

# Partners in Prevention

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On July 26th 2007, DVIRC launched the Partners in Prevention network with a forum on working with young people to prevent violence against women.

The day opened with a keynote address by Kim Webster, from VicHealth, on the new 'Framework to guide the primary prevention of intimate partner violence'. Kim's presentation drew attention to social factors that contribute to the prevalence of violence against women and the broad variety of targets and settings for prevention activities.

Associate Professor Moira Carmody, from University of Western Sydney, followed with a thought provoking exploration of current research and theory on sexual assault prevention. Moira questioned the effectiveness of violence prevention activities that focus on raising awareness of sexual assault and negative behaviours. She went on to present a model for working with young people that includes education on 'sexual ethics' and positive behaviours as well as definitions of sexual assault.

Moira's research has formed the basis for a six week sexual ethics program that has been piloted with 70 young people in New South Wales and is currently being evaluated. Copies of the research and more information about the project are available from [www.sexualethics.org.au](http://www.sexualethics.org.au)

The day continued with presentations from a number of projects currently being carried out across Victoria:

## **Feeling Safe, Being Strong - Chris Storm, Bethany Community Support**

A 10 week primary school program, involving classes at grade 3 and 4 level, 'Feeling Safe, Being Strong' promotes and encourages the development of positive strategies and safe responses to violence, and creates an environment that maximises the development, health and resilience of all children.

## **Xpect Respect - Alana O'Callaghan, Meridian Youth and Family Services**

Xpect Respect is targeted at an entire Year 9 cohort (adolescents aged 14/15), with the objective of promoting change not just individually but within the culture of the school. The 9 week program has a dual focus that is both prevention as well as responding to existing issues of bullying and violence within the school environment.

## **Respect Protect Connect - Kristine Hill, Women's Health in the South East and Chris Mitchell, South East CASA**

Respect Protect Connect is a peer education program, using young adults to run workshops on healthy relationships in secondary schools throughout the south-east suburbs. RPC aims to empower young people to explore alternate ways of dealing with conflict/violence through discussion, role plays and other group activities.

## **REAL Life - Emma Fahey and Claire Zara, Women's Health Goulburn North East**

REAL Life is a four session program (4x double period) designed to run over four weeks and facilitated by a member of the school community (health education teacher, welfare officer, school nurse) and a domestic violence worker. WHGNE provide the training and manuals to teachers and workers wishing to implement REAL Life in their school. The program manual, evaluation report and information on upcoming training are available from [www.whealth.com.au](http://www.whealth.com.au)

The morning ended with the launch of the new and improved 'Bursting the Bubble' website: [www.burstingthebubble.com](http://www.burstingthebubble.com) which was updated to incorporate feedback from the recent evaluation.

After lunch we got down to business with the first Partners in Prevention network meeting. The meeting identified some of the major barriers and successes in doing violence prevention with young people and identified ways the network could support work in this field. As a result of these discussions the network will:

- establish a website to capture current violence prevention initiatives targeting young people across the state and facilitate resource sharing for workers in the field
- hold quarterly network meetings that incorporate professional development and provide opportunities to interact with other workers
- set up an e-group to facilitate communication between workers
- work towards creating guidelines for best practice in primary violence prevention initiatives targeting young people
- advocate for the primary prevention of violence against women with relevant government departments

Feedback on the day, and subsequently, suggests that the time is ripe for the violence prevention agenda to come to the fore. Participants felt energised and inspired by the presentations and the possibility for future collaborations. Hopefully the network will be well placed to take advantage of current trends, support the excellent work already underway and push the violence prevention envelope a little further across the state.

For more information on the network or to register your interest in the e-group, please contact project worker Kiri Bear at DVIRC on (03) 9486 9866 or [kbear@dvirc.org.au](mailto:kbear@dvirc.org.au)