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# The link between policing, violence against women and public health organisations



VICTORIA POLICE

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Domestic  
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Victoria

 *Peak body for domestic violence  
services for women & children*

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**Why is Violence against Women and Children a public health issue?**

**Victoria Police's response – where have we come from?**

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# Women and children are the majority of victims of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse

## Prevalence of VAWC

Approximately 1 in 3 women (33%) have experienced physical violence at some stage in their life since the age of 15

Approximately 1 in 5 women (19%) have experienced sexual violence at some stage since the age of 15 (PSS, 2005).

## It is traditionally under-reported

Only 1 in 3 or 33% of women experiencing physical assault by a male perpetrator in the last 12 months reported to police in 2005 compared with 19% in 1996 (ABS 2005 and PSS 2006) and close to 1 in 7 for sexual assault.

## Cost to the Community

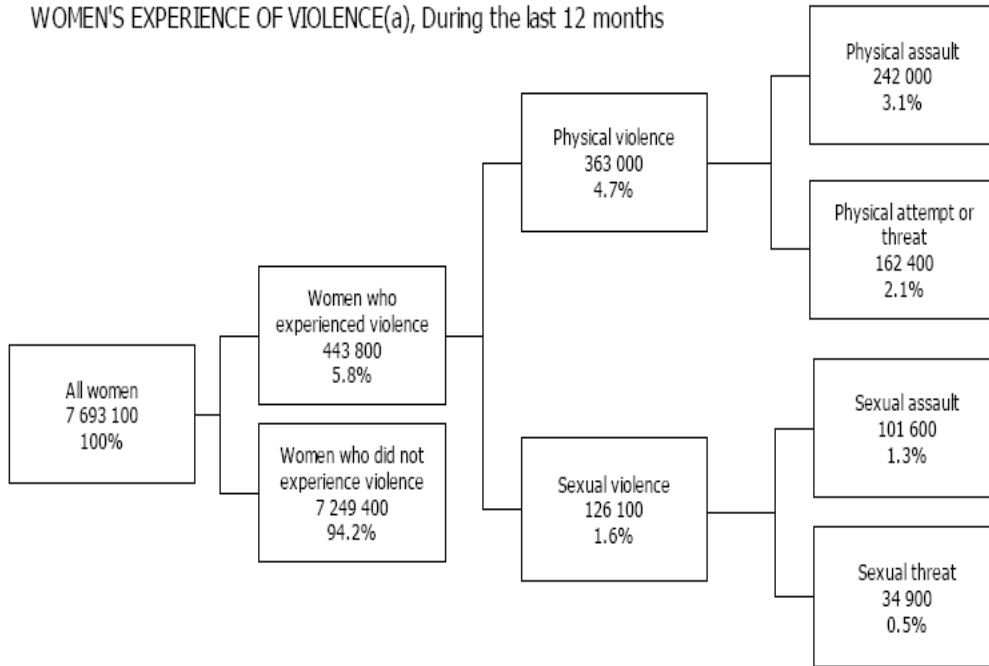
- Costing the Victorian economy \$3.4 billion (National Plan to Reduce VAWC, 2010).
- Intimate partner violence is responsible for more ill-health and premature death in Victorian women under the age of 45 than any other risk factor – including high blood pressure, smoking and obesity.

# Approximately 110,950 Victorian women experienced violence in the previous 12 months (PSS 2006)

Figures below, indicate nationwide prevalence, Victoria counts for approximately 25% of the total population

Despite excellent interventions and reforms in place we do not have evidence to suggest that the incidence or prevalence has significantly decreased over time.

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE(a), During the last 12 months



For example there has been no change in the proportion of Australian women who experience physical violence in their lifetime, with one in three women experiencing physical violence since the age of 15 (32.6% in 1996 to 33.3% in 2005)

Source: Personal Safety Survey Summary Overview, M Heenan, VicHealth

What has increased is reporting – which Victoria Police and the services have been targeting for the last 10 years through reforms

(a) Women who experienced violence during the last 12 months could have experienced violence more than once. The components when added may therefore be larger than the total.

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# Victoria Police's role in responding to and investigating Family Violence

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- There has been significant cultural change within Victoria Police around responding to family violence – it is a community issue not a private one.
- We have been actively working to increase reporting of family violence and sexual assault as they have been under-reported
- The role of Victoria Police:
  1. Increase the safety for victims of family violence
  2. Hold perpetrators of family violence accountable for their behaviours by laying criminal charges where appropriate
  3. Provide early intervention and disruption to break the cycle of family violence
  4. In partnership with other agencies, government and non-government, support an integrated response to family violence.

# Victoria Police key commitments and changes over the last 10 years

## 2001 - 2010

- Then CCP, Christine Nixon announced a new focus on violence against women (VAW) as a priority for Victoria Police. *Violence Against Women Strategy: A Way Forward* (VAW Strategy).
- Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence* (2004) and update (2010) Risk Assessment and Risk Management (including referrals) through L17
- Code of Practice for the Investigation of Sexual Assault (2005)
- Family Violence Advisors (14) and Family Violence Liaison officers approx 180 members (2006)
- SOCIT Project pilot and MDCs (2007/08)
- Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2009-14* following the original strategy (2002-2007)
- Family Violence Protection Act* (2008) – incl. FVSNs

## Last 2 Years

**Enhanced FV Service Delivery Model**

3 MDCs  
2012/13  
\$10 million

Focus on repeats

**SOCIT Transition (300 EFT)**

Victoria Police Intelligence Doctrine

Family Violence Teams (n=18)

**Taskforce ASTRAEA**

**FVSN Legislation Repeal**

**Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children**

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## In the beginning - the challenges to an integrated response

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- response fragmented and dispersed across a range of providers
- a lack of confidence in the police and justice system
- range of practice approaches across services
- access for women from diverse communities
- siloed budgets
- inconsistent response across state and federal jurisdictions
- lack of reliable data and evaluation
- inconsistent risk assessment and risk management
- workforce capacity

# Driving reform

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## **A shared vision of reform and developing common understanding and language**

- improve safety of women and children including option of staying at home
- accountability of perpetrators
- Cross-portfolio ministers group
- Cross portfolio IDC and working groups
- Strong and sustained partnership with the non-government sector
- regional partnerships driving new governance at local levels
- Investment - over \$90 million since 2005

## **Ongoing challenge: balancing system accountability + women's agency**

*“Throughout the entire period I just felt so responsible. I was the one calling. I was the one putting Neung in jail. I was the one that had all of the orders placed, and it became an extremely emotionally disruptive point anyway. I felt they definitely needed to step in at some point and take the responsibility off my shoulders.”*

**Ingrid Poulson whose two children and father were murdered by her estranged husband  
Interview with Andrew Denton, Enough Rope, 2006**

# Key reforms and achievements

## Legislative

New stand-alone legislation *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*.

Defensive homicide offence created in 2005 under *Crimes (Homicide) Act 2005*.

Penalties for intervention orders breaches.

## Systems

Referral pathways, protocols, codes of practice for specialist family violence services

New family violence risk assessment and risk management framework.

System capacity for women and children to remain at home and in their communities.

Information sharing guidance for system. (Victorian Privacy Commissioner).

Regional leadership and coordination.

First systemic review of family violence deaths in Australia established in Coroners Court of Victoria.

Improving system responses to ensure children's and young people's safety and wellbeing.

## Operational

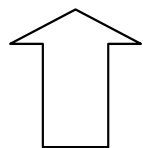
Victoria Police *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence*.

Specialisation in court and legal services.

Statewide partnership agreements between family violence services, Child Protection and Child FIRST/Family services.

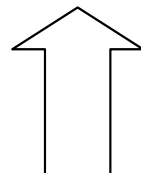
Outreach, case management and housing options for women (including vulnerable cohorts).

Statewide training program in family violence risk assessment and risk management (embedding and extending to mainstream sectors).

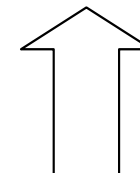


- *Victorian Family Violence Database (trend data)*

- *Health Costs of Violence*
- *National Survey on Community Attitudes (VicHealth)*



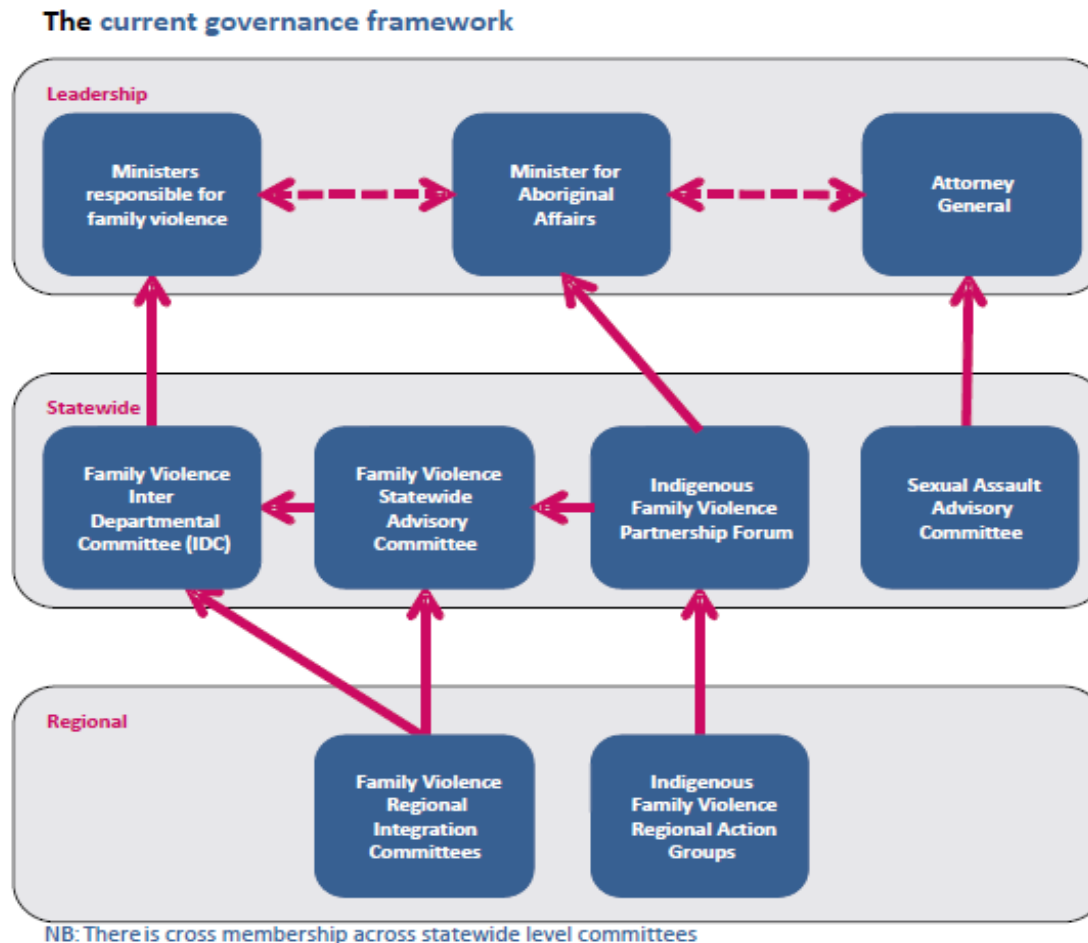
- *Family Violence benchmark data snapshots*



- *Australian Research Council Linkage Grant (SAFER)*

- *Police crime statistics*

# Leadership, Governance and partnerships has been critical



# Strengths

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- Whole of government approach & neutral govt coordination
- 5 ministers advocating meant unprecedented resources
- Improved government accountability - ministers and bureaucracy
- Evidenced - based primary prevention strategy
- Relationships developed across a range of bureaucracies and sectors
- A peak body for men's family violence programs
- Leadership

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**Why is Violence against Women and Children a public health issue?**

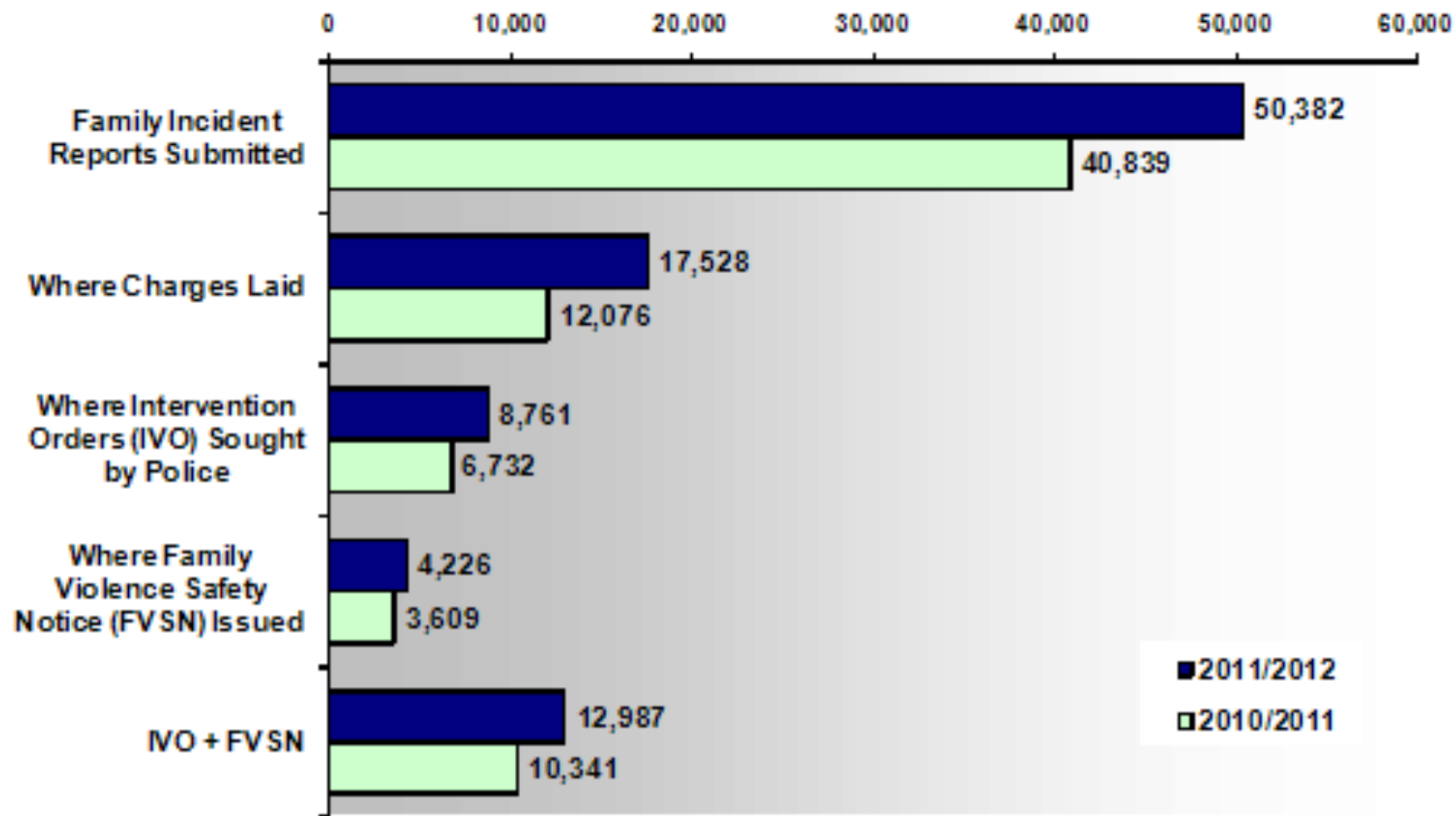
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# The last 12 months



## Increased Reporting and Compliance – capturing more incidents

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### Since 2003/2004 to 2010/11 (introduction of the Code of Practice):

- o 48% increase in attendance at family violence incidents by police
- o 294% increase in charges laid by police arising from family incidents
- o 289% increase in applications for intervention orders by police
- o Police are now the applicant in between 55%-60% of family violence applications (as opposed to around 35% in 2004/05)



# Where we are currently?

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- **Release of the new *Victoria's Action Plan to Respond to Violence against women and children* (Oct 2012)**
- **Focus on early intervention and prevention**
- **Continuing to embed reforms (e.g. VicPol Enhanced Service Delivery Model)**
- **Focus on recidivist offenders**
- **Continued leadership - Chief Commissioner Ken Lay, APM has continued to raise family violence as a key priority for Victoria Police**
- **Heightened media interest and awareness – working with the media**
- **Demand for service provision (Courts and agencies)**
- **Links with other reform agendas**

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# Research shows that promoting equal relationships between men and women is the key to reducing violence against women

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**VicHealth (2007) in their groundbreaking research on preventing violence against women found that:**

- **promoting equal and respectful relationships between men and women systematically in individual relationships, community, organisations and society**
- **promoting non-violent social norms and reducing the effects of prior exposure to violence (especially on children)**
- **Improving access to resources and systems of support can contribute to a reduction in violence.**

**A change in community attitudes and behaviour is what is required to reduce the incidence of VAWC in our community:**

- **For example, there has been no change in the proportion of Australian women who experience physical violence in their lifetime, with one in three women experiencing physical violence since the age of 15 (32.6% in 1996 to 33.3% in 2005)**

*Source: Personal Safety Survey Summary Overview, M Heenan, VicHealth*



# Evidence tells us that the underlying cause of VAW are the unequal relationships between men and women

There is a strong relationship between men’s perpetration of violence and their attitudes about gender roles and relationships. The strongest and most consistent predictors of holding violence supportive attitudes were being male and having weak support for gender equality. (Vichealth 2007).

**Table 1: Underlying determinants of violence against women:**

<i>Individual/relationship</i>	<i>Community and Organisational</i>	<i>Societal</i>
<b>Belief in rigid gender roles and identities, weak support for gender equality</b>	<b>Culturally-specific norms regarding gender and sexuality</b>	<b>Institutional and cultural support for, or weak sanctions against, gender inequality and rigid gender roles</b>
<b>Masculine orientation/sense of entitlement</b>	<b>Masculine peer and organisational cultures</b>	
<b>Male dominance and control of wealth in relationships</b>		

# Summary

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- Violence Against Women and Children is a public health and broader social issue
- Reforming family violence in Victoria has been essential to ensure women and children are safe and perpetrators of violence are held accountable for their actions.
- Prevention is the key to ensuring last change and reduce the prevalence in the community
- Working together to respond and prevent violence against women and children is critical and requires a whole of community effort.



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