

Partners in Prevention

Expansion project

2017-18

Evaluation report -

Executive summary

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Partners in Prevention (PiP) supports more than 1,300 community based practitioners working with schools and early childhood services to embed evidence-based respectful relationships education. While nearly all (93%) PiP members work in a role that includes some element of primary prevention of violence against women and/or respectful relationships education, less than one-third (29.6%) work in roles where respectful relationships education is their primary focus.

PiP's activity and reach expanded significantly during 2017-18, in line with the Department of Education and Training's (DET) respectful relationships initiative and the growth of the prevention sector more broadly – and the rapidly changing and growing sector supporting this. This expansion will continue in 2018-19, and the period this evaluation covers is considered phase 1 of the expansion.

There were two main delivery components during phase 1 of the PiP expansion project; capability building activities including communities of practice, seminars and training sessions, and information sharing activities including developing and sharing resources, email bulletins and website content. These activities were framed by three project objectives:

1. Build partnerships for effective and sustainable respectful relationships education policy and practice in Victoria,
2. Strengthen the Victorian respectful relationships education sector for evidence-based practice and accountability to the work,
3. Contribute to the Victorian preventing violence against women evidence base.

The project team conducted a thorough evaluation of phase 1 of the PiP expansion project in order to measure the reach, impact and value of the PiP program for members. The evaluation's purpose was to determine PiP's value to Victoria's respectful relationships and prevention of violence against women sector and to draw conclusions about PiP's role in sector development, connection and collegiality in the context of a rapidly changing landscape. Findings from the evaluation are the focus of this report and are summarised as follows:

- PiP connects practitioners with each other to reduce feelings of isolation.
- PiP connects members with the right people at the right time, providing access to specialist expertise and opportunities for partnership and collaboration.
- PiP communities of practice provide collaborative spaces for members to share experiences, identify common practice challenges and learn from one another.
- PiP provides expert advice and advocacy to government.
- Through their engagement with PiP, members have a clearer understanding of the evolving respectful relationships context, and are better equipped to support the DET initiative's implementation.
- This deepened understanding of the context has helped to clarify and strengthen the community sector's role in respectful relationships education.
- Through their engagement with PiP, members gain a sound understanding of the key foundational elements of primary prevention and respectful relationships education:
 - The feminist framework underpinning prevention work and the importance of a gendered approach
 - The whole school approach and the Victorian evidence base for violence prevention in schools
 - The historical context of respectful relationships education in Victoria

- Through their engagement with PiP, members gain an understanding of, and build their capability around, key practice themes and challenges relating to respectful relationships education specifically, as well as prevention practice more generally.
- PiP provides members with opportunities to explore new and emerging practice themes and challenges, and to develop/increase nuance in their approach.

These findings show that PiP's value is greater than the sum of its parts – the integrated nature of PiP information sharing and capability building activity is where its unique value lies. They also show that PiP provides an invaluable service to government in supporting sector development and sense-making for professionals operating in a complex and evolving context. The main conclusion drawn from these findings is that PiP is well-placed to support the emerging and expanding primary prevention workforce in Victoria more broadly than just those who are engaged in respectful relationships education.