

# **Evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund 2018–2021**

Aishah Jameel, Lauren Penny and Kerry Arabena



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ISBN: 978-0-6488733-8-9

First published December 2021

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### **For citation**

Jameel, A., Penny, L. & Arabena, K. 2021, *Evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund, 2018–2019*, Karabena Publishing, Melbourne.

### **Professional disclosure statement**

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# Acknowledgments

**Karabena Consulting respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the many lands on which the Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing operates and where this evaluation took place.**

We acknowledge the 10 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations located across Victoria that participated in the evaluation:

**Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative**

**Djirra\***

**Lake Tyers Health and Children's Services**

**Merri Health & Long Walk**

**Spark Health Australia**

**Victoria Aboriginal Child Care Agency**

**Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative**

**Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative**

**Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place**

**Njernda Aboriginal Corporation.**

To all the staff who participated in this evaluation: your knowledge and experiences have informed the recommendations in this evaluation and will continue to play a vital role in supporting families and preventing family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We acknowledge Gunditjmara consultant Judith Ahmat McDonald from Watnanda Consulting for her valuable contribution to this evaluation.

Lastly, Karabena Consulting acknowledges the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and its hardworking staff who played a pivotal role in supporting this evaluation.

\*Previously Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service Victoria

# Terminology

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Perpetrator</b>         | For the purposes of this report, we have used the term perpetrator to describe people who choose to use family violence, while acknowledging that this is not the preferred term for many in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and that there is a need for this term to be updated. |
| <b>Project</b>             | The individual family violence prevention projects delivered by each Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Program implementer</b> | The staff responsible for delivering the family violence primary prevention program within each organisation such as project leads, camp facilitators and project officers.                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Program participant</b> | The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants who have taken part in the individual projects.                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Victims/survivors</b>   | Individuals who have experienced family violence.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

# Abbreviations

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Aboriginal</b>                     | While recognising the diversity of First Nations peoples, in line with Victorian Government terminology we also use the term 'Aboriginal' to include all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent living in Victoria. The term 'Indigenous' is mostly used when referring to all Indigenous peoples, their cultures, knowledges and scholarship. |
| <b>ACCO</b>                           | Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>ACT</b>                            | Australian Capital Territory                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>AIATSIS</b>                        | Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>AIF/Aboriginal Innovation Fund</b> | Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>DFFH</b>                           | Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Victorian Government)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>DPC</b>                            | Department of Premier and Cabinet (Victorian Government)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>ICT</b>                            | Information and Communications Technology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>LGBTQIA+</b>                       | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and + for everyone else who may not identify with one of these other banners                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>VACCA</b>                          | Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

# About this Evaluation

## **This review by Karabena Consulting documents the findings and recommendations from our independent evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund (Aboriginal Innovation Fund or AIF) from 2018 to 2021.**

For our evaluation, we reviewed the outcomes of 10 primary prevention projects that were funded by the AIF and delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) across Victoria. In addition to these projects, many of the ACCOs have also implemented or are implementing a range of other primary prevention projects that are funded under different funding streams. The findings of this evaluation are, therefore, limited to specific primary prevention projects funded under the Aboriginal Innovation Fund.

The Victorian Government established the AIF to support Aboriginal-led organisations to design and deliver innovative prevention programs to respond to local needs, and to ‘test’ these initiatives for First Nations communities in Victoria to understand which are the most effective. Thus, in undertaking this evaluation, it was important for us to consider the meaning of ‘innovation’ in family violence prevention, which we explored in an in-depth literature review (see pp. 23–61). Innovation in this context is the process that adopts new mechanisms, ideas and technologies and adapts them into workplace cultures. Importantly, innovation fosters creativity while implementing traditional strategies such as professional development, effective partnerships and supportive collaborations. A culture of innovation is an environment that supports creative thinking and advances efforts to extract cultural, economic and social value from family violence prevention activities that are both initiated within and targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Approaching the task of innovating family violence prevention strategies requires specific processes and activities to address racism, power inequities and the ongoing impacts of colonisation, and to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to support culturally safe, community-owned and -led solutions.

To this end, the key objectives of the AIF are:

- To increase access to Aboriginal community-led family violence prevention and support services, which is in line with strategic direction 4.2.2 of *Korin Korin Balit-Djak – Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017–2027*.
- To be new and ground breaking through prevention programs and approaches that have not been tested in Victoria, or have never been done before but have a promising evidence base.
- To test new forms of partnership and collaboration by instigating partnerships between private and non-government sectors, or between different services or sectors, or other groups in the primary prevention space.
- To grow or upscale existing ways of working through changes that significantly develop and grow the effectiveness of existing programs, services or models of program delivery that improve program outcomes and people’s lives.
- To test new approaches to implementation by adapting existing programs and models to target new or priority settings and/or cohorts or use alternative mechanisms to deliver existing models or programs (Victorian Government 2021a:1).

This evaluation found that the Aboriginal Innovation Fund has achieved most of its intended objectives.

Findings from the evaluation and the review of the literature has identified several factors that are instrumental to the success of family violence primary prevention interventions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander communities, including:

- connection to culture, healing and trauma-informed practice
- the involvement of First Nations staff and Elders
- utilising strengths-based approaches and language
- partnership and collaboration between different parties
- community-driven initiatives
- capacity building.

## About this Evaluation (cont.)

The main barriers to successful program delivery were the COVID-19 pandemic and restricted funding. When undertaking the literature review, we explored what is meant by ‘family violence’ and ‘primary prevention’, the drivers of family violence, an overview of current primary prevention interventions, opportunities for innovation and facilitators of First Nations-led family violence prevention interventions, and the importance of evaluating programs involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities.

We also explored the meaning of innovation in family violence prevention, including innovative approaches such as technology-based, community-led and hybrid models as well as family-based interventions. Although the literature demonstrates that innovation occurs more in family violence crisis responses, there is a lack of innovation seen in primary prevention interventions. The full literature review can be found on pp. 23–61 of the report.

In the evaluation we put forward several key recommendations for consideration such as the need:

- To practise culturally safe commissioning by:
  - building trusting relationships and partnerships
  - improving future reporting and monitoring templates to make them more community driven and culturally appropriate
  - allowing for longer term funding cycles, and consideration of scaling up and continued funding for successful primary prevention projects
  - incorporating capacity building opportunities for funded organisations in the funding process.

- To have programmatic changes for the family violence primary prevention sector and the DFFH through:
  - changing the language used in family violence to become more positive and empowering
  - shifting the focus of family violence away from men who perpetrate violence and broaden funded projects to include less recognised forms of violence and other groups who perpetrate violence
  - broadening the focus from primary prevention interventions to embracing all levels of prevention interventions.
- To use population and demographic data to expand where and how services are delivered by:
  - funding and delivering primary prevention services online to extend population reach
  - supporting workforce transition from face-to-face work to online and remote work
  - addressing in-built program initiation and implementation inequities by recognising the contribution of in-kind services.
- To promote innovation within the family violence prevention sector through:
  - utilising technology and digital platforms
  - forming partnerships across sectors.

A full list of the recommendations can be found on pp. 62–66 of this evaluation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating effects on family violence rates worldwide, but it has also highlighted the opportunity and need for family violence prevention organisations to adopt and deliver more innovative strategies to communities. Moving forward, it is crucial for funded organisations, as well as the DFFH, to facilitate the implementation of innovative strategies, such as those recommended in this evaluation, to address the family violence experienced by First Nations families.

# Purpose of the Evaluation, Methodology and Data Collection

## Project overview

In May 2017, the Victorian Government launched Free from Violence: Victoria's Strategy to Prevent Family Violence and all Forms of Violence against Women (Free from Violence). The strategy forms part of Victoria's 10-year plan, Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change, which outlines the government's approach to implementing the 227 recommendations that came from Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund was designed by the Office of Prevention and Women's Equality and the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum. It is a key deliverable of the *Free from Violence – First Action Plan 2018–2021*, specifically Priority Area Three: Innovate and inform. Giving effect to the principle of self-determination, the Aboriginal Innovation Fund supports Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to design, trial, test and evaluate the effectiveness of a range of new and innovative primary prevention initiatives for Aboriginal people and their communities across a range of settings and contexts.

The goals of the Aboriginal Innovation Fund are:

- to increase access to Aboriginal community-led family violence prevention and support services
- to gain a better understanding of what works to prevent violence.

Since 2018, the Victorian Office for Women in the then Department of Health and Human Services has funded 13 projects under the Aboriginal Innovation Fund, ranging in duration from one to three years. The projects were delivered by 13 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, with most projects concluding at the end of July 2021. The original call for submissions for the Aboriginal Innovation Fund was to support organisations to trial, test and evaluate their family violence primary prevention projects for one year (June 2018 – June 2019). In May 2019, the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence approved a six-month extension for the funded organisations to continue delivering initiatives from July to December 2019. In November 2019, an additional six-months extension from January 2020 to June 2020 was later approved by the Minister, with the ACCOs required to submit a project plan proposal for the extension of their activities. In June 2020, 11 out of 13 ACCOs were

approved for a further 12-month extension to support the continued delivery of primary prevention activities in the COVID-19 recovery and to continue building the evidence base required for scale-up.

In 2019, the Office for Women moved to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC). As part of the funding process, funded organisations were required to submit progress and financial reports, project plans and final reports using reporting templates provided by the DPC. In addition to their individual internal project evaluation processes, organisations also participated in external evaluation activities of their funded projects with the DPC and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). As part of the external evaluation process, there were plans by the DPC to provide evaluation support and a monitoring and evaluation framework using Aboriginal-led governance and measures of success. Unfortunately, because of DPC departmental and staff changes and the unforeseen impacts of the pandemic, the intended monitoring and evaluation framework was not delivered, while a lack of DPC staff capacity meant they could not provide evaluation support to the organisations. Although larger ACCOs were able to undertake their own monitoring and evaluation activities, smaller organisations more often did not have the resourcing, capacity and capability to do so.

In February 2021, the Office for Women moved to the DFFH. In May 2021, Karabena Consulting was commissioned by the DFFH to evaluate the Aboriginal Innovation Fund following a competitive procurement process.

This project, which is an outcomes evaluation, ran from June to September 2021, and was developed across five stages:

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**Stage 1** Project commencement and planning

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**Stage 2** Stakeholder engagement and evaluation activities

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**Stage 3** Literature review

---

**Stage 4** Submission of interim evaluation report

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**Stage 5** Delivery of final report – *Evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund, 2018–2019.*

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## Purpose of the Evaluation, Methodology and Data Collection (cont.)

### Stage 1

**Project commencement and planning** involved developing a project plan, holding initial meetings with the DFFH, and establishing a Project Steering Committee and holding an initial meeting with its members.

### Stage 2

**Stakeholder engagement and evaluation activities** involved consultations with funded organisations in the form of an online survey and semi-structured interviews on Zoom. Unfortunately, we were unable to consult with participants of the projects due to the sensitive nature of the program, tight timelines on the evaluation, and constraints associated with COVID-19 and the ongoing lockdowns across Victoria. Some organisations were also able to share internal evaluation data that they had collected throughout their projects. In addition to consultations with funded organisations, we also reviewed progress reports, final reports and project plans submitted by the ACCOs to the DFFH as part of the evaluation activities.

### Stage 3

**Literature review** involved conducting a desktop literature review of relevant State and Commonwealth policies, and program literature inclusive of published and unpublished documents and reports that focused on:

- what is meant by ‘family violence’ and ‘primary prevention’
- the drivers of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- protective factors
- the facilitators to First Nations-led family violence prevention programs and opportunities for innovation
- innovative family violence primary prevention interventions
- features of innovation processes and outcomes
- culturally safe commissioning
- evaluating programs involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The literature review also built on a desktop review conducted by the Outcomes and Evidence Branch of the DPC in the first half of 2020 (Victorian Government 2020a); this was largely a process review.

### Stage 4

**Submission of interim evaluation report** involved a progress report and a draft of the evaluation report to the DFFH. In Stage 4, the evaluation team also presented the draft evaluation findings to the program implementers in the form of two online roundtable discussions. The roundtables, which were facilitated by Professor Kerry Arabena in August 2021, provided an opportunity for program implementers to provide feedback on the findings of the evaluation and incorporate their wealth of expertise and insights into the development of the final Evaluation Report.

### Stage 5

**Delivery of final report** saw the completion of the *Evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund, 2018–2019* and its findings outlined herein.

## Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The aim of this evaluation is to evaluate the Aboriginal Innovation Fund and provide recommendations to the DFFH:

- 1** To support the administration, monitoring and evaluation of funded projects.
- 2** To inform future primary prevention policy and programmatic directions and investments.

The findings of the evaluation will also contribute to the limited evidence base on what works to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against Aboriginal women and communities.

The evaluation reviewed the outcomes of 10 primary prevention projects from 10 funded organisations as outlined in Table 1.1 (opposite).

**Table 1.1 / Overview of all funded organisations and projects**

| Funded organisations                               | Projects                                                                                                                                                                 | Participated in the evaluation |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative       | Burron Guli                                                                                                                                                              | Yes                            |
| Djirra                                             | Young Luv Social Media Campaign and Camps                                                                                                                                | Yes                            |
| Lake Tyers Health and Children's Services          | Partners in Prevention of Family Violence                                                                                                                                | Yes                            |
| Merri Health & Long Walk Trust                     | Speak Up, Speak Out                                                                                                                                                      | Yes                            |
| Spark Health Australia                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wellah Women Aboriginal Women's Health and Happiness Project</li> <li>Wellah Women Children's Book and Education Suite</li> </ul> | Yes                            |
| Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency             | Safe and Strong Family Violence Youth Camps                                                                                                                              | Yes                            |
| Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative                  | Yarning Up Our Services Our Way                                                                                                                                          | Yes                            |
| Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative                 | When Communities Speak                                                                                                                                                   | Yes                            |
| Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place           | Deadly Dads/Ochre Program                                                                                                                                                | Yes                            |
| Njernda Aboriginal Corporation                     | Nyini Health and Wellness Program                                                                                                                                        | Yes                            |
| Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative       | Family Violence Prevention Design Yarns                                                                                                                                  | No                             |
| Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative | Women's Catch-up Group                                                                                                                                                   | No                             |
| Mallee District Aboriginal Services                | Free from Violence Campaign                                                                                                                                              | No                             |

## Purpose of the Evaluation, Methodology and Data Collection (cont.)

### Evaluation methodology

#### Project Steering Committee

To ensure that the evaluation was culturally appropriate and locally acceptable, we established a Project Steering Committee to provide guidance and advice on the evaluation process. The membership of the Project Steering Committee consisted of four program implementers from three funded organisations who elected to be part of the Committee, as well as Karabena Consulting researchers. As part of our methodology, we had initially planned to send out online surveys, hold 10 online workshops with program implementers, conduct semi-structured interviews with program participants, and hold two roundtables (one with program implementers and one with policy makers). However, in the first Project Steering Committee meeting, concerns were raised about the process of the evaluation, with different organisations wanting to participate in the evaluation in different capacities due both to time and capacity constraints, and to COVID-19 restrictions. To address the concerns raised, we developed an online Expression of Interest survey, which gave all organisations involved in the evaluation an opportunity to decide on the extent of their participation in the project. The methodology of the evaluation was altered to reflect the concerns and capacity of organisations and to accommodate the needs of the program implementers.

#### Consultation plan

A consultation plan was co-developed with the Project Steering Committee, which detailed key stakeholder groups, stakeholder engagement strategies and activities, and consultation questions. Due to the sensitive nature of the funded projects and time constraints, our consultation activities were limited to consultations with individual project leads and staff who agreed to participate in the evaluation. These were in the form of an online survey distributed and completed on Survey Monkey, and semi-structured interviews carried out on Zoom. Two out of 10 organisations (Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative,

and Lake Tyers Health and Children's Services) opted to not participate in the consultations and a further four organisations (Long Walk & Merri Health, Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, Spark Health Australia and Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative) provided us with initial support but did not fill out the survey or participate in the interviews.

#### Online surveys

Two online surveys were developed on Survey Monkey: one to be completed by program implementers and the other for program participants. The survey questions were co-developed with the Project Steering Committee and the DFFH, and were distributed to relevant project staff and to those program participants who elected to be part of the evaluation. The program implementers survey consisted of 31 questions and the program participants survey 23 questions, all of which were either multiple choice or open-ended. Each survey had the option for participants to select whether they wanted to participate in semi-structured interviews with the evaluation team. The survey questions can be found in **Appendix B: Online survey questions.**

#### Semi-structured interviews

The questions for the semi-structured interviews were also co-developed with the Project Steering Committee and the DFFH. In our recruitment of interviewees, we relied on program implementers to identify relevant project staff and on respondents to the surveys who also elected to participate in the interviews. The interview questions can be found in **Appendix C: Interview questions.** An overview of the phases of work, key activities and outputs is provided in **Appendix D: Phases of work, key activities and outputs.**

#### Data sources

The data that informed the evaluation were collected from both existing data sources supplied by the DFFH, and primary data sources.

## Specification of existing data sources

The existing data sources reviewed comprised the following data collected from each ACCO:

- six-monthly progress reports (2019–2021)
- project plans
- project planning and results documents
- internal evaluation reports
- final reports
- desktop review conducted by the DPC.

It is important to note that not all ACCOs conducted internal evaluations and there were missing progress reports, project plans and one final report. Additionally, some fields within some reports were not fully completed. We were only able to review documents that were provided to us. A full list of specific data sources received from each ACCO is provided in **Appendix E: Data sources used in the evaluation**.

## Specification of primary data sources

Primary data were collected directly from program implementers and one participant in the form of online surveys and semi-structured interviews over Zoom. These were conducted in July 2021 by the evaluation team. Two online surveys were created and circulated, one for program implementers and one for program participants. Four people completed the program implementers survey while only one completed the program participants survey. We conducted seven semi-structured interviews over Zoom with seven program implementers from three ACCOs.

## Challenges to the evaluation

There are a number of limitations to this evaluation, namely:

1

**Timing of the evaluation and lack of evaluation readiness:** Feedback from program implementers indicated that the evaluation was conducted at a time when they were at capacity with finalising their individual projects, completing reporting to the DFFH and managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The result of this, coupled with changes to the evaluation requirements by the DPC/DFFH over the life of the projects, led to low engagement of stakeholders in the evaluation.

Despite our efforts to engage with stakeholders, we were unable to undertake a number of planned consultations such as workshops with program implementers and semi-structured interviews with program participants. We also received low response rates for our online surveys. This lack of available primary data altered the original evaluation methodology, which meant that we relied heavily on reviewing existing data sources such as the progress reports, project plans, final reports and internal evaluation data provided by some of the ACCOs.

It is important to note (as mentioned earlier in **Specification of existing data sources**) that there were missing progress reports, project plans and one final report. Additionally, the quality of the existing data was varied and inconsistent as some reports were incomplete or lacked the necessary information required for the evaluation. As such, we were only able to review those documents provided to us and the information they contained.

## Purpose of the Evaluation, Methodology and Data Collection (cont.)

2

### **Limited program participant perspectives:**

We were unable to collect direct input from program participants due to the limited support from program implementers given their limited capacity and the poor timing of the evaluation. This resulted in a lack of program participant perspectives being reflected in the evaluation. However, we were able to obtain participant responses from internal evaluations done by some program implementers (particularly the larger ACCOs) and have incorporated them into the findings of the evaluation.

3

### **Small sample size for consultations:**

We had initially planned to consult 50–100 people (5–10 from each organisation) for this evaluation. Two out of the 10 organisations opted not to participate in the consultations at all, and a further four organisations did not fill out the survey or participate in the interviews. We had sent the program implementers survey to seven project leads across seven organisations with the expectation that the surveys would be distributed to, and completed by, other members of their teams. However, this did not happen as we expected, and we only received four responses (two of which came from the same organisation). Additionally, we were only able to secure seven interviews across three ACCOs. The result of this limitation is that we relied heavily on existing documents and the literature review and were only able to use the outcomes of the consultations as a supplement.

**... when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strong with culture, family violence goes away, like it's against the cultural grain.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

# Findings of the Evaluation

This evaluation reviewed 10 Aboriginal Innovation Fund family violence primary prevention projects across Victoria. The organisations and the geographical project reach are outlined in Table 1.2, and a description of each project can be found in **Appendix A: Summary of funded projects.**

**Table 1.2 / Overview of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations included in the evaluation**

| Funded Organisations                         | Projects                                                                                                                                                                           | Geographical reach within Victoria                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative | Burron Guli                                                                                                                                                                        | Ballarat, Ararat, Golden Plains, Hepburn, Moorabool, Pyrenees                                                                                                                     |
| Djirra                                       | Young Luv Social Media Campaign and Camps                                                                                                                                          | Metro Melbourne and regional Victoria (Yarra, Campaspe, Darebin, East Gippsland, Glenelg, Horsham, Knox, Melton, Southern Grampians, Swan Hill, Warrnambool, Whittlesea, Wyndham) |
| Lake Tyers Health and Children's Services    | Partners in Prevention of Family Violence                                                                                                                                          | East Gippsland                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Merri Health & Long Walk Trust               | Speak Up, Speak Out                                                                                                                                                                | Hume and Moreland                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Spark Health Australia                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Wellah Women Aboriginal Women's Health and Happiness Project</li> <li>&gt; Wellah Women Children's Book and Education Suite</li> </ul> | Melton and Whittlesea                                                                                                                                                             |
| Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency       | Safe and Strong Family Violence Youth Camps                                                                                                                                        | Southern metropolitan region (City of Frankston, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Cardinia, Casey, City of Greater Dandenong, City of Kingston, Bayside, Port Phillip and Glen Eira)   |
| Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative            | Yarning Up Our Services Our Way                                                                                                                                                    | Geelong                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative           | When Communities Speak                                                                                                                                                             | Warrnambool, Portland, Heywood, Hamilton                                                                                                                                          |
| Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place     | Deadly Dads/Ochre Program                                                                                                                                                          | Maroondah, Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Monash, Whitehorse, Yarra Ranges                                                                                                         |
| Njernda Aboriginal Corporation               | Nyini Health and Wellness Program                                                                                                                                                  | Loddon Mallee                                                                                                                                                                     |

## Findings of the Evaluation (cont.)

Between 2018 and 2021, the Victorian Government invested more than \$3.2 million to support the design and delivery of 13 Aboriginal Innovation Fund projects. Of that, \$2.7 million was invested into 10 of the projects included in this evaluation, with an average of \$272,600 in funding received per project. All the funded organisations were ACCOs located across Victoria, and most of the projects targeted Aboriginal men and young boys, followed by Aboriginal women and young girls. Other groups also included families, staff involved in family violence primary prevention work, victims/survivors and Elders.

More than 1107 people engaged directly in the projects (607 beneficiaries were identified in desktop review and approximately 500 people<sup>1</sup> were identified in this evaluation). In addition to that, there were 1200 social media followers, all from the Young Luv Social Media Campaign. Approximately 400 outputs<sup>2</sup> were produced from 2018 to 2021 (with 257 between 2018 and June 2020, and 121 from July 2020 to July 2021). The types of outputs recorded were cultural camps, Zoom sessions, health challenges and cultural workshops.

The 2016 census reported that there were 47,788 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria (ABS 2019), with approximately 54 per cent residing in regional areas and the remaining 46 per cent in metropolitan areas. The funded projects were spread across the State with most delivered in those Local Government Areas with high Aboriginal populations, such as the regional areas of Geelong, East Gippsland and Ballarat, and metropolitan Darebin, Whittlesea, Latrobe, Wyndham, Casey and Hume. This has meant the projects were delivered in areas with high need.

During Victoria's numerous lockdowns, some projects were suspended while others were delivered online. The online projects were able to reach a larger cohort of participants, including those who resided outside of the project's intended geographical boundaries. This is discussed further in **Innovation and the move to online.**

Multiple projects were carried out in East Gippsland, Warrnambool and Knox. However, the DFFH also identified a number of under-serviced areas that could be targeted for future investment such as the regional areas of Shepparton and Mildura, which had no funded projects, and Geelong with only one project operating.<sup>3</sup> There is a growing Aboriginal population in the western part of Melbourne who would benefit from future primary prevention initiatives and investment.

### Has the AIF achieved its objectives?

The Aboriginal Innovation Fund has achieved most of its intended objectives, specifically:

- to support Aboriginal-led organisations to design and deliver family violence primary prevention projects
- to test new forms of partnership and collaboration
- to grow or upscale existing ways of working.

As part of the commissioning process, funded projects were required to demonstrate achievements against multiple Victorian Government prevention and gender equality initiatives. These include the *Free from Violence* strategy, the *Family Violence Outcomes Framework*, the *Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Framework*, *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*, *Korin Korin Balit-Djak*, and *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families*.

The evaluation found that all projects demonstrated a strong alignment with the objectives of the Aboriginal Innovation Fund initiative. In particular, the project outcomes are required to align with Domain 1 of the *Family Violence Outcomes Framework*, which sets out that family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated. We note that the outcomes of this framework are largely broad, longer term State-wide aims for Victoria; as such we were not able to provide an adequate assessment of whether the projects align with each specific outcome.

<sup>1</sup> This figure is likely to be an underestimate as not all projects reported the total number of participants reached.

<sup>2</sup> This figure is an approximate and is likely to be an underestimate as not all projects reported the final number of outputs.

<sup>3</sup> We note that Mallee District Aboriginal Services' Free from Violence Campaign covers the Mallee region, but that the organisation did not participate in this evaluation.

However, project feedback shows the programs to be well on their way to achieving these outcomes, and that they certainly align with the overall aim of ensuring that family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated:

**I told my brother to stop stereotyping. He was saying only boys should play football.**

Participant, Speak Up, Speak Out

The projects also aligned with the short- to medium-term outcomes of the *Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Framework*, with the funded organisations reporting a number of common outcomes they expected their projects to achieve. These included that program participants have:

- an improved understanding of, and connection to, Aboriginal culture
- an increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of family violence and support services
- more confidence, self-esteem and empowerment
- a better understanding and knowledge of healthy and respectful relationships.

Evidence from participant feedback and staff reflections, which were recorded in the internal evaluations conducted by some ACCOs, indicated an overall increase in their understanding of family violence and respectful relationships, and of connection to culture and community. Participants also recorded an increase in their confidence to seek help and support:

**From being involved with the program, I have seen all the boys grow and be proud of their identity. They have a much less chance of going through the justice system. Fantastic program. The boys listened to me and my stories.**

Guest speaker, Burrton Guli

While the projects appear to have achieved their intended objectives and short- to medium-term outcomes, it will take a long time to observe the long-term outcomes or impacts of the program, which are ultimately expected to result in behaviour change:

**The thing with changing behaviour is that it's not instantaneous, you know, it's not like we're growing a veggie patch and we see results in a few weeks, few months. Things don't come out until they're actually instilled and practised. We can learn about it but until we need to use our mathematics, if you like, we can learn all we want but until it's actually in practice... and we don't see the fruit of that.**

Program implementer, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

However, having an increase in awareness and understanding does not necessarily equate to a change in action or behaviour. Therefore, longer-term, follow-up evaluations would need to be conducted to confirm if participation in these projects will actually result in a reduction in family violence rates.

## Findings of the Evaluation (cont.)

### What works to prevent violence in First Nations communities?

Feedback from program implementers suggests there are several factors that are imperative to the success of family violence primary prevention interventions. At the forefront of what works to prevent violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is connection to culture.

#### Connection to culture, healing and trauma-informed practice

Culture is an intrinsic part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' identity, and it has been well documented that connectedness to culture is a protective factor against family violence in First Nations communities:

**... when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strong with culture, family violence goes away, like it's against the cultural grain.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

Connecting to culture builds resilience, helps to develop a strong sense of identity, promotes self-determination, and improves health and wellbeing outcomes. A common feature of the projects is that they have drawn on First Nations cultural knowledge, and incorporated cultural activities and healing practices, to educate their community about family violence and respectful relationships:

**It was all around connection to culture and Country. And so there was a lot of cultural sharing, knowledge sharing and cultural activities that the girls hadn't been able to do before, so like they made feather skirts and a whole range [of]... things like that.**

Program implementer, Young Luv

Most of the cultural activities delivered through the projects consisted of traditional ways to connect with culture such as storytelling, possum cloak making, yarning circles<sup>4</sup> and retreats on Country. However, some projects adopted more innovative approaches to deliver their messaging by utilising technology, engaging in online trends, and collaborating with influencers to make their content relatable to specific groups within the community, such as young Aboriginal girls:

**I think definitely that it was designed by Aboriginal women, like young Aboriginal women, and the content was really tailored to centre Aboriginal girls. And to be very much tailored to their needs and their worldviews and their perspectives. So I think that's very innovative and then also the way the content was designed was just really engaging and accessible... Using platforms that they engage with every day, rather than having them come in to the office or do it through formal workshops... just doing it in ways, you know, done on the way to school or doing whatever, engaging in social media.**

Program implementer, Young Luv

Embedding culture, healing and trauma-informed practices is powerful and has been identified as being effective in family violence primary prevention work by program implementers and participants alike:

**[The Ochre] Program includes culturally specific therapeutic interventions and practices that I find culturally safe to engage in. The program integrates an understanding of Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing that is strength-based.**

Participant, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

These findings support the literature on what works in family violence prevention programs and in healing programs targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

<sup>4</sup> Yarning circles are used within both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures 'to learn from a collective group, build respectful relationships, and preserve and pass on cultural knowledge'. For more information see: <https://www.yarning.com.au/what-is-yarning>.

## Engaging Aboriginal staff and Elders

Not only are the types of activities being delivered important, but the staff involved in the activities are also crucial. All of the program implementers surveyed said that most of the staff delivering the projects were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and they expressed the importance of First Nations staff and Elders taking the lead in the delivery of cultural activities. This was substantiated during the interviews as well:

**They have times where they really lead the camp, the cultural activities, and the conversations with young people... For me, as someone who's not Indigenous, I'm able to step out and go this actually isn't a conversation for me – Auntie, can you step in and have this conversation? And they're really available to be able to be there for the young people and what they need, and facilitate the cultural activities as well.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

The presence of Elders has been particularly beneficial in facilitating activities with Aboriginal youth as they are able to impart wisdom and cultural knowledge, ensure the activities are culturally appropriate, and offer a safe space for young participants. Their role is different to that of staff:

**I don't think the camps would be anything what they are without our Elders, being able to facilitate cultural activities, and even their presence adds that element of respect and healthy relationships.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

**... the conversations that the kids are gonna have with like an Elder is gonna be different than they might have with me, which they are. I think introducing them to Elders is a huge thing that we try to do at the camp, and just getting that motherly, fatherly kind of older wisdom feel, you know, calm, soft... you see them having little yarns off to the sides with the kids and becoming a bit of a safe [person]. I think all the workers are safe people for them, but I think the Elders, they get sort of maybe a bit of a different sense of safety from them.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

Young participants enjoyed the company of the Elders and staff, and some even looked up to them as role models:

**We found that young Aboriginal women absolutely were enraptured being able to be with Elders. To be in the bush and with women of their community teaching them and showing them and engaging with them in a healthy and positive way.**

Camp facilitator, Young Luv

**[Burron Guli] is a great program, [it] gave my boys something to look forward to every week. Came home talking about it. I believe it is a very positive program, especially when we have no real male role models.**

Parent of participant, Burron Guli

For many young people attending these primary prevention activities, it was the first time they were exposed to their Aboriginal culture and it had a profound effect on them:

**So, you know, we've had young people engaging in a cultural activity and they break down and cry and go 'but I'm so white, like, my skin is so white, I'm not Aboriginal'. And we're able to have those discussions about how culture, you know, where they're at in their cultural journey and how they can connect to it and how to emphasise with the difficulty of that.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

## Findings of the Evaluation (cont.)

The involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has clearly been shown to play a vital role in the success of these projects, particularly in offering much-needed guidance, mentorship and support to young Aboriginal participants on their cultural journeys.

### Strengths-based approaches and language

Current perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within the family violence space have been identified as narrow and deficit focused. Reflections from program implementers have shown that a focus on strengths-based approaches, and a shift of language from a deficit lens to a positive and preventive terminology, are more likely to be effective in preventing violence in Aboriginal communities:

**The language of perpetrator and victim does not work for our communities... Adopt ‘people who use control and violence’ as opposed to ‘men’s groups’ or ‘perpetrators’.**

Program implementer, Yarning Up Our Services Our Way

**The language used by VACCA in implementing the camps has also shifted, recognising that terms like family violence are confronting. Whereas talking about promoting healthy relationships is drawing on positive terminology and preventative language, and more likely to be effective in reaching young people.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

The feedback was also supported by program participants, some of whom had experienced family violence:

**... many respondents and workshop attendees want to see greater strength-based responses to family violence.**

Program implementer, When Communities Speak

**I wanted to be a part of a cultural men’s group that was strength-focused in overcoming issues related to family violence. This program offered social connectivity that I needed due to the social isolation from COVID-19 lockdowns.**

Participant, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

This evaluation has demonstrated that there is a need for systemic change within the family violence sector to adopt more strengths-based perspectives when designing and implementing primary prevention programs. This will be crucial in increasing participant uptake within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

### Partnerships and collaboration

As already outlined, a key objective of the AIF is to test new forms of partnership and collaboration. However, the reporting templates do not require providers to report specifically on how they have achieved this objective. This made it difficult to assess the success of the partnerships, as some partners included in the project plans were not mentioned in subsequent reports.

#### Partnerships between organisations

The available data show that providers have been able to collaborate successfully with other organisations, which have also been valuable sources of support. Partnerships have contributed to successful project delivery by:

- sharing resources, skills and knowledge, including cultural practices
- providing consultative support and expertise
- building capability and networks
- brokering referrals for activity participants
- informing activity content and scope.

Some organisations were able to leverage existing relationships to assist in the delivery of their projects, and partnerships were formed across a range of different sectors in the community. The ACCOs mainly formed relationships with schools, sports clubs, other ACCOs, family violence prevention services (including Aboriginal-specific organisations), government departments and relationships support services. Organisations also collaborated with local Elders, and community members and leaders. Importantly, there appeared to be a lack of collaboration with some other relevant stakeholders including the housing sector, financial services, police and the judicial system among others.

### Examples of successful partnerships

A review of the projects demonstrates that collaboration is critical to the successful delivery of family violence prevention strategies. For example, when implementing school education programs, Koorie Education Support Officers and Elders have been recognised as being instrumental in identifying students and schools in the relevant target groups, and in facilitating connections between program implementers and families. It is also important to have strong relationships with the school staff:

**[Having] one key contact at schools to champion [Speak Up, Speak Out] was instrumental in the implementation of [the program]. This teacher had strong relationships with participants, promoted the program to the broader school community and, in a practical sense, organised room bookings, access to AV, etc.**

Program implementer, Speak Up, Speak Out

The opportunity to partner with a local ACCO was also valuable in the implementation of the Speak Up, Speak Out program, as its staff assisted with engaging participants and their families, and providing a space to deliver the program.

As discussed in Engaging Aboriginal staff and Elders, forming strong partnerships with local Elders has been shown to be essential regardless of the project type. Like education programs, the participation of Elders in the planning, implementation and debriefing of cultural camps was found to be critical to their success.

Finally, partnerships with content creators and ‘influencers’ have proven to be increasingly important due to the rise of social media. This allows providers to reach a wider audience and to engage people they would have otherwise been unable to reach, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic which saw an increased use of social media and other online platforms. Promoting program activities through partner networks allows providers both to increase their networks and to reach targeted audiences.

### Community-driven initiatives

Each of the projects has been developed by Aboriginal people to address community needs. Reflections from the ACCOs demonstrated that community-led, self-determined initiatives are central to the implementation of successful family violence primary prevention interventions in First Nations communities. According to one implementer:

**I think the best thing that's come out of it is that we're starting to have [a] proper conversation of what prevention means from a community.**

Program implementer, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

In some instances, community members were directly involved in the development of projects:

**Well, I mean, I sort of developed the program through just the needs of the community. When I first came to Mullum, I volunteered in the food bank myself and just got to know the community a lot more intimately. They saw some of the work that I brought in and they asked if I would like to work on the family violence prevention strategy that Mullum wanted to put together. And, of course, it sort of launched with good ideas, good intentions of how it could look. But, as you know, when a program becomes personal to a particular community or audience, it blends into the needs of that particular community or audience. And so it sort of stepped in... because I was doing a lot more work with the men, it stepped into the Deadly Dads and there was a need there for wholesome conversation about parenting.**

Program implementer, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

## Findings of the Evaluation (cont.)

The Deadly Dads/Ochre Program has found success in involving community members in its implementation and making them ‘free from family violence ambassadors’:

**I really encourage the ambassadors to be the ushers of the group, to help with the lunch, to welcome people at the door, to start being kind again, to start taking an interest in people, to start asking a person how their week's been or what they've been [doing]... [to] generate conversation that's kind, make them feel safe. That's what the ambassadors are doing.**

Program implementer, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

Another project which is largely community driven is the Speak Up, Speak Out Program, which was designed and developed with consultation from Wandarra Elders. The Elders' ongoing involvement resulted in 100 per cent of those surveyed expressing that they felt ownership of, and connection to, the project. Similarly, the young participants in the Safe and Strong Cultural Camps appeared to gravitate towards the Elders and valued their presence. According to feedback about the camps, the involvement of Elders has been key to their success:

**It's been quite a collaborative process with consulting with Elders both internally at VACCA and engaging Elders and Traditional Owners on the lands where the camps have been held... It's not just one little team [who] say we're gonna do this thing and they go and do it, but that as many people as possible are involved in the design and the implementation, [and] that we do invite people across programs to participate.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

It is evident across the organisations that the involvement of the local community in the implementation of programs plays a vital role in identifying needs, facilitating engagement and connection to culture, and, ultimately, the overall success of the programs.

### Relationships between program implementers and participants

The relationships that program implementers cultivate, including connections to communities, have been essential in program participation. The staff spend a great deal of time fostering and building relationships with participants to establish trust and create a safe and comfortable space for them:

**Some guys just come, they sit, they enjoy the space and don't say too much, but they're coming back so it's obviously working for them. So the attendance is an indicator to that, they're finding that space safe.**

Program implementer, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

Part of creating a comfortable environment for participants is being flexible and accommodating to meet the needs of participants, especially the younger ones:

**We allow people to be engaged as much as they want to be, to the point where we'll say 'Well, you don't have to come the whole time, you can just come on Day 2, or just come on Day 1. You can come with a worker, you can come with a parent.' We were able to facilitate whatever those young people need so that they could get at least a little bit out of it, and maybe that'll bring them along to the next one because they've had a glimpse of what it's all about.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

There is also evidence that some participants even rely on staff for personal advice:

**... the people actually are now coming to me with issues that arise in their lives, because they know that what we're doing in this strategy is safe. They know that they can talk about issues that might trigger them... Sometimes I get calls saying, you know, I want to take it out like this, I want to deal with it like that, but they've got now a safe person to ring.**

Program implementer, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

The support that program implementers provide extends beyond their project roles and is not covered by current funding. Staff may begin by providing assistance to participants before the official program intervention has even started:

**I had one guy [who] attended that the bus left [behind] because he was running really late. We ended up taking him in a separate car about an hour and a half later, but he was high on the phone in the morning because there was an incident at his home the night before with his dad and things got quite heated. And he was not going to come and I could hear him on the phone, [but] he ended up coming in. There's been a couple times in the morning I've had to shoot out to different young people's houses and be like, 'What's up man, like, change your mind?' Something small can kind of make them not want to attend.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

Even through the challenges of lockdowns brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, program implementers continued to reach out and provide much-needed support to participants:

**Project workers had to create other ways of engaging clients. Constant contact was maintained with men across the community with a weekly phone call or [a] visit to the house conducted in clients' yards to maintain social distancing... The project workers have provided that one-on-one contact with clients throughout the pandemic. This has reduced anxiety and many other mental health issues that arise from being isolated and under threat of a pandemic.**

Program implementer, Partners in Prevention of Family Violence

## **Building connections through shared experiences**

Several of the projects demonstrated that building connections with community and other participants is critical to the success of family violence prevention programs. For instance, one of the key components of the Deadly Dads/Ochre Program is to offer a safe space for participants to connect with one another and the community. Providing somewhere for participants to engage and connect prevents boredom, which can often lead to addiction and violence:

**The strategy behind the Ochre Program was that [Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place] offered a space for people who wrestled with addiction, especially gambling addiction, to alternatively choose to come to a space of safe engagement and entertainment over going to the pokies where potential perpetration [of violence] after losing their money could occur.**

Program implementer, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

Engaging with the community and hearing from others who have been in similar situations has proven to be positive for participants:

**I've also introduced an engagement prevention strategy, a movie day once a month, and that's in line with a mob called SHARC, which is a self-help against gambling. It's [an] opportunity where community come together, we have guest speakers talk about their healing journey and how they've processed and overcome their gambling habits... The strategy around that is getting people off the couch, out of their homes. Instead of going down to the pokies, they'll come to us, you know, a place that's safe, a place that's good.**

Program implementer, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

## Findings of the Evaluation (cont.)

Although COVID-19 disrupted face-to-face engagement, which is certainly preferred, the Deadly Dads/Ochre Program was able to continue to engage participants online by introducing different partners and stakeholders. Similarly, the Wellah Women Aboriginal Women's Health and Happiness Project was able to use Zoom to facilitate connections between participants, who greatly valued the opportunity to bond with each other:

**I was going insane not being able to go to [the] local Co-op, [and] have a laugh with a few Kooris there. And this program gave me my sanity back. Having a good laugh with like-minded Black women was a highlight of COVID lockdown.**

Participant, Wellah Women Aboriginal Women's Health and Happiness Project

**The main reason participants registered was to build connections, learn more and hear from female Aboriginal guest speakers. The women shared on many occasions how they really enjoyed being able to be inspired by one another and share in each other's successes and milestones.**

Program implementer, Wellah Women Aboriginal Women's Health and Happiness Project

Through this program, participants identified that they met someone new on 79 occasions over an eight-week period. Twenty of them also said they had maintained connections with other participants since completing the program through phone calls, social media and making plans to meet up in person as allowed by COVID-19 restrictions. Research shows that empowering female participants is a key facilitator for First Nations-led family violence prevention programs (discussed further in Empowering women).

## Capacity building

Although it is not a key objective of the Aboriginal Innovation Fund, providers are expected to commit to shared learning and capacity development. To build strong prevention systems, it is vital to support the development of a skilled workforce who are able to expand the reach of current primary prevention activities and develop innovative strategies. However, as only a small number of the organisations we evaluated reported on capacity building, it is unclear to what extent it has been built into all of the prevention programs. While some of the reporting templates specifically ask about capacity building many do not require providers to address this directly, but several of the projects demonstrated capacity building both within their organisations and among project participants.

### Organisational capacity building

One clear example of capacity building is through the partnerships that Djirra formed with The Digital Picnic and the Equality Institute during their Instagram campaign. This collaboration facilitated capacity building around the use of targeted social media to share prevention messaging, with Djirra staff completing training in:

- using the Instagram platform and Zoom
- content and video marketing
- social media strategies, including how to create impactful and culturally appropriate content
- how to evaluate the success of their campaign.

Collaborating with these organisations was said to be essential to the success of their Instagram campaign and the Young Luv camps:

**Our Instagram campaign collaborated with key partners, The Digital Picnic and the Equality Institute, which provided mutual learning and improved our team's capacity to run a successful campaign for young Aboriginal women.**

Program implementer, Young Luv

Another project which had a strong focus on capacity strengthening was Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative's Yarning Up Our Services Our Way. Wathaurong provided Indigenous research methodologies training and mentoring in Aboriginal participatory action research and yarning methods, anti-racism praxis and applying the *AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research* (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2020). This built the capacity of staff from multiple service streams to facilitate research and enabled them to engage in gathering data for the current project and future work:

**The workshop participants were extremely engaged in, and passionate about, the [Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative's] Indigenous research methodologies training workshop... As an organisation we are now able to gather information from the communities we support, theme it and adapt our service response to meet community needs.**

Program implementer, Yarning Up Our Services Our Way

Further capacity building activities included leadership opportunities for Aboriginal staff through facilitating the Safe and Strong Cultural Camps and educating Elders about how to use an online messenger platform in order to facilitate consultations for the Speak Up, Speak Out Program.

### **Participant capacity building**

Building some form of capability among participants was common across the projects. This included training and skills development, education around relationships and culture, confidence building, healing and leadership opportunities. For example, the Safe and Strong Cultural Camps provided leadership opportunities for young people, with some of the more mature participants asked to demonstrate new activities as emerging leaders. They were also encouraged to handle any minor issues that arose among other participants, under the supervision of staff. VACCA found this to be very effective and plan to approach some past participants to assist in the co-design and co-leading of future camps:

**I think something that we do that is innovative is, without putting more on their plate or expecting them to be leaders, but asking a little bit more of some of those older guys and putting them in a position of empowerment. And you see them like really take that on... maybe some of them, that might have even been the first time they've kind of been put in a bit of a leadership position.**

Program implementer, Safe and Strong

An unexpected outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it presented opportunities to build capacity in relation to the use of technology. For instance, where participants were struggling with technology, organisations provided video tutorials on how to use Zoom and other online platforms. This meant that these participants had the capacity to engage in the program throughout the pandemic and its associated lockdowns.

Further, most of the programs focus on increasing internal capacity, which includes building participants' understanding of what healthy relationships look like. Burrong Guli, for example, includes discussions of relationships in every session and encourages participants to talk about how they have incorporated the Burrong Guli Lore of 'Love, Respect, Safety, and Responsibility' into their lives:

**I cleaned my brother's room and helped Mum cook dinner. I showed responsibility as a big brother, I showed respect to Mum, and I showed love to my little brother and Mum as I helped them because I love them.**

Participant, Burrong Guli

Similarly, the Safe and Strong Cultural Camps teach youth how to recognise unhealthy relationships. Data collected by VACCA show that the camps increased participants' understanding about healthy, respectful relationships and where to get help if they feel unsafe in a relationship. The Deadly Dads/Ochre Program also included workshops on maintaining respectful relationships, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

## Findings of the Evaluation (cont.)

Importantly, with many women unable to recognise that they are in an unhealthy relationship, the Young Luv Social Media Campaign educates women about the many facets of violence and how to identify controlling behaviours. The Nyini Health and Wellness Program has also had success in improving participants' understanding of healthy communication in relationships:

**We feel closer, as we now have the chance to become closer through better understanding and support for each other's needs.**

Participant, Nyini Health and Wellness Program

Investing in education and prevention strategies that build capacity in relation to healthy and respectful relationships has been proven to be a key factor in breaking the cycle of family violence.

### Opportunities for improvement

#### Innovation and the move to online

There was a wide range of primary prevention interventions delivered to community, comprising of:

- education programs carried out via schools, social media platforms, community programs and sports clubs
- cultural youth camps
- women's health and support groups
- the production of children's educational resources
- facilitated cultural workshops and activities including yarnning circles, storytelling, possum skin cloak making, and healing ceremonies.

Most of these are either new pilot projects for the individual ACCOs or build on existing projects with a new target group. The majority share foundations that lie in Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, which have been practised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for thousands of years. When program implementers were asked what they considered to be innovative about their projects, we received a mixture of responses such as:

- the ability of staff to translate complex evidence-based information in an accessible and engaging way
- how the project was designed by, and for, Aboriginal people with an emphasis on culture, community and Country
- the strength of the collaboration between the ACCOs and other stakeholders.

In addition, these projects all have a strong focus on:

- reconnecting to culture
- building networks within community
- self-determination and empowerment (e.g. engaging Elders and community in the project design and implementation)
- addressing community needs
- incorporating healing and trauma-informed practice
- using strengths-based approaches to address family violence.

Although these approaches are not necessarily 'innovative' in a First Nations context, there could be significant benefit and opportunity in adopting them when designing and delivering primary prevention strategies for mainstream family violence services, or services targeting other marginalised groups such as migrant and refugee populations.

The impacts of COVID-19 have been devastating and have disrupted the face-to-face delivery of many essential services, including those in family violence prevention. Program implementers unanimously found the restrictions caused by the pandemic to be the key barrier in delivering their projects. Conversely, the pandemic also brought about the need for flexibility and to adapt quickly, as well as increased resilience:

**We never once looked upon this as a factor that limited project reach and effectiveness. Our Indigenous community has always maintained the strength and resilience to overcome any barriers faced to ensure we continue our journey forward with success and value.**

Program implementer, Nyini Health and Wellness Program

While some ACCOs chose to suspend their projects, others moved to deliver their services online. Staff and participants had to learn how to engage remotely, which was challenging for some – particularly those who had limited technological capabilities and lacked access to laptops and other ICT equipment. Program staff also had to deal with the rise of Zoom fatigue and low levels of engagement and attendance by program participants, which proved to be challenging:

**... and it was challenging to be able... to hold the audience, you know? And, as we all know, as time flew by people were getting a lot more fatigued with Zoom and holding that audience. So it was up to us to really work together as different organisations...**

Program implementer, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

The COVID-19 crisis forced program implementers to think outside the box and come up with innovative solutions to deliver services creatively. For example, Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place was able to overcome the issue of reduced participant engagement by inviting a cartoonist to several workshops held over Zoom, in which the cartoonist would draw portraits of the participants. This proved to be a fun, creative and effective way of keeping people engaged online.

The shift online also brought about new opportunities to deliver primary prevention interventions that would not have been possible otherwise. This unexpected outcome of the pandemic was reported by multiple organisations. By moving online, the Wellah Women Aboriginal Women's Health and Happiness Project was able to secure more than 200 participants, 25 per cent of whom lived outside of Victoria. Another example is the Young Luv Instagram campaign that reached out to an international audience, with some of its 1200 followers originating from the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada.

Although there are challenges associated with delivering culturally safe family violence prevention content online, there is an increasing need to adapt service delivery to this format, as it presents an opportunity to deliver services in creative and innovative ways.

## Funding

Short-term funding was identified by program implementers as another main challenge to the delivery and expansion of family violence prevention projects.

**Funding is the only obstacle to this program continuing.**

Program implementer, Burron Guli

**The biggest issue we will face, as with most Indigenous community-driven initiatives, will be the funding to run the program on an ongoing basis.**

Program implementer, Nyini Health and Wellness Program

This issue has also been recognised by participants:

**Some of the recommendations from both the workshops and respondents are to have secure, long-term funding for prevention programs that are developed and targeted at these gendered groups.**

Program implementer, When Communities Speak

## Findings of the Evaluation (cont.)

Despite having an identified need, program implementers said that the lack of funding made it difficult to expand Burron Guli and run more sessions. The Yarning Up Our Services Our Way implementers expressed similar issues:

**[Being] under-resourced and fund[ed] restricts us [only] to engaging with problems and [providing] time-limited support.**

Program implementer, Yarning Up Our Services Our Way

Similarly, those implementing the program When Communities Speak also raised limited funding as an ongoing impediment, specifically that services require more resources to provide prevention strategies rather than just crisis responses to family violence.

With issues around funding consistently reported by ACCOs, both in the literature and throughout this evaluation, there is a clear need for government to provide secure funding that meets the demands of the community and supports the appropriate delivery, monitoring and evaluation of primary prevention services.

### Opportunities for scalability

The success of some of the projects has led to their identification for possible expansion to other target groups and geographical areas. Some projects that were initially targeted at specific groups – such as males (e.g. Burron Guli and Deadly Dads) or young students (e.g. Speak Up Speak Out Program) – have received positive feedback from participants and/or their parents, and thus have the potential to be offered to females and those from different age groups (e.g. high school students and adults):

**Bigger is better. Involve the girls by having a sister program. Maybe a graduation performance/dance.**

Parent of participant, Burron Guli

**I want to learn more about being an upstander myself. There should be a program for adults.**

Parent of participant, Speak Up, Speak Out

An example of a project that evolved to address the needs of the community is Deadly Dads. Following the success of the program, which was initially only for men, the Ochre Program was developed to focus on promoting healthy and respectful relationships for both genders:

**... females should always be included in this conversation of prevention because, you know, both sexes, we get it right, we get it wrong. And we have children involved and little eyes are watching how we treat each other and how we talk to each other and how we learn from each other. So I've always wanted to make the prevention strategy always around an inclusive audience of men and women and children and families. And so it became the Ochre Program which is something that both men and women are a part of.**

Program implementer, Deadly Dads/Ochre Program

Another project that has shown potential for expansion and scalability is the Young Luv Instagram campaign. As this project operates in an online setting, it should be easy to use different platforms and expand it to other parts of Victoria and Australia without disruption from any further lockdowns.

It is important to note that while specific projects have shown promise for replication in other target groups and settings, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are diverse and unique to each Country and each community. Existing project content and material should, therefore, be adapted and tailored through consultation with local communities and Elders to ensure its cultural acceptability and appropriateness and that its delivery will meet individual community needs.

# Literature Review

## Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund

The purpose of the Aboriginal Innovation Fund, one of the key deliverables of the *First Action Plan 2018–2021* (Victorian Government 2018a), is to support Aboriginal-led organisations to design and deliver innovative prevention programs. It is also to ‘trial, test and evaluate the effectiveness’ of these initiatives for First Nations peoples and their communities ‘across a range of settings and contexts’ (Victorian Government 2021a:1).

The key objectives of the AIF are:

- to increase access to Aboriginal community-led family violence prevention and support services, in line with strategic direction 4.2.2 of *Korin Korin Balit-Djak – Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017–2027*
- to be new and ground breaking
  - prevention programs and approaches that have not been tested in Victoria, or have never been done before but have a promising evidence-base
- to test new forms of partnership and collaboration
  - new partnerships between private and non-government sectors, or between different services or sectors, or other groups in the primary prevention space
- to grow or upscale existing ways of working
  - changes that significantly develop and grow the effectiveness of existing programs, services or models of program delivery that improve program outcomes and people’s lives
- to test new approaches to implementation
  - adapt existing programs and models to target new or priority settings and/or cohorts or use alternative mechanisms to deliver existing models or programs (Victorian Government 2021a:1).

Since 2018, the Victorian Government has allocated almost \$3.2 million towards the 13 Aboriginal Innovation Fund projects. Each funded organisation is required to align its project outcomes with the prevention domain of the *Family Violence Outcomes Framework*, which sets out that family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated. The framework seeks the following outcomes:

- Victorians hold attitudes and beliefs that reject gender inequality and family violence; Victorians understand the causes and forms of family violence, who is affected by violence, and the impact on victims.
- Victorians actively challenge attitudes and behaviours that enable violence; Victorians discuss and condemn violence through challenging rigid gender roles, gender inequality, sexism and discrimination, to break the cycle of violence.
- Victorian homes, organisations and communities are safe and inclusive; the prevalence of violence is significantly reduced for all Victorians equally, and people live free of fear.
- All Victorians live and practise confident and respectful relationships; Victorians are equipped with the knowledge and skills that inform and shape healthy, safe, equal and respectful relationships (Victorian Government 2018a:8–9).

Each of the above outcomes sets out various indicators. Further, project outcomes must also align with the short- to medium-term outcomes that are linked to strategies outlined in the *Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework*, including:

- increased community awareness and knowledge of services, support and culture
- improved understanding of healthy and respectful relationships in Aboriginal families and community
- increased confidence and leadership of Aboriginal people (Victorian Government 2012a:26).

## Literature Review (cont.)

As part of the evaluation, this literature review will examine what is meant by ‘family violence’ and ‘primary prevention’, explore the drivers of family violence and violence against women, and provide an overview of primary prevention and intervention approaches. Further, it will discuss the main facilitators for First Nations-led family violence prevention programs and the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had in this space, including opportunities for innovation. Lastly, we will analyse the innovations in family violence prevention programs and features of innovation processes and outcomes, as well as discuss the importance of evaluating programs involving First Nations communities.

In this review, we have analysed the findings of the internal desktop review undertaken by the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, as well as relevant policies, published reports and peer-reviewed papers. In doing so, we searched for documents that emphasise the social and emotional wellbeing considerations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people engaged with holistic models of care.

### What is family violence?

Violence against women is a major human rights issue and a public health concern. Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence against women (Starmann et al. 2018). The *Free from Violence* strategy focuses on family violence and all forms of violence against women. It refers to family violence, as defined in Section 5 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic), as behaviour by a person towards a family member that:

- is physically or sexually abusive
- is emotionally or psychologically abusive
- is economically abusive
- is threatening
- is coercive
- in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person.

It also includes behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, the kinds of behaviour outlined above. This definition is used in various research papers (Equality Institute 2018; Langton et al. 2020a; Victorian Government 2012a). The *Free from Violence* strategy ‘approaches family violence as a deeply gendered issue’, acknowledging that while violence can take various forms, and both men and women can be perpetrators and victims/survivors, ‘structural inequalities and unequal power relations between men and women mean women are more likely to experience family violence’ (Victorian Government 2017:1).

The *Free from Violence* strategy recognises that the term ‘violence against women’ is broader than the definition of family violence. In regard to violence against women, the strategy refers to the definition set out in Article 1 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* (1993) and *Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women in Australia*.

**These describe violence against women as: any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.**

## Family violence in First Nations communities

The notion of family violence in First Nations communities is ‘broader and more encompassing’ than those described above (Victorian Government 2012a:8). The concept of family in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities varies widely across extended families, clans and descent groups, ‘dictated by cultural precepts of kinship’ (Langton et al. 2020b:18). Family violence was defined by the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force as:

**an issue focused around a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities. It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of Indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide.**

(Victorian Government 2018b:7)

Similar to *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families (Dhelk Dja)*, the *Free from Violence* strategy expands on this definition and acknowledges violence perpetrated by non-Aboriginal people against Aboriginal partners, children, young people and extended family. This has a direct impact on ‘spiritual and cultural rights, which manifests as exclusion or isolation from Aboriginal culture and/or community’ (Victorian Government 2018b). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience family violence at higher rates, which is ‘compounded by experiences of racism and marginalisation’:

**While this violence also has gendered patterns, disproportionately affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, there are other factors at play, deeply rooted in the impacts of colonisation and violent dispossession, particularly the loss of land and culture and the high levels of intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal women, men, children, families and communities.**

(Victorian Government 2017:2)

This violence can be intergenerational and, importantly, victims/survivors can also be perpetrators of family violence (Victorian Government 2012a).

## Shifting the focus from men who perpetrate family violence

Although family violence is largely considered to be a gendered issue and there is a plethora of literature about male perpetrators, it is important to broaden our understanding of the perpetuation of violence. Although currently underexplored in Australia, there is emerging research about ‘women who use force’. Recent research by the University of Melbourne, in collaboration with Curtin University and Baptcare, has highlighted the importance of developing family violence services for female perpetrators of violence (Kertesz et al. 2020). This research also notes that while the lack of appropriate service system responses to these women has been recognised by the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, no specific recommendation was made in relation to this group.

Kertesz et al. (2020) discovered that women who perpetrate violence are most commonly victims or survivors of domestic and family violence themselves. Thus, it is vital that there is a trauma-informed approach to assessment and intervention for these women so they can learn how traumatic experiences can lead to destructive behaviours, allowing them to make different choices in the future (Kertesz et al. 2020). In addition, this research found that the context in which women use force ‘differs from men’s violence in motivation, intent and impact’, with men found to ‘use violence to exert power and coercive control over women and children’, whereas women tend to be motivated by stress, anger, self-defence and retaliation (Kertesz et al. 2020:6). Where ‘mutual violence’ has been identified, it is often asymmetrical, with women more likely to use psychological, verbal and emotional force. When women use physical force, it is ‘more likely to be minor or moderate, rather than severe’ (Kertesz et al. 2020:2). The survey findings indicate that almost half of the reports of women using force were targeted at their male partners, and almost a third reported the use of force targeted at their children (Warren, Martin & Chung 2020).

## Literature Review (cont.)

Most of the family violence perpetrated by women is identified through women's self-disclosure. However, while women are more likely to self-disclose, they are often deterred by fear of losing their children through child protection or family court proceedings (Kertesz et al. 2020). Child protection data confirm that fear of having a child removed contributes to the under-reporting of child abuse and neglect in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Australian Government 2020). Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding about what constitutes family violence.

It is also important to note that family violence can be experienced in all types of families, across all genders and by all sexualities (Victorian Government 2017). Where heterosexuality is the social norm and there are rigid social constructions of gender, the likelihood of family violence against members of the LGBTQIA+ community is increased. Thus, the Victorian Government has recognised that there is a 'need for specialised approaches to preventing violence in same-sex relationships' (Victorian Government 2017:16).

Another less recognised form of family violence is adolescent family violence, which is perpetrated by young people against family members, including parents, siblings, carers and others. Adolescent family violence can include physical and sexual violence, property damage, verbal abuse, coercive and controlling behaviours, financial abuse and psychological and emotional abuse (Fitz-Gibbon, Elliott & Maher 2018; Campbell et al. 2020). This behaviour could be used to achieve things like changing household rules or extracting money from a parent (Fitz-Gibbon, Elliott & Maher 2018). Some presentations by adolescents who use violence include those who have experienced trauma, those suffering from mental health issues, people with a disability, and those using drugs and alcohol. Similar to the above, adolescent family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is very likely to be under-reported due to the risk of child removal, as well as the high rates of contact that First Nations youth have with criminal justice agencies (Campbell et al. 2020).

### Elder abuse

Another widely recognised form of family violence, which was specifically addressed in Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence, is elder abuse. This is defined as:

**any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust, usually a family member. The abuse may be physical, social, financial, psychological and/or sexual and can include mistreatment and neglect.**

(Victorian Government n.d.)

*Dhelk Dja* recognises elder abuse as 'abuse against older Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Elders' (Victorian Government 2018b). Due to the impacts of colonisation and the significantly shorter life expectancy of First Nations people, those aged 50 and over are commonly considered as 'older' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (Senior Rights Victoria n.d.a). Elder abuse occurs in the community, at home and in institutional settings such as aged care. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety found that abuse in residential care is 'far from uncommon', with thousands of allegations of assault in the 2019–20 period (Australian Government 2021).

Elder abuse has become increasingly prevalent, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Senior Rights Victoria n.d.b). In 2020, Senior Rights Victoria received slightly fewer calls to their helpline compared to 2019, mainly due to a decrease in calls during lockdown periods. However, data from emergency services indicated an increase in elder abuse during these periods and calls to Senior Rights Victoria increased again (beyond 2019 levels) when restrictions were lifted (Senior Rights Victoria n.d.b). This suggests that the decrease in calls during this time was due to fewer people witnessing troubling behaviour and calling for advice, as well as fewer older people seeking help, potentially because the perpetrator was present (Senior Rights Victoria n.d.b).

Financial abuse is one of the most reported types of elder abuse (Joosten et al. 2020). In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, many older people experience 'humbugging'. This is where someone demands money that belongs to someone

else with no intention of repaying it. The demands are 'repeated, often with a threat or actual physical, emotional or psychological abuse if the person refuses' (Kimberley Birds 2020:3). This financial Elder abuse is frequently perpetrated by the Elder's own children and grandchildren. It can include processing the Elder's Centrepay without their permission or by coercing them, misusing carers' payments and/or threatening Elders for their royalty payments. Kimberley Birds (2020) found that there can be a lack of respect for Elders, with their power eroded by young people taking advantage of them, particularly when it comes to the use of technology. Elders may be vulnerable because they are frightened of how their children and grandchildren will react if they don't comply, or they are made to feel guilty if they don't hand over their money.

Financial abuse tends to go unreported by older people because they are scared, feel shame or do not recognise that it is abuse. It is important to implement prevention strategies, such as educating older people about elder abuse and how to manage their finances, to help address financial abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Kimberley Birds 2020).

## Primary prevention approach to family violence

A primary prevention approach is a long-term agenda that seeks to prevent family violence before it occurs. It focuses on the population as a whole and requires changing the social conditions that shape inequalities and violent behaviour (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015; Victorian Government 2017). Distinct from early intervention and crisis response (also known as secondary and tertiary response), primary prevention works to create broad societal change by:

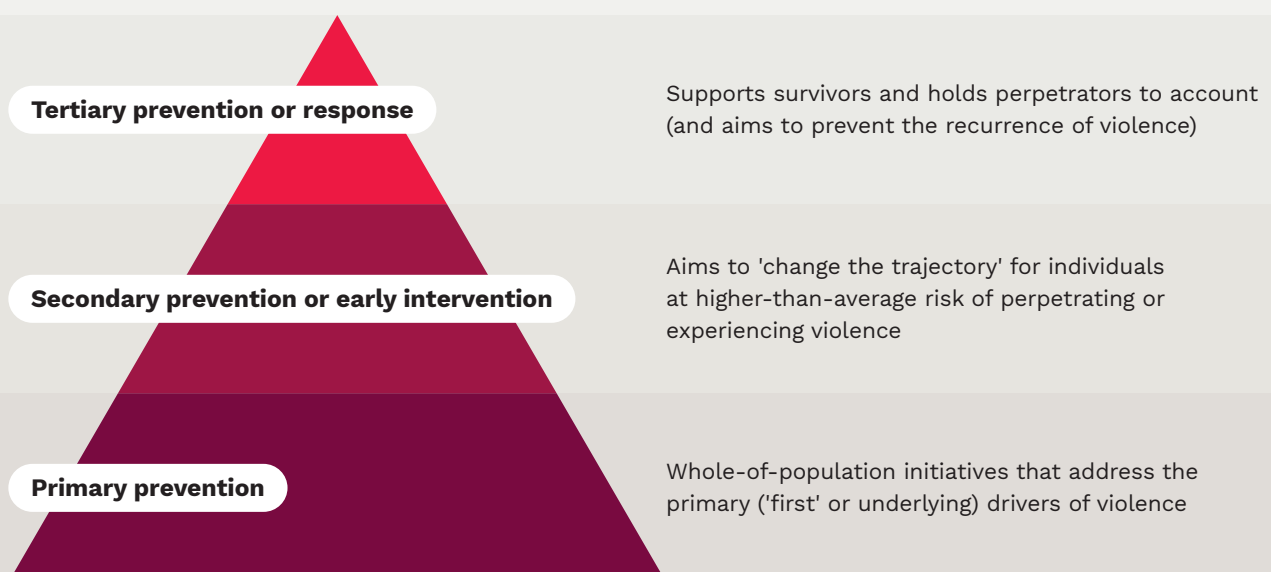
**identifying the deep underlying causes of violence – the social norms, structures and practices that influence individual attitudes and behaviours – and acting across the whole population to change these, not just the behaviour of perpetrators.**

(Victorian Government 2017)

This, in turn, helps to alleviate pressure from the systems that carry out secondary and tertiary responses, and should effectively link to these efforts.

**Figure 1.1 / The relationship between primary prevention and other work to address violence against women**

(Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015)



## Literature Review (cont.)

*Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women and their Children in Australia* outlines the first national approach to preventing violence against women and children (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015). In doing so, it builds upon Victoria's 2007 framework *Preventing Violence before It Occurs*, which 'enabled unprecedented prevention activity in Victoria' and 'was recognised as world-leading in international research' (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015:14). The *Change the Story* framework:

- identifies the drivers of violence against women
- provides evidence-based guidance on 'how to strategically and effectively lead, coordinate, resource and support prevention effort across Australia'
- informs the 'development of policy and legislation, prevention strategies, programming and advocacy that targets and seeks to reduce the drivers of violence against women' (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015:7).

This framework explicitly recognises that:

**Further consideration of how to most effectively prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children is imperative, and requires a separate, dedicated effort, one that is guided by a participatory process where the voices, experiences, ideas and solutions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves are central.**

(Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015:3)

In response, *Changing the Picture* (Our Watch 2018a; Our Watch 2018b) resources were developed specifically to address the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children. Here we use these resources to examine the drivers of this violence.

### Drivers of family violence and violence against women and children

A primary prevention approach aims to address the underlying drivers of family violence. Given their complex and interrelated nature, 'no singular factor can be neatly ascribed [as the] "causal" status for violence in Indigenous Australian communities' (Blagg, Bluett-Boyd & Williams 2015:4). As such, it is impossible to separate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's experiences of gender inequality, racism and discrimination, and the ongoing impacts of colonisation. These factors all contribute to the particularly high rates of violence experienced by First Nations women:

**Racism and the contemporary impacts of colonisation affect all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Sexism and gender inequality affect all women. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are impacted by the intersections of all these factors, and it is the compounding effects of these intersections that drive particularly high levels of violence against them.**

(Our Watch 2018a:71)

This literature review will focus on the three underlying drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women identified by Our Watch (2018a) – the ongoing impacts of colonisation; racism, power inequalities and discrimination; and gender inequalities – as well as the role that the COVID-19 pandemic has played in the increase of family violence. It will also examine the social constructions of masculinity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, which are inherently different to those applied to non-Indigenous males, and the effect of this not only on families but on entire communities.

### Ongoing impacts of colonisation

It is important that family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is seen ‘in light of a continuum of ongoing violence experienced as a result of the colonisation process’ (Our Watch 2018a:25). The process of colonisation has had detrimental impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including:

- forced child removal
- widespread institutionalisation
- dispossession of people from their lands
- intergenerational trauma
- exposure to violence
- systemic oppression and disempowerment
- racism
- interruption and destruction of cultural practices and connections
- lateral violence.

It is widely understood that intergenerational trauma plays a significant role in the cycle of family violence experienced by First Nations people (Our Watch 2018a; Equality Institute 2018; Langton et al. 2020b; Victorian Government 2018b). Intergenerational trauma is unhealed trauma, associated with both historical and contemporary experiences, that is passed down through the generations (Equality Institute 2018). There is a large body of evidence that links experiences of trauma with an increased risk of perpetrating violence (Adams et al. 2017). If someone has not yet had the opportunity to heal their trauma, it may result in an ‘internalising of oppression and an externalising of expressions of violence’ (Our Watch 2018a). Intergenerational trauma also increases the risk of drug and alcohol misuse, which in turn contributes to the perpetration of violence (Our Watch 2018a; Equality Institute 2018; Blagg et al. 2018; Langton et al. 2020a).

The destruction of cultural practices, which has disrupted the ‘social roles and responsibilities of men and women’, has resulted in a kind of violence that did not exist prior to colonisation (Our Watch 2018a:66). Traditional laws and practices established community norms that ‘defined appropriate relationships between men and women’ and outlined acceptable behaviour, including those relating to the use of violence (Langton et al. 2020a; Our Watch 2018a:66; Adams et al. 2017):

**Post-invasion society has meant the permeation of one of the dominant culture’s most repugnant values into our own community – sexism. And this dynamic has changed the social position of Aboriginal women within Australia. From being considered equal to men, we now occupy the lowest rung on the socio-economic ladder**

Larissa Behrendt. (Our Watch 2018a:66)

Prior to colonisation, First Nations people ‘successfully managed interpersonal, family and community relationships for over 60,000 years’, where violence was ‘strictly regulated and controlled’, bearing ‘little or no resemblance’ to the violence seen today (Our Watch 2018a:21).

Where cultural knowledge and practices have been destroyed, it negatively impacts the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which can then result in increased violence (Our Watch 2018a). Further, personal experience of violence at home and within communities has been shown to normalise the use of violence and contribute to the ongoing cycle.

## Literature Review (cont.)

### **Racism, power inequalities and discrimination**

The ongoing impacts of colonisation have shaped Australian society and culture, including 'creating racist and discriminatory norms, structures and practices' (Our Watch 2018a:45). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls report that 'racism is so prevalent it has become normalised in broader society' (AHRC 2020:76). This is particularly relevant to the perpetration of violence by non-Indigenous men against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Systemic discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage create a power imbalance, whereby non-Indigenous people are privileged. Although racism can perpetuate various forms of violence, the effect of racism intersecting with gender inequality increases violence against First Nations women by non-Indigenous men (Our Watch 2018a). Colonisation in Australia has created a society in which violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is more likely to be condoned, and with women frequently subjected to damaging stereotypes and discriminatory ideas, such as:

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are lazy and lack a 'work ethic', simple-minded, given to substance abuse, inherently violent and criminal and that we feel entitled to a 'free ride' and preferential treatment.**

(AHRC 2020:77)

These ideas and misconceptions create an environment in which racist violence is legitimised, with some non-Indigenous people becoming indifferent to violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Our Watch 2018a). It is often presumed that perpetrators of violence against First Nations women are also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. However, this is certainly not always the case, with evidence suggesting that non-Indigenous men make up 'a significant proportion of perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women' (Our Watch 2018a:20).

While the nation's attention has been recently drawn to issues of gendered violence, discrimination and inequality, including at the Women's March 4 Justice rallies in March 2021, First Nations women have highlighted that the perpetration of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women has long been ignored and normalised. In an open letter, senior Aboriginal academics called for these concerns to be central to national discussions about violence against women:

**Violence and sexual abuse of women is grounded in power relations and inequality. The dynamic of racism continues to remain, within the violence against women sector and more broader, undermines all efforts to address violence against women. Particularly violence which Indigenous women experience... We call for justice for Indigenous women who are being murdered in this country – their deaths are barely accorded a public response and racism has been apparent from many cases involving white male perpetrators whose skin colour affords them privilege in the legal system.**

(McGlade, Carlson & Longbottom 2021:np)

Recent statistics show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females aged 15 and over were 34 times as likely to be hospitalised due to family violence as non-Indigenous females (AIHW 2019). Importantly, while non-Indigenous women have been calling for coercive control to be criminalised, this is a serious concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, as 'Indigenous women are treated as aggressive and angry in accordance with racist stereotypes and may be penalised by such laws' (McGlade, Carlson & Longbottom 2021). As such, it is vital that primary prevention strategies address the ongoing impacts of colonisation, including racialised power inequalities (Our Watch 2018b).

## Gender inequalities

Although it is acknowledged that violence can be perpetrated by both men and women, family violence is a ‘deeply gendered issue’ (Victorian Government 2017:1). *Change the Story* (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015) describes gender inequality as being both ‘the core of the problem’ and ‘the heart of the solution’. This means that the majority of Australian and international family violence prevention frameworks focus on preventing men’s violence against women.

The following expressions of gender inequality ‘consistently predict higher rates of violence against women’ (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015:8):

- the condoning of violence against women
- men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence in public and private life
- rigid gender roles and stereotypes constructions of masculinity and femininity
- male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

Reinforcing factors that can increase frequency or severity of violence include (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015:8):

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

Although gender inequality affects all women, the intersection of racism and sexism creates what has been referred to as a ‘double bind of oppression’ for First Nations women, resulting in higher rates of violence against them (Our Watch 2018a:65). Another factor that contributes to increased levels of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is the ‘contemporary impacts of imposed “colonial patriarchy”’ on First Nations gender roles, which have disrupted the traditional roles and responsibilities (Our Watch 2018a:66). This is discussed in the above section **Ongoing impacts of colonisation.**

Despite the disproportionate power and opportunity that men in Australia are afforded, the impacts of colonisation have in fact disempowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. This, coupled with the erosion of their traditional cultural roles, has made it ‘difficult for them to meet either traditional or colonially imposed standards of manhood’ (Our Watch 2018a:66). Contemporary social constructions of masculinity compound intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, which drives negative outcomes including violence.

## Social constructions of masculinity

Most of the projects funded under the Aboriginal Innovation Fund targeted male-perpetrated violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. In doing so, they focused on traditional constructions of masculinity in an Australian context, without acknowledging that these social constructions are configured differently for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. There are a wide range of social, cultural, media, sports-driven and religious experiences that frame masculinity. Most recently, Australian masculinity has been framed through incidents relating to rape-permissive cultures in private schools and in parliaments across Australia (Murphy-Oates 2021). Interestingly, these are the places from which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men have traditionally been actively excluded, and yet their identity in mainstream Australia has been portrayed as being synonymous with rape, paedophilia and extreme drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence (NT Government 2007; Cowlshaw 2014).

In positioning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men as the perpetrators, and women and children in need of saving from these men, governments and media have moralised violence against women as ‘everyone’s business’ (Council of Australian Governments 2010), including in the workplace (Wathen, MacGregor & MacQuarrie 2015). That violence perpetrated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men is a concern for ‘everyone’ leads to whole communities needing to be disciplined with extensive bureaucratic measures on one hand (Cowlshaw 2014) and externalised, paternalistic moralising on the other (Due & Riggs 2012).

## Literature Review (cont.)

A Canadian study that examined Aboriginal men's risk for violent victimisation found a link between risk of severe forms of violence, high levels of unemployment and a young average age (Brownridge 2010). While there is further work 'needed to understand the interplay of colonisation and violence' (Brownridge 2010:n.p.), the study shows that a gendered focus on the constructions of masculinity in violence-prevention strategies is important (Saltner 2016). In a critique of the construction of masculinities within violence against women in primary prevention work in high-income countries, Saltner (2016:n.p.) claims that gender norms have been given 'an unjustified priority over gender inequality as determinants of violence against women'. Further, Saltner argues that this 'myopic focus' has led to violence prevention strategies that are a 'one dimensional' account of masculinity, and which are 'unable to explicat[e] the practical steps necessary to achieve the aims of primary prevention' Saltner (2016:n.p.).

Additional studies have demonstrated the importance of understanding how men who use violence rationalise its use against their family and intimate partners, and then applying this insight to develop culturally appropriate interventions (Sikweyiya et al. 2020). Similarly, recognising the drivers of intimate partner violence, perpetrated by men and experienced by women, is critical to developing effective prevention programs. One six-year international study found that such violence is driven by 'poverty, patriarchal privilege and the normative use of violence in interpersonal relationships', which in turn increase 'childhood trauma, poor mental health and substance misuse, poor communication and conflict in relationships' (Gibbs et al. 2020:n.p.). By shifting to a gendered lens in primary prevention, we can reorientate the discourse to address the economic, political and cultural transformations needed to prevent violence and return men to their families whole, complete and with a masculinity determined by them, not by their upbringing or their place in society.

This is 'more than a community-based initiative', one requiring policy makers and government agencies to address and include the structural and systems changes that prioritise women's equal rights, in addition to equal opportunities, and adjusting them to eradicate the systemic oppression of women in

the Australian political landscape (Kuskoff & Parsell 2019). Additionally, developers of interventions to prevent intimate partner violence must recognise and interrogate the configuration of aspirations, social norms and behaviours that is drawn on by some men to justify their use of violence. Primary prevention implementers need to focus on motivations for, and perspectives and aspirations of, masculinity, and on the role that the subjugation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children plays in supporting them to achieve this form of masculinity (Gibbs et al. 2020). Such an approach challenges the traditional public discourses around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's masculinity, and demands a stronger focus on healing, prevention and early interventions.

There have been calls for a new theory of masculinity (Arabena 2017; Mayor 2021), one that challenges the representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in current policy and practice. Community efforts in this regard 'involve changing values, structures and norms that support gender inequality' (Puccetti et al. 2019:n.p.). Leadership in family violence strategies invariably requires and reinforces systemic change. This can be confronting for members of the community, particularly in calling out 'rigid gender roles and men's control of decision making, and the role of alcohol and other drugs as reinforcers (but not primary drivers) of family violence' (Puccetti et al. 2019:n.p.).

**... developers of interventions to prevent intimate partner violence must recognise and interrogate the configuration of aspirations, social norms and behaviours that is drawn on by some men to justify their use of violence.**

Agencies working to eliminate gendered violence, such as White Ribbon, use interactive group education sessions and community-wide social marketing to address the acceptability among young men both of violence and of the norms of masculinity. Together with a focus group of engaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, White Ribbon and the Healing Foundation devised a framework that reduces and prevents family violence by working directly with men and boys. The key elements of this work showed that all interventions, at a minimum, need to include:

- an understanding of the effects of foundational and structural violence and its continued impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys
- a reconnection to core cultural practices and protocols
- joined-up action with women and children in the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions
- family violence prevention strategies that are positioned within broader community strategies addressing intergenerational approaches and adopting and adapting community healing approaches
- co-designing the intervention with communities in ways that empower them to drive change, including leading with collective wellbeing
- adequate resources to support the implementation of accessible, safe interventions in places that are culturally safe (Adams et al. 2017).

Primary prevention strategies need to acknowledge that although gender inequity, poverty and controlling behaviour is mostly perpetrated by men against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, it is not the domain of men alone. As such, more effort must be put into understanding the drivers and dynamics of family violence. This includes working with and understanding constructions of masculinity, the reasons why men use violence, and recognising the capacity of men, women and children to be perpetrators of violence that impacts family health and wellbeing.

## **The impact of COVID-19 on family violence**

Internationally, Indigenous women's experience of violence has emerged as one of the most pressing issues of the COVID-19 pandemic, with more women reporting more episodes of violence than usual (Native Women's Association of Canada 2020). In Canada, surveys have shown a strong correlation between the financial impacts of the pandemic and intimate partner violence, with current and past partners posing the largest threat to the safety of women and children. Victims/survivors, however, 'are twice as likely as non-victims to identify family members as the biggest threat' (Native Women's Association of Canada 2020:8). During the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been more instances of violence against women and children (Peterman et al. 2020; Power et al. 2020; Johnstone et al. 2020; Carrington et al. 2020). Factors that have contributed to higher rates of family violence during this time include:

- increased financial insecurity
- decreased employment
- housing insecurity
- increased sustained periods of time that families are in the home together due to isolation/quarantine
- reduced ability for individuals and their children to leave the family violence during this time
- reduced access to support and community services when schools, activities and other community services are closed (VACCA n.d.:n.p.).

## Literature Review (cont.)

A United Nations ongoing report on some of the countries that have been worst hit by the pandemic suggests that the existing inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have become even more pronounced, with Indigenous women and women of colour suffering disproportionately as vulnerabilities have multiplied (United Nations 2021). Domestic violence, femicide and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence have increased during the pandemic, which has exacerbated pre-existing toxic social norms and gender inequality. During the time when half the world's population was in lockdown due to COVID-19, estimates put the number of girls and women between the ages of 15 and 49 who had been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence at around 243 million (United Nations 2020). The intersections between marginalisation and discrimination have made certain groups of women more susceptible to the experience of violence, including domestic workers, and women who are older, who live with disabilities, reside in institutional settings, have limited or no access to technology, face overlapping discrimination or inequities, and experience housing precariousness and violence.

The pandemic has also exacerbated deep-seated health, social and economic inequities in Australian society, especially the long-standing disparities between First Nations peoples and other Australians. Research shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are likely to be increasingly isolated and that conditions are ripe for coercive control (Markham, Smith & Morphy 2020:15). Baird (2020) reports that men are using COVID-19 as justification for isolating their female partners, depriving them of health care and barring them from support services. Compounding these issues are the rhetoric and discourses used by various governments that 'shame' people for leaving their homes. For women who use regular everyday outside activities as a strategy and a safe means by which to report violence, the policing of curfews and the promotion of stay-at-home orders present additional barriers to seeking support.

During the pandemic, children have also been denied access to support services that are largely available in school environments. Due to the constant school closures, particularly since the arrival of the Delta variant of the virus, clusters have arisen in educational settings catering to children of all ages. As a result,

Victorian Aboriginal Commissioner for Children and Young People Justin Mohamed reported that COVID-19 has highlighted the vulnerabilities experienced by young people through their increased exposure to family violence, abuse or conflict (CCYP 2021a).

In times of heightened stress, such as in a pandemic, many of the usual strategies used by young people to manage risk – such as getting out of the house, going to school, or staying with friends or extended family – have not been available. The Commission for Children and Young People has heard that young people feel 'confined and insufficiently supported' in their home environments (CCYP 2021b:5), helpless to support friends or peers living in violent or abusive situations, and concerned about bullying and hacking while online. Several strategies have been adopted and adapted by service providers to keep the children they work with safe, including:

- switching to phone-based services
- providing phones and credit to young people enabling them to keep in touch
- increasing both contact with families and the frequency of care team meetings
- asking children to turn on video cameras during interactions to enable a better assessment of safety and wellbeing (CCYP 2021b:6).

Agencies have also accessed additional training and resources to support children and young people with regard to COVID-19, suicide prevention, mental health, harm minimisation, and cyber safety and security. Creative and proactive strategies have been employed, such as using the dropping off of care packages or food as an opportunity to sight children and young people in the home and talk to parents from a safe distance. Other strategies across the sector include the development of rapid partnerships and joined-up service delivery between homelessness, mental health and alcohol and drug agencies, supported accommodation, residential care and the youth justice system. These partnerships are important for young people living outside of the family home in transitional or unstable housing, as the lockdowns made their lives less safe. For children affected in this way, 'the risks of harm at home and the absence of in-person support often felt more urgent than the risk of COVID-19' (CCYP 2021b:3).

In Victoria, the Department of Health, in consultation with ministers and senior executives from a wide range of government agencies, has mandated lockdowns and public health orders that include social distancing, shelter-in-place, restricted travel and reduced access to community organisations and services. While these measures have been taken by the Victorian Government to protect people from contracting COVID-19, they are also impacting on the experience of, and increases in, family violence. As COVID-19 measures are likely to continue for an extended period of time, this in turn could extend the impact of risk factors for family violence, such as increased unemployment, reduced income, limited resources and inadequate social support (Campbell 2020). Additionally, alcohol abuse, another commonly reported risk factor, has been linked to an accumulation of stressful events and a lack of social support, both likely occurring as a result of the impact of the pandemic. This has been exacerbated by the closure of licensed premises and increases in takeaway outlets, which has led to alcohol consumption now more likely to be occurring in the home (Colbert et al. 2020; Rehm et al. 2020).

In Victoria, Crime Statistics Agency figures released for 2020 showed family violence incidents increased 9.4 per cent to 92,521 people, the highest number on record (ABC News 2021). The number of family violence incidents between 1 October and 31 December 2020 in which an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander victim/survivor was involved increased 15.7 per cent compared with the same period in 2019 (Victorian Government 2021b). Further, the number of affected Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander family members<sup>5</sup> increased 7.4 per cent from June 2020 to June 2021 (Victorian Government 2021c). Operation Ribbon was launched in April 2020 in anticipation of the added family stresses the pandemic would cause (Ilanbey & Koob 2020). Evidence shows that the violence during lockdown was more sustained and lasted days, not hours, and the victims/survivors of the assaults were more traumatised as a result. The complexity of the presentations was noted, shifting from partner-to-partner to include parent-to-child and sibling-to-sibling (ABC News 2021). One domestic violence support service in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs reported more than 130 women

needing support at the peak of the Victorian crisis (ABC News 2021). Lack of alternative housing continues to be a major reason why women and children continue to live with violent partners (Hughes 2021).

A nation-wide survey on the impact of COVID-19 on the domestic and family violence workforce (Carrington et al. 2020:5) shows that:

- 62 per cent of respondents reported increases in the number of clients accessing their services during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 86 per cent reported an increase in the complexity of their client needs
- 67 per cent reported new clients seeking help for the first time.

Further, a recent study looking at physical and sexual violence and coercive control during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experienced higher rates of violence than non-Indigenous women in the three months prior to the survey (Boxall & Morgan 2021).

Respect Victoria (2020) and other sector experts have developed a series of guiding principles for the primary prevention of family violence and violence against women in both the crisis and recovery phases of the pandemic:

- 1** Strengthen primary prevention focus across the whole of the family violence reform front.
- 2** Build understanding of the impact of the intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage in all our prevention efforts.
- 3** Uphold the importance of independence and decision making in public and private life.
- 4** Challenge rigid gender roles, advance gender equality and advocate for respectful gender relationships.
- 5** Engage men to adopt and maintain respectful and non-aggressive behaviours and peer relations.
- 6** Challenge attitudes that condone violence through association with external stressors.

<sup>5</sup> An 'affected family member' is the individual who is deemed to be affected by events occurring during a family incident.

## Literature Review (cont.)

### Impact of family violence on companion animals during COVID-19

A decision to leave a violent and abusive relationship is a complex process, made even more difficult in a pandemic environment. Pets and service animals (companion animals) are a vital part of the lives of many families, which means they are also an important part of the decision-making process when people consider leaving a violent situation. While companion animals in households can offer therapeutic support, they may also be at risk of harm and used to exert control over victims/survivors of violence (Campbell et al. 2021). These animals' central role in family life means many victims/survivors of family violence are reluctant to leave them behind when they flee, because they fear their animal/s will be harmed in retribution.

A Family Violence motion to recognise animal abuse as a form of family violence was successfully passed in the Victorian Parliament in March 2021 (Meddick 2021). The motion advocated for a prompt review of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic.) to redefine these animals as 'family members' who require protection. There is a growing body of evidence linking animal abuse and domestic violence (Ascione 1997; Becker & French 2004; Fawcett, Gullone & Johnson 2002; Tipaldy, Walsh & Phillips 2012), with the study by Volant et al. (2008) showing that 53 per cent of women entering a refuge to escape family violence reported that their pets had been harmed.

In instances where companion animals may be the one source of trusted companionship and love in an abusive relationship, the COVID-19 pandemic presents additional risks to already-vulnerable humans and animals (Atlas 2020). Animal abuse is one of three top indicators for domestic homicide, along with previous strangulation attempts and access to weapons (Atlas 2020). During the pandemic, shelters, not-for-profit rescues, private breeders and pet stores all reported more consumer demand than there were dogs and puppies to fill the requests, with the RSPCA seeing in excess of 26,000 online applications to adopt a pet since March 2020 (Kinsella 2020). Although not evident in the literature, statements from people who manage agencies, such as foster care for animals whose owners are experiencing homelessness, highlight that many victims/survivors reported their partners had either used their animals as a means of control or, worse, had killed them as punishment (Victorian Government 2020c).

Thus, innovation opportunities to address family violence could promote links between animal care, veterinarian education and offers of support in cases of domestic violence co-occurring to companion animals (Monsalve, Ferreira & Garcia 2017; Gallagher, Allen & Jones 2008). It is also critical to improve collaborations between human welfare and animal welfare agencies, expand existing community partnerships, and inform the public of the importance of reporting any concerns of abuse regarding animals. Given that there is no clear precedent for the current crisis in the existing academic literature, exploring the impact of natural disasters on family violence reports may provide an important insight for professionals working with the victims/survivors of family violence (Campbell et al. 2021).

### Protective factors

Protective factors are those that 'when strengthened, promote safety, stabilisation and recovery from family violence' (Victorian Government 2021d:123).

They include:

- social support networks
- safe and stable housing
- stable employment where the victim/survivor is less isolated
- access to resources (financial, transport, accommodation, services)
- the perpetrator being unable to approach the victim/survivor (such as intervention orders, incarceration or the victim/survivor relocating. The victim/survivor moving away from the perpetrator can be dangerous and is only truly protective if the perpetrator is unable to locate the victim/survivor)
- engagement with services (health/professional/therapeutic)
- connection to culture/identity (The Lookout n.d.; Spiranovic et al. 2021; Victorian Government 2012b; Victorian Government 2021d).

These protective factors largely rely on social conditions that have been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a ‘perfect storm’ (Spiranovic et al. 2021). Therefore, it is crucial that innovative strategies are implemented to address these vulnerabilities and the resulting increase in family violence.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures also contain a ‘unique set of protective factors’ that ‘serve as sources of strength and resilience’ (Zubrick et al. 2014:93). However, the impacts of colonisation and the destruction of culture have all too often resulted in poor social and emotional wellbeing outcomes, which are now recognised as a ‘significant contributor to the levels of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children’ (Adams et al. 2017:7).

Thus, Blagg et al. recommend that family violence prevention be underpinned by a social and emotional wellbeing approach, in which ‘connection with law, cultures, and spirituality are protective factors in terms of vulnerability to the kinds of problems that create family violence’ (Blagg et al. 2018:62). Connection to culture is the most well-recognised protective factor against violence for First Nations peoples (discussed in **Culture as a protective factor**) (Victorian Government 2018b; Our Watch 2018b; Victorian Government 2012a; Blagg et al. 2018).

## Family violence intervention approaches

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commission (2006:7) categorises family violence interventions into the following broad areas:

- **Support programs** – provide accessible and appropriate counselling for family and community members.
- **Identity programs** – aim to develop a secure sense of self-value or self-esteem within the individual, family or community.
- **Behavioural change** (men’s and women’s groups) – as the majority of family violence is perpetrated by men, strong support for men’s behavioural reform programs is required.
- **Night patrols** – have the potential to build cooperation, mutual respect and support with local police.

- **Refuges and shelters** – although an important part of any family violence intervention strategy, they are not a sufficient response to the difficulties produced by high levels of violence in First Nations communities.
- **Justice programs** – promote mediation between people in conflict, designate appropriate cultural punishments for perpetrators, for example, through circle sentencing and the prevention of recidivism.
- **Dispute resolution** – anecdotal evidence suggests some success in using impartial members of the First Nations community as facilitators and incorporating traditional dispute-resolution techniques into mediation processes.
- **Education and awareness raising** – vital to raise awareness about family violence prevention, and to skill-up communities to resolve conflicts and identify the need for interventions with perpetrators.
- **Holistic composite programs** – composed of elements of all of the above, these operate to target different forms of violence in the community and categories of offenders or victims/survivors or employ different methods of combating or preventing violence.

The implementation of composite programs, particularly in communities displaying multiple forms of increasing violence, is shown to be an emerging and preferred approach that reflects a more systematic way of combating violence, combining both proactive and reactive methods which target different age and gender groups. The preference is for these programs not to make reference to family violence at all, focusing on the strengths of families and cultural connections rather than on the act, behaviours and experience of violence. This is not to trivialise the experience or expression of violence, but to provide non-judgmental pathways for people seeking support, such as those outlined in Table 1.3 (over page).

## Literature Review (cont.)

**Table 1.3 / Pathways for seeking support**

| Issue addressed                                                 | Strengths-based strategic initiative                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Intimate partner violence</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Strong relationships</li> <li>&gt; Strong families together</li> <li>&gt; Couples group work</li> </ul>                            |
| <b>Rape-permissive cultures in elite schools and parliament</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Respect yourself</li> <li>&gt; Legal responsibilities before and after the age of 18</li> <li>&gt; Living with emotions</li> </ul> |
| <b>Violence during a pandemic</b>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Online afternoon teas</li> <li>&gt; Elders reading stories</li> <li>&gt; Homework online with mums and dads</li> </ul>             |
| <b>Male-perpetrated violence</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Our Men, Our Shields<sup>6</sup></li> <li>&gt; The Way of the Warrior<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>                                       |
| <b>Financial abuse</b>                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Women in Business, Sis-stars for financial freedom</li> <li>&gt; Membership to Kinaway – women in business networks</li> </ul>     |

An issue for governments introducing services is how best to trigger such programs in communities where they are obviously needed, while at the same time creating a climate whereby the programs are community originating, motivated and controlled (see **Culturally safe commissioning**).

### Mainstream service provider responses

Mainstream organisations have understood, in large part, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience more and complex traumas as a result of their experience of violence perpetrated by men from different backgrounds and cultures, and that these experiences are disproportionate and severe (Our Watch 2018b). Drivers for mainstream involvement in preventing family violence against Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander women and children include addressing misconceptions about such violence, and understanding that:

- > violence is not part of culture
- > violence is perpetuated by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men
- > alcohol is a contributing factor
- > there are essential prevention activities aimed at addressing the underlying drivers of violence including the legacies of colonisation (Our Watch 2018a).

It is also crucial to address racism in service delivery settings (Arabena et al. 2020) and the gendered drivers of violence across the Australian population

<sup>6</sup> Our Men, Our Shields is a charter that articulates the roles and responsibilities of men in caring for their families. Available at: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d1563ccaafe00001ca3d2c/t/6091d3477452b43956326179/1620169622430/First1000Days\\_Our\\_Men\\_Our\\_Shields.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d1563ccaafe00001ca3d2c/t/6091d3477452b43956326179/1620169622430/First1000Days_Our_Men_Our_Shields.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> A potential strengths-based name of a program which supports men to find inner peace rather than make reference to their experience of violence.

(Arabena, Milward & Blaber 2020). The Changing the Picture Advisory Group summed up the situation in the following way:

**The message here is to everyone in Australia: individuals, communities and governments, to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, we all have a role to play... Non-Indigenous organisations and people – both men and women – need to examine the way colonisation has embedded racist and sexist assumptions, structures and practices into how they operate every day. Australian systems and institutions need to change. Individual men – both non-Indigenous men and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men – need to take responsibility for their behaviour, for the way they treat women and children, for the way they interact with other men, and for the way they raise their children, especially their sons.**

**And Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and men all need healing: trauma-informed approaches that deal with the devastating legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation... We also need to talk about gender inequality and its impacts for our women, because we can't ignore the compounding effect that racism and gender inequality have in exacerbating the levels of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women...**

(Our Watch 2018b)

Mainstream service providers are obliged to understand and implement cultural safety strategies and to facilitate an increase in their own cultural competencies. They also need to ensure that these strategies are embedded across the entire organisation including in agency policies, in workforce professional development strategies, and in practices and referrals offered to people accessing mainstream services. Strong allies are key to undertaking prevention work. This will require non-Indigenous staff to break down silos and prioritise the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities in ways that promote genuine and meaningful partnerships (Cripps & Adams 2014).

## Prevention actions

*Changing the Picture* (Our Watch 2018b) outlines three essential prevention actions to address the underlying drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women:

1

### **Address the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for First Nations people, families and communities**

This involves various actions including healing intergenerational trauma and strengthening culture, identity and families. The use of strategies that promote healing and culture have been identified as key facilitators to the effectiveness of family violence prevention programs (discussed in depth in Facilitators).

2

### **Address the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for non-Indigenous people, and across Australian society**

To address the contemporary impacts of colonisation, we must 'challenge and prevent' all forms of racism, including racialised power inequalities. It is vital that we address 'indifference, ignorance and disrespect' and challenge the condoning of violence towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

3

### **Address the gendered drivers of violence against First Nations women**

This includes challenging gender stereotypes, harmful ideas about masculinity and relationships, and the condoning of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. It is important to support women's participation in leadership, strengthen equal and respectful relationships between males and females, and implement intersectional approaches to preventing violence against women.

## Literature Review (cont.)

### Promising primary prevention techniques

Some examples of promising primary prevention activities (Walden & Wall 2014; Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth 2015; Victorian Government 2012a) include the following:

- **Direct participation programs** – includes schools-based programs to create gender-equitable environments and build students' skills when it comes to relationships and ethical behaviour.
- **Community awareness, mobilisation and strengthening** – includes comprehensive public education about what family violence can look like and community programs in areas such as sporting clubs.
- **Family strengthening** – includes strengthening and supporting First Nations family structures in settings such as family centres and Aboriginal meeting places, which in turn strengthens the whole community.
- **Cultural strengthening** – includes strengthening culture within families and communities to help build capacity to deal with issues of violence. This could include engaging in cultural activities.
- **Responding to grief and trauma** – includes healing to prevent violence with activities such as art therapy.
- **Self-esteem and resilience building** – includes learning how to make positive choices, build leadership skills and confidence, and share knowledge in settings such as schools, sporting clubs, camps and family centres.
- **Organisational development** – includes workplace initiatives promoting equitable and respectful gender relations, and positive bystander responses.
- **Communications and social marketing** – includes raising awareness of violence against women and children in the media, as well as challenging attitudes and social norms that contribute to violence. The use of social media is also important due to its accessibility, reach, younger appeal and interactivity.
- **Civil society advocacy** – includes raising awareness through advocacy and encouraging governments, organisations and communities to take preventative action.
- **Legislative and policy reform** – includes reforms that promote gender equality and perpetrator accountability.
- **Saturation approach** – Victoria's 'Generating Equality and Respect' project was a place-based prevention model, in which multiple 'mutually reinforcing programs and strategies' were simultaneously implemented in the one local area. This meant that messages reached the community from various angles, building a culture of equality and respect from within and a 'whole-of-community commitment to prevention' (Victorian Government 2017:37).

It is important to note that these strategies are based on research undertaken before the COVID-19 pandemic and the approaches will need to be modified to suit the current climate, including any future restrictions and lockdowns. The challenge for the workforce will be to move these activities to online platforms and for the workforce to deliver them remotely.

### Creating innovation-tolerant cultures in workplaces and partnerships

The Aboriginal Innovation Fund was established to respond to local needs and to 'test' innovative family violence primary prevention initiatives for First Nations communities in Victoria to understand which are the most effective. A culture of innovation is an environment that supports creative thinking and advances efforts to extract cultural, economic and social value, in this case, from family violence prevention activities that have been initiated within and target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The policy context in Victoria is primed to generate new or improved services and opportunities for violence-involved families, particularly in response to global social movements such as the #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter. The work of various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander commissioners, public servants, parliamentarians,

entrepreneurs, lawyers and community leaders has been similarly impactful in creating practical outcomes for self-determination. Together, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies are designing programs and responses to family violence that are unique and centred on culture, healing and sharing information through kinship and extended family networks.

Recent innovations in family violence prevention have been increasingly delivered through digital and technology-based modalities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Emezue 2020; Pfitzner, Fitz-Gibbon & True 2020). In Victoria, evidence of the impact of family violence continued to emerge over successive lockdowns. The pandemic has amplified social, economic and cultural stressors that fuel family violence, particularly as the usual prevention activities have been greatly impacted by stay-at-home and social distancing mandates. While domestic violence victims/survivors have been quick to link into these new digital networks, we are yet to see how these digital prevention strategies will reduce violence, particularly as workforces pivot to include digital engagement as part of their service delivery skillset (Emezue 2020).

These pandemic-led circumstances have forced a culture of innovation in workplaces and between partnering organisations as never before. Our new ways of working in disease control, some of which have been quite drastic but necessary from a public health point of view, have greatly impacted people's employment, parenting and schooling experiences, and businesses. They have also required us to consider how to facilitate innovation, both imagined and forced, in our homes and workplaces, and in our partnerships.

## What is innovation?

Innovation is the process that adopts new mechanisms, ideas and technologies and adapts them into workplace cultures. Importantly, innovation fosters creativity while implementing traditional strategies such as professional development, effective partnerships and supportive collaborations. In a pandemic environment we can see the impacts of innovation. Innovative cultures start with philosophy and tone, where all stakeholders are accountable for delivering practical support, processes and outcomes. Each individual or agency needs to see where and how their work fits into the new knowledge ecosystem, to encourage relationships with colleagues who are prepared to support each other's learning, to document outcomes and to promote unconventional thinking (Ishak 2017).

A healthy culture of innovation has a shared language, set of values and mutually reinforcing beliefs about the importance of innovation. In family violence prevention, this will incorporate new patterns of behaviours that support research and innovation. A thriving culture of innovation can leverage the existing strengths of organisations and partnerships, and co-create new research and innovation ecosystems.

**Innovative cultures start with philosophy and tone, where all stakeholders are accountable for delivering practical support, processes and outcomes.**

## Literature Review (cont.)

There are several design principles and activities that are incorporated into innovation cultures that are worthy of note (Pisano 2019). Camburn et al. (2017) in their study of design innovation and integrated practice have noted the importance of ‘action spaces’ in the design effort. Promoting the combinatorial nature of design processes, they created a menu from which design teams can compile ‘a set of activities (and a later subset of methods) relevant to the given problem at a given point in time’ (Camburn et al. 2017:4). These activities are as follows:

- Creativity throughout the design process, not only in the ideation phase, as there are many problems that need to be solved.
- Free space for blue sky thinking; being able to explore opportunity without constraint.
- Empathy for all and working with people on two levels: by understanding user needs and by collaborating with peers (Dunne & Martin 2006).
- Expressive collaboration based on co-design and multi-modal communication.
- Curiosity for context and adaptive pathways.
- Balancing ‘big and small’ and having an appetite for ambiguity.
- Make, test, learn and repeat – a continuous quality improvement strategy.
- Celebrating both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods to allow for human insight and the integration of intuition with the data (Camburn et al. 2017).

The type of innovation cultures created depends on the patterns of design activity, style of the designer and the context (Alexander, Ishikawa & Silverstein 1977). Innovation is a key strategic enabler to address the growing complexity of problems facing our society, and one that often facilitates multidisciplinary and cross-cultural outcomes relevant for end users and peers working to address family violence and its causes.

### Family Safety Services Hub

One such innovation-led initiative in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) is the Family Safety Services Hub, a virtual network of interconnected people and services. Co-designed by ThinkPlace, a range of stakeholders and the ACT Government’s Coordinator-General for Family Safety, the Hub catalyses systemic change to improve services’ ability to prevent, intervene in and respond to domestic and family violence (ACT Government & Think Place 2018).

The Hub is a pandemic-related strategy introduced to promote better communication and coordination in identifying people at risk of family violence, and to provide improved support and pathways to safety for those affected by it. Designed to bring people together, the Hub enables participants to create and test new projects that seek to improve intervention in, and the prevention of, family violence. The process uses design methods and principles to introduce innovation challenges to the family violence space. It then invites participants to share, develop and model ideas around what can be improved for those who find themselves needing to navigate the family violence support service system.

### Development Marketplace

The World Bank established the Development Marketplace: Innovations to Address Gender Based Violence in partnership with the Sexual Violence Research Initiative. The Marketplace was developed to award teams from around the world with funds to support evidence-based research, interventions and other activities related to gender violence prevention and response. It looks for projects that are methodologically innovative, that expand capacity in low- and middle-income countries, and that further the relationships between academics, practitioners and policy makers (World Bank n.d). Innovations making scientific contributions to the field and addressing a gap are prioritised. Cross-cutting themes addressed through this shared approach include economic empowerment strategies that recognise poverty as a risk factor associated with gender-based violence and oftentimes reinforces gender inequity. Microfinance and economic empowerment approaches have been trialled to address this intersection. Other programs are funded:

- to develop women-friendly working environments
- to understand the relationship between economic empowerment and reductions in intimate partner violence
- to increase women's participation in household decision making through fostering more egalitarian relationships
- to reduce the impact of coercive behaviours such as controlling women's resources and reproductive decision making.

Additionally, the Marketplace also seeks to address acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence, which are perpetuated because of gender norms and stereotypes and reinforced by unequal power dynamics. The sites of these initiatives include primary and high schools and university campuses. Projects are developing and delivering comprehensive sexuality education, and interventions with primary school students to focus on healthy relationships and protecting girls on their way to and from schools. 'Walking Buses', in which groups of students and teachers walk to and from school together, are being trialled to assess their impact on reducing the risks of violence (Lieberman & Zimmerman 2015).

## Features of innovation processes and outcomes

The challenges we face today are increasingly complex. Since 2019, our workforces in Victoria have faced bushfires, floods and a pandemic, all of which have compounded the disproportionate levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Family violence occurs in context, and people's experience of navigating family violence prevention and supportive systems are made up of interconnected and intersecting actors, each with their own motivations, limitations and characteristics. As such, approaching the task of innovating family violence prevention strategies requires specific processes and activities to address racism, power inequities and the ongoing impacts of colonisation, and to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to support culturally safe, community-owned and -led solutions.

## Scenario planning

Scenario planning explores possible futures over time, a technique that is imperative to foster innovation. This is because innovation programs require more than the generation of a new idea. Designing an innovative family violence program solely around a 'novel approach' is not enough; thought also needs to be given as to how ideas will be implemented and whether they will lead to lasting, sustainable change. Scenario planning can support organisations to determine how they will need to respond with technology and/or process changes over time, and also to plan for unforeseen or unintended consequences and then to model it all. This can be achieved through scenario-planning strategies. In a post-bushfire, pandemic environment, such scenarios could include:

- identifying gaps in knowledge in a workforce used to providing face-to-face services, but which now needs to pivot to delivering services online
- shifting first responders and domestic violence call-outs from response to prevention
- co-locating family violence prevention workers in child and maternal health clinics or early childhood centres.

Scenario planning has the greatest impact when uncertainty is high, new opportunities are needed, the quality of strategic thinking is low, changes have impacted the way services are delivered, and/or differing strong opinions exist. Each of these scenarios then becomes a platform for ideation and divergent thinking. Good innovation is premised on equal parts invention, action and building the partnerships needed to socialise or commercialise the outcome. It also needs to be based on future thinking and strategy, to use behavioural insights and for partners to be motivated in translating the intent of the innovation to system-level change.

## Literature Review (cont.)

### Convening powers

Innovation is also driven by ‘convening power’ – the ability to identify the right people, get them in a room together and provide them with shared language and shared tools. Convening power is defined as the ability to catalyse collective actions by the relevant people and organisations to address global and regional challenges. To exercise convening power is not an end goal but rather a means of fostering collective action to achieve desirable outcomes (World Bank Group 2018).

With the right people coming together at the right time and in the right setting, intention can easily be transformed into action. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the principle of ‘nothing about us without us’ requires agencies to consider the needs

of those who will actually be using the family violence prevention program. Self-determination further amplifies the need to invest in co-design strategies to enhance opportunities for success. Such an approach is needed as innovation is reliant on factors like the strength of partnerships and organisational opportunity for implementation. The Aboriginal Innovation Fund may well incorporate factors like these into its assessments of family violence prevention and early intervention solutions.

Table 1.4 outlines some innovation design and implementation strategies that the Victorian State Government could incorporate into checklists to map the impacts and outcomes of its investment.

**Table 1.4 / Potential inclusions in evaluation checklists for innovation projects**

| Innovation design features      | Innovation implementation strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Systemic change strategy</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Developing shared vision</li> <li>› Identifying and assembling partners (convening power)</li> <li>› Workshop systems levers to change systems-level outcomes</li> <li>› Pilot and document transformations</li> <li>› Evaluate and scale</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>System mapping</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Exploring the system and identifying dynamics</li> <li>› Deep ethnography to understand lived experience</li> <li>› Complex sense-making and insight generation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Futuring and ideation</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Scenario planning</li> <li>› Generating concepts for prototyping</li> <li>› Bringing applied forms of academic research methods, design research, behavioural science and more to create evidence of what works and what needs to change in complex systems</li> <li>› Incorporating empathy-sourced insights and rich statistical data to provide a foundation for decision makers to evaluate policies, programs, services and interventions</li> <li>› Taking an adaptive approach to evaluation, working with programs early to co-design the evaluation framework and the right data points, and ensuring an ethical approach</li> </ul> |

| Innovation design features                 | Innovation implementation strategies                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Prototyping and scaling</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Testing prototypes in real-world situations</li> <li>› Identifying unintended consequences</li> <li>› Changing roadmaps for adoption at scale</li> <li>› Scaling up</li> </ul> |
| <b>Co-design frameworks and strategies</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Frameworks to deliver genuine stakeholder engagement</li> <li>› Ecosystem mapping</li> <li>› Co-designing strategies for new policy and transformation</li> </ul>              |
| <b>Engagement methods and programs</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Engagement method matrix</li> <li>› Engagement protocol design</li> <li>› Engagement communication design</li> </ul>                                                           |
| <b>Facilitation and delivery</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Facilitating events and engagement programs</li> <li>› Developing engagement communication products</li> <li>› Engagement program reviews</li> </ul>                           |
| <b>Co-design equity and inclusion</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Co-designing capacity building with First Nations peoples and culturally diverse groups</li> </ul>                                                                             |
| <b>Evaluation design framework</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Evaluation intent and outcomes</li> <li>› Co-designing evaluation models</li> <li>› Evaluation mixed methods design</li> </ul>                                                 |
| <b>Evaluation program delivery</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Evaluation team formation and training</li> <li>› Evaluation delivery and monitoring</li> <li>› Expertise to advise decision makers</li> </ul>                                 |
| <b>Evaluating impact reporting</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Evaluation reports</li> <li>› Dynamic evaluation reports</li> <li>› Evaluation documentaries</li> </ul>                                                                        |

### Theoretical approaches: Innovation, evaluation and impact

Victoria's engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is framed by Treaty, self-determination, and wide-level community engagement. The reason for engaging community members is to co-design services that are locally appropriate and harness local assets in common phases of innovating outcomes: innovation growth; development and sustainability or diffusion of the innovation through processes; pathways; and user experience.

To date, there has been little consideration in the literature of how innovative family violence prevention services are designed, how they emerge and develop, and whether they sustain or diffuse innovation. Examining co-designed initiatives through the lens of social innovation has been increasingly used as its theoretical approach is more attuned to analysing grassroots rather than top-down, technical innovations.

Social innovation theory is relevant for examining and understanding what occurs at each stage of innovation development. Farmer et al. (2018), in reviewing regional innovations in Australia, is a good example of this approach. They found that:

- innovations themselves were all adaptations of existing ideas, which had emerged due to local participants combining knowledge from the local context, and their own experiences and examples
- external facilitation brought resources together
- projects provided a protective niche in which pilot innovations developed, but their implementation needed both support from managers and/or policy makers and to be compatible with existing health system practices.

A conclusion drawn from this work showed social innovation provides a useful lens to understand the grassroots innovation process implied in having community participation in service co-design. Thus, for new ideas to thrive, commissioning organisations need to diffuse useful, co-designed service innovations throughout their networks and to develop effective partnerships to realise the potential of community involvement in co-design (Farmer et al. 2018).

### Models used to innovate family violence prevention programs

**Family violence is abhorrent and has no place in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies.**

(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2006)

For more than a decade, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner has documented the damaging impacts of family violence and abuse on communities, families, women, children and men. Family violence in First Nations communities is:

- a barrier to women achieving leadership positions, and a causative factor in their experience of incarceration, intergenerational trauma and grief
- a factor in children's cognitive disabilities, underperformance in schools and overrepresentation in criminal justice processes
- a contributor to substance misuse, and mental health and wellbeing issues (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2006).

Because of these intersections, family violence is best addressed through holistic approaches that favour complexity, multi-agency coordination and the development and delivery of processes and programs to match government commitments and community needs. Also crucial are genuine community participation and partnerships that recognise and value First Nations community initiatives and networks, strong leadership from women, and the modelling of appropriate behaviour by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men that challenges the use of violence and supports and nurtures women and children.

In some literature, family violence and abuse has been touted as showing a lack of respect for First Nations cultures, with calls for a model on which proud traditions and community structures can be rebuilt. Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations want to embed strong accountability and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that governments and organisations commit quality time and resources to address the issue, and to identify and celebrate successes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families have stated the importance of changing the narrative and the mindsets of people who work with their communities, a change best described as shifting from approaches that manage dysfunction to ones that support functional communities.

## **Innovative family violence primary prevention interventions**

### **New frontiers: Innovating technology-based models**

The potential usefulness of information and communications technology (ICT) to violence prevention cannot be separated from the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the family violence prevention workforce to pivot from face-to-face to remote online work (Pfitzner, Fitz-Gibbon & True 2020). Privacy, regular contact, access to information and the ability of victims/survivors to leave in-home violence have all been compromised during the pandemic. Twenty months of intermittent lockdown orders posed important considerations as to how ICT applications can work best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly in the design and planning of interventions for various types of violence. The intersections between technology, family violence prevention, public health work, the impacts of COVID-19 and health-seeking behaviour have all become critically important. ICT can affect the means of data collection, program design and community-based interventions, as well as support the workforce to continue its delivery of services. While there have been some successes in using technologies – including mobile phones, and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter – there has also been a trend toward cyberbullying, a loss of privacy and security, and stories of perpetrators targeting victims/survivors through social media sites (Meurn 2012).

Technology poses both solutions and challenges for family violence prevention practitioners in their use of digital supports (Pfitzner, Fitz-Gibbon & True 2020). Technology-based models appear to focus on three general strategies to prevent violence:

- to host information (such as websites containing safety information or support systems for violence-affected people)
- to deliver novel interventions to people at risk of perpetrating or being victims/survivors of violence or violent behaviour
- to augment existing preventative interventions targeted at reducing violence against women and children (Hunt et al. 2020).

Examples of technology-based intervention models include programs that provide a means of improving the social skills and behaviour of users. Games have also been implemented to facilitate the development of pro-social skills among children to prevent violence (Craig et al. 2016). There are further examples of parenting and parent-training interventions that seek to address mental health issues through coaching, video therapy, psychiatry and self-guided content (Breitenstein et al. 2017), and other tools that support parents to monitor their children's Internet use and to look for signs of cyberbullying, depression, suicidal thoughts and sexting on a child's phone (Marr 2019).

Perpetrators, of course, can also use technology to harass, monitor, stalk, impersonate and make threats to control, frighten or humiliate (DVRCV n.d.). To date, there are no accurate national prevalence rates for adult victimisation and perpetration of key forms of technology-facilitated abuse, which include online sexual harassment, stalking, partner violence and image-based sexual abuse. Nor do we yet understand the lived experiences and help-seeking patterns of women victims/survivors of such abuse, or been able to identify any currently available (or needed) help-seeking remedies. As a result, there is not yet an evidence base that could inform practice innovation and the further development of prevention and responses to technology-facilitated abuse (Flynn, Powell & Hindes 2021; Harris 2020).

## Literature Review (cont.)

Technological interventions have also been successful in addressing workplace violence and personal safety for various professions (Burkoski et al. 2019). A good example of this are the additional coding classes for girls that have been implemented to support women's engagement in designing programs, and ensuring that local solutions to local problems are contributed to by both men and women (Gregoire 2019). Workforces can now also expect to be learning new information in online learning packages, with the COVID-19 pandemic bringing forward mass access to online learning by five- to seven-year-olds (Ardill 2020). The learning opportunities for this technological platform need to promote increased usability, security and privacy to make technologies inherently safe for the user.

The multinational tech company IBM has developed five key design principles. Although well known to tech developers, these principles take on additional meaning when they are used to address coercive control (IBM Policy Lab 2020). The five design principles are:

- 1 Promoting diversity in the design team to broaden the understanding of user habits and enabling greater exploration of use.
- 2 Guaranteeing privacy and choice so users make informed decisions about their privacy settings.
- 3 Combating gaslighting by designing for timely and pertinent notifications, and for local override with remote activation.
- 4 Strengthening security and data so that information is not used maliciously.
- 5 Making technology more intuitive as victims/survivors may lack the time, ability or confidence to navigate new technologies.

However, technological models still have a way to go in providing appropriate family violence prevention information and in protecting users by making technology resistant to coercive control. For, of course, such models work best when perpetrators cannot 'exploit inventions, tarnish intentions, or dim the light of technological achievement' (IBM Policy Lab 2020:n.p.). Most importantly, technological models are a key step towards making the tech world safer for all of us.

### Community-led intervention models

Community-controlled service and treatment organisations are increasingly asked to integrate a full spectrum of prevention strategies to address violence. Selecting organisations that have high levels of general capacity and readiness for intervention, like integrating a public health approach to intimate partner violence prevention, will likely increase success in building an innovation-specific capacity and, in turn, implementing innovation (Freire et al. 2015). Key points of difference that need to be considered when developing policies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence prevention include:

- the need for an updated Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention framework to understand and respond to violence
- recognition that violence against First Nations women is not a cultural response
- recognition of the cultural determinants of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing
- an understanding of how existing policy and funding frameworks create barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's and boys' programs and program evaluations (Adams et al. 2017:15).

Any community-led model is best facilitated under a community governance model, with White Ribbon acknowledging that an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander framework for prevention of violence has at least five crucial elements:

- strong cultural governance and self-determination
- a commitment to genuine co-design
- a strong basis in local culture
- is underpinned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and principles
- incorporates safe spaces for trauma-informed healing (Adams et al. 2017:23).

Features of best practice community-led models include the incorporation of community development principles, such as community ownership and control of programs wherever possible or appropriate, and responsiveness to local conditions and contexts. Models need to include local cultural appropriateness, such as sound communication, sufficient levels of flexibility and adaptability to respond to changing circumstances affecting target communities, and engagement with cultural obligations, community priorities and protocols. Other important features are the integration of program development and implementation; involving government, non-government and First Nations organisations; engaging with Elders; long-term sustainability; and a holistic focus in dealing with underlying trauma and its antecedents. Community-led intervention models take a flexible approach, which accounts for the complex and multiple factors that contribute to the occurrence of Indigenous family violence (AIHW & AIFS 2016).

### **Civil, criminal and alternative justice responses**

While most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children will never encounter the criminal justice system, those who do are likely to have experienced multiple forms of disadvantage (AHRC 2020). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women represent the fastest growing prison population in Australia and are currently 21.2 times more likely to be incarcerated than non-Indigenous women (ALRC 2017). An emphasis solely on criminal justice responses to family violence poses two main concerns for First Nations women:

- 1** That the system is generally ineffective in addressing the behaviour of perpetrators in the longer term. The effect of imprisonment is to remove them from the community and then, without any focus on rehabilitation or addressing the circumstances that led to the offending in the first place, simply to return them to the same environment.
- 2** That there is a range of barriers to the accessibility and cultural appropriateness of legal processes, which discourage First Nations women from using the criminal justice system in the first place.

Alternatives to criminal justice responses include:

- Restorative justice, which operates at a stage in the process where a perpetrator is prepared to take responsibility for their actions and the victim/survivor is willing to participate.
- Therapeutic justice practices, which remove any processes that alienate or stigmatise any individual by ensuring all parties engage with, and give relevance to, the underlying reasons for the offending.

### **Hybrid models: Integrating community-led and mainstream responses**

Innovative responses targeting First Nations family violence are comprised of fresh ideas, practices and programs that specifically seek to address victim/survivor, perpetrator and community needs. Hybrid models can involve multiple organisations and/or partnerships to deliver responses consisting of prevention, early, secondary and tertiary intervention, and post-crisis programs and projects. Organisations and/or partnerships that design and implement innovative responses have a solid understanding of what programs and/or responses have not worked in the past, a grasp of why they have not been successful, and a willingness to attempt a different mode of address. Further, they have a good understanding of the community nuances and local context in which the program is to be delivered (Blagg, Bluett-Boyd & Williams 2015).

Examples of innovative and hybrid models include:

- **Yarnabout conversation and reflection cards:** SCOPE and Nungeena produced a collection of Indigenous strength cards, Yarnabout Conversation and Reflection Cards, to raise community awareness around family violence. There are 75 cards, with each having a different image that has a cultural, spiritual or community meaning.
- **Night patrols:** To prevent alcohol-related violence, women in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities established night patrols. A successful example of these is the Remote Area Night Patrol in Tangentyere, Northern Territory. Patrolers who had a deep understanding of language and pre-existing relationships with the community were employed. They often used traditional dispute resolution methods and local cultural knowledge to defuse potentially violent situations.

## Literature Review (cont.)

➤ **Mildura family violence and sexual assault campaign:**

This initiative is an example of a multi-sectorial, hybrid project that aimed to educate and raise awareness about family violence and sexual assault within First Nations communities in Mildura, Victoria. The campaign was developed by the Mildura Aboriginal Corporation, Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative, and various Aboriginal justice and family violence organisations, with engagement from Victoria Police. In addition to posters, three television commercials were produced and aired in Mildura television between October 2006 and December 2007.

➤ **Community justice groups:** The Coen Local Justice Group was established in Cape York, Queensland in 2000 to respond to growing community demands for effective responses to victims of family violence. The Group, which provides community advice, consisted of Elders and members of the clan groups in the Central Cape region, Queensland Police, Education Queensland, Queensland Health and Coen Regional Aboriginal Corporation (Blagg, Bluett-Boyd & Williams 2015).

Each of these interventions responds to client needs with a focus on recovery, healing and safety through individually tailored and planned responses. Hybrid models include early intervention and post-crisis support services, as well as programs for men's behaviour change that help both men and women be accountable and responsible to family members. These programs may include crisis care responses, counselling, casework, group-work, advocacy and after-hours telephone crisis services. Hybrid models aim to promote early intervention strategies to prevent the occurrence, or escalation, of family violence by offering post-crisis support.

### Place-based approaches

Place-based approaches, one of many responses available to public policy makers and managers, involve using evidence of expected outcomes and knowledge of the enabling conditions (Juster 2014; Koontz & Thomas 2006). Such approaches are usefully applied to interventions in First Nations communities, as language boundaries and community connectedness are deeply experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Collaborative place-based approaches are called for when the problems are complex or 'wicked' and the solutions either uncertain or require multiple forms of intervention (Bellefontaine & Wisener 2011).

Place-based approaches usually have certain features in common, but often differ in the extent to which these features are incorporated into their model and practice (Moore & McDonald 2013). Given the diversity observed among different place-based initiatives, Moore et al. (2014) suggested that it may be useful to conceptualise the key common features as a spectrum or continuum:

- A defined geographic area with a focus on service system coordination and/or community support.
- Community engagement, although the extent and level of community control can vary.
- Actions are adapted to local needs.
- A multi-level approach (i.e. intervening at three or more levels of influence) that simultaneously addresses the many ecological factors that impact upon children and families.

Place-based responses have been used to address family violence, with varying degrees of success (AIHW & AIFS 2016). They are also being used to address issues of justice, child safety and ending violence (Gilbert 2012; Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2019), and are a key feature of the Victorian Government's response (Victorian Government 2020b; Moore et al. 2014).

## Empowerment

With appropriate resources, many Aboriginal communities have the resilience to develop and implement their own effective solutions to family violence (Andersson et al. 2010). This approach counters what is wrong in Aboriginal communities to understand what is right, and produces a practical benefit for people in the community. Resilience offers a pathway by which disadvantaged populations can learn about violence and take responsibility to reduce the risks and share the experiences (Andersson et al. 2010).

In New Zealand, Māori have been recognised as leading the way with the 'Whānau Ora' (Family Well-being) program, which focuses on whānau empowerment by 'supporting them to develop plans and working with them to achieve short-, medium- and long-term goals' (Atwool 2020).

## Family-based interventions

There are areas of unmet need in the development and delivery of family violence services, particularly in dealing with the complexities of family violence within First Nations families. For example, service providers often hear the message from families that they want to stay together, but they just want the violence to stop (ACT Victims of Crime Coordinator 2009). In New Zealand, a community group committed to developing family-centric initiatives, came up with an innovative approach that was both informed by the community and supported by funder stakeholders (Chisnell et al. 2019). The innovation in this approach was to facilitate couples working together, rather than separately, in intensive interventions combining Māori worldviews and other community development principles (Chisnell et al. 2019).

Key features of the family-centred program include:

- addressing social concerns
- delivering interventions to protect and improve the wellbeing of children who experience violence
- enabling families to become part of the solution for ending the violence
- encouraging agencies to use their resources more holistically and collaboratively
- delivering interventions facilitated by the needs of the participating families.

## Couples-based approaches

Couples-based approaches to domestic violence are also being used in New Zealand for couples committed to behaviour change. It is important to note that couples in these programs were willing and not compelled to participate 'as a diversionary or compliance driven measure' (Chisnell et al. 2019:6).

Couples-based interventions include:

- Couples group weekends – where five to six similarly aged couples were 'matched' to participate in weekend retreats that included workshops, therapy, reflection and feedback, and physical activities.
- Follow-up workshops with couples – 10 days after the initial retreat couples were given opportunities for sharing their challenges and achievements, and developing an ongoing support plan.
- A children's group retreat – in which children and parents attend separate workshops and then come together the next day for family activities. Counsellors are available at the children's retreats.
- Activities in the children's workshops – to build children's confidence using creative play and therapy and provide opportunities for them to talk to their parents about what they wanted and didn't want to happen in their home life (Chisnell et al. 2019:7).

The analysis of the quantitative data from New Zealand police records post-intervention indicated that, since attending the weekend camps, out of 37 couples, 21 had no further police attendance, nine had made preventative calls to police to scale down potential family conflict, two had no call-outs for over three months, and two had more police attendance but significantly less physical violence (Chisnell et al. 2019:6). Post-intervention, the remaining 11 couples decreased both police attendance and physical violence (Chisnell et al. 2019:6).

## Literature Review (cont.)

Through observational techniques, evaluators identified the activities reinforced the couples' learning, beliefs and values that they had developed during the couples counselling weekend, along with 'evidence of a new way of thinking, letting go of the past and barriers to change' (Chisnell et al. 2019:12). Evaluators also observed that participants were able to gain further insight into the impact of violence in their families and could better appreciate the voices of their children. In semi-structured interviews with staff, all of the couples were positive about the strong relationships they had developed with the program facilitators through their use of therapeutic and empathetic engagement techniques (Latta 2003 as cited in Chisnell et al. 2019:13).

This approach was considered non-traditional in that the focus was on couples and family-based interventions rather than on the services which, in separating those who perpetrate violence from those who experience violence, place the responsibility for change on the family (Chisnell et al. 2019). It was also systematic and community based, focusing on strengths not deficits, and incorporated cultural determinants of health and wellbeing, thereby enabling a better understanding of Māori worldview and of individual and collective wellbeing. With a family-based epistemology the basis of knowledge and learning, participants reported their cultural beliefs and values had been incorporated into the intervention; this was fundamental to its success (Te Pou O Te Whakaaro Nui 2015 as cited in Chisnell et al. 2019:15).

Thus, interventions with couples and their families, along with pioneering programs that are place based and use Indigenous principles, values and beliefs, have the potential to build regional capacity for enduring social change.

### Partner education and finance programs

International evidence from countries such as South Africa is showing that combining intimate partner violence, gender and relationship education with information about microfinancing programs is achieving good outcomes in decreasing participants' experience of violence (Jewkes et al. 2008). These programs target financial stressors as a contributor to family violence and welcome both men and women to some sessions, on topics such as gender and power, couple communication and parenting. Participants in a study by Doyle et al. (2018) reported they had experienced less physical and sexual intimate partner violence in the past year, a decrease achieved by addressing community, social, communication and financial factors that are the foundation of intimate relationships. Doyle et. al (2018) also found that international programs combating family violence have implemented a combination of strategies, such as:

- engaging and training health workers, local authorities and community activists to run local and informal activities using communication materials, media and advocacy, and community-based support
- using 'edutainment' to reinforce social change messages through mass media, messaging, radio and television dramas
- providing pathways for men and women to earn incomes and reduce financial stress
- implementing reflective strategies.

Another study by Bradley et al. (2011) demonstrated that social networks are critical to community-level effects as knowledge is shared through personal contacts. Without these personal networks, interventions are compromised and difficult to sustain at a community level.

## Facilitators for First Nations-led family violence prevention programs and opportunities for innovation

A review of the available literature revealed a lack of research and evaluation into the effectiveness of First Nations-led family violence primary prevention programs. However, we were able to identify some common facilitators of these programs, as well as opportunities for innovation.

### Facilitators

#### Involvement of community/Elders

The literature clearly shows that the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence programs is largely dependent on community involvement. An evaluation of a range of programs found that a ‘crucial factor in their success’ was the fact that they were ‘community-led programs, delivered by Indigenous organisations’ (Blagg, Bluett-Boyd & Williams 2015:30). According to the Equality Institute, it is imperative that prevention programs focus on ‘issues identified by the community, through strategies led by the community’ (2018:26). This ensures that programs will be culturally sensitive, and communities are empowered to ‘lead change and prevent violence themselves’ (Equality Institute 2018: 26).

The *Warawarni-gu Guma Statement: Healing Together in Ngurin Ngarluma*, developed at ANROWS (Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety’s) 2nd National Research Conference on Violence against Women in 2018, outlines the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s involvement in ‘all aspects of policy formulation and a wide range of service responses and data sovereignty’ (Langton et al. 2020a:40). Specifically, the statement says:

**We need a new way – our way – for addressing family violence in our communities; a way that recognises the impact of intergenerational trauma on our people, our families and our communities... ‘Nothing about our mob, without our mob’.**

(Douglas et al. 2018)

A review of family violence prevention programs in First Nations communities shows that practitioners agree that a key principle to their success is community ownership and control, as well as ‘responsiveness to local conditions and contexts’ (AIHW & AIFS 2016:2). It is crucial that the community is engaged and has a strong acceptance of the program, which can take time.

For women, it is particularly important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination is intrinsic to the development of family violence programs. This is because women will be more likely to seek help from services run by First Nations people, as they feel they will be better understood and more likely to receive assistance ‘without racism or condescension’ in a ‘culturally safe environment’ (Langton et al. 2020a:40).

An internal desktop review of the Aboriginal Innovation Fund also found that community was key to the successful implementation of projects. Key enablers were:

- empowering community and project participants to inform project design and delivery
- employing staff with significant cultural knowledge and cultural connections within their local areas
- engaging Elders and custodians of Country to provide both cultural knowledge and act as mentors and supports to project participants, including young people and those at risk of family violence (Victorian Government 2020a).

Further, it is vital that the ‘nuances and dynamics of family violence within specific communities’ are identified, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are diverse. This means that terms such as ‘family violence’ or ‘family member’ will have different meanings for different groups (Equality Institute 2018:25). Research in Australia ‘argues that policy frameworks should support Indigenous-led knowledge and solutions, and community-based services’ (Blagg et al. 2018:22). The Victorian Government has recognised the importance of self-determination and has ‘committed to an enduring community-led response to end family violence against Aboriginal people’ (Victorian Government 2018b:3). According to the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, even though local, community-owned programs are considered most effective, ‘their robust evaluation can be difficult’ and there is ‘considerable scope for additional evaluations to be done’ (AIHW & AIFS 2016:3).

## Literature Review (cont.)

Research from New Zealand largely mirrors the Australian literature regarding what is effective when implementing First Nations-led family violence prevention strategies, such as the success factors of whānau (family) violence prevention programs. These include:

- Taking a multi-level approach that includes strengthening knowledge and skills at an individual level and promoting community ownership of the issue at a community level. This type of approach is ‘likely to achieve the best results in violence prevention’ (Dobbs & Eruera 2014:30).
- Collaborating between government agencies and iwi (tribes).
- Using frameworks based on strengthening whānau rather than focusing solely on individuals or couples.

Māori face similar challenges to Australia’s First Nations peoples, as they too are over-represented in family violence statistics due to a range of complex underlying factors such as colonisation, social marginalisation and racism (Dobbs & Eruera 2014). As Western models to address whānau violence ‘do not readily translate cross-culturally’, or adequately deal with these factors (Dobbs & Eruera 2014:5), there has been a resultant increase in First Nations-specific models and programs.

### Healing and trauma informed

There is a wealth of evidence that puts an ‘emphasis on healing as a framework for working with Aboriginal men who use violence’ (Andrews et al. 2021:61), and it has long been recognised that ‘all attempts to address violence against Indigenous women must adopt a “holistic response with a health focus on healing and empowerment”’ (Blagg, Bluett-Boyd & Williams 2015:19). Rather than focusing on punitive responses, healing-informed practices recognise the impact that colonisation, intergenerational trauma and racial discrimination continue to have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Incorporating healing into family violence prevention programs is therefore key, as it works ‘to address compounding factors that can stop violence from happening in the first place’ (Equality Institute 2018:26).

Given this, it is imperative that the workforce has undergone healing and trauma training so that they have the capacity to recognise symptoms of trauma and are able to understand its impacts on actions and recovery (Our Watch 2018b). Facilitators of Aboriginal men’s healing, fatherhood and family violence programs have emphasised that a healing approach does not mean letting behaviour go unchallenged, but rather that facilitators need to ‘come from a place of support and non-judgement’ while not ‘letting people off the hook’ (Andrews et al. 2021:65). Facilitators also spoke about the importance of keeping men engaged while working towards sustained behavioural changes, including their use of violence and other trauma-related issues such as substance abuse.

One of the six guiding principles in *Dhelk Dja* is ‘Cultural and trauma informed resilience and healing approaches’. It recognises that the ‘best way to reduce the incidence and intergenerational impacts of family violence’ is to ‘draw upon cultural knowledge, strengths, resilience and resources’ (Victorian Government 2018b). *Dhelk Dja* also outlines the importance of using a whole-of-family approach, which not only supports those who use violence to take charge of their healing journey, but works to address the individual and collective needs of those experiencing family violence. Blagg, Bluett-Boyd & Williams also discuss the importance of healing from a ‘whole-of-family perspective’, whereby family violence interventions recognise the impact that violence has on the whole family and thus focus on maintaining the relationships within the family (Blagg, Bluett-Boyd & Williams 2015:19).

### **Culture as a protective factor**

One of the main facilitators to successful First Nations-led family violence prevention programs is the ‘critical importance’ of incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and using ‘cultural strengthening as a protective factor against violence’ (Victorian Government 2018b:28). Following on from the discussion above, connection to culture is central to healing. In a review of 21 healing projects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Healing Foundation identified the following themes:

- Identifying with our cultural lineage makes us proud and dignified.
- Preserving and sharing cultural heritage gives us a sense of future.
- Connecting with land, Country and our history makes us strong.
- Following our cultural ways makes us feel good and builds our spirits.
- Strengthening our community gives us belonging and protection.
- Acknowledging leadership allows us to mentor our future leaders.
- Respecting self and others is an important cultural value that guides us.
- Using our cultural skills in our work makes us feel valuable and rewards us.
- Grieving space and healing time let us take care of hurt.
- Reconnecting with our spiritual selves is powerful and makes us whole (Healing Foundation 2015:4–5).

As discussed, the destruction of culture that contributes to the ‘erosion’ of social and emotional wellbeing has been ‘recognised as a key driver of the current levels of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities’ (Our Watch 2018a:56). Therefore, it is necessary to address the ‘breakdown of traditional culture and kinship practices including disconnection from cultural roots’ by rebuilding (Olsen & Lovett 2016:14).

Building connection to culture is a ‘commonly reported strength’ of family violence programs that aims to address broader social and emotional wellbeing issues (Blagg, Bluett-Boyd & Williams 2015:31). Research tells us that focusing on rebuilding connections to culture and Country is effective both for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence programs and for healing programs (Carlson, Day & Farrelly 2021). A desktop review of the Aboriginal Innovation Fund projects emphasised that one of the factors contributing to positive change was ‘strengthening cultural knowledge and practice through workshops, traditional practices, ceremonies and mentoring between elders and young people’ (Victorian Government 2020a:20). Cultural camps are a ‘powerful setting for primary prevention’, as they work to address violent behaviour and cultural strengthening (Victorian Government 2012a:10).

Similarly, in New Zealand, the Mauri Ora framework focuses on applying te ao Māori (the Māori world) cultural constructs to practice in order to address historical and contemporary factors that contribute to violence, and has been used ‘with considerable success’ (Dobbs & Eruera 2014:7). While whānau violence prevention was previously approached using a deficit model, prevention techniques are now being used that ‘contribute to the body of knowledge becoming known as whānau ora and the cultural capacities and capabilities which assist extended families to build resiliency, protective factors and processes’ (Dobbs & Eruera 2014:20).

Research on the cultural determinants of health and wellbeing further demonstrates the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples having strong connections to culture.

### Cultural determinants of health and wellbeing

The following section on cultural determinants of health and wellbeing has been taken from Arabena (2020) *'Country Can't Hear English'*. Referencing the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Model and the Mayi Kuwayu: The National Longitudinal Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Project (Salmon et al. 2018), there are six key elements needed for healing, health and wellbeing:

- 1 Connection to Country** – closely related to identity and attachment with the physical environment, this element facilitates a sense of belonging and connection.
- 2 Indigenous beliefs and knowledge** – including relationships, identities and cultural traditions, and incorporates healing, traditional medicine and gendered knowledge systems and practices.
- 3 Indigenous language** – including verbal, written and body language as a vehicle for expressing culture and teaching it to others; language is the basis for cultural knowledge, economies and trade.
- 4 Family, kinship and community** – knowing and being part of a community and having responsibilities, obligations and duties in extended families, community life, local initiatives and political issues.
- 5 Cultural expression and continuity** – actions taken to express attitudes, beliefs, customs and norms often in the form of dances, songs, storytelling, ceremony and the sharing of food, celebrations and the representation of values.
- 6 Self-determination and leadership** – facilitates control over decision making and resources and assists collective thinking and actions that benefit people influenced by the decisions made.

Cultural determinants are premised on extensive and well-established knowledge networks that exist within communities and in the community-controlled sectors. The implementation of these is consistent with themes in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations 2007) and Australia's commitments to meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations Development Programme 2015).

Cultural determinants originate from and promote a strengths-based perspective that builds stronger individual and collective identities. In so doing, they create a sense of pride, resilience and improved outcomes across the other determinants of health, including education, economic stability and community safety (Brown 2013). In this way, culture also 'underpins family violence holistic healing for Aboriginal communities' (Victorian Government 2019:19). It does so:

**... by empowering people (individuals, families and communities) to recognise and understand their cultural identity. Culture provides a set of values and behaviours and standards that guide how the world is seen.**

(Victorian Government 2019:19)

There are public and private cultural practices, some of which are gender-specific, while others are intergenerational. Culture links people across places, songlines and with totems. Culture is not static; it is changing, dynamic and expressed by people irrespective of where they live. While cultural aspirations, traditions and experiences differ across the nation, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a right to a cultural life and a responsibility to ensure cultural continuity for this and future generations.

The challenge for policy makers is to ensure that policy works over the longer term by incorporating environmental, social and economic concerns, encouraging broader participation, and handling uncertainty constructively. Innovation can and will occur when we experiment with new policy instruments and processes, and there are opportunities for cultural determinants of health to be taken up across different institutional settings. Issues of scale will need to be clarified to reallocate these shared responsibilities across geographic and administrative boundaries while encouraging mutual understanding and ongoing learning.

One of the main levers for implementing cultural determinants in the family violence area is identifying opportunities to support access to cultural healing and family-to-family engagement through cultural and entrepreneurial endeavours that promote good health and wellbeing.

Cultural determinants are viewed as intrinsic to individuals and families having strengths and purpose. Founded on worldviews and built on Indigenous science knowledge, cultural determinants are acknowledged as the key to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples finding belonging. We need to recognise the value of cultural determinants in supporting communities to thrive, creating wealth by unlocking the potential in the Indigenous Estate – ‘the sum of Indigenous rights and interests in Australian land and waters’ (Arabena, Holland & Hamilton 2020) – and empowering individuals, families and communities.

### Empowering women

As outlined, empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take control of their healing and drive change is key to family violence prevention programs. For men, this includes empowering them to reclaim their roles as fathers, grandfathers and uncles within their families, and supporting them to heal (Carlson, Day & Farrelly 2021). Another identified strength of First Nations-specific programs is tailoring program responses to empower female participants, with evidence showing that ‘empowerment principles are preventative by nature’ (Blagg, Bluett-Boyd & Williams 2015:31). Empowering women helps to re-frame their experience of victimisation, to instead focus on their strengths. Women can become empowered by:

**Helping them to make their own decisions. Talking about not only the negatives but also positives, such as their resilience and strength, their ability to protect and care for their children, their ability to ask for help when needed.**

(Putt, Holder & O’Leary 2017:39)

Advocating for and empowering women has been identified as being ‘at the core of service delivery and practice’ for women’s specialist domestic and family violence services (Putt, Holder & O’Leary 2017:31). Further, peer mentoring allows women to share their experiences, which not only empowers them but, in turn, other women as well. This has the ability to increase levels of social and emotional wellbeing and contributes to ‘the enhancement of women’s confidence, self-esteem and resilience in their ability to address family violence within their community’ (Blagg, Bluett-Boyd & Williams 2015:31).

A key facilitator for the primary prevention of family violence in First Nations communities is promoting women’s leadership in an effort to address the gendered drivers of violence (Equality Institute 2018). Actions to prevent violence against women should:

**... resource, support and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls to thrive in decision making and leadership positions (which will be defined in extremely diverse ways) both within their communities, and in every setting of society.**

(Our Watch 2018b:20)

According to Dudgeon et al. (2014:438), ‘it is critical to enable people to move from a “victim mentality” to a strong sense of positive self-esteem and empowerment in order to change their circumstances’. Programs that facilitate First Nations ‘understandings of healing, empowerment, and leadership can redress much of the grief, loss, and trauma experienced by families and communities (Dudgeon et al. 2014:437).

### Opportunities for innovation

#### Increasing resources and funding boosts

The most common barrier outlined in the Victorian Government’s review of the Aboriginal Innovation Fund in 2020 was a shortage of resources, particularly in relation to staff. Reported issues included:

- an inability to meet project demand, with most project staff working in a part-time capacity
- difficulties retaining staff, which has impacted the delivery of projects
- an under-resourced workforce with a high turnover rate has made building trust and engagement with community members difficult; engaging those who use or have been exposed to family violence requires extensive time and expertise
- issues engaging and retaining male role models and mentors (Victorian Government 2020a:22).

## Literature Review (cont.)

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse found that one of the barriers to effective family violence prevention programs is ‘unsustainable responses that rely solely on short-term government funding’ (AIHW & AIFS 2016:15). Similarly, an evaluation of the Aboriginal Family and Community Healing program, based in metropolitan Adelaide, also discussed challenges in relation to insufficient staff and short-term funding:

**The [Aboriginal Family and Community Healing] team had limited capacity due to the intense and extensive nature of their work, issues within their own families, and other responsibilities. Aside from insufficient staff and funds, there were also restrictions on how and where funding could be deployed. Continual restructure of the regional health service impacted greatly on staff morale and program integrity – many workers and clients commented on the resulting downgrading of popular program components and reduced staff capacity.**

(Kowanko et al. 2009:9)

Family violence prevention programs in New Zealand have faced similar challenges, with resources instead being directed to crisis intervention (Dobbs & Eruera 2014:40; Atwool 2020:6). In 2018, the CEO of Djirra (Victoria’s only Aboriginal community-controlled specialist family violence service), Antoinette Braybrook, emphasised the importance of ‘long-term, significant funding’ when addressing family violence (Braybrook 2018). She reiterated the necessity for early intervention services that are culturally safe, such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (Braybrook 2018).

The Victorian Government provided more than \$123 million to community-controlled organisations and Traditional Owner group networks to develop resources and strategies to respond to culturally led, safe responses to COVID-19 (Wyatt 2020). The package included the establishment of a COVID-19 Response Fund, as well as funding for immediate support that included emergency relief, outreach and brokerage, social and emotional wellbeing initiatives, and cultural strengthening and celebration opportunities. Policy makers have a duty of care to consider a range of scenarios for the immediate future, including ones in which the health and economic costs are deep and

long lasting (Henry 2020). What is unclear from the utilisation of these funds is which of these resources and strategies were the main focus in supporting families during the pandemic; that is, whether these funds were used to promote vaccine take up or social and emotional wellbeing during lockdown.

### Culturally safe commissioning

One way to innovate funding is by implementing cultural determinants within government to support the practice of culturally safe commissioning (Bulloch, Fogarty & Bellchambers 2019; Lowitja Institute 2020; Productivity Commission 2020). The following approaches will result in culturally safe funding processes:

- Centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, people, perspectives and knowledge.
- Adopting strengths-based and self-determination approaches.
- Co-designing indicators and measurements of success with community.
- Funding that embraces holism, innovation and responsiveness.
- Building trusting and genuine partnerships between funder and recipients.
- Creating longer term funding cycles.
- Prioritising knowledge translation and translation of findings to community.
- Reducing over-reporting requirements.
- Ensuring capacity and capability building is included in funding for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff.

### Innovating out of COVID-19

An earlier evaluation of the Aboriginal Innovation Fund found that the COVID-19 pandemic ‘impacted the delivery capacity of funded agencies, with the absence of face-to-face interaction affecting relationship building efforts’ (Victorian Government 2021a). The move to online services has proven difficult, with some providers expressing difficulty in contacting their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients as they ‘often won’t answer the phone when the caller is “unidentified” – fearful that it’s “the welfare” or police’ (Carrington et al. 2020:27).

Accessing face-to-face services has been particularly difficult for those living in remote communities due to travel restrictions, while online services have also been problematic due to issues with accessing reliable phones, computers or an Internet connection (Carrington et al. 2020). COVID-19 restrictions have put women at an increased risk of violence as they have been locked down, in their homes and their community, with those perpetrating the violence. This is particularly concerning, as lockdowns have meant that there has been 'limited ability to facilitate evacuation or safety planning' (Carrington et al. 2020:40).

Social, emotional and financial stress has also been brought on or exacerbated by the crisis. In such a situation, some people can develop a mindset that either excuses, downplays or trivialises violence. Thus, services, governments and policing organisations need to maintain a strong narrative that there is no excuse for violence under any circumstance.

Despite this, the pandemic has seen an increase in the number of 'first time reports of intimate partner violence and the weaponising of children as part of shared care arrangements...' (Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner & True 2020a:n.p.). Perpetrators have been using 'the threat of COVID-19 infection to gain access to women, to force them to share a house with their abuser when they previously lived separately and to control access to children' (Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner & True 2020a:n.p.). In an environment with curfews, one-hour time slots for exercise and only one member of the household allowed to shop for essential items, there is a shift in how people are accessing support (Fitz-Gibbon, True & Pfitzner 2020).

**Between May and July 2020, Victorians represented 31% of all 1800 webchats, representing a 30% increase in use compared to the three months prior to May. Another key change was the increase in volume of calls placed late at night, peaking around midnight, representing both the decision for victims to use the 1800 chat function after the perpetrators had gone to sleep, and that victims are seeking help with trauma including nightmares, flashbacks or sleep disturbances.**

(Fitz-Gibbon, True & Pfitzner 2020)

Family violence prevention interventions need to innovate in order to keep victims/survivors of family violence safe during home confinement, and to minimise the potential for escalating violence. This will require increased investment in specialist domestic violence service sectors to allow for innovations in remote service delivery, support for the wellbeing of family violence practitioners, and to realise the opportunities for building the capacity and engagement of neighbours, friends and family in helping victims/survivors of violence in safe and effective ways. A focus is required then on innovations in workplaces, remote service delivery and in partnerships.

According to a Monash University report on trend data from three frontline services, the reduced access to opportunities for seeking help caused by the current pandemic has actually led to more women making use of the online chat available at 1800RESPECT, and to more male perpetrators seeking behaviour change support (Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner & True 2020a). As a result, many services are now transitioning to providing services via online chat and messaging-based services, email, and video and voice calls (Pfitzner, Fitz-Gibbon & True 2020). Other ways in which service providers have been able to adapt in response to the pandemic include:

- incorporating their response into the essential services that have remained open so that people can still access support (i.e. GP clinics, child care centres, Centrelink)
- using code words in phone and messaging communications, or physical signals, as a new 'alert system'
- accessing alternative methods of communication such as 'Gruveo', an encrypted web-based video call service that is undetectable
- using all-female run services such as 'Shebah' and 'SheDrops'
- conducting 'house tours' though video chat to allow service providers to gain more environment information, and to inform risk assessment and safety planning.

### Evaluating programs involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Despite a recent increase in government investment and availability of programs and services targeted to improve health outcomes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities continue to experience poorer health outcomes compared to the non-Indigenous population. This is partly due to a lack of evaluations on First Nations-specific programs and a scarcity of available peer-reviewed published and unpublished evidence about them (Muir & Dean 2017; Productivity Commission 2013; Walden & Wall 2014; Finlay et al. 2021). A report by Hudson (2016), for example, found that out of 1,082 First Nations-specific programs in Australia, more than 90 per cent had not been evaluated to see if they had achieved their objectives. This issue has also been identified overseas, with research from New Zealand suggesting the lack of knowledge about the effectiveness of existing family violence prevention and intervention programs is due to 'minimal investment in evaluation processes' (Dobbs & Eruera 2014:42). According to Dobbs & Eruera (2014), there is a need for clearly developed in-depth, strengths-based research to be undertaken in key areas.

### Challenges in evaluating First Nations programs

A number of challenges have been identified in evaluating social programs, particularly those that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific (Muir & Dean 2017). It is inappropriate, for example, to use Western evaluation approaches as these rarely capture Indigenous worldviews and perspectives (Cargo et al. 2019). Furthermore, there is a lack of outcome indicators that are both culturally appropriate and align with First Nations community needs, priorities and measures of success. Other challenges include the following:

- It can be difficult to separate out the effects of a specific program and be certain that any observed outcomes are associated with or attributable to that program. This is particularly complex when evaluating First Nations programs as they often take place against a range of other social interventions and policies.
- Not all evaluations are built into program design and so data is seldom collected throughout the lifetime of the program but rather at its end, which doesn't provide a true narrative of the program. Furthermore, there is often a lack of dedicated funding and/or support for funded organisations to conduct evaluations.
- Many communities experience limited organisational resources (such as funding, space and staffing), with smaller organisations, in particular, often not having enough trained staff with the experience to collect evaluation evidence while also actually delivering the interventions.
- There can be unrealistic expectations from funders to see the changes and effects of the programs within the limited timeframe of the funding cycle, when many of these can only be observed after well into the future (Muir & Dean 2017).

### **Challenges in evaluating family violence primary prevention programs**

There are three key challenges associated with evaluating family violence primary prevention programs (Walden & Wall 2014):

- There is a social silence around the issues of family violence and a reliance on self-reporting.
- Indicators used to measure behaviour change often rely on an increase in understanding or an improvement in awareness, but people don't always act according to what they know, even if they believe and understand it.
- It takes a long time to observe and measure the primary prevention interventions, often much longer than the funding period.

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultural protocols, worldview, priorities and knowledges should be central to the evaluation process.**

### **Conducting culturally safe evaluations in First Nations settings**

Since 2018, several frameworks and guidelines have been developed to guide the planning, design and conduct of evaluations of policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The following principles have been identified as best practice in conducting culturally safe evaluations in First Nations settings:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation and leadership should be reflected in the evaluation of First Nations-specific programs and all evaluation processes, including the design of evaluation questions, and decision-making on the program's implementation.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultural protocols, worldview, priorities and knowledges should be central to the evaluation process.
- Establishing and maintaining good communication and respectful relationships of trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders requires significant investment in time and resources and so should be prioritised and planned for.
- Evaluation should be built into the program design process from the start, with organisations preparing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander impact assessment and evaluation plan for all program proposals.
- Build capability by providing training and professional development opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and funded organisation staff to conduct and manage high-quality evaluations.
- Ensure evaluation data is relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and collected in culturally safe ways.
- Ensure evaluations are properly resourced, with sufficient funding, time and staff allocated for extensive consultations and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders (Productivity Commission 2020; Muir & Dean 2017; Cargo et al. 2019; Finlay et al. 2021; Hudson 2017; Kelaher et al. 2018).

# Recommendations

The recommendations of this evaluation were informed by:

- feedback and reflections from program implementers.
- evidence from the existing data sources
- evidence from the literature review.

We encourage the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to consider the following key recommendations as outlined here.

## Practise culturally safe commissioning

### Build trusting relationships and partnerships

Co-develop and co-design all aspects of the funding processes with the funded organisations, including design and delivery of projects, evaluation planning and implementation.

- Feedback from the program implementers indicates that there is a need to involve funded organisations and program participants in the funding of projects, and for them to take an active role in how projects and the Aboriginal Innovation Fund are evaluated. This should also include co-developing evaluation metrics and indicators that are of importance to the community.
- This feedback stems from the lack of consultations held with program implementers during the commissioning process of the AIF evaluation, and the DFFH's/DPC's changing evaluation requirements on individual projects, which led to confusion and frustration on the part of the program implementers.

Establish continuity of support for funded organisations.

- We received positive feedback from several program implementers about the level of support provided by the previous Aboriginal Innovation Fund project officer. This has highlighted the importance of establishing continuity of support and the value of building partnerships with funded organisations.

Focus on genuine relationship building instead of transactional relationships. This involves providing support and resources to ACCOs instead of taking control, and recognising the difference between project management and contract management.

### Improve future reporting and monitoring templates to make them more community driven and culturally appropriate

Consider using specific evaluation frameworks tailored to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Clearly articulate short-, medium- and long-term outcomes, and consider the inclusion of a capacity-building section in the reporting, as capacity building is currently not reported on by all funded organisations.

Outcomes should be co-developed with organisations that are most relevant to each local community and cultural context (not following predetermined outcomes) and sustained over the funding period, which enables consistent reporting over time.

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Feedback from some program implementers has indicated that the language used in the progress reports and final reports are complicated and not user-friendly. There is a need to adopt plain language in the reports to allow the staff who are actually involved in delivering the projects to complete the reports themselves with ease.

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Given the gap in the literature about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence programs and services, ACCOs should be funded to publish evaluations of their work in this area.

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Incorporate cultural elements in reporting that are co-developed with First Nations communities and aligned to the cultural determinants of health and wellbeing to ensure they are validated from a community perspective.

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Allow for creative ways of reporting (e.g. videos, audio, photographs). This will enable program implementers to report project achievements and progress that cannot be captured in writing. Further, this may also reduce the burden of reporting experienced by many organisations that have to report to multiple funders.

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There needs to be standardised reporting templates across the funded years for organisations to fill in as this will allow for consistency and transparency, and for evaluations to be conducted easily. This could be achieved by convening an evaluation and monitoring committee of funded stakeholders and facilitating evaluation goal setting workshops.

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Support organisations to enhance their ability to acquit against all stated deliverables through their progress reporting.

- There were issues of incomplete or unsubmitted reports and project plans from the organisations that impacted on the findings of this evaluation and the process review.
- Support could include having regular check-ins with the funded organisations and holding online tutorials, particularly during submission periods, to ensure that they adequately acquit against their funding budget and deliverables before receiving new funding.

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### **Allow for longer-term funding cycles**

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Consideration should be given to allocating funding for a minimum of three years to allow ample time for appropriate service delivery, monitoring and evaluation of short-term outcomes, and any potential to scale up successful primary prevention projects.

- Current funding cycles for the Aboriginal Innovation Fund are for one year, with opportunities to extend annually. Restricted funding has been cited as a consistent limitation across the literature and reporting to delivering and expanding family violence prevention services.

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More funding is required to reflect the additional contributions that ACCOs provide to ensure the successful delivery of their project.

- Current funding does not take into account the extraordinary commitment of the community and the in-kind contributions provided by program implementers. Many staff go above and beyond their job description to support participants to attend programs, which needs to be considered in the distribution of funding.
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## Recommendations (cont.)

### **Incorporate capacity building opportunities for funded organisations in the funding process**

The DFFH should consider publishing evaluation reports on those of its commissioned projects affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to build the evidence on the impact of First Nations-led interventions in the State.

- Our findings from the literature review have identified a lack of evaluations conducted on First Nations-specific programs and of published evidence.

Hold evaluation training workshops with funded organisations to build evaluation literacy of program implementers.

- This could include a two-day workshop with integrated roundtable discussions, where program implementers can discuss and decide what the evaluation process should look like. The DFFH should then continue to facilitate biannual workshops at which program implementers can complete their evaluations and discuss what is working and where improvements can be made.

Allocate dedicated funding within the grant for the professional development of program implementers.

Establish an Aboriginal Innovation Fund community of practice for funded organisations to facilitate opportunities for them to cross-fertilise ideas through sector workshops and professional development opportunities, and to establish a project steering group made up of a representative from each funded program.

- There is currently no opportunity for funded organisations to facilitate knowledge sharing in relation to their family violence prevention work. Establishing a community of practice would provide the program implementers with an opportunity to meet regularly, share experiences about their projects and learn from each other.
- Ensure that efforts are coordinated across the DFFH, and are aligned with Building the Aboriginal Evidence Base partnership, the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance and VACCA.

Establish a Family Violence Prevention Summit in Victoria to encourage network building and knowledge sharing among family violence prevention organisations in the State.

Establish opportunities for services to incorporate peer researcher initiatives, where end users and beneficiaries of programs can be engaged and empowered to undertake research and support.

## **Programmatic changes for family violence primary prevention sector and the DFFH**

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Address discourses that construct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's behaviours and experiences as 'identities' by challenging the use of language that is heteronormative and positions men as perpetrators and women and children as victim/survivors. Instead, use approaches that recognise the impact and expression of trauma, and acknowledge the chronic stress and lack of access to resources that will facilitate behaviour change in families.

- Reflections from program implementers have shown that there is a need for sectoral change to shift the language used in the family violence space to be less deficit-focused (e.g. the use of perpetrator, victim) and instead adopt more positive, empowering terminology in consultations with survivors of family violence, First Nations communities and others. Shifting from a deficit lens to using strengths-based and preventive terminology is more likely to be effective in preventing violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
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Shift the focus away from men who perpetrate violence against women and children, and broaden all DFFH-funded family violence prevention projects to include other less recognised forms of violence (e.g. financial control, elder abuse and animal cruelty), and the different groups who perpetrate violence (e.g. women and adolescents).

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Broaden the focus from primary prevention interventions to embrace all levels of prevention interventions.

- In undertaking the evaluation, the evaluators found it challenging to focus solely on primary prevention interventions as there is significant overlap between the various levels of prevention. We found that participants in primary prevention activities generally have previous experience of family violence themselves, making a siloed approach ineffective. Prevention interventions cannot be examined in isolation as family violence prevention requires a holistic approach.
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## **Use population and demographic data to expand where and how services are delivered**

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Investment and distribution of funding should take into account population and demographic data to ensure that services are delivered in areas of greatest need.

- The impact of lockdowns has seen an increase in migration away from metropolitan areas in favour of regional areas, which have limited infrastructure in place.
  - There is a growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the western suburbs of Melbourne, and yet there is currently limited access to Aboriginal community-controlled infrastructure in the area. This means that victims/survivors of family violence are more likely to present to ambulatory services and emergency departments, which have fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers with specific skills in implementing innovative family violence initiatives.
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## Recommendations (cont.)

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Innovative approaches in the family violence prevention space, such as delivering services online and increased funding for these approaches, can lead to greater population reach across multiple geographic boundaries thereby allowing people to access much needed services.

- Support the workforce transition from face-to-face to online and remote work and understand that the current stressors will be exacerbated as COVID-19 moves into regional and remote Aboriginal communities. Just as there have been calls on other First Nations-focused workforces to uptake COVID-19 activities (i.e. Integrated Team Care workers being part of the community health response to vaccinations), it is likely other First Nations workforces will be pulled into this work as outbreaks occur in places with high Aboriginal populations, like Shepparton. Planning needs to be done now in order to meet that eventuality.
  - Address inbuilt program initiation and implementation inequities by recognising the contribution of in-kind services.
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## Innovative family violence prevention strategies

### Utilise technology and digital platforms

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The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the increasing need to fund and deliver more culturally safe family violence prevention services online. There is an opportunity to adopt more technology in the family violence prevention sector by utilising mobile apps, SMS-based services, social media platforms, gaming and artificial intelligence to educate and raise awareness within the community and protect and support victims/survivors.

- We have seen a change in how people are accessing support services, with an increasing number of victim/survivors seeking support online from midnight into the early hours of the morning. We need to ensure that staff are available to meet this demand.
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It is important to recognise and address issues related to the growing 'digital divide' in communities as family violence prevention measures increasingly move to online and remote interventions. Support needs to be available for those who do not have access to digital platforms 24/7.

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### Form partnerships across sectors

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Another strategy to promote innovation in the family violence prevention sector is to encourage the formation of cross-sectoral responses and innovative partnerships.

- Legislation in Victoria recognises companion animals and pets as family violence victims. There is an opportunity for veterinarians, family violence workers, animal shelters and women's refuges to collaborate in supporting women, children and their pets to leave violent circumstances.
  - There is potential for funded organisations to form partnerships with the police, the public housing and homelessness sectors, the ICT industry and software developers, Elders, drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, and the Department of Justice to create innovation pipelines in which people can be supported to move out of unsafe circumstances.
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Form partnerships with other areas of the DFFH and the Victorian Government to coordinate across all evaluation frameworks and information to ascertain substantial opportunities for learning and transformation.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Summary of funded projects

| Project title                                                                                                                                     | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Burron Guli Program – Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative</b>                                                                         | Burron Guli is a cultural strengthening program that was delivered to male Aboriginal youth within primary school settings. The eight-week program focused on empowering young boys in understanding their Aboriginal culture, and promoted respectful relationships and attitudinal gender equality change. Activities of the program included cultural education and modelling by Elders through building positive relationships, increasing emotional intelligence, problem solving, and promoting positive attitudes and respectful relationships towards females. |
| <b>Young Luv Social Media Campaign and Camps – Djirra</b>                                                                                         | Young Luv consists of several activities: a workshop, social media campaign and cultural camps for young Aboriginal girls aged 13–18. The program focuses on promoting healthy and respectful relationships, the strength of culture and community in the lives of young Aboriginal girls and the importance of staying connected to trusted people for support.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Speak Up, Speak Out – Merri Health &amp; Long Walk Trust</b>                                                                                   | Speak Up, Speak Out is an education program for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 10–12 focusing on healthy, respectful and safe relationships. The program trains them to become a proactive participant against family violence and violence against women.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Wellah Women Aboriginal Women’s Health and Happiness Project and Wellah Women Children’s Book and Education Suite – Spark Health Australia</b> | Wellah Women Aboriginal Women’s Health and Happiness Project is an Aboriginal women’s health and support group that aims to promote health, fitness, wellbeing and resilience in Aboriginal women and their families.<br><br>Wellah Women Children’s Book and Education Suite is a resource targeting primary school-aged children in Victoria with the aim of promoting positive messaging around gender equality and challenging family violence.                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Safe and Strong Program – Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency</b>                                                                           | Safe and Strong involves cultural camps for young Aboriginal people living in the southern metropolitan area of Melbourne. The camps support young people’s ability to recognise unhealthy relationships, to promote equal and respectful relationships and to understand available community resources. Their aim is also to help young people not to become perpetrators or victims of family violence through promoting the practice of, and a connection to, culture.                                                                                              |
| <b>Yarning Up Our Services Our Way – Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative</b>                                                                        | Yarning Up Our Services Our Way is a series of yarning circles, the aim of which is to understand how family violence prevention services and external service providers (e.g. Police, Justice/Corrections, Child Protection) can better help Aboriginal communities experiencing family violence and improve the delivery of their services. It is aimed at family violence and family services staff, as well as at Aboriginal people who have experienced family violence.                                                                                          |

| Project title                                                                                | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>When Communities Speak – Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative</b>                           | When Communities Speak is a community research project based in the south-west of Victoria. The project aims to build Aboriginal communities' understanding and awareness of family violence, to review the language used around family violence with the aim of becoming more culturally sensitive and proactive, and to improve and strengthen family violence service provision and access for Aboriginal people in the region. The project privileges the voices of Aboriginal people who have experienced family violence.       |
| <b>Deadly Dads/Ochre Program – Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place</b>                  | Deadly Dads delivered educational workshops to Aboriginal men with the aim of increasing their awareness of, and respect for, the effects and impact of family violence, and of fostering stronger connection to culture and their identities as Aboriginal men and fathers. The Ochre Program, which emerged as a result of the success of Deadly Dads, is a mixed gender program that seeks to promote respectful relationships and communication among men and women, and to increase awareness of the impacts of family violence. |
| <b>Nyini Health and Wellness Program – Njernda Aboriginal Corporation</b>                    | Nyini Health and Wellness engages young Aboriginal people in a series of activities (e.g. camps, workshops/group discussions) to build their understandings of the drivers of family violence, and to enable them to recognise, challenge and reject violence and inequality in all its forms.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Partners in Prevention of Family Violence – Lake Tyers Health and Children's Services</b> | Partners in Prevention of Family Violence works with Aboriginal men and boys by running a series of cultural activities and workshops to engage and empower them to explore issues of family violence and its impact on the community and to generate solutions to these issues. The project focuses on cultural strengthening through group programs and activities.                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Appendix B: Online survey questions

These survey questions were aimed at program implementers (i.e. project leaders and relevant staff responsible for delivering their respective family violence prevention projects).

| Questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Stakeholders                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <p><b>Do you think the family violence prevention project is achieving its intended objectives and proposed outcomes?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes           <input type="radio"/> I don't know         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> No           <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>Has the project reached its intended target group/s?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes           <input type="radio"/> I don't know         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> No           <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>Would you describe your project as culturally responsive and holistic?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes           <input type="radio"/> I don't know         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> No           <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>Does your project include healing initiatives?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes           <input type="radio"/> I don't know         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> No           <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>What were the key enablers to deliver a successful project? (Select all that apply)</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Community involvement to inform project design and delivery         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Engaging Elders and custodians of Country         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Flexibility from staff and funder to meet the needs of program participants         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Project having a holistic focus         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Staff having cultural knowledge and cultural connections within local areas         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Mutual trust between staff and program participants         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Good coordination between programs         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Planning for long-term sustainability         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p> | Project staff and project leaders |

| Questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Stakeholders                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <p><b>What are some of the gaps or challenges you are able to identify to the delivery of your family violence prevention project? (Select all that apply)</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Lack of staff – problems recruiting and retaining staff<br/> <input type="radio"/> Lack of trust from community and program participants<br/> <input type="radio"/> Short-term funding<br/> <input type="radio"/> COVID-19 restrictions<br/> <input type="radio"/> Lack of cultural awareness of staff delivering the program<br/> <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p>  | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>Do you think there are enough staff employed at your organisation to deliver the project?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes<br/> <input type="radio"/> No<br/> <input type="radio"/> Sometimes<br/> <input type="radio"/> I don't know<br/> <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>If you ticked 'No' to the question before, what are the barriers to employing enough staff? (Select all that apply)</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Not enough funding<br/> <input type="radio"/> Unable to locate appropriately skilled or experienced people to employ<br/> <input type="radio"/> Unable to locate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to employ<br/> <input type="radio"/> Too busy to recruit<br/> <input type="radio"/> There are no barriers<br/> <input type="radio"/> I don't know<br/> <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p> | Project leaders                   |
| <p><b>Does your organisation find it difficult to retain staff for the project?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes<br/> <input type="radio"/> No<br/> <input type="radio"/> Sometimes<br/> <input type="radio"/> I don't know<br/> <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Project leaders                   |
| <p><b>How many Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff and non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander were involved in delivering the project?</b></p> <p>Comment box</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Project staff and project leaders |

## Appendix B: Online survey questions (cont.)

| Questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Stakeholders                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <p><b>How important do you think it is for staff delivering the project to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Important           <input type="radio"/> I don't know         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Not important           <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p>                                  | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>Are there enough staff in your project with significant cultural knowledge and connections to deliver the project?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes           <input type="radio"/> I don't know         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> No           <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Sometimes         </p> | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>Do you have enough time to build trust and engage with community members in this project?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes           <input type="radio"/> I don't know         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> No           <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Sometimes         </p>                          | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>(For projects targeting males) Do you find it difficult to engage and retain male mentors in the project?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes           <input type="radio"/> I don't know         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> No           <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Sometimes         </p>          | Project leaders                   |
| <p><b>Are there any aspects of the project that would be beneficial to other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities in Victoria or Australia? If so, how?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes (please specify) – Comment box         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> No         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> I don't know         </p>                                  | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>Were there any unintended consequences or benefits associated with the project?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes (please specify) – Comment box         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> No         </p> <p> <input type="radio"/> I don't know         </p>                                                                                                                    | Project staff and project leaders |

| Questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Stakeholders                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <p><b>Have you seen participants benefit from participating in the project?</b><br/> <b>If so, what are some of the benefits seen?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes (please specify) – Comment box           <input type="radio"/> Sometimes<br/> <input type="radio"/> No           <input type="radio"/> I don't know<br/> <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) – Comment box         </p> | Project staff and project leaders |
| <p><b>How well was the Department's engagement and support in the project?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Very well           <input type="radio"/> Not very well<br/> <input type="radio"/> Reasonably well           <input type="radio"/> Poor<br/> <input type="radio"/> Adequate         </p>                                                                                                     | Project leaders                   |
| <p><b>Do you think the current reporting templates adequately capture the value and impact of the project?</b></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes, the current reporting adequately reflects my work in delivering the project<br/> <input type="radio"/> No, the reporting does not accurately represent my work because – (Comment box)         </p>                                                     | Project leaders                   |
| <p><b>In the future, what improvements should be made to the reporting process to reflect the value and impact of the family violence prevention program?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> No improvements need to be made</p> <p>Comment box</p>                                                                                                                                                         | Project leaders                   |
| <p><b>Are there any future plans to continue this project?</b></p> <p>Comment box</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Project leaders                   |
| <p><b>Are there any changes you would make to improve the project? Do you have any recommendations?</b></p> <p>Comment box</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Project staff and project leaders |

# Appendix C: Interview questions

| Questions                                                                                                                       | Stakeholders                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Name and role in project                                                                                                        | Project staff and project leader |
| How did you become involved in this project?<br>(already employed in the organisation, employed specifically for this project?) |                                  |
| Who was involved in designing the project and how were they involved?                                                           |                                  |
| In your opinion, what was innovative about this project?                                                                        |                                  |
| What kinds of outcomes did you expect to see from the project?                                                                  |                                  |
| Did you observe these outcomes from participants? To what degree?                                                               |                                  |
| What were some of the highlights or outcomes the participants spoke to you or staff about?                                      |                                  |
| What are the key enablers to deliver a successful project?                                                                      |                                  |
| What are some of the gaps or challenges to the delivery of your family violence prevention program?                             |                                  |
| How has COVID-19 impacted the delivery of the program and participation rates?                                                  |                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Have you seen an increase in people presenting during COVID-19?</li> </ul>             |                                  |
| How was information about the success of the program distributed? What channels?                                                | Project leader                   |
| How well was the Department's engagement and support in the program?                                                            |                                  |
| What would you like to see differently from the Department moving forward?                                                      | Project staff and project leader |

## Appendix D: Phases of work, key activities and outputs

| Phases of work                                                                  | Key activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Outputs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Project commencement &amp; planning</b><br>(June 2021)                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Project commencement with DFFH</li> <li>&gt; Develop and endorse project management plan</li> <li>&gt; Gain list of stakeholders and key contacts from DFFH and Project Steering Committee</li> <li>&gt; Recruit Project Steering Committee</li> <li>&gt; Hold first Project Steering Committee meeting</li> <li>&gt; Co-develop Consultation plan with Project Steering Committee and obtain endorsement from Project Steering Committee and DFFH</li> <li>&gt; Develop Expression of Interest online survey and distribute to program implementers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Project management plan</li> <li>&gt; Consultation plan</li> </ul>                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Stakeholder engagement and evaluation activities</b><br>(June – August 2021) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Develop and distribute participant information sheet and consent form to project staff</li> <li>&gt; Develop and distribute two online surveys to program implementers and participants</li> <li>&gt; Conduct interviews with stakeholders (if there is enough engagement)</li> <li>&gt; Collate and review consultation responses</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Participant information sheet</li> <li>&gt; Consent form</li> <li>&gt; Two targeted online surveys</li> <li>&gt; Workshop discussion paper</li> <li>&gt; Roundtable discussion papers</li> </ul> |
| <b>Literature review</b><br>(June – August 2021)                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Literature review</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Literature review (incorporated in final evaluation report)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Interim evaluation report</b><br>(August 2021)                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Draft and submit progress report and outline of draft evaluation report to DFFH</li> <li>&gt; Present initial evaluation findings at two program implementers roundtable discussion for feedback and comments</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Progress report and outline of draft evaluation report</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Final evaluation report</b><br>(September 2021)                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Finalise evaluation report incorporating feedback from DFFH and program implementers</li> <li>&gt; Submit final evaluation report, and conduct presentation of, Evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund, 2018–2019 to DFFH</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Final evaluation report – Evaluation of the Aboriginal Family Violence Primary Prevention Innovation Fund, 2018–2019</li> </ul>                                                                  |

## Appendix E: Data sources used in the evaluation

| Funded organisation                                 | Data source                                                                                                                                         | Primary data source           |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative</b> | 2019 progress reports, 2020 progress reports, project planning and results document, final report, internal evaluation survey                       | Online survey                 |
| <b>Djirra</b>                                       | 2019 progress reports, 2020 progress report, project planning and results document, final report, internal evaluation survey                        | Online survey and interviews  |
| <b>Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative</b>           | 2019 progress reports, 2020 progress report, 2021 progress report, project planning and results document, final report                              | None                          |
| <b>Lake Tyers Health and Children's Services</b>    | 2019 progress reports, 2020 progress report, 2021 progress report, project planning and results document, final report                              | None                          |
| <b>Long Walk &amp; Merri Health</b>                 | 2019 progress reports, 2020 progress report, project planning and results document, final report                                                    | None                          |
| <b>Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place</b>     | 2019 progress reports, 2020 progress report, 2021 progress report, project planning and results document, final report                              | Online surveys and interviews |
| <b>Njernda Aboriginal Corporation</b>               | 2019 progress report, 2020 progress report, project planning and results document, final report                                                     | None                          |
| <b>Spark Health Australia</b>                       | 2019 progress reports, 2020 progress report, project planning and results document, final report                                                    | None                          |
| <b>VACCA</b>                                        | 2019 progress reports, 2020 progress reports, 2021 progress report, project planning and results document, final report, internal evaluation survey | Interviews                    |
| <b>Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative</b>            | 2020 progress report, 2021 progress report, project planning and results document, interim final report                                             | None                          |





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