

Maribyrnong City Council Violence Against Women Assessment Tool

Background to the Assessment Tool

We all have a role to play in preventing violence against women. As parents, employees, employers or community members we can all make a difference to women's safety by promoting gender equity and respect for women in our communities.

This assessment tool has been developed in order to assist Council to work with the community to identify and implement strategies to prevent violence against women.

The tool draws on local, national and international literature covering a broad range of disciplines, including community safety, health promotion, crime prevention through environmental design, feminism and gender equity.

Violence against women is recognised as being the end point on a continuum of attitudes and behaviours in relation to women that constantly surround us, in our homes, workplaces and communities.

In this context, what messages, both overt and covert, do Council owned facilities send the community about respect for all community members including women, and the importance of positive gender relations?

This assessment tool is part of a process that aims to bring about *social change* by creating settings – in the built and social environment - where individuals are not exploited, power is not abused and all members of the community are involved and respected.

The tool enables the user to undertake a search for evidence of broad values around gender equality and equity, social inclusion and community capacity building, recognising that these features create a climate in which violence is not only prohibited, but unlikely to occur.

Finally, this tool recognises the broad benefits that creating safe spaces for women has for all community members. Spaces that are safe for women are safe for everyone and are evidence of a community that cares for all its members.

The tool is divided into the following sections:

Section One: Facility Profile (Interview with staff or management required)

Section Two: Built Environment

Section Three: Social Environment (Interview with staff or management required)

Section Four: Policies and Procedures (Interview with staff or management required)

Section Five: Summing Up

Questions to answer are:

Why do I or don't I like this place?

When and why do I feel comfortable or uncomfortable here?

What changes would make me feel safer?

Sections in highlighted text indicate that assistance from management and staff will be required in order to answer these questions.

Section One: Facility Profile

Staff Involved in Audit:

Facility Name:

Purpose:

Function of Facility:

Users of Facility:

Other General Information:

- **Age of facility**
- **Hours of operation**
- **Staffing numbers**
- **Gender balance in Staffing**
- **Staffing Turnover**
- **Closed for holidays**

Section Two: Built Environment

- **Lighting**

Is the lighting too bright or too dark in any specific area?

How well does the lighting illuminate the area?

How clearly does the lighting illuminate directional signs?

Do I know where/whom to call if lights are out, broken, not yet turned on?

Am I able to identify a face 25 metres (75 feet) away?

Is the lighting obscured by trees or bushes?

How well does the lighting illuminate pedestrian walkways and footpaths?

- **Sightlines**

Can you clearly see what is ahead?

Is your visibility obstructed by pillars, sharp corners, walls, bushes, advertisement panels, ditches etc?

What would make it easier to see ahead?

- **Isolation**

Can you see and hear people around you and do you feel you could be seen and heard by others?

Are staff a visible presence?

Do you feel the nearest emergency service such as an alarm, emergency phone is close at hand?

Are there adequate security measures in place after hours?

- **Possible assault sites**

Are there any areas where someone could hide from view?

Are there any specific areas in and around the building where you feel more vulnerable?

- **Maintenance**

Is there litter lying around?

Is there evidence of vandalism?

Are there any broken items?

- **Signage**

Is the lettering on the signs easy to read and large enough?

Can you see signs directing you to emergency assistance?

Are there visual symbols to represent important information such as emergency telephones, stairwells, etc.?

Are the signs easy to understand for a person whose first language is not English?

Are signs within visual range for a person with visual impairment?

Is there information posted describing the hours the building is open?

- **Accessibility**

Are the wheelchair access ramps appropriate?

Is the area/building easily accessible for persons with mobility disabilities?

- **Stairwells**

Is the lighting level comfortable?

How do you feel using the stairs?

Would you use the stairs at night?

Could someone hear you if you called for help?

- **Elevators**

Is the lighting level comfortable?

What atmosphere do the elevators project?

Do you know how to call for assistance when in the elevator?

Are there visual symbols to represent important information?

- **Car Park**

Is the lighting in the car park sufficient?

How far is the nearest person to hear a call for help?

Does the car park present any entrapment sites?

- **Movement Predictors**

How easy is it to predict a woman's movements (e.g. her route)?

Is there an alternative well-lit and frequently travelled route or path available?

Can I tell what is at the other end of the path, tunnel, or walkway?

- **Possible Entrapment Sites**

Are there small, confined areas where I would be hidden from view?

Are there areas that should be locked, fenced or barricaded?

- **Escape Routes**

How easy would it be for a victim to get away?

Is there more than one exit?

If yes, are they unlocked?

- **Nearby Land Uses**

Can I identify who owns or maintains nearby land?

Impressions of nearby land use:

Is the surrounding or nearby land used for?

Eg: Shopping/retail

Offices

Restaurants/bars

Residential houses and streets

School

Park

Garage

Church

Car park

Industrial

Parkland

Wasteland/vacant blocks

Other

- **Factors that make a Place More Human**

Does the place feel abandoned?

Why?

Is there graffiti on the walls?

In my opinion, are there racist or sexist slogans/signs/images?

Are there signs of vandalism?

Would other materials, tones, textures or colours, signs and symbols, improve my sense of safety?

- **Overall Design**

Is it easy to access the building?

If I weren't familiar with the place, would it be easy to find my way around?

Is the place too spread out?

Are there a confusing number of levels?

Are there handrails on the ramp and stairs?

Do the glass doors have decals on them so that a person with a visual impairment won't walk into them?

Does the entrance door have an electric door opener?

If there are stairs, is there a ramp available as well nearby?

Is there a detectable indicator denoting stairway or escalators for people with a visual impairment?

If no, are they easily detectable by colour or protected by railings?

(This is imperative for a person with a visual impairment)

Is the area free from obstacles or protrusions?

Impressions of overall design:

very good good satisfactory poor very poor

Now that I have completed my safety audit walk, do I still have the same general impressions as I did at the beginning of this process?

Section Three: Social Environment

Community Safety – Real and Perceived

- Have there been any documented incidents of violence, including discrimination and harassment?
- Have there been any incidents of violence, including discrimination and harassment, reported in the media?
- Is there a policy or plan to deal with inappropriate/anti-social behaviour?
- Are staff present and approachable?
- Have staff been trained to deal with inappropriate behaviour and conflict resolution procedures?
- Is there a monitoring or surveillance system (eg: CCTV)?
- Is the building monitored by security guards, police, or other?

Community capacity building

- Are there provisions for clients/service users/community to have input into the running and operations of the facility?

If so, are women encouraged to attend/participate in these forums/surveys etc.?’

Social Inclusion/Participation

- Does the facility encourage access, belonging and social inclusion particularly to those at greater risk of family violence due to isolation, poverty, disability access etc?

- What are the attendance rates of the facility (eg: high/low)?
 - Evidence of facility used by all members of community, including most disadvantaged?

 - Cost involved of accessing facility?

 - Concession rates available?

 - Public transport available to/from the facility?

- Are there any obvious gaps in attendance that the facility is trying to address? (eg: older people, women, young people, CALD groups)?

If so, what strategies are being used to address these gaps (eg: activities aimed at engaging social isolated (eg: women’s groups, childcare availability)?

Are there any specific features of the facility’s operating procedures or built environment that deter members of the community from accessing and utilising its programs/services? (eg: family change rooms, women’s toilets etc.)

Promotions/Communication

- How is the facility promoted to the community?
- Languages other than English?

Section Four: Policies and Procedures

- What are the relevant policies and procedures guiding the operation of the facility? (including occupational health and safety)
- Is there evidence of a gender equity commitment in policies and procedures?
- What actions against violence could be integrated into the policies and practices governing this facility (eg: women in local decision-making?)
- Any other comments, key issues not already covered, from Manager/Coordinator/

Section Five: Summing up

What improvements would you like to see?

Do you have any specific recommendations?

In your opinion, who should be responsible for making these changes?