



Partners in Prevention Expansion Project

2017 – 2019 Evaluation Report



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Executive summary

DVRCV first established the Partners in Prevention network (PiP) in 2007 with the help of seed funding from VicHealth's *Respect, Responsibility and Equality* program. Each month, PiP would bring a handful of practitioners delivering respectful relationships education together so they could share their knowledge, ensure their practice aligned to evidence and coordinate their efforts.

“I’ve loved the support that the PiP staff have provided. The PiP project officer put us in contact with other people doing similar sort of work, and she’s since put other people in contact with us, to talk about what they’re doing. It’s been really good to have those linkages.”

– FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

Much has changed since then. Victoria is now a world leader in the design, delivery and evaluation of respectful relationships education. The Department of Education and Training’s (DET) Respectful Relationships initiative continues to build on the primary prevention evidence base, demonstrating that the adoption of a whole school approach is the single most important component of effective violence prevention in education settings. Alongside this largescale prevention initiative, the Victorian Government has also implemented a raft of legislation and invested significant funding into establishing prevention initiatives across different settings and building the systems and infrastructure required to embed, deepen and sustain this activity across our society.

PiP has become a key component of Victoria’s prevention infrastructure and convenes a membership of more than 1,500 people. While approximately 30% of PiP members are teachers, community workers and practitioners working in roles where respectful relationships education is their primary focus (accounting for more than 60% of their work), our data shows that PiP members are also researchers, policy-makers, health professionals and lawyers. They work with First Australians, diverse communities, sporting clubs, universities and local governments. They share DVRCV’s vision, ‘to create a world where women and their children are thriving, respected and free from violence’.

The Victorian Government’s policy approach to primary prevention and gender equality recognises that we need highly skilled people and organisations if we are to create the change required. The findings here show that PiP, as the largest professional network for the primary prevention sector in Victoria, is central to achieving this vision.

Recently the demand for services provided by PiP has increased due to the pace of change in the prevention sector and the emergence of a larger and more diverse prevention workforce.

In response to this demand, the activity and reach of PiP expanded significantly from 2017-2019, with funding from the Victorian Government’s Office for Women. There were two main delivery components of the PiP expansion project: **capability building activities** including communities of practice, seminars, training sessions, conferences, provision of information and advice to members and **information sharing activities** including developing and sharing resources, email bulletins and website content.

In June 2018, DVRCV conducted a detailed evaluation of the PiP expansion project from June 2017 to May 2018 (Phase one of the project). This evaluation report builds on these findings and measures the overall reach, impact and value of the PiP program to members over the two-year program from 2017-19. Specifically the evaluation sought to determine the value of PiP to Victoria’s respectful relationships and prevention of violence against women sector, and to draw conclusions about the role of PiP in creating a sense of sector identity, connection with the evidence base and collegiality amongst practitioners, policy-makers and other professionals working to prevent violence against women.

Key outcomes

1. PiP is embedded in Victoria’s prevention infrastructure

Preventing family violence and all forms of violence against women requires a sophisticated prevention infrastructure that includes mechanisms for coordination and quality assurance, an expert workforce, political leadership, policy and legislative reform and shared monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This evaluation found that PiP is a central and critical component of the prevention infrastructure in Victoria, providing support, advice, connection, information and resources to more than 1,500 people.

As Victoria’s prevention sector expands, PiP continues to connect and build the capability of its workforce. PiP events provide a space for prevention practitioners to collaborate, share challenges and problem-solve with their peers. Maintaining

connection between dispersed practitioners and building the capability of the growing workforce is crucial if we are to coordinate efforts and embed initiatives effectively.

2. PiP strengthens the community sector’s role in the Respectful Relationships initiative and encourages a collaborative approach to prevention across different settings and sectors

Evaluations of PiP in Phase one and two showed that participation in PiP activities has allowed members to gain a deeper understanding of the RRE initiative. This has assisted those from the community sector to better recognise and articulate their role in the new respectful relationships landscape. Members advised that participation in PiP activities strengthened their understanding of the education system, which improved their subsequent interactions with schools. Many members said

“We’re often working in very small teams, and a lot of people work solo in their organisation. So I think it’s really important to have a network [where] you can meet others, who are working in the same space, and across sectors.”

– COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE PARTICIPANT

PiP resources and events provided them with clarity on where the RRE initiative sits within the broader context of prevention work across the state.

One member reflected that a PiP seminar about respectful relationships in early childhood settings gave her and her colleagues essential tools that they later used in the design of their own project. She told DVRCV staff that hearing practical suggestions from an early childhood educator on the seminar panel, **‘really helped us go back and start thinking about how we would roll something out’**.

3. PiP is positioned to effectively provide expert advice and advocacy to government

The partnership between DVRCV and the Department of Education and Training (DET) strengthened throughout Phase one and Phase two of the PiP expansion. Formal and informal channels of communication and collaboration were established at the leadership and operational levels of both organisations. Closer relationships and more frequent meetings created opportunities for the exchange of ideas, advice and feedback.

Close collaboration between the community sector and government, and across settings means the work of PiP and the DET is better aligned and ultimately more impactful as this dynamic ensures that activities are mutually reinforcing.

4. PiP provides important opportunities to deepen members’ knowledge of the evidence base and hone their practice

During Phase one and Phase two, capability building and information-sharing activities focused on different thematic practice areas. These were designed to broaden and deepen participants’ knowledge and build skills, with an average of 90% of respondents across all seminars stating the practice themes were relevant to their work.

The articulation of evidence-based practice through PiP activities has encouraged and supported community agencies to move away from delivering one-off training programs in the classroom. Instead, many members are now working with schools to embed

a whole of school approach to respectful relationships education and prevention of violence against women.

The evaluation conducted at the end of Phase one found that PiP members expressed strong interest in engaging more deeply in inclusive practices, intersectionality and diversity. In response, DVRCV prioritised intersectionality, diversity and inclusion and embedded these concepts in each stage of the Phase two planning process, bringing the voices of marginalised communities to the centre of many PiP activities. DVRCV established and fostered a range of partnerships across the sector with organisations possessing specialist expertise on engaging with marginalised groups. These organisations included, Djirra, Spark Health, drummond street services and the Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health. Prioritising diversity and intersectional approaches has benefited PiP members in their own practice and maintained PiP’s relevance and position as a respected source of information.

5. PiP is fostering connection, collegiality, capability building and sector identity

PiP succeeded in bringing people together in a caring, safe, supportive and welcoming space that facilitated openness, a sense of solidarity and genuine connections among members at PiP events and activities. Members noted that the safety and sense of solidarity that PiP events fostered aided the free and generous exchange of information, knowledge and ideas among both experts and practitioners.

The expansion project provided a range of opportunities for networking and capability building, with 1,132 people participating in 30 events over the two years. These events allowed members to connect with and learn from DVRCV staff, other sector experts, as well as their peers. These networking opportunities were highly valued by members and had a significant positive impact on members’ morale and quality of their practice, particularly for members working in isolation. Members reported feeling ‘hopeful’, ‘refreshed’, ‘energised’, ‘reassured’, and more confident in themselves after attending PiP events.

“You have created a space in which everyone is willing to share and talk about their work.”

– FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT



Conclusion and recommendations:

These findings show that PiP's value is greater than the sum of its parts. The integrated nature of PiP's information sharing and capability building activities is where its unique value lies. Members connect and grow their networks while also learning about best practice and evidence-informed approaches, in a sector undergoing rapid change and expansion. 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 continue to provide expert support to members working with a focus on respectful relationships, but is also ready to support the emerging and expanding primary prevention workforce in Victoria more broadly.

The following actions are recommended to fuel PiPs future success:

- Ensure PiP activity continues to strengthen Victoria's prevention infrastructure by reinforcing prevention work within and across settings, in particular by making connections between work in education and other primary prevention initiatives.
- Continue to focus on PiP capability building activities to deepen practitioner understanding and provide multi-modal opportunities for professional development.
- Strengthen the whole of school approach by creating more collaborative relationships between community organisations, schools and DET
- Continue to provide a platform that prioritises diverse

voices and experiences, building on existing work in the sector and emerging understandings of intersectional approaches to primary prevention work.

- Expand PiP's focus to encompass broader prevention practice to support a rapidly expanding sector. This will increase PiP's value for existing members – the majority of whom have a broader focus than respectful relationships education alone, and for government – as it continues to invest in prevention across a wide range of settings.
- Develop strategies for membership retention and growth, extending reach particularly with rural and regional practitioners, local Government and new-starters in the expanding prevention workforce.
- Continue to collect data to understand all PiP members, including their location, organisation and role type, length of service and membership, to allow more detailed analysis of who is actively participating and engaged with PiP events and resources over time.





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