged with fathers at this event generally attracts a high number of fathers, to gain feedback and ideas for the school based project. * The school decided to trial holding a women’s engagement event – training in financial literacy by the local women’s financial specialist Money Natters. Five women attended this event and a range of financial issues were identified including – preparing for separation, wills and managed superannuation, budgeting and negotiating pay arrangements. The training was identified by participants as successful and the school, in partnership with CIRE, is now providing a second set of financial literacy training workshops in Term 3 2017. * The school were keen to invite an inspirational speaker to support this work and approached Steve Biddulph, a parenting expert on raising boys and raising girls. Steve was excited by the project and agreed to come to Healesville to present in June 2017. This was a tremendous achievement for the school, which had already achieved regional recognition for its effort in implementing restorative practices and the Seven Habits (Stephen Covey) program. On Saturday 24th June 300 people attended the Memo Hall in Healesville to hear Steve’s exciting and innovative talk on Raising Girls. * The Badger Creek Pilot project has continued to evolve. School council reviewed its progress and with Health Promotion support agreed on a model to form a subcommittee where several parents and key school personnel will be involved to design the interventions – *the Healthy Families Action Group*. Health Promotion will continue to provide evaluation support. CIRE are currently designing a women’s warehouse program to be delivered on site to empower women with a range of skills from health and wellbeing, communication, family violence awareness, career planning and gardening to be trialled in Term 4 2017. |

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| Upper Yarra Service Provider Consultation | Health Promotion was cognizant of the complexity of service accessibility, the socio-demographic and community dynamics of the Upper Yarra, including the townships of Yarra Junction, Wesburn, Millgrove, Woori Yallock, Warburton and Powelltown. The initial method chosen was to facilitate discussion with members of the Upper Yarra Service Provider network and to undertake a brief strengths based assessment around what work was occurring in the four platforms of the Our Watch strategy. Approximately 30 service providers attended this workshop in March 2016 to provide strategic direction. Health Promotion became aware Upper Yarra Secondary School had already been registered as an Our Watch pilot school for the delivery of the Respectful Relationships curriculum. The new Principal of the CIRE -Yarra Valley Community school was also a powerful advocate for respectful relationships in the community. Some key findings from this workshop were that:   * There were a number of projects and support services for early parenting and for supporting women already operating (exercise groups, play groups, occasional care, and education opportunities). * Limited work in challenging gender stereotypes and roles was occurring through theatre groups. * There was some support for Respectful Relationships in the Upper Yarra through EACH and Relationships Australia. * There were limited interventions that challenging of the condoning of men’s violence against women.   The opportunities identified by this network included:   * Events and workshops to gather and strengthen women that is about women (not about their role as mothers or roles in the family). * More family friendly and inclusive activities are needed (instead of alcohol based activities). Events need to be local and accessible. |
| Strengthening Women – CIRE Community Consultation | In May 2016 Health Promotion met with CIRE Community Services to discuss the potential for implementing the Our Watch framework in the Upper Yarra communities – particularly the strategy for promoting and empowering women’s independence and decision making. CIRE Community services are one of the largest employers, education providers and providers of childcare, education and a community school in the Upper Yarra. They were approached as a strategic partner, to utilize their existing networks, resources and capacity to further influence our region. The management of CIRE was very positive about the Our Watch framework and organized for an initial consultation workshop with women of influence from the community in July 2016. The first strengthening women workshop identified a range of issues that the women felt were important priorities for strengthening women in the Upper Yarra including service accessibility, education opportunities, opportunities for inspiration and family violence response. Four further workshops were held to clarify the main points of focus. Several seed projects were identified as essential to the empowerment of women in the Upper Yarra including:   * Women’s celebrations and events, festival and days to normalise empowerment and create a sense of belonging. * Formalising the strengthening women’s group into a committee. * Accommodation – a hub or location that is a permanent resource for women. |

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|  | * Workplace engagement to undertake PVAW. * Training/guidelines on what to do if someone discloses family violence. * A safe place to seek help – crisis care, potentially offered by CIRE. * Accessibility to services in the Upper Yarra. * Financial confidence. * Building best practice programs in schools (respectful relationships).   In late 2016 some key members of the workshops decided it was imperative that the group formalise. Invitations were sent to invite interested members to form part of a leadership group. In early 2017 the leadership group of six community women met and decided to incorporate and form a peak body in the Upper Yarra called “Voices of Women”. The vision of Voices of Women is:  *For the women of the valley to live lives that are empowered, in a community where their voices are heard, represented and sought on for the decisions that affect them. For the women of the valley to be enabled to achieve their own visions, at a personal, family and community level.*  The group is currently forming its 12 month business plan and has had positive support of sponsorship in its early stages. |
| General Community Education and Support for PVAW | * Health Promotion assisted Healesville High School with the key note presentation and delivery of two Year 7 student wellbeing days. Health Promotion presented on women’s empowerment and PVAW to 60 Year 7 students. * Health Promotion presented an information session on PVAW to the Healesville Lions club. Healesville Lions are a prominent member of the Healesville community that provide significant funding to local projects. 15 local community members attended. * Health Promotion presented to Healesville Rotary, in support for the women’s empowerment group but also to educate Rotary members about the prevention of family violence. There was some variability in knowledge and awareness of family violence amongst members. 20 Healesville Rotary members attended. * Health Promotion participated in three meetings of the Upper Yarra Body Image working group to inform the feminist and PVAW approach to work engaging the community in discussions around body image and the objectification of women. * Health Promotion supported the delivery of one session of the Youth Clinic at Upper Yarra Secondary School to promote and increase girl’s involvement at the clinic – providing information and informal conversation around the services provided to support young women’s health. |
| Indigenous Community | Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association is a partner of the Healesville Change the Story Project. Several members of HICSA contributed to the design of the partnership focus.  Health Promotion supported Boorndawan Willam to apply for the Primary Prevention Grant (Department of Premier and Cabinet – 2016) for the Liwurruk - Girls in the Hood Program. The application was successful. Health Promotion assisted with consultation with young indigenous women around the project ideas and also liaising with key artist, Shellie Morris, who agreed to be part of the project from the Northern Territory. Shellie is well known for empowering young people and promoting women’s independence and creative expression. |
| Women’s Representation at Yarra Ranges Council | Health Promotion held initial discussions with Yarra Ranges Council staff, the sole current female YRC councillor and the Women’s Policy Officer at the VLGA to look at how the community could encourage more women representation on Yarra Ranges Council. Health Promotion supported a conversation between two potential candidates, the current local councillors and the VLGA to look at the ways forward. The potential candidates requested support from the VLGA to hold a workshop in the Yarra Ranges on women’s engagement in local council to renew focus on Gender equity in Local Government for our community. |
| Be the Change Project | Through the Be the Change Project, Health Promotion surveyed 20 football and netball club presidents in the AFL Yarra Ranges league (which are predominantly in the Yarra Valley catchment). The Project held a forum which inspired club leadership to plan to increase women’s participation and challenge club cultures in June 2017. This forum was attended by 180 people. |

**Table: Domains of women’s empowerment (Malhotra, et al. 2002)**

**Economic**

Household – Women’s control over income, relative contribution to family support, access to and control of family resources.

Community – Women’s access to employment, ownership of assets and land, access to credit, involvement and/or representation in local trade association, access to markets.

Broader Arena- Women’s representation in high paying jobs: women’s CEO’s presentation of women’s economic interests in macro-economic policies, state and federal budgets.

**Socio cultural**

Household- Women’s freedom of movement, lack of discrimination against daughters; commitment to education of daughters.

Community-women’s visibility in and access to social spaces; access to modern transportation; participation in extra-familial groups and social networks.

Broader Arena- Women’s literacy and access to broad range of educational options; positive media images of women, their roles and contributions.

**Familial/Interpersonal**

Household- Participation in domestic decision-making, control over sexual relations, ability to make childbearing decisions, freedom from domestic violence.

Community- Shifts in marriage and kinship systems indicating greater value and autonomy for women, local campaigns against domestic violence.

Broader Arena- Regional/national trends in timing of marriage, options for divorce, political, legal, religious support for shifts.

**Legal**

Household- Knowledge of legal rights, domestic support for exercising rights.

Community – Community mobilization for girls, campaigns for rights, enforcement of legal rights.

Broader Arena – Laws supporting women’s rights, access to resources and options.

**Political**

Household – Knowledge of political system and means of access to it, domestic support for political engagement, right to vote.

Community – Women’s’ involvement or mobilization in the local political system/campaigns, support for legislation and representation.

Broader arena - Women's representation in regional and national bodies of government, strength as a voting block.

**Psychological**

Household – Self-esteem, self-efficacy, psychological wellbeing.

Community- Collective awareness of injustice, potential of mobilization.

Broader Arena – women’s sense of inclusion and entitlement; systemic acceptance of women’s entitlement and inclusion.

***What were the main approaches chosen and why? (e.g. whole of community, schools)***

Health Promotion focused on four main approaches during the 2016 – 2017 year of implementation:

* **Community mobilisation** through support for community partnerships e.g. Healesville Change the Story
* **Community education on PVAW** through opportunistic sessions or invitations to speak to groups (such as Rotary or Lions) and high profile events (such as Steve Biddulph’s presentation on Raising Girls).
* **Pilot programs of direct participation** such as Healesville This Girl Can, the Rotary funded Women’s Empowerment Group and the pilot engagement project of Change the Story at Badger Creek Primary School.
* **Advocacy for the promotion of women’s role in public life**, such as the support for the establishment of Voices of Women and initial meetings for mobilization of support for women candidates to run for Yarra Ranges Council.
* **Advocacy for increasing women’s participation in sport** (through the Be the Change Project).

These approaches were chosen based on the Principles of our Health Promotion PVAW focus including that the initiatives were strengths based, feminist and place based. These approaches were also chosen because of our knowledge of community dynamics, the reach and capacity of existing services and our current partner relationships.

*Which domains of empowerment did the strengthening women’s work focus on?*

Health Promotion has reviewed its focus on promoting women’s empowerment and decision making through the lens provided by the World Bank’s measures investment in gender development (Malhotra et al, 2002). This lens depicts several domains of women’s empowerment which occur in the three settings of the household, community and broader arenas:

* Economic
* Socio-cultural
* Familial/Interpersonal
* Legal
* Political and
* Psychological

The table on the right illustrates examples of these categories in the three settings.

**Domains of women’s empowerment – Health Promotion Activity 2016 – 2017**

The table below illustrates which domain each PVAW activity relates to. This provides a useful framework to investigate where our investment has been in the reporting period and where the gaps are.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Household | Community | Broader arenas |
| Economic | -Badger Creek Primary School – Change the Story (Smart Money training) | -Voices of Women (Employment, education, mentoring for the Upper Yarra). |  |
| Socio-cultural | -Badger Creek Primary School – Change the Story (Parent engagement in healthy relationships) | -Voices of Women  -Badger Creek Primary School – Change the Story  Healesville Change the Story | -Voices of Women (Promotion of women’s empowerment)  -Be the Change Project (Women’s profile as footballers, challenging gender stereotypes) |
| Familial/  Interpersonal | -Healesville This Girl Can (education, referral, support)  -Badger Creek Primary School – Change the Story (education, referral, support) | -Healesville This Girl Can (community scale intervention through groups of Year 9 students)  -Badger Creek Primary School – Change the Story (whole of community focus)  - Healesville Change the Story (community campaign) |  |
| Legal | -Healesville This Girl Can (legal education, consent) | Healesville Change the story (Eastern Community legal Centre – community education on intervention orders and support) |  |
| Political |  | -Yarra Ranges Council Advocacy (gender equity) | -Yarra Ranges Council Advocacy (gender equity) |
| Psychological | Healesville This Girl Can (self-esteem, self-efficacy)  Healesville Change the Story (women’s events – self-esteem, self-efficacy) | -Healesville This Girl Can (collective awareness of injustice)  -Healesville Change the Story (collective awareness of injustice, mobilization)  -Be the Change Project (collective awareness and immobilization) | -Be the Change Project (systematic acceptance of women’s inclusion) |

***What impacts did the health promotion work have on women in the community?***

The impacts of each activity in the community can be assessed through our evaluation sources. The following is a summary of the impacts noted by each initiative and the qualitative or quantitative data that was collected to assess this:

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| Women involved in the Healesville Change the Story and Voices of Women partnerships | A short survey was sent to seven key women who have been actively involved in strengthening women in the Yarra Valley in the last 12 months. These women have been central to the delivery of new projects, supporting other women or linking the project to new sources of support. Four questions were asked regarding the impact of the involvement in the empowering women work and their responses are listed below:  **How has being involved in Strengthening Women in the Yarra Valley impacted you within the last 6-12 months?**   * *The impact on me has been the proof that so many women in the area are in need of help.* * *I have become more aware of the issues and needs for women of the Yarra Valley. This has influenced my current work with families, knowing what challenges there are for parents to access supports and increased my interest in advocating for outreach and programs to strengthen women.* * *Together with [name removed], I ran a five week empowerment program funded by rotary with money set aside for domestic violence, which used creativity and understanding around defences, trauma, beliefs and boundaries within the psyche as a way of exploring empowerment. The women walked away with a bag full of tools to rework the inner landscape. The feedback was unanimously positive and very humbling with comments like 'it should be compulsory for every woman to do this program" there were also a lot of requests for something similar for young teenagers. We were actually blown away at how profound and transformative this workshop proved to be. We would be happy to run more and also train others to run a similar program so this could spread on a bigger scale. We feel that this is crucial to real empowerment in the world - if the inner world is not addressed the behaviours will repeat no matter how much opportunity is offered from the outside.* * *Given me a sense of community but I think I personally feel I need more and that it has been something that I have been lacking of late.*   **What have you learned about empowering women in the Yarra Valley during this time?**   * *I have learned a lot about the types [of] services available to women of all ages.* * *Women need to have opportunities to meet and discuss what they want and need. They also require informed persons/workers to provide relevant programs and services, and be trained in the delivering of these services. I.e. Family Violence. Women also need some fun stuff, and activities they can learn how to move through the hard times and other women to mentor them through these difficulties.* * *We have learned that given the right opportunity and safe environment and a free or affordable option women really want to grab opportunities with both hands - despite not having to pay - the workshops [we held] were attended with respect and commitment and a real willingness to do the work.* * *That women who feel supported and connected feel more empowered to get out and achieve what they want to achieve.*   **What does women's empowerment mean to you?**   * *It means to me an independence and confidence to make your own decisions in all areas of life and be fully aware of people/services available if you need to seek for yourself or friends.* * *Women confident with who they are and have the capacity to find what they need and ask for help when they don't know where to find support. Women's empowerment also looks like, women helping other women, women being resourceful and women being proud of being a woman.* * *For me women's empowerment starts with self - with the way we treat ourselves, with our self-talk, our actions in the world. We are working within a patriarchal paradigm which means we have to work as individuals and as a wider community to create platforms and opportunities to rewrite what we accept as normal. My personal passion lies with the individual, their psyche and the opportunities for connection that arise when a sense of authenticity and autonomy is uncovered.* * *As a woman who has spent a huge part of my life being disempowered and then finding my inner strength and growing and empowering myself, it is hugely important to me to see women feel empowered. As a mother of a young daughter I never what for her to feel the way I have, I want her to know that she strong and can achieve whatever she sets her mind to. Feeling empowered and supporting empowerment in others is such an amazing feeling.*   **What are the priorities for continued empowerment of women in the Yarra Valley?**   * *Priorities are education, ease of access to services and support and to educate from a young age.* * *To help advocate for services and supports in the Yarra Valley that women want and need, including ensuring the services are women and family friendly. Supporting programs, groups, events and activities in the valley that empower women.* * *…my priorities lie in the realms of psychological empowerment, my belief is that if you shift the internal landscape, the external landscape becomes more accessible and opportunities for an empowered life opens up. So I think it is a priority to run more empowerment workshops for ALL women …* * *Strengthening women in communities, opportunities and supports for women, skill building for women.* |

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| Healesville This Girl Can | 13 students participated in the pilot Healesville This Girl Can program. A short pre and post program survey was developed for the participants to self-assess their sense of empowerment, knowledge of services and overall wellbeing of three different parameters. The results are in the graph below:  The participants also evaluated each session less formally with a target chart to see how close the session was to being “on the bulls eye” and the facilitators provided feedback on every session. In summary the session facilitators felt the participants really benefited from the sessions and engaged well, particularly in the topics of nutrition, consent and family violence (healthy vs. unhealthy relationships), cyber bullying, sexting, the self-portraiture activities and sexual health workshop. Improvements will be made around the counselling support, provision of more engaging activities (e.g. games) and the topic of sexuality.  The school wellbeing coordinator was very positive about the impact of the program, noting that some students who did not always attend school would attend specifically to participate in This Girl Can. The program also enabled the wellbeing coordinator to identify students that needed more support (e.g. through counselling).  The final session involved some feedback discussion and the following comments were noted by the participants:   * *The nutrition session was great, the presenters were up with the trends and it was great to know about sometimes foods.* * *Brian the self-defence trainer was great, he taught us about attitude, including how to be more confident and not care about what a boy thinks about you.* |

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| Healesville Change the Story Partnership | The Healesville Change the Story Partnership met once a month over the 2016 – 2017 year. The partnership recorded its reflections as part of the Participatory Action Research approach at every meeting. Monthly emails were sent advising partnership members of what was happening. Individual members met to progress key projects. The impact and process of the partnership was assessed by a focus group held by Women’s Health East (as part of the assessment of the regional Together for Equality and Respect Strategy and Action Plan) in June 2017. Key Impacts of the group identified by the focus group were:   * The Family Violence and Bystander training (delivered to 50 community members) was informative for participants. * The importance of engaging men in PVAW, was a key impact of the group. * As a result of being in the partnership, participants noticed an increase and capability and support for implementing their own work and overcoming challenges. * Building the gendered drivers into work that is already happening has been a key impact of the group, for example a community nurturing day for women became more with a greater focus on empowering and strengthening women in the community. * The groups’ collective skill was used to hold a community breakfast that attracted approximately 100 people in Healesville. * The group has had a direct influence on other PVAW projects in the region – such as the leadership from Rotary in connecting funding from Coles to the EFL/AFL Be the Change Project. * Projects we have been doing in the community have had a visible impact in Healesville. |
| Be the Change Project | The Be the Change Project involved the establishment of a working partnership, a survey into women’s participation and attitudes towards women in football and netball clubs in 115 clubs in the EFL and AFL Yarra ranges regions. A forum was held in June on supporting and increasing women’s participation with key note speakers Emma Grant (AFL W – Collingwood) and Luke Ablett. Details of this project can be read in the Be the Change Project Evaluation Report, 2017. |
| Badger Creek Change the Story project - Steve Biddulph Presentation | On Saturday June 24th Steve Biddulph presented to a sold out audience of 300 parents at the Healesville Memo Hall. Just under 100 evaluation surveys were received from the event. 43% of the respondents to the survey lived in the Yarra Ranges. 99% of these were parents with 58% involved in raising girls. Participants were asked what the most significant thing about Steve’s talk and a range of positive comments was received that illustrate the tremendous insight and inspiration Steve is currently providing in Australia on this topic, for example:   * *[I need my] connection to my daughters to be stronger.* * *The importance of listening to the small things now and turning the TV off.* * *Ensure girls feel or have access to support.* * *Dads also need to be involved in daughter’s lives & aunt/female figures.* * *..it hit home that I am always busy and do not allow enough opportunities for talking with my daughter.* * *How to talk with and help my 12 and a half year old daughter navigate her way through her teenage years.* * *How important role models are to young girls – using positive language about our body image and encouraging girls to own all spaces.* |

***What was the reach of the health promotion work in strengthening women?***

The table below outlines the reach of the Health Promotion PVAW work in 2016-2017.

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| Project | Type of engagement | No. of people |
| Voices of Women | Strengthening women gatherings (4), End of year celebration, Leadership group meetings (4) | 40 |
| Healesville Change the Story – Bystander training | Training presentations (2) | 60 |
| Healesville Change the Story – Partnership Meetings | Meetings | 25 |
| Steve Biddulph | Public presentation | 300 |
| Media releases (Steve Biddulph, White Ribbon). | Newspaper articles | 77,210 |
| Healesville This Girl Can | Program | 13 |
| Be the Change Project | Survey, Forum, Media articles, Facebook posts | 71,733 |
| Healesville High School – Year 7 wellbeing day | Presentation | 60 |
| Upper Yarra Secondary School – young women’s engagement with Youth Clinic event | Event | 5 |
| TOTAL |  | 149,446 |

***What are the key learnings for Health Promotion around the engagement of women in community based primary prevention in the Yarra Valley?***

* There is a clear appetite and interest by women to empower and strengthen women across the Yarra Valley catchment.
* Women are able to clearly identify their needs for empowerment and support – this was evidenced by the engagement at Badger Creek Primary School, Voices of Women consultation and the Healesville Change the Story project - This Girl Can.
* Women in the community are keen to engage men in these conversations and see men as part of the solution – as evidenced by the partnership by men and women at Healesville Change the Story and the keenness of Voices of Women to include male members in their organisation.
* Women need assistance and flexibility to be able to engage in community dialogue and events – support for childcare, and teleconferencing are important to enable participation.
* There are multiple key partners that are invested in strengthening and supporting women in the Yarra Valley that already engage with women in the Valley – such as CIRE, Yarra Ranges Council, ANCHOR and church groups.
* Young women are keen for more support, opportunity and guidance - as seen by the enthusiasm and interest of young women at Healesville This Girl Can and at the Upper Yarra Secondary College Youth Clinic.
* There is a keen appetite from parents in the Yarra Valley to learn more about parenting and to be provided with up to date, current and relevant information about raising boys and girls that is attuned to the social realities of our time.

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# *Recommendations for Strengthening Women in the Yarra Valley for PVAW*

# Health Promotion should continue to support the organisations and key women leaders involved in the Healesville Change the Story Partnership and Voices of Women Inc. These partnerships are community led yet also supported by a range of organisations keen to support their success. They have demonstrated their ability to be innovative, supported and resourceful.

# Health Promotion should consider leading a Yarra Valley wide assessment of women’s aspirations and priorities for empowerment.

# Health Promotion to continue to support community leaders to advocate for investment in gender equity in local government (councillor representation) in the Yarra Ranges Council.

# Health Promotion to strategically focus on supporting schools to replicate the Badger Creek Change the Story Pilot, as an example of placed based – settings based community interventions for PVAW.

# Health Promotion should consider focusing more on challenging gender stereotypes and support for challenging gender norms in early childhood, maternal and school settings.

# Health Promotion continue to provide a focus on engaging with both genders in the Yarra Valley, to ensure effective primary prevention and a focus that emphasises equality and social responsibility by both men and women in creating respectful relationships.

# Health Promotion to continue partnering with sporting groups to engage community leaders in challenging club cultures, providing gender equitable environments and connected placed based initiatives in line with the recommendations of the Be the Change Project Evaluation Report.

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