



CoRE

COMMUNITIES OF RESPECT & EQUALITY

Preventing violence against women and
their children in the Grampians region
2021-2025 STRATEGY



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Women's Health Grampians acknowledges:

- The Traditional Custodians of the lands across the Grampians region: the Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Djab Wurrung, Wurundjeri, Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Peoples, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways. In particular, we recognise the strength and courage of Aboriginal women and girls in our communities who bravely speak up against oppression and the consequences of colonisation and generously share their wisdom on family, country and culture.
- The many women and gender diverse people who have lived experience of discrimination and violence, who, by bravely sharing their stories, have helped inspire cultural change.
- The many people who generously contributed their knowledge throughout the consultation process that informed this Strategy.
- The insights and advice provided by this Strategy's Expert Panel including Kathryn Aedy, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health; Helen Freris and Soizic Brohan, Women with Disabilities Victoria; Dr Jessica Crofts, Sports & Recreation Victoria; Adjunct Associate Professor Sue Dyson, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University; Patty Kinnersly, OurWatch; Shelley Lillyst, Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative; and Dr Cathy Tischler, Federation University Wimmera.
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FOREWORD

It's not enough for us to be aware that violence against women and their children is a widespread problem in Australia.

Simply being horrified by the statistics and heartbroken by the stories isn't enough. We must act.

Although gender-based violence is a serious and complex social problem, it is preventable. We know what to do to create a community where gender-based violence is a thing of the past, and the momentum for change has never been stronger. Our political and social environments are focussed on violence against women and gender-based discrimination. National and international campaigns and rallies against violence, harassment and discrimination have created a sense of urgency that we must harness.

We are immensely proud of the Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) Alliance and members' commitment to creating safe, equal and respectful communities across the Grampians region – communities where every person is valued, heard, respected and empowered, and has equal access to opportunities. We are confident that when this is the case, gender-based violence won't occur.

Culture and systems change are long-term propositions that call for collective action. Women, men and gender diverse people must work together to redress disadvantage and to eliminate the systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs and the delivery of services in workplaces and communities. This will mean working harder to ensure that women and gender diverse people who live with the impacts of multiple discriminations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, those from diverse cultures and religions, those living with a disability and those of different sexual orientations, live free from prejudice in all its forms.

We know that equality is good for everyone and that those with inherent privilege are often well-placed to influence change. This is why the engagement of men as allies to the gender equality movement is vital, and we're proud to have so many compassionate men committed to CoRE.

I am really pleased to share this, the second four-year Strategy developed for CoRE. You'll note it's a shorter document, as the rationale, theories and intentions outlined in the original CoRE Plan still stand. The 2021-2025 CoRE Strategy marks the evolution of CoRE and sets the scene for growth and more advanced actions over the next four years.

I congratulate CoRE members for their commitment and actions to achieve gender equality, and encourage all those who support our vision to become involved. Through collective efforts and perseverance, we can create 'communities of respect and equality'.

Marianne Hendron

CEO, Women's Health Grampians
Chair, CoRE Leadership Group

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Women's Health Grampians uses an inclusive definition of 'women' that includes all people who identify as women. We acknowledge the high rates of violence against trans women and gender diverse people and the many ways that gendered norms, stereotypes and discrimination contribute to inequality and oppression. The term 'gender-based violence' refers to violence that is specifically directed towards women because of their gender.

WHAT IS CoRE?

CoRE is an alliance of organisations, businesses, clubs and groups that are committed to creating safe, equal and respectful communities in the Grampians region: an area in western Victoria spanning more than 48,000 square kilometres with a population of around 240,000.

CoRE is based on the belief that the reach and influence across society of its wide and diverse partnership will help to drive cultural change, reduce barriers to gender equality and re-frame cultural norms and acceptable behaviour – important steps in preventing violence against women and children.

Members of CoRE commit to this, the *CoRE Strategy for preventing violence against women and their children*. By following the guiding principles and undertaking meaningful actions to promote gender equality, they work individually and collectively to prevent gender-based violence. Recognising that members will be at varying stages of readiness and with different levels of capacity to engage in prevention work, CoRE is flexible and supports members to identify their best contributions.

Within CoRE's first four years, from 2016-2020, 120 diverse members joined the CoRE Alliance.

Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life.

UN Declaration ¹⁸

GOVERNANCE

Oversight of CoRE is provided by the CoRE Leadership Group: a representative group of members who guide the initiative, particularly in relation to its growth, quality, sustainability and relevance.

The day-to-day management and support of CoRE is provided by Women's Health Grampians (WHG). WHG's Regional Consultants support and build the capacity of CoRE members to implement sustainable changes to encourage gender equality within their organisations and across their spheres of influence.

THE FACTS ABOUT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence takes a profound and long-term toll on women's health and wellbeing, on families and communities, and on society as a whole.

- Approximately 1 in 4 women has experienced violence by an intimate partner. ¹
- On average, one woman a week in Australia is killed by an intimate partner. ²
- 1 in 5 Australian women has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. ¹
- Almost 10 women a day are hospitalised for assault injuries perpetrated by an intimate partner. ³
- Australian women are nearly three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner. ¹
- 1 in 4 Australian women has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner. ¹
- Children exposed to violence are more likely to have a range of health, developmental and social problems, both during childhood and later in life. ⁴
- Based on 2015 analysis, gender-based violence is costing Australia \$21.7 billion each year. ⁵

The Grampians region experiences high rates of family violence. In more than half the Local Government Areas in the Grampians region, the family violence incidence rates are above the state average. ⁶

Women living in rural areas are more likely than those in urban areas to experience family violence, and they face additional barriers to reporting and escaping abuse ⁷, including: geographic isolation; limited access to services; a lack of anonymity; community members with conservative attitudes; higher levels of gun and weapon ownership; and the experience of natural disasters (e.g. floods, bushfires etc.) which can increase the risk of family violence. ⁸

Some women in our community face additional risk of violence and disadvantage.

- In comparison with other women, Aboriginal women are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence and almost 11 times more likely to be killed as a result of violent assault. ^{9, 10}
- 1 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 15 and over has experienced physical violence in a 12-month period. ¹¹
- 3 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a male intimate partner. ¹²
- Although limited, existing data and research suggests that rates of violence experienced by LGBTIQA people are at least comparable to that experienced by the wider female population. ^{13, 3, 14}
- Although the types and impact of intimate partner violence have been found to be similar for same-gender relationships and heterosexual relationships, different forms of violence are sometimes used within this community. ¹⁵
- Some studies suggest high prevalence rates of violence against women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and specific issues of complexity. ¹⁶
- Women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence than those without disability. ¹ The difference is greatest for violence by a cohabiting partner (physical and/or sexual), where women with disabilities are twice as likely to experience violence as women without disability. ¹⁷

Whilst we recognise that men are also the victims of violence and believe that no level of violence is acceptable, CoRE is firmly focussed on preventing violence against women and their children. This is because the data tells us that the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of family violence are men and the majority of victim-survivors are women and children. ⁹

PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

We now have a good understanding of why gender-based violence occurs and how it can be prevented.

The national framework *'Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia'*¹⁹ provides an evidence-based approach and conceptual model for action for the primary prevention of violence against women (PVAW).

Primary prevention describes an upstream, population approach to addressing the underlying causes and drivers of violence, so that it doesn't happen in the first place. It is different to tertiary prevention – or response work – which supports survivors and holds perpetrators to account after violence has occurred. PVAW seeks to change the social norms, practices and structures that allow violence to take place.

The pursuit of gender equality lies at the heart of PVAW, as gender inequality is the main driver of violence against women and children.¹⁶

Informed by *Change the Story*, CoRE acknowledges that the underlying drivers of violence against women are gendered, culturally-embedded and complex. They include beliefs and behaviours reflecting disrespect for women, low support for gender equality, and an adherence to rigid gender roles

and identities. Addressing these drivers and encouraging transformative change requires a long-term, population-level approach that includes addressing the structures, policies and practices that support such behaviours and beliefs.

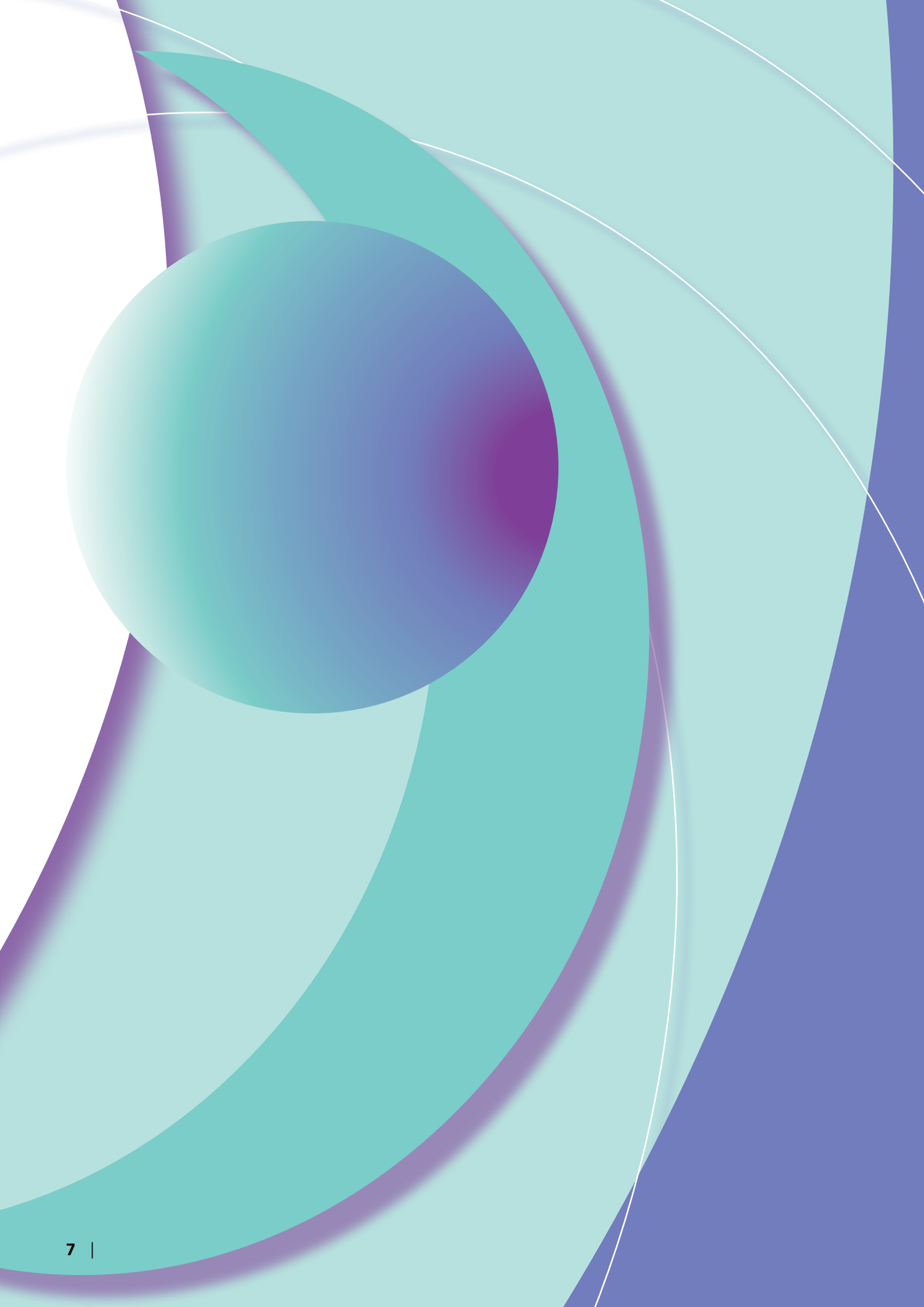
The prevention of gender-based violence has been enhanced in recent years by a deepening understanding of intersectionality and its impact on gender equality and gender-based violence. Intersectionality acknowledges the complex interconnectedness of different forms of disadvantage and discrimination. To break that down, it essentially means that discrimination doesn't exist in a bubble – different kinds of prejudice can be amplified in different ways when put together. *Changing the Picture*¹², Our Watch's national resource for the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, highlights the impacts of colonisation intersecting with gendered factors as the main drivers of violence against Aboriginal women.

Gender stereotypes can have negative consequences for men and women. Research shows that the pressure on men to follow outdated stereotypes of masculinity is contributing to their mental health and to their use of violence against women, and other men.²⁰ Everyone will benefit if men can break free from harmful gender stereotypes.

Creating a community where women and children live free from violence, abuse and discrimination will require all of us, working deliberately to achieve gender equality. Only together can we change the attitudes, stereotypes and inequality that allow violence to thrive.

"There is no doubt that violence against women is deeply rooted in power imbalances that are reinforced by what we consider 'normal' or 'expect' regarding roles and behaviour for men versus women."

The Victorian Royal Commission
into Family Violence Report
(2016)²¹



CoRE supports its members to address the five essential actions to reduce violence against women that are outlined in *Change the Story*:¹⁸

1.

CHALLENGE THE CONDONING OF VIOLENCE: reduce the tolerance for attitudes, beliefs, practices that justify, excuse or downplay violence against women and their children, or that shift the blame from victim to perpetrator

2.

PROMOTE WOMEN'S INDEPENDENCE IN DECISION-MAKING IN PUBLIC LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS: the independence of women to make decisions and exercise control is not curtailed

3.

CHALLENGE RIGID GENDER STEREOTYPES AND ROLES: stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity are left behind, not perpetuated

4.

STRENGTHEN EQUAL AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS between women and men, boys and girls and people of all genders

5.

PROMOTE AND NORMALISE GENDER EQUALITY in public and private life

THE STRATEGY

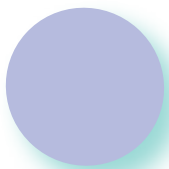
The CoRE Strategy provides a framework for more detailed, regular planning by CoRE members, the CoRE Leadership Group and Women's Health Grampians.

VISION

A safe, equal and respectful society for everyone- where women and their children live free from gender-based violence and every person is valued, heard, respected and empowered.

PURPOSE

CoRE's purpose is to motivate and support organisations in the Grampians region to prioritise and take action to promote gender equality as the means by which gender-based violence will be prevented.



STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. CULTURAL CHANGE

Goal - Challenge attitudes and beliefs around violence and inequality

- 1.1** Challenge thinking and build knowledge and capacity to address the drivers of gender inequality and violence and promote cultural change
- 1.2** Address the intersectional nature of discrimination
- 1.3** Support Aboriginal-led prevention strategies in collaboration with the Grampians Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum

2. SYSTEMS CHANGE

Goal - Improve practices, policies and systems to eliminate gender inequality

- 2.1** Take and support meaningful, sustainable action aligned with the Change the Story and Changing the Picture frameworks
- 2.2** Support CoRE members with obligations under the Gender Equality Act

3. COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Goal - Support collaboration and grow CoRE across the region

- 3.1** Grow the reach and impact of CoRE
- 3.2** Foster collaboration within and amongst CoRE members

4. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Goal - Promote, adopt and contribute to the knowledge base of best-practice in gender equality

- 4.1** Monitor and regularly review plans, strategies and outcomes, undertaking evaluations appropriate
- 4.2** Share information about what works and what doesn't work
- 4.3** Monitor and respond to emerging issues impacting on gender equality and discrimination

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CoRE and its members are guided by the following principles:

Primary Prevention	<p>Gender-based violence is preventable.</p> <p>We commit to actions that promote gender equality as the means by which gender-based violence will be prevented over time.</p>
Gender equity and gender transformative practice	<p>Socially and historically, there has been an imbalance in the opportunities available to women and men – we don't operate on a level playing field.</p> <p>To achieve fairness, we commit to redressing the imbalance with strategies that help compensate for the disadvantages that women have faced.</p> <p>By striving for gender-transformative practice, we will think deeply about the impacts of gender and seek new, innovative solutions to achieving gender equality.</p>
Intersectionality	<p>Intersectionality acknowledges that gender inequality is compounded by the overlapping effects of other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience due to characteristics such as: race; Aboriginality; religion; ethnicity; disability; age; sexual orientation; rurality and/or; gender identity.</p> <p>We commit to applying an intersectional approach to promoting gender equality and to tailored and responsive strategies for specific groups of people who may be at greater risk of discrimination</p>
Cultural safety	<p>Cultural safety is more than just being aware of, and respecting other cultures.</p> <p>We commit to creating and supporting environments and practices that are spiritually, socially and emotionally safe – where there is no assault, challenge or denial of identity or culture. We recognise that cultural safety is particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p>
Collaboration for collective impact	<p>Gender-based violence is a complex social problem that requires a collective effort.</p> <p>We will collaborate, share knowledge and resources, find solutions together and form partnerships to leverage expertise and avoid duplication.</p>
Evidence-informed practice	<p>We will ensure our work is informed by evidence, expert opinion and by the views of diverse women with lived-experiences of discrimination and violence.</p>
Sustainability	<p>Transforming the deeply entrenched structures, norms, practices and attitudes that perpetuate gender-based violence requires long-term, sustained efforts.</p> <p>By building knowledge and capacity, challenging attitudes and norms and supporting systems change, we will work to change our society forever.</p>
Accountability	<p>We are committed to accountability and continual improvement. We will monitor and evaluate our work, share the results and use our findings to improve our effectiveness.</p>

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS STRATEGY?

With the conclusion of the first CoRE Strategy in 2020, this refreshed Strategy builds on the success of CoRE. The foundations remain the same but new initiatives, focus areas and emerging priorities will be incorporated across the next four years.

RECOMMITMENT

As we launch the 2021-2025 Strategy, CoRE members will be asked to recommit to CoRE as a sign of their ongoing commitment to our shared vision.

MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS

To ensure the integrity, consistency and influence of CoRE, a short set of minimum expectations of all members will be introduced. Members will be supported by WHG to meet these expectations.

INCREASED FOCUS ON INTERSECTIONALITY

CoRE members will be encouraged and supported to pay additional attention to the intersectional nature of discrimination. By giving voice to those with lived experience of discrimination, WHG will support CoRE members to apply an intersectional lens to their systems and programs. We will also support Aboriginal-led family violence prevention strategies in partnership with local Aboriginal Controlled networks and organisations.

CORE FRIENDS NETWORK

To extend the influence of CoRE, we will introduce a CoRE Friends Network. Individuals within CoRE member organisations who are interested in broadening their knowledge and promoting gender equality will receive regular communications and access to resources.

THE VICTORIAN GENDER EQUALITY ACT 2020

The Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020 requires the Victorian public sector, local councils and universities (known as defined entities) to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality. Many of our CoRE members are defined entities and there are significant overlaps between their contributions to CoRE and their requirements under the Act. We will support these members to achieve their obligations, whilst aligning our broader work with the intent of the Gender Equality Act.

SECTOR DEVELOPMENTS AND EMERGING ISSUES


Across this four-year strategy we expect there to be significant changes in the social and political environment in respect to gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence. A revised Change the Story Framework will be released in 2021 and new sector developments are likely. The COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly have ongoing effects, both in its impact on women and in how it influences the way businesses and organisations communicate and work.

We will keep a watching-brief on change and ensure CoRE considers and responds to emerging issues, policy change and new evidence on how to prevent gender-based violence.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Ever-evolving, CoRE is responsive and flexible. With a commitment to action research, WHG regularly reflects on how the model could be adapted to better meet the needs of its members and to strengthen actions to promote gender equality.

A detailed Evaluation Plan supports the monitoring and evaluation of CoRE over time. It sets a framework for the regular collection of data from a variety of sources and for assessing the impact of the initiative over time.



“We need to be aware that all the groups are in the room with us. It’s not about the people who look different or express themselves differently. Intersectionality is about unpacking inclusive practice.”

Consultation Participant

“We’ve seen improved behaviour and respect within the organisation.”

CoRE Member

BEING A CoRE MEMBER

Being a CoRE member is about committing to taking action.

With the support of WHG, members review, plan and take steps to promote gender equality within their organisations and through their spheres of influence.

Members agree to:

- Integrate and resource relevant activities;
- Make changes to their organisation’s planning, policies and operations;
- Work collaboratively with other members to share knowledge, resources and ideas; and
- Communicate on progress, insights and challenges that will help monitor and build the capacity of the CoRE Alliance.

All CoRE members are expected to:

- Secure leadership support (CEO or equivalent, and leadership team);
- Have an organisation-wide CoRE action plan which evolves over time;
- Appoint a CoRE liaison person (CoRE coordinator or champion); and
- Report on progress annually.

Support is provided through:

- One-on-one consultations with WHG’s Regional Consultants who provide expertise and tailored advice;
- Leadership briefings to increase knowledge and organisational commitment;
- Training programs on a variety of topics, including: gender equity, prevention of violence against women, active bystanders, and intersectionality;
- Organisation-wide programs such as Act@Work;
- Community of Practice events to build members’ capacity to implement change and provide a forum for members to share knowledge and insights; and
- An extensive suite of practical resources to assist organisations to take action.

CoRE membership is open to any organisation, business, partnership, network or group within the Grampians region that is willing to commit to the vision, principles and goals outlined in the CoRE Strategy.

For more information on CoRE, visit <https://whg.org.au/our-work/prevention-violence-women/core/>

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