

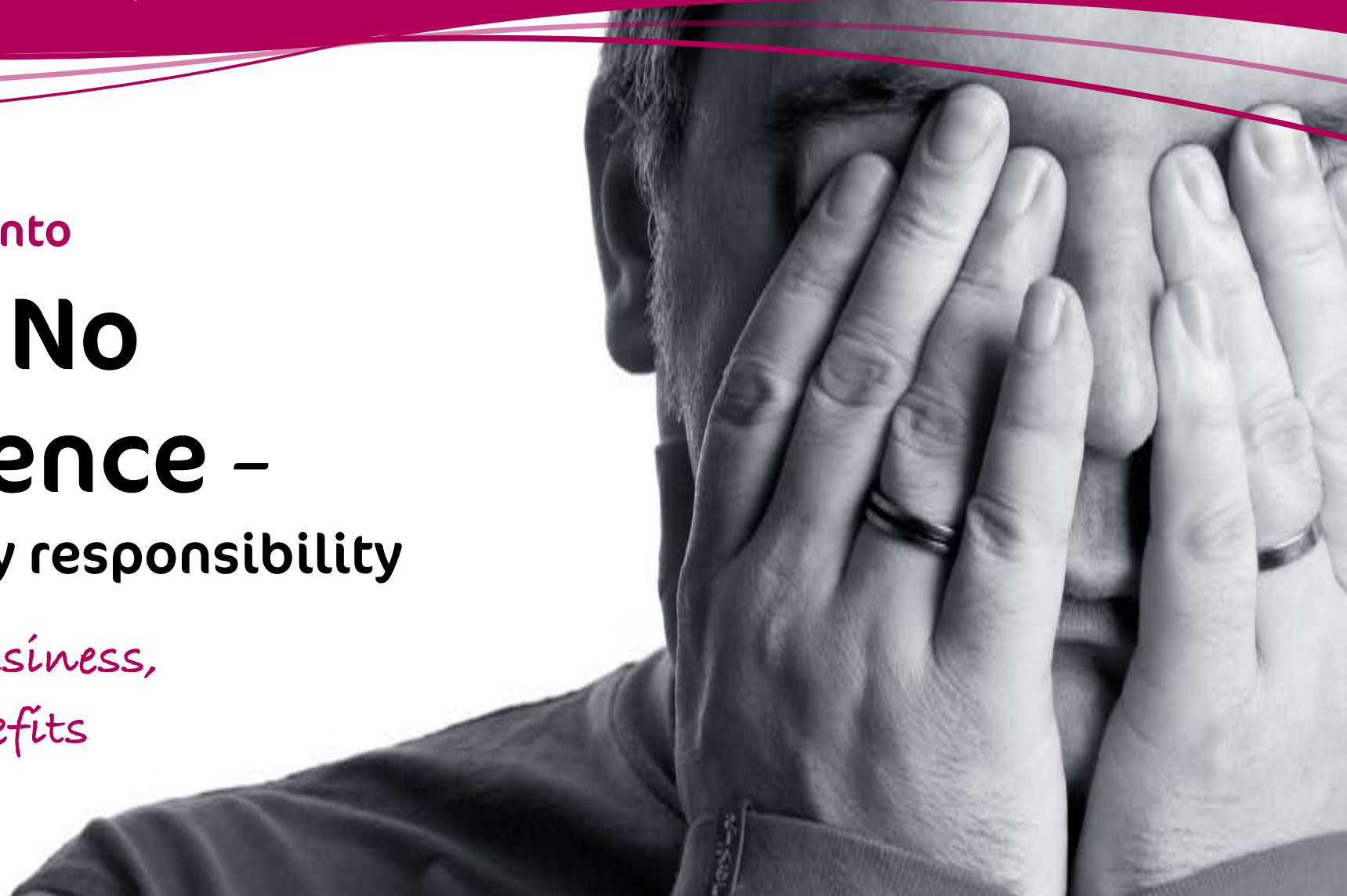


A brief insight into

Saying No to Violence –

A community responsibility

*everybody's business,
everybody benefits*





Foreword

In response to a community forum initiated by the previous Nillumbik Shire Mayor in 2006, several women from Nillumbik came together to address the seemingly hidden problem of family violence in the area. From this small group which consisted of community members, service providers, a police representative, survivors of domestic violence, a researcher/academic and Nillumbik Council officers, the Nillumbik Women's Network was formed.

The Network saw its role as identifying and advocating for the needs of local women. In partnership with Nillumbik Shire Council, the Network was successful in obtaining funding from VicHealth as part of its state-wide strategy on *Respect, Responsibility and Equality: Preventing Violence Against Women*. The aim of the local program was to work at a grass roots level to raise awareness about the impact of family violence and to encourage the community to take a stand in the prevention of violence against women.

This booklet has been written as a 'How to' guide for other communities planning to develop grass roots campaigns to prevent violence against women. Local resident Jane Ashton was the project coordinator for *Saying No to Violence – A community responsibility*. Jane is a widely recognised and effective campaigner opposing violence against women and has written this booklet to help other communities to take a stand against family violence.

We acknowledge the support of VicHealth for their funding for the initial project and for this booklet and the Councillors and staff of Nillumbik Shire Council who have been generous in their continuing support of the project. We are also deeply appreciative of those women, many of whom were survivors of domestic violence, who helped to spread the word and to those men and women from our community who opened their club room doors and welcomed us.

Mandy Press
Convenor Nillumbik Women's Network



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To go where no women have gone before

The primary aim of Saying No to Violence – A Community Responsibility was to engage the men in the Nillumbik community around the issue of family violence.

We wanted to start a dialogue with men and the wider community about family violence; we wanted to speak to people who had never considered the issue before.

We wanted to raise community awareness of what family violence is and debunk some commonly held beliefs.

We wanted to distribute information about family violence services and men's referral services, as well as promote the VicHealth newsletter *Respect, Responsibility and Equality*.

We wanted to emphasise that family violence was everybody's responsibility.

We wanted to make women affected by family violence in our community feel confident that, as a community; we would support them and demonstrate that help was available.

We wanted to introduce as many men as possible to The White Ribbon Campaign.

We wanted to use local and national media as much as possible to underpin messages, and to spread information and referral contact numbers.



Why we thought we should go there...

We had a strong belief in the power of community groups to take on board serious issues and to use their networks and personal contacts to spread key themes and information.

We wanted to complement the state and federal government initiatives around family violence by reinforcing key messages locally. We believed our local men and women would be willing to discuss family violence and play a part in its prevention. This might not be through direct involvement such as referral or support of someone, but at the least would include a heightened awareness about gender bias and issues of respect, responsibility and equality.

We also believed that we understood our local community networks well enough to engage them on this difficult issue. We also understood that the majority of men in our community condemn violence against women and children, but were unsure about how to translate this into action.

No man is an island... the power of partnerships

To engage the wider community, and particularly men, we needed a strong base with a diverse range of passions and interests. We had this with the Nillumbik Women's Network and support from Nillumbik Shire Council.

The Nillumbik Women's Network had representatives from the Diamond Creek Police SOCA Unit, Eltham Leisure Centre, Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness Centre, and Diamond Creek Community Centre, Living & Learning Nillumbik, Nillumbik Community Health Services, Panton Hill Anglican Church, LaTrobe University, as well as a core group of local women who had connections to a wide range of community activities.



Infiltration

Members of the Nillumbik Women's Network were asked to contact the local community groups that they were associated with, and enquire whether we could make a brief presentation to them at their committee meeting. This resulted in a wide range of contacts and groups. For example, one woman in the Nillumbik Women's Network had children who played basketball at Eltham Wildcats Basketball Club; another woman's husband played tennis at Kangaroo Ground Tennis Club; another was a member of the Hurstbridge Adult Riding Club, and another was involved with Diamond Creek Progress Association. Numerous women had connections with local fire brigades.

After the initial agreement to participate, the project coordinator would then follow up with a telephone call to the club president or secretary to answer any questions that they had and to confirm a suitable time and date to attend. This was followed up with an email to ensure the club secretary had something in writing about the project.

The following is a sample email:

Dear John

Saying No To Violence - A Community Responsibility

Following our telephone conversation I am now writing to confirm that June Smith and myself, will be making a short (10 minute) presentation to your Committee on 8 June at 8pm.

As I mentioned to you, the Nillumbik Women's Network received funding from VicHealth as part of its Respect, Responsibility and Equality program, and our project's aim is to include community groups throughout Nillumbik in the primary prevention of violence against women.

Our presentation will cover:

- What is family violence?
- Some of the myths surrounding family violence.
- How family violence affects the women who are abused, their children and the wider community.
- Family violence statistics for Nillumbik.
- How as individuals we can support and help those being abused.
- Options for those who have a mate or colleague who chooses to be abusive or violent.
- How individuals and organisations can support the White Ribbon Campaign in November and come along to the Mayor's Cocktail Party on 29 November.

Other points of interest:

- We will distribute information, advertisements and posters to your committee.
- Your committee will have an opportunity to meet and talk to a local woman who is a survivor of violence.
- We aim to have more men and women in Nillumbik wearing white ribbons than anywhere else in Australia.
- Those clubs participating in the project will have their names read out on a roll of honour at the White Ribbon Cocktail party.

Again, thank you for agreeing to be part of this project and we look forward to meeting you and your Committee on 8 June.

Kind regards
Project coordinator

The presentation

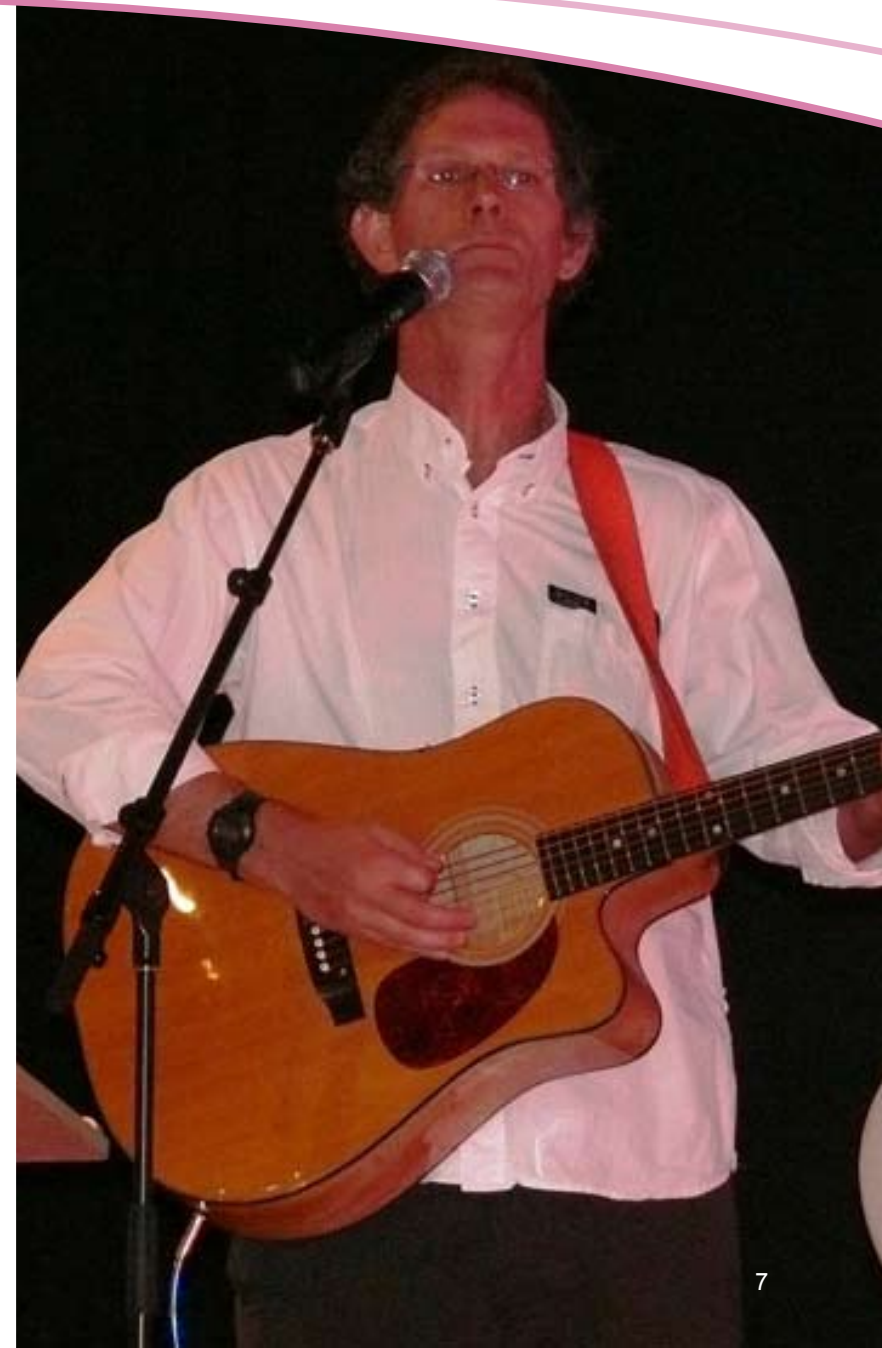
The decision to make a presentation at an organisation's normal monthly committee meeting was based on the fact that many men will not go to specific forums or presentations about family violence – unless they either work in or have some other connection to the family violence sector. Office bearers may attend specific forums, if their governing body encourages them to do so, but generally it is impossible to reach all of the people on a particular committee with an issue not related to their primary activity. We wanted to engage as many people from one organisation as we could, so that the message would be taken on board by the movers and shakers of that group.

Many clubs do have speakers who attend their normal committee meetings on a wide range of issues and this was the avenue which the office bearers felt comfortable for us to use. However, this meant that often, the wider group did not know before hand that we were going to be in attendance, and this encouraged the officer bearer to welcome us and put into their own words

why we were there. Most office bearers in local groups have a status within those groups and this again helped to underline the message that this organisation wanted to help stop violence against women.

We trialled a number of presentations. Initially we tried to incorporate too much information, which made the presentations too long, and we were very aware of not taking up too much time when organisations had all their usual business to get through.

Finally we settled on an eight minute presentation, based around the *Australia Says No* campaign. This immediately gave us some common ground with our audience and enabled them to feel that they already knew something about this issue.



Survivors as presenters

A significant part in giving an engaging presentation was to have a local survivor of violence as one of the presenters. This had not been part of our initial plan, but evolved as the project unfolded. At the presentations where a survivor was a copresenter we realised that the effect on the group was far more intense. These women managed to engage people emotionally; this was even more evident when members of the group personally knew the woman and her children. It strengthened the messages about the prevalence of family violence and demonstrated what people can do to support women and children living with, or escaping from family violence.

We were fortunate to have three women from our network who were all extremely comfortable about disclosing some of their history to an audience. All of them had undergone some training to speak publically about family violence and they were all able to speak about the big-picture dynamics of family violence as well as give some detail from their own experiences.

All the presenters enjoyed giving the presentations and being part of this unique work – for all of us it was an opportunity to take this issue into the light. One of the survivor presenters has gone on to be a successful media spokesperson and public speaker on behalf of survivors of family violence.

As the presentations became more frequent, often two a week, we worked with a core group of two general

presenters, and three survivor presenters. One general and one survivor presenter gave the presentations. The introduction and key questions were mainly delivered by the general presenter and the survivor presenter would manage the feedback and complete the responses from the group.

The words and messages

The following is an outline of a typical presentation:

Thank you Peter and your Committee for inviting us here to introduce our project *Saying No To Violence – A Community Responsibility*.

My name is Jane Ashton and I am a member of the Nillumbik Women's Network and the cocoordinator of this local VicHealth funded project.

Most men love and care about women. It is a minority who commits acts of violence or abuse. One survey found one in four women had experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of fifteen.

VicHealth is encouraging local communities to raise awareness and spread the word about family violence. With some of the information we will share with you tonight you may be able to help someone you know – not necessarily now, but maybe in years to come – and you may even save someone's life.

Physical or psychological domination and control

Violence against women includes physical and sexual assault, sexual harassment, psychological abuse, keeping control of finances, threats of violence, property damage and harming pets. Not all violence leaves visible scars. Emotional violence includes being regularly subjected to demeaning jokes, domineering forms of behavior and sexual harassment.

The fear is greatest in women's own homes. A common myth is that most violence is committed by strangers. In fact, women are most at risk from men they know.

Q: As a society we often make excuses for men who behave in controlling or violent ways, can you think of some?

Alcohol, drugs, stress, financial difficulties and cultural background are some ways society excuses this behaviour. Perpetrators of control and abuse choose who they abuse, how they abuse and when. There are many excuses that we as a society have learned to accept for this behaviour. You may also think that men who are violent to their wives and kids are mentally ill. This is not always the case. Violent men can look and act like ordinary men.

Q: Another myth is that family violence doesn't happen often where we live; do you think that is true?

Nillumbik Community Health Services reported nearly a third of their cases involve some form of violence or abuse

against women. Types of abuse range from sexual, verbal, emotional and financial through to extreme physical violence. Clients have been hospitalised and some fear for their life.

Police family violence reports for Nillumbik show that in the last four months there were 53 family incident reports and children were present in almost all of the cases. These reports are the tip of the iceberg, these reports are when things have become very serious and usually a woman has been hurt.

Q: Some people believe that women who are victims of abuse deserve it and that they often provoke their partner, do you think this is true?

No one asks for abuse. There is no excuse for violence. Most victims of abuse do everything they can to pacify their partners to avoid conflict and violence.

Q: Often people believe it can't be that bad or she would leave. Why do you think a woman might stay?

Women often rely on their partner for financial support, particularly if they have a young family. Women also stay to keep the family together and may tolerate the violence for the sake of their children. Many women want the violence to end, but not the relationship, some fear that if they leave, the violence will escalate. The first six months after a woman leaves an abusive partner are the most dangerous. Some women worry about involving the police and what people will say.

Q: Police in Victoria now respond very differently to family violence. Abuse of women and children is a serious criminal offence. What options do you think police have when they arrive at someone's home?

Police have a wide range of options. They can suggest

counselling, can issue intervention orders, have the right to remove the abuser from the home, and can lay charges if the incident is serious and the behavior is criminal.

Q: If you believed a female relative or friend was in an unhealthy or violent relationship what could you do?

Offer your support, don't be judgmental, and find out more from a family violence service. You might be able to help her prepare a safety plan.

You can call the police – they are the experts in criminal law and they can't help unless they know what is happening. Police understand that women are most at risk when they are pregnant, have just given birth or are leaving a relationship.

Q: If you heard or witnessed violence what could you do?

Always call the police. They can give confidential advice and they are the ones who can decide if someone needs help and if someone needs to be stopped.

Q: If you believe that a male friend or colleague is treating his wife, partner or girlfriend in a way that you felt uncomfortable about what could you do?

Don't leap in, it could put her in more danger. Call the Men's Referral Service on **1800 065 973** for some strategies.

Q: What impact do you think family violence has on children?

It affects children negatively. Victoria Police attend over 20,000 family incidents each year. Children are present at more than half of these incidents.

Children grow up in a climate of fear. There is evidence that physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children is

more likely to occur in a home where one adult is violent towards the other.

Children can become angry, frightened, depressed and have a sense of powerlessness, it can also affect their physical health, school work and self-esteem and lead to substance abuse.

Q: So what can you do to help us?

- Your organisation can run the advertisement we leave with you in your newsletter or on your website.
- You can put up the posters we give you.
- You can read brochures and publications provided by VicHealth.
- You can sell White Ribbons in November. We want more men in Nillumbik than anywhere else in the world to be wearing a White Ribbon on 25 November – the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.
- Attend our White Ribbon Cocktail party in November and bring as many club members along as you can.
- You can incorporate a pledge into your club charter, handbook, or rules stating your club/organisation condemns violence and abuse against women and believes that all people should be treated with respect, responsibility and equality and that saying no to violence is a community responsibility.

We believe the majority of men in Nillumbik want to be part of the solution and hope that you will join us in this initiative so that women and children won't get hurt or killed, and that men won't go to prison. As a community we can say 'saying no to violence is a community responsibility' so women and children won't suffer.

Quantity and quality

Between April-November 2007 we gave presentations to over 20 local groups and organisations. These included a presentation to a full Council meeting; Panton Hill and Research football clubs; Eltham Wildcats Basketball Club; Kangaroo Ground Tennis Club; Kangaroo Ground and St Andrews Adult Riders; Diamond Valley Scout and Cub Leaders; Diamond Creek Progress Association; Diamond Valley LETS; Wattle Glen, Panton Hill, Research, Christmas Hills and St Andrews fire brigades; Diamond Creek Bowling Club; Diamond Creek East, Panton Hill PSs; Living & Learning Nillumbik's AGM; Girls' World Forum; Panton Hill Anglican and St Andrews Anglican Churches.

These presentations lead to referrals to speak to other groups and have lead to presentations throughout Victoria, including: Mercy Care Refuge Fundraisers; Victorian Basketball Managers Meeting; CFA Crisis Support Workers; EASE AGM Bendigo; Rotary and Probus Clubs Mooroopna; CWA Ballarat, and the NAB Ignite program.

The committees and groups we presented to in Nillumbik, consisted of five to 30 people. We spoke to about 350 people from local groups – approximately 75 per cent were men. None of these men had been included in a discussion around family violence before.

Ten of the groups put an item into their newsletter about our presentation and included referral numbers for outreach and referral services (Appendix A). The Eltham Wildcats Basketball Newsletter is distributed to 3,000 families.

The referrals to speak to other groups lead to larger groups of between 30 and 150 people; these also offered more time – 20 minutes to an hour – more in depth discussion, and the opportunity to use a Powerpoint presentation.

Opening night reviews!

We were impressed with the willingness of the groups to engage in a discussion around family violence.

The women in the groups often gave strong non-verbal signs that they understood the messages and were extremely supportive of us being there, and were often the first ones to answer our questions and often told the group of episodes that had affected them or people they knew. This helped to normalise the discussion and automatically gave people in the group cues as to who might be someone to speak to if they knew of someone suffering from family violence.

We were extremely careful not to be confrontational with the men attending the presentations. We emphasised the places in the community we all know where to go to get help if there is a fire, or if we want to play a particular sport – but would people know where to refer someone if they felt that person was being abused.

At one of the fire brigades we visited, (where our audience consisted of 32 men and no women), the Captain was fantastic and gave us every single excuse that men make when they are violent to women, he said he had heard them all and dismissed all of them as pathetic. Once he had spoken we felt our job had been done.

At another meeting a man continually made statements about women being violent and bullying to men. Again it was a male member of his group who suggested that the majority of death and serious injury was due to male violence against women and not the other way round.

At other meetings, men stated their concern for their sisters and daughters; some had helped female relatives or friends to escape bullying and violent men. They had never realised these behaviours were, in fact, family violence.

The groups were pleased to be included in the roll of honour at the Mayor's White Ribbon Cocktail Party and saw this event as something which they would like to attend having now been included in the discussion. Many groups also indicated that they would put up posters and sell White Ribbons in November.

Appendix A – item from newsletter

Comments after presentations

“I was greatly moved when I heard you speak and thank you for your generosity and bravery in sharing your story. I have had two conversations after the presentation with people sharing their stories. One Committee member's sister and their family had no idea at all.”

“I am getting some tremendous responses from your talk at Lilydale from my colleagues – you have made a lasting impression and several have mentioned that they would like to invite others to any future talks you may give. There is also a lot of interest in White Ribbon Day.”

“A heartfelt thank you for the talk you gave to us on Tuesday night.

I have never seen our group so absorbed in what you were telling us and in many cases just struck dumb. They were profoundly moved by your honesty and dignity and your commitment to educating the community about their responsibility in addressing domestic violence.

You have given us many valuable and practical tools for us in our work, in addition to a range of literature on support services available which is new to us.”



Taking it to the streets...yo

By the time we attended the town fairs we had several local men supporting us, one of these was the former Nillumbik Mayor, another a fire brigade Captain and another was an ex-policeman who now ran a local business. We also had the support of the Nillumbik Women's Network members, their husbands and partners who came along to lend a hand.

Through our contacts with Nillumbik Shire Council and the Nillumbik Women's Network, we booked a site at the Panton Hill Festival in October and the Rotary Eltham Town Festival in November.

We had a large trestle table covered with some black material; a large black vase filled with sand in which we placed some twisted willow, and along the willow we attached white ribbons. We were promoting the Dance Against Domestic Violence which was being run locally, so we set up an old gramophone player and attached black and white helium balloons to it. We had some basic statements printed on card which we pinned to the front of the stall. The table was covered with information from the White Ribbon foundation, Domestic Violence Resource Centre (DVIRC), No To Violence (NTV), Berry Street and other agencies. We had ribbons and wristbands to give away with a White Ribbon brochure. At the second festival we also handed out 300 white iced cup-cakes made by one of the Women's Network members.

Since then we have added a shade tent and extra chairs and a local sign writer donated professional fluoro board signs.



The pleasant weather and relaxed atmosphere of town festivals allows people to wander by and just browse. The majority of people were happy to take a ribbon or wrist band. Friends, acquaintances and children of those running the stall would just come up to have a chat and men from other community stalls would come and talk to the men they knew at the White Ribbon stall – curious about what they were doing there.

We did have a number of women disclose their stories of abuse at the festivals, so it was important to have trained women available to offer support. We also had a lot of men pick up the *No to Violence* brochures, or take one for a mate. Some women were extremely supportive of us being there and some were obviously affected by the fact that

men from our community were willing to speak out against violence to women.

At the two fairs we attended in 2007, we handed out 2,000 ribbons and 600 wristbands.

It is worth noting, that in 2008 we attended four town fairs. The number of men staffing the stall has grown, and the men now organise the set-up and dismantling of the stall.

At the fairs we returned to, there was definitely a feeling we were accepted and expected to be there, and the novelty value of local men being involved in a campaign to prevent violence against women was decreasing.

Knights in white satin...

It was extremely important to have a high profile man to lead the way as our first White Ribbon Ambassador. Therefore, the passion and commitment of former Nillumbik Mayor, Councillor Warwick Leeson, was an invaluable catalyst in encouraging other men to step forward as Ambassadors. Again the Nillumbik Women's Network quickly put forward the names of seven other prominent local men and we soon had a solid core group of Ambassadors.

We were able to acknowledge these men publicly at our White Ribbon Cocktail party. At the end of this event four other local men came forward wanting to be future Ambassadors.

The former Mayor subsequently had breakfast meetings with these men and other men interested in becoming involved in the White Ribbon Campaign.

We had managed to get some local media coverage of our Ambassadors; however, this is an area which could be developed further.

Oh what a night!

On Thursday 29 November we held the former Mayor's White Ribbon Cocktail Party. The aim of this event was to bring all those groups engaged in the project together. We hoped this would embed and normalise the key messages: encourage future commitment; expose this new audience to top class male speakers who were experts in family violence; as well as showcase local male leaders talking about and supporting the White Ribbon Campaign.

We had some pretty swish black and white invitations designed and sent these out to the groups we had spoken to with the following covering letter:

Dear Denise

Invitations To Mayor's White Ribbon Cocktail Party

On behalf of the Nillumbik Women's Network we would like to thank your organisation for allowing us to introduce our VicHealth project *Saying No To Violence – A Community Responsibility*.

Over the past six months we have spoken to over twenty local sporting clubs, CFAs and other organisations, as well as attending the Pantom Hill and Eltham Town Fairs. Nillumbik now has 16 White Ribbon Ambassadors, more than any other shire in Australia.

The White Ribbon Cocktail Party is to acknowledge all the organisations which have supported us with raising awareness about White Ribbon Day and will re-enforce the strong message that violence, of any kind, but particularly against women and children will not be accepted by this community.

I have enclosed some invitations for the Cocktail Party as well as some other material on the White Ribbon Campaign.

Kind regards

Project Coordinator



Getting the pitch right...

Encouraging men and women to attend an event which is going to promote the White Ribbon campaign, and one which will challenge men to become involved in preventing violence against women is not easy.

We decided we needed to make people – particularly men – feel comfortable about attending. This meant we highlighted how great the groups had been in inviting us to present to them. We highlighted the former Mayor's support and involvement in the event; we included local singer and comedian Greg Champion to give the event a blokey, football connection. We included the then Assistant Police Commissioner, Dr Leigh Gassner as our keynote speaker, and invited a local survivor of violence – singer Tessa Jetson – to perform her uplifting song *Every day is getting brighter*.

We decided to have a Collingwood Tallstar – a comedian on stilts – dressed as a footballer, in the reception area. His outfit echoed the black and white theme and his connection to football also helped to break the ice and put people at their ease as they arrived.

The CEO of Nillumbik Shire Council, Bill Forrest was MC, and Peter Burns – a White Ribbon Ambassador, local resident and Chief Executive Officer of YMCA Victoria – spoke briefly about communities working together to create social change. Mandy Press, Chair of the Nillumbik Women's Network read out the roll of honour including all the clubs who had become involved in the project.

During the evening a Powerpoint slide show continually played, showing pictures of all the groups which are involved in the project. The slide show also thanked our sponsors and showed black and white photos from all over the world of men caring and playing with children.



People power

The staff from Nillumbik Shire Council and the women from the Nillumbik Women's Network helped to prepare the venue. The Eltham Community and Reception Centre was available to us at a reduced rate and provided a beautiful and significant local venue in which to hold the event. We decorated the reception area and hall with bunches of black and white helium balloons and some simple but striking white flower arrangements. The very large White Ribbon Day banner was hung down one side of the main hall.

A local group of women who were studying French volunteered to run the bar. Local teenagers volunteered to act as waiting staff. A member of the Nillumbik Women's Network catered for the function, only charging cost price for delicious finger food. The majority of our speakers and performers did not charge for their attendance. We had a number

of women available from the network to handle any disclosures of abuse or to offer emotional support if the need arose during the evening and our Ambassadors organised the reception area and welcomed people.

Over 200 people attended, approximately 40 per cent were men. Twenty-six community groups were represented. All senior Council officers and Councillors attended. All our local outreach services, as well as some state-wide organisations, such as Senior staff from VicHealth, AFL Victoria and The Collingwood Football Club also attended the function.

A community grant from the Hurstbridge and Diamond Creek Bendigo Banks helped to cover the cost of the food and hall decoration and *Total Print* donated the invitations.



Comments after the cocktail party

“ I was so overwhelmed at being asked to sing at your lovely event.

I thank you so much, this has been a long journey for me. Years ago I could not talk about my past without breaking down. It is so important for me to share with others to help give them courage.

It was a lovely night and I am so grateful to be part of the evening. ”

“ Great – thanks. Thanks also for inspiring Nick – he said the cocktail party was amazing! He wants to become an Ambassador. ”

“ I had a great night and was pleased to attend. You should be so proud of yourself and those working with you in what you achieved. Watching this cause gather pace is truly heart warming. ”

“ It has been a humbling experience, one that I have found to be both confronting and very rewarding. I very much appreciate your faith in my ability to contribute and I am in awe of your capacity to encourage, cajole and prompt so many people to support this most worthy cause.

Thank you for the opportunity.
Warm regards. ”

Hogging the limelight

Due to the huge amount of activity in the Northern suburbs around the White Ribbon Campaign and the many VicHealth primary prevention projects, the local media was really on board.

Our two local papers put out twenty articles about family violence in the eight month period of our project. Members of the Nillumbik Women's Network generated a whole lot of newsworthy items, not just about the Nillumbik Says No project, but also about the launch of the Network, International Women's Day and some of their member's individual success stories. Also the Dance Against Domestic Violence and the launch of the Northern Region help cards generated more news, reinforcing the messages to our local communities.

Former Nillumbik Mayor, Councillor Warwick Leeson, had a two-page item included in the Victorian Local Government Association newsletter.

Plenty Valley FM – our local radio station – found time for us to speak regularly about the project and interviewed us at the town fairs.

During that period we also achieved some national media featuring Donna Zander and Neil Owen on *Sunrise* speaking about White Ribbon and The Dance Against Domestic Violence. Donna also featured in an article in *The Australian*.

Outcomes

This project inspired men and women from Nillumbik to try something different; to use their contacts and existing networks to take the *Saying No To Violence* message and White Ribbon out to a cross-section of community groups, particularly to men.

Outside of the family violence sector, few people, have knowledge about what family violence is – despite increased media coverage and changes to our legal system – and what they can do to help prevent it. We managed to speak directly to many people about family violence for the first time. Many of these groups went on to put up posters, put advertisements in their newsletters, sell white ribbons and attend our Cocktail Party. Some people we presented to also contacted us for help or referral information over the next few months.

The White Ribbon Campaign is a fabulous tool for engaging men and is part of an international movement. The campaign already has sports and media personalities as spokesmen. It contains a simple message about including men in preventing

violence against women. It normalises men being involved in violence prevention and challenging sexist attitudes. It provides support to local initiatives and has an informative website.

The local festivals gave even more people in Nillumbik some basic information about the White Ribbon Campaign and will help to enhance future recognition of the White Ribbon and what it represents.

By the end of November 2007 the Nillumbik Women's Network; Nillumbik Shire Council; the newly formed White Ribbon sub-committee – and all the other partners in the project – felt we had achieved everything we could have hoped for in the first year of a grassroots project, and more. We had formed strong friendships and partnerships, worked together to refine our presentations, managed to actually get the groups on board, and had reassured those in our community affected by violence that as a community we do care and we are trying to support them.



2008 and beyond

Some additional funding from VicHealth has ensured that the core work of recruiting and training Ambassadors, promoting the White Ribbon Campaign and holding a major community event each November can continue for another two years.

The momentum for the project is still strong and the increasing number of men becoming involved is a promising sign for our future and our continuing work in convincing everyone that *Saying No To Violence – is A Community Responsibility*.



Nillumbik Womens Network



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