# Evidence to action and local action as evidence:

## Findings from the Building Safe Communities for Women and their Children Action Research Support Initiative

ELIZABETH ORR
ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORT INITIATIVE PROJECT LEADER, ANROWS

CORINA BACKHOUSE
RESEARCH OFFICER (RESEARCH PROGRAM), ANROWS

DR CUONG LA
ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORT INITIATIVE PROJECT OFFICER, ANROWS

ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY
*to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children*

**ANROWS acknowledgement**

This material was produced with funding from the Australian Government. Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety gratefully acknowledges the financial and other support it has received from the government, without which this work would not have been possible. The findings and views reported in this paper are those of the authors and cannot be attributed to the Australian Government.

**Acknowledgement of Country**

ANROWS acknowledges the traditional owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past, present, and future, and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture, and knowledge.

© ANROWS 2018

**Published by**

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited (ANROWS)
PO Box Q389, Queen Victoria Building, NSW, 1230 | www.anrows.org.au | Phone +61 2 8374 4000
ABN 67 162 349 171

**Evidence to action and local action as evidence: findings from the Building Safe Communities For Women and their Children Action Research Support Initiative / Elizabeth Orr, Corina Backhouse, Cuong La.**
Sydney: ANROWS, c2018.
Pages ; 30 cm. (ANROWS Insights, Issue 01/2018)

I. Family violence – Australia. II. Family violence – Prevention – Australia . III. Safe communities. IV. Domestic violence – Services for.
I. Orr, Elizabeth. II. Backhouse, Corina. III. La, Cuong.

**ISBN: 978-1-925372-72-4 (print) | 978-1-925372-73-1 (online)**

**Creative Commons Licence**

Attribution-Non Commercial **CC BY-NC**

This licence lets others distribute, remix and build upon the work, but only if it is for non-commercial purposes and they credit the original creator/s (and any other nominated parties). They do not have to license their Derivative Works on the same terms.

Version 3.0 (CC Australia ported licence): View CC BY-NC Australia Licence Deed | View CC BY-NC 3.0 Australia Legal Code

Version 4.0 (international licence): View CC BY-NC 4.0 Licence Deed | View CC BY-NC 4.0 Legal Code

Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of this report.

Please check the online version at www.anrows.org.au for any amendment.

## EVIDENCE TO ACTION AND LOCAL ACTION AS EVIDENCE: FINDINGS FROM THE BUILDING SAFE COMMUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORT INITIATIVE

**Prepared by:**

Elizabeth Orr, Action Research Support Initiative Project Leader, ANROWS

Corina Backhouse, Research Officer (Research Program), ANROWS

Dr Cuong La, Action Research Support Initiative Project Officer, ANROWS

**Author acknowledgment:**

The stories of practice contributed from workers across Australia about the emerging field of preventing violence against women required them to go the extra mile, because practice research is seldom factored into the "doing" in their work day. We wish to thank all workers in the Building Safe Communities for Women and their Children (BSCW) projects, their communities, and their host organisations for reflecting upon and sharing practice wisdom and challenges about building safe communities for women and their children so that others might learn from, and then build upon, that knowledge and practice.

The authors are particularly grateful for the work and contributions of Dr Mayet Costello, Director, Research Program, and a number of ANROWS staff, including previous Action Research Support Initiative Officers Stephanie Howard and Dr Peter Ninnes; and Dr Peta Cox, Senior Research Officer (Research Program); Rebecca Gyles, Office Manager; and Jennifer Novak, Information Management Officer.

The authors also wish to thank Monique Keel, Practice Capability Manager at Our Watch, for her significant contribution through co-facilitating and providing ongoing support to the BSCW Community of Practice alongside ANROWS's Action Research Support Initiative team.

Dr Heather Nancarrow, Dr Kim O'Donnell, Christina Kadmos, Aunty Georgina Williams, Shaun Nannup, Aunty Lila Watson, Kymalie Riley, Michelle Hunt, and Scott Holmes also made valuable contributions in workshops.

The independent evaluation of the BSCW Community of Practice by Kiri Bear, and the support and insights of all staff of the ANROWS Melbourne and Sydney offices are gratefully acknowledged.

This report is part of the ANROWS Insights publications series and is not intended to be a research report but rather is a project report that outlines the work and findings of the ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative. More information about this project and the BSCW projects referred to in this report are available at https://anrows.org.au/research-program/action-research-support-0.

**Suggested citation:**

Orr, E., Backhouse, C., & La, C. (2018). *Evidence to action and local action as evidence: Findings from the Building Safe Communities for Women and their Children Action Research Support Initiative* (ANROWS Insights, 01/2018). Sydney: ANROWS.

This page has intentionally been left blank.

# Contents


**LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES** 4

**ABBREVIATIONS** 5

**LIST OF THE BUILDING SAFE COMMUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN PROJECTS** 6

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** 9

What can community organisations and community-based practitioners learn from the Building Safe Communities for Women projects and ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative? 10

Next steps: What can be done to continue to grow the evidence about what works to prevent violence against women? 11

**1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND** 12

Report purpose 13

**2. PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH** 15

2.1 Why use action research? 15

2.2 The ANROWS action research support approach 15

2.3 Methods used to provide action research support to BSCW projects 19

**3. EVIDENCE FROM LOCAL ACTION: FINDINGS FROM THE ANROWS ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORT INITIATIVE 24**

**4. LESSONS AND FINDINGS ABOUT HOW TO BUILD SAFE COMMUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN 33**

4.1 Prevention of violence starts from an understanding of a community and its needs 33

4.2 Building safe communities requires access to a range of resources 36

4.3 *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* 37

4.4 Training: Specialised knowledge enables greater reach 39

4.5 Prevention of violence in diverse communities requires tailored, context-specific, and community-led interventions 40

4.5.1. Priority populations and intersectionality

4.5.2. Addressing specific needs in priority populations

4.5.3. Cultural values and challenging one-dimensional attitudes to "culture"

4.5.4. The importance of cultural competence and engaging interpreters, cultural workers, and cultural advisors

4.6 Engaging men in prevention work is essential 46

4.7 Collaborative and collective impact approaches to prevention encourage greater community participation and investment 47

**5. LESSONS AND FINDINGS ABOUT WHAT WORKS TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS TO BUILD SAFE COMMUNITIES 50**

5.1 Reflective practice 50

5.2 Engagement of BSCW projects with ANROWS action research support 51

5.2.1 ANROWS action research support web page statistics

5.3 Modelling the use of an action research approach and tools by the action research support team 53

5.3.1 Online questionnaires

5.3.2 Site visits and individual project support

5.3.3 Templates: Action research primer, *Stories from the field*, and project story template

5.4 Including additional BSCW projects 55

5.5 Working with BSCW projects in all jurisdictions and in diverse settings and finding common elements 56

5.6 Supporting projects to publicly share their learnings with other community-based projects and workers and the broader community 57

5.7 Community of Practice and partnership with Our Watch 57

**REFERENCES 60**

**APPENDICES 63**

APPENDIX A: Action research primer 64

APPENDIX B: ANROWS action research project story template 78

# List of figures and tables

FIGURE 1 The core action research support activities, and the iterative processes of planning, action, observation, and reflection 16

FIGURE 2 Action research support cycles 16

FIGURE 3 Action Research Support Initiative phases 17

FIGURE 4 Summary of action research support methods, events, activities, and data 23

FIGURE 5 Stages of community readiness 34

FIGURE 6 Elements of the prevention of violence against women–response to domestic and family violence continuum for community-based projects 57

TABLE 1 Methods used to provide action research support to BSCW projects 20

TABLE 2 InTouch guide to choosing partner-ethno-specific service 41

TABLE 3 ANROWS action research web use 53

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ANROWS | Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety |
| ARS | Action research support (project/project team) |
| BSCW | Building Safe Communities for Women and their Children |
| CALD | Culturally and linguistically diverse[1] |
| DSS | Department of Social Services (Australian Government) |
| DV | Domestic violence |
| DFV | Domestic and family violence |
| LGBTQI | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, intersex |
| The National Plan | The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 |

1 The abbreviation to "CALD" is predominantly used in policy settings. Typically, CALD is used to refer to people, including migrants and refugees, for whom English is not their primary language, or who have cultural affiliations which differ to those dominant in mainstream Australia, by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, or preferred language. In using this abbreviation, it is important to note the assumption of diversity that is often evoked by using "CALD", whereby people from Western, English-speaking backgrounds, who nonetheless are culturally and linguistically diverse, may be presumed *not* to be a part of this group.

# List of the Building Safe Communities for Women and their Children projects

| BSCW project name | Organisation and location | Project number | Focus |
|---|---|---|---|
| We All Care | Carers ACT | 1 | Young people & schools |
| Creating Safe Culturally Diverse Communities | Migrant Resource Centre, Tasmania | 2 | Young people & CALD communities |
| What Will It Take? A community talks, listens and acts | Colony 47 Inc., Tasmania | 3 | General community |
| Start Today Again: Fathers healing relationships after family violence | The Salvation Army and University of Tasmania, Tasmania | 4 | Men |
| Ending the Cycle | Sammy D Foundation, South Australia | 5 | Young people |
| No More Excuses | City of Salisbury Local Government Authority, South Australia | 6 | General community |
| Building Safe Communities for Women (AHCSA) | Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia Inc., South Australia | 7 | Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander |
| Domestic Violence Against Older Women: Developing networks to improve service provision | Flinders University, South Australia | 8 | Women - older |
| Channels of Hope for Gender | World Vision Australia, Northern Territory | 9 | Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander |
| No More to Violence: Building safer communities in Tennant Creek | Tennant Creek Women's Refuge, Northern Territory | 10 | General community & Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander |
| Stand Up – Stories of Hope and Healing & ATNETYEKE! Stand up! | Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group & Tangentyere Council, Northern Territory | 11 | Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander |
| Tjungukulampa Walytjararraku: For all us together, family | Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation, Northern Territory | 12 | Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander |
| Doors to Safety: For women with disabilities experiencing violence | Women's Community Health Network WA, Western Australia | 13 | Women & disability |
| Women Building Belonging in the Fitzroy Valley: Harm Free Society | Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre, Western Australia | 14 | Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander |

| BSCW project name | Organisation and location | Project number | Focus |
|---|---|---|---|
| Peel Says NO to Violence | Peel Community Development Group, Western Australia | 15 | General community |
| Families United Together: Community education project on domestic violence | Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors, Western Australia | 16 | CALD communities |
| Community, Respect and Equality: Strategic Action Plan for Family Violence Prevention in Geraldton | Chrysalis Support Services Inc., Western Australia | 17 | General community |
| Creating Safe Places | Koolkuna and Marketing for Change, Western Australia | 18 | Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander |
| Living Together, Living Safely | Access Community Services Ltd, Queensland | 19 | CALD communities |
| Community Champions Ending Violence Against Women | Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service, Queensland | 20 | General community |
| R4Respect – a youth participation model | YFS Ltd, Queensland | 22 | Young people |
| United in Diversity – facilitating safer pathways | InTouch, Victoria | 23 | CALD communities |
| Together We Can: Stop Family Violence in Cardinia | Southern Family Life Service Association Inc., Victoria | 24 | General community |
| Standing Strong: Building Safe Communities for Women | Women's Health Loddon Mallee, Victoria | 25 | Regional - general community |
| Conversations for Change | Primary Care Connect, Victoria | 26 | Regional - general community |
| Working Together with Men | Carers Victoria/HealthWest Partnership, Victoria | 27 | Men - CALD communities |
| Dads Group | Dad's Group Inc., Victoria | 28 | Men |
| Furthering Life Opportunities for Women (FLOW) | South East Community Links, Victoria | 29 | CALD communities |
| Keeping Families Safe | Gateway Health, Victoria | 30 | CALD communities |
| Safe in Our Town | Glen Innes Family Support Services, New South Wales | 31 | Regional - general community |
| Live Safe Feel Safe | Arab Council Australia, New South Wales | 32 | CALD communities |
| Women's Domestic Violence Prevention Macarthur | The Benevolent Society, New South Wales | 33 | General community |
| Challenge to Bourke to Reduce Family Violence | Bourke Aboriginal Health Service, New South Wales | 34 | Aboriginal |
| Women's Community Shelters | Women's Community Shelters, New South Wales | 35 | General community |
| Mentors in Violence Prevention | Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust, New South Wales | 36 | Young people, bystander training & schools |
| All of Us – Preventing Violence Against Women | City of Parramatta Council, New South Wales | 37 | General community |

| BSCW project name | Organisation and location | Project number | Focus |
|---|---|---|---|
| "Pull Ya Head In" Campaign | Sutherland Shire Family Services, New South Wales | 38 | General community |
| Safer Relationships | CORE Community Services, New South Wales | 39 | CALD communities |
| Act Local | Save the Children, Western Australia, Victoria, Northern Territory and Queensland | 40, 40a, b, c, d, & 21 | Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander & regional - general community |

# Executive summary

Domestic and family violence and sexual assault perpetrated against women and their children is prevalent, serious, and preventable. In Australia, approximately one in four (2.2 million) women has experienced some form of violence by an intimate partner since the age of 15, compared to one in 13 men. Approximately one in six women in Australia has been subjected to physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The social, health, and economic costs of violence against women and their children are huge. For women in Australia aged 18-44, intimate partner violence contributes more to their health burden than any other risk factor, including alcohol use, tobacco use, or high cholesterol (Webster, 2016). Preventing and stopping violence against women and their children is a national priority that requires whole-of-community action.

The Australian government's Department of Social Services (DSS) provided one-off grants of up to $150,000 to community-based projects led by a range of organisations across Australia, as part of the Building Safe Communities for Women and their Children (BSCW) initiative. The BSCW grants program aimed to reduce violence against women and their children by supporting community-led projects that are responsive to the specific needs of the women, children, and families in those communities. The ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative supported the BSCW projects to reflect and document their learning and share them with ANROW to collate and synthesise the successes, challenges, gaps, and opportunities in working to build safe communities across Australia.

This report provides an overview of the key findings from both the individual BSCW projects and the synthesised findings of the ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative. The intention of the report is to share findings in an accessible way that will encourage

community-based practitioners and organisations to implement further local initiatives to address violence against women and their children.

## WHAT CAN COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTITIONERS LEARN FROM THE BUILDING SAFE COMMUNITIES FOR WOMEN PROJECTS AND ANROWS'S ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORT INITIATIVE?

The combined findings on successes and challenges from the BSCW projects and ANROWS action research support can be summarised as follows:

1. There is significant enthusiasm across Australian communities to better respond to and prevent violence against women and their children. Initiatives such as the BSCW grants and their incorporated action research approach provide opportunities for a broad range of service providers and community members to engage in locally led and context-specific prevention strategies.
2. Challenging the harmful gender-normative attitudes and behaviour of boys and men is an important foundation for the prevention of violence against women across Australia's communities.
3. Documenting and reflecting on work with local communities contributes to building and deepening our understanding of how to change gender stereotypes across the life span, over time, and in diverse geographic communities, thereby contributing to the evidence about what works and what doesn't work in this emerging field of work.
4. Collective impact and whole-of-community strategies to build safe communities for women and their children encourage greater community involvement and closer relationships between diverse groups, service providers, and organisations involved in the prevention of violence against women and their children.
5. Communities of practice, delivered in flexible ways (e.g. online, face-to-face), are an effective way of supporting practitioners in Australia's emerging workforce of prevention of violence against women practitioners.
6. Prevention of violence against women and their children initiatives must be appropriately tailored to their target population.
7. Community-based prevention work benefits from access and support to implement an evidence-informed theoretical and practice framework. Action research approaches to prevention are a powerful community engagement tool and are complimentary with the national primary prevention framework to prevent violence against women, *Change the story*.
8. Changing attitudes and behaviours to prevent violence against women takes time. Adequate investment in relationship building, material resources, and human resources is imperative for community-based prevention projects to sustain and build upon their achievements.
9. Action research support, provided through activities such as workshops, webinars, and communities of practice, was found to improve practitioner confidence and

can lead to improved outcomes for community-based prevention projects.

10. Evaluated programs that aim to prevent violence by changing gender attitudes and behaviours and challenging practices, cultures, and institutions that condone, excuse, or reinforce violence against women are needed in all jurisdictions in Australia.

These findings provide ideas for the kinds of measures that could be developed to analyse and improve the work of local community projects in future.

## NEXT STEPS: WHAT CAN BE DONE TO CONTINUE TO GROW THE EVIDENCE ABOUT WHAT WORKS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

A key success factor in the overall BSCW program is that the organisations that hosted the BSCW projects built and extended relationships and partnerships and worked in collaboration with other BSCW projects and a range of local and national organisations, including ANROWS and Our Watch. Collaborating further and leveraging other sources of funding to support ongoing prevention of violence work would provide a longer timeframe for the development of measures of success and implementation of robust research activities. For example, local partnership approaches that successfully leveraged cross-sector partnerships and in-kind support or pro-bono support are articulated by the Stand Strong Safe Communities for Women Lodden Mallee (Project 25), which devised local action plans that will continue to be implemented beyond the BSCW funding period; the Community, Equality & Respect project in Geraldton (Project 17), which devised a regional plan; and the No More Excuses City of Salisbury (Project 6), which leveraged additional funding from the justice sector in South Australia to further develop and implement their work in local schools.

The overwhelming combined message from the BSCW projects is that prevention work requires longer term support and evaluation. It is hoped that the organisations that hosted and sponsored the BSCW projects will continue to use the evidence and networks generated through the project for further action in their communities.

The BSCW action research project stories are being actively used by organisations and community-based project teams to demonstrate the findings from their prevention of violence against women activities in seeking funding sources to continue to build on their work. Partners that can be approached to continue this work include local and state governments, private businesses, philanthropic organisations, family and domestic violence networks, and non-government organisations.

The BSCW Community of Practice is an example of a low-cost but effective way of continuing to grow collaborative practice on a national level. The communities of practice are considering ways to keep practitioners engaged in prevention work, and they have already begun to organise their own meetings, to map ongoing learning needs, and to make presentations about the value of practitioner forums to reflect on practice.

# 1. Introduction and background

The ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative and the BSCW grant program are commissioned as part of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. The National Plan is a long-term partnership between the Australian government, state and territory governments, and civil society that aims to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children (Council of Australian Governments, 2011). The vision underpinning the National Plan is that, by 2022, Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities. The first of the national priorities of the National Plan's *Second Action Plan 2013-2016: Moving Ahead* is to **drive whole-of-community action to prevent violence** (Australia. Department of Social Services, 2014). The first action under this priority, agreed to by Australian, state, and territory governments, is to **support communities to prevent, respond to, and speak out against violence, through local government, business, community and sporting groups, schools, and key institutions** (Australia. Department of Social Services, 2014).

The Australian government's Department of Social Services (DSS) provided BSCW grants of up to $150,000 to community-based projects led by a range of organisations across Australia: six in Western Australia, four in South Australia; three in Tasmania, nine in Victoria, nine in New South Wales, four in the Northern Territory, three in Queensland, one in the Australian Capital Territory, and one multi-jurisdictional project. The intention of the grants was to provide one-off funding to support sustainable community-led prevention approaches and not ongoing service provision or projects.

The BSCW grants seek to address the above priorities by supporting communities to develop and implement practical solutions to respond appropriately to and reduce

violence against women and their children in their own communities, and to help prevent this violence in the future.

Specifically, the objectives of the BSCW program are to:

- facilitate sustainable community collaborations to create safe and strong support for women and their children who have been subjected to violence; and
- share progressive learning to support action by non-grant recipients to develop social capital[2] and community infrastructure to better address violence against women and their children.

The ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative aimed to support the BSCW projects to achieve these objectives by enabling grant recipients to adopt an action research methodology to evaluate, and, if needed, adapt approaches to the delivery of prevention of violence against women activities appropriate to their communities.

ANROWS was contracted by DSS specifically to:

- build the capacity of BSCW grant recipients to design and undertake action research activities;
- provide ongoing support to BSCW grant recipients and assist them with documenting and disseminating their findings; and
- document, publish, and share the findings of the action research support project.

## REPORT PURPOSE

This project report (as distinct from a research report) outlines findings from the ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative. This report describes the ANROWS project methodology, shares lessons from the BSCW projects and lessons from ANROWS's Action Research Support Initiative, and presents this evidence in an accessible way for use by community-based practitioners.

The aims of this report are to:

- share findings from the BSCW projects about what works and what are the challenges in working with communities to reduce and prevent violence against women and their children;
- give an overview of ANROWS's project and methodology;
- encourage and support the ongoing use of action research approaches in community-based work to reduce violence against women;
- provide links to tools that encourage community workers to keep engaging with research, reflect on their practice, and consider effective prevention strategies in their community context; and
- be a resource for other similar community-based projects.

2 Social capital can be understood as resources accumulated in social relations formed around shared experience or motivation (e.g. preventing violence against women). Social capital resources include trust, norms such as reciprocity, and networks of associations (e.g. shared language).

The report is expected to be relevant to:

- practitioners and students, policymakers, and researchers in the community services, health, corrections, education, and violence against women sectors; and
- people interested in improving practice, and linking what is happening at a community or regional level with academic inquiry and continuous quality improvement of projects and services working to prevent violence against women and their children.

In this report, ANROWS combines thematic analyses of 39 BSCW project stories with the action research support team's observations of the actions trialled at a local community level to both improve local response to and prevent family violence. This report synthesises findings and lessons from the BSCW projects and shares lessons from ANROWS's Action Research Support Initiative.

Other data sources used to inform the report were:

- feedback from projects during 36 site visits;
- outcomes and feedback from four workshops, four online webinars, and six online focus group discussions;
- the literature from the action research and prevention of violence against women fields; and
- an independent evaluation of the BSCW Community of Practice.

# 2. Project methodology and approach

## 2.1 WHY USE ACTION RESEARCH?

Action research is a cyclical, iterative approach to designing research in which a range of methods are used to inform action, produce knowledge, and generate new evidence in the course of everyday work. Action research makes explicit its aims to pursue and implement change—action—during the processes of studying the things that it is seeking to change (Wicks, Reason, & Bradbury, 2008).

Action research encourages active engagement, collaboration, and partnership of program participants, practitioners, community members, and other stakeholders in the design of research and implementation of project activities. In this way, the approach generates social capital to address social challenges within diverse communities in appropriate, context-specific ways (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

The value of using action research in primary prevention projects is its capacity to build on practitioners' reflective practices by asking questions about how to engage stakeholders in prevention activities and to achieve positive outcomes for participants, to seek answers through work practices, and to be adaptable and improve practice on the basis of the learnings generated (Crane & Richardson, 2000). This is of particular benefit in the context of building safe communities for women and their children, where BSCW project workers represent an emerging workforce of prevention of violence against women practitioners working out of a range of community services and organisations.

## 2.2 THE ANROWS ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORT APPROACH

The action research support was developed and implemented with recognition of the varying levels of action research skills and experience among BSCW project staff.

Figure 1 shows the basic approach that informed the design and implementation of this initiative. Figure 2 illustrates how each cycle of activities was integrated into smaller cycles of action research and how this informed the next phase. For example, feedback from surveys and each of the workshops was used to inform the next phase and activity, thus forming a process of continuous quality improvement and "on the run" evaluation of the action research support provided to BSCW practitioners throughout the course of ANROWS's initiative. Figure 3 explains the activities in each phase in more detail.

**FIGURE 1**
The core action research support activities, and the iterative processes of planning, action, observation, and reflection

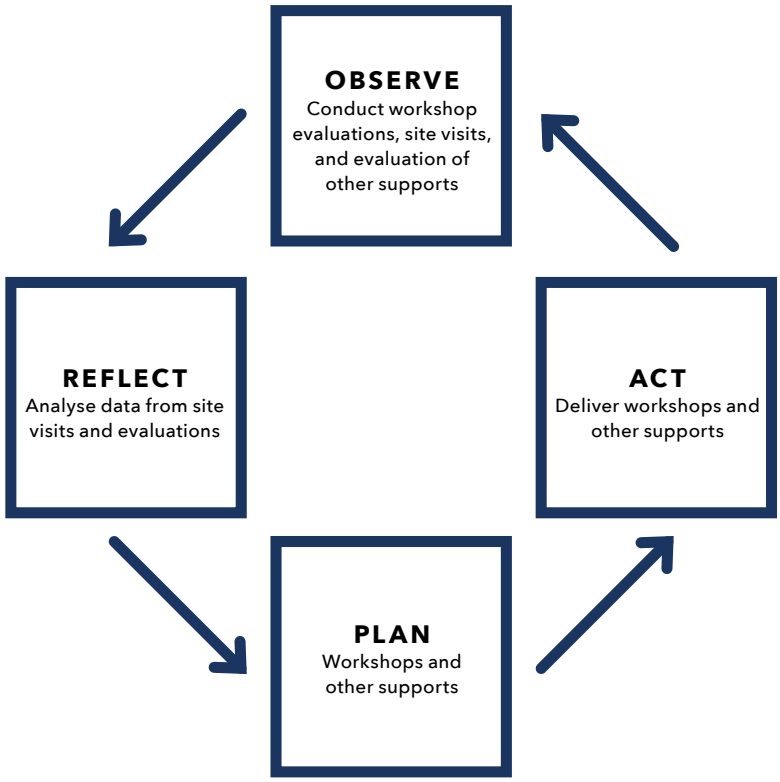
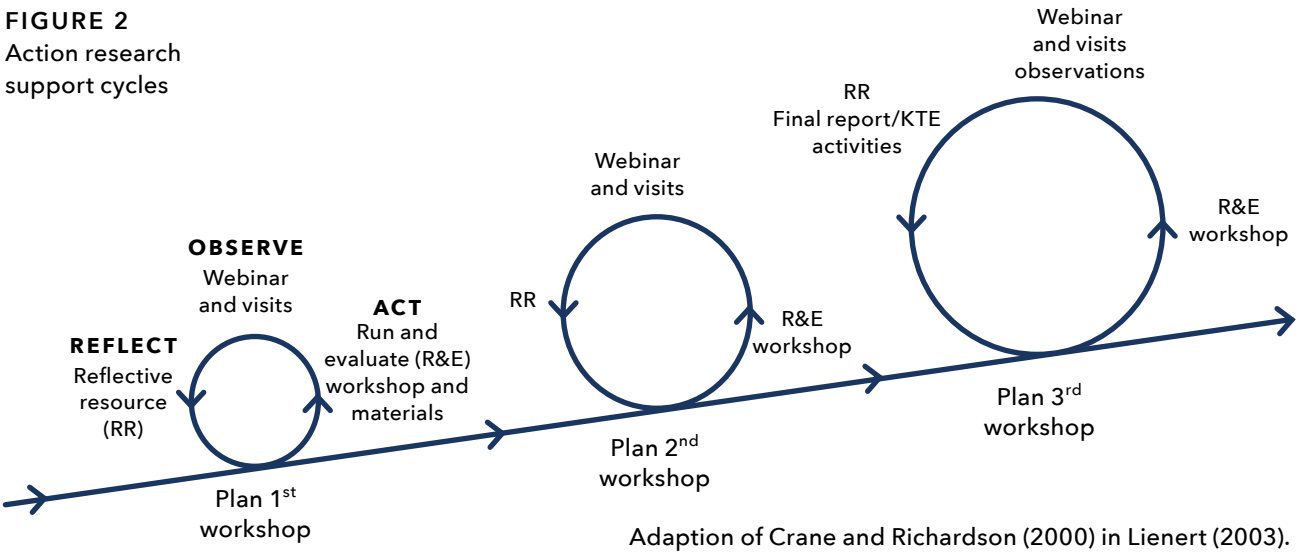



**FIGURE 2**
Action research support cycles




Adaption of Crane and Richardson (2000) in Lienert (2003).

**FIGURE 3**
Action Research Support Initiative phases

## PHASE ONE

January - April 2016

- Development of action research support plan and approach.
- Workshop and webinar planning.
- Research, collation, and development of action research support tools, templates, and resources for first workshop and webinar.
- Commenced engagement and consultation on action research support approach with initial 28 BSCW projects.
- Needs analysis of BSCW grant recipents' knowledge and use of action research, and understanding of violence against women
- Testing, revision, and finalisation of workshop materials.

## PHASE TWO

May - September 2016

- Delivery and evaluation of first workshop (introducing BSCW projects to each other and the Action Research Support Initiative, *Stories from the field*, development of BSCW action research plans in Adelaide).
- Commencement of site visits.
- Webinar One: *Introduction to action research*.
- Webinar Two: *Action research tips and technical tricks*.
- Additional 12 BSCW projects commence.
- Ongoing telephone and email support to BSCW projects.
- Project report sharing outcomes of phase one and two of the action research support project with BSCW practitioners.

## PHASE THREE

October 2016 - March 2017

- Delivery and evaluation of second workshop (Research methods, *Stories from the field*, held in both Perth and Brisbane).
- Webinar Three: *Using the project story template*.
- Ongoing telephone and email support to BSCW projects.
- Continued site-visits.
- 40 BSCW project summaries published on ANROWS website's Action Research Support Initiative page.
- Project report sharing outcomes of phase three of action research support with BSCW practitioners.
- VicHealth grant awarded to establish BSCW Community of Practice in partnership with Our Watch.

**FIGURE 3**
Action Research Support Initiative phases (*cont...*)

## PHASE FOUR

April - October 2017

- Facilitation of six BSCW focus groups.
- Delivery and evaluation of third workshop (*Development of project stories, 'Stories from the field'*, sharing action research findings in Alice Springs).
- Facilitation of BSCW Community of Practice meetings (online and face-to-face), and commissioning of independent eveluation.
- Ongoing telephone and email support to BSCW projects.
- Continued site-visits.

## PHASE FIVE

November 2017 - February 2018

- Development and finalisation of Action Research Support Initiative publication sharing BSCW findings.
- Delivery and evaluation of second phase of BSCW Community of Practice, in continued partnership with Our Watch.
- Individualised support to BSCW projects in the development of project stories for inclusion in publication.
- Final public workshop and publication launch, showcasing BSCW project work and sharing findings from the Action Research Support Initiative.

## 2.3 METHODS USED TO PROVIDE ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORT TO BSCW PROJECTS

There are many different research methods that can be used within the action research cycle, and which methods are appropriate will depend on individual project parameters, the needs of practitioners, the broader community context, and the specific conditions in which the projects are delivered. Decisions related to which research tools to use (e.g. surveys, interviews, focus groups) and how to document the processes and learnings (e.g. meeting notes) are made in consultation with participants (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015).

The action research support team used a range of tools for scoping and evaluation work, including online questionnaires, observation and discussion during site visits (and documentation of these), and communication with and feedback from BSCW practitioners and other relevant stakeholders such as Our Watch and DSS. In keeping with the iterative and participatory processes of an action research approach, methods of action research support were assessed for appropriateness and usefulness to BSCW practitioners both before and after being implemented. The findings from these processes of reflective practice and research continued to inform the precise nature of support and resources provided to BSCW projects throughout the Action Research Support Initiative. Additionally, an independent evaluation of the establishment phase (March-July 2017) of the BSCW Community of Practice was commissioned and used to inform its next phase.

Table 1 outlines the methods used by ANROWS's action research support team to provide action research support to the BSCW projects, the purpose of each method of action research support, and the sources of data produced through each of these action research support activities. The sources of data outlined in Table 1 formed the basis for the thematic analysis presented in this report.

Figure 4 (page 23) is an infographic representing the activities of the Action Research Support Initiative pictorially. For example, a map shows the location of the BSCW projects around Australia and a graph indicates the increasing number of BSCW participants at the workshops.

**TABLE 1**
Methods used to provide action research support to BSCW projects

| Methods | Purpose | Data sources |
|---|---|---|
| Workshops | • To share findings with other BSCW projects and organisations in the sector by presenting *Stories from the field*<br>• To build the confidence and presentation skills of BSCW project workers<br>• To provide opportunities to network with other BSCW projects and share challenges, experiences, and solutions<br>• To trial and refine action research tools and templates<br>• To inform needs analysis for the next workshop and webinars | • Feedback surveys<br>• Workshop reports<br>• *Stories from the field* presentations<br>• All workshop session presentations<br>• Changes to action research tools and templates<br>• ANROWS ARS team notes |
| Webinars, including:<br>• *Introduction to action research*<br>• *Research tips and technical tricks*<br>• *Using the project story template*<br>• *Using measurement for making meaning with action research* | • To complement and extend existing action research activities<br>• To provide guidance on how and why to conduct action research<br>• To provide follow-up to workshops and allow participants to share their action research progress and discuss with one another issues arising<br><br>All webinars are available at:<br>https://anrows.org.au/research-program/action-research-support-0 | • Webinar video recordings<br>• Feedback surveys<br>• ARS team reflective notes<br>• ANROWS research team feedback |
| Online focus groups:<br>• Working with CALD Communities<br>• Working with Indigenous Communities<br>• Action Research<br>• Methods and Evaluation | • Facilitating opportunities for BSCW projects engaging with similar themes to discuss specific issues, challenges, opportunities, and successes<br>• Inform planning for workshop | • Focus group meeting notes<br>• Focus group recordings<br>• Feedback surveys<br>• ARS team reflective notes<br>• Third workshop agenda |

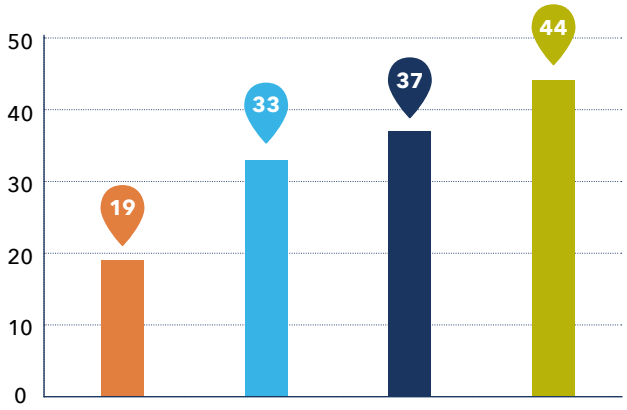
| Methods | Purpose | Data sources |
|---|---|---|
| Development and delivery of action research resources and tools, including:<br>• Action research primer<br>• Action research project story template<br>• Collated resources on research methods and processes, measurement and evaluation tools, ethical research policies and requirements.<br>• Workshop reports | • To assist in documenting, reflecting on, and disseminating action research processes and outcomes of BSCW projects<br>• To provide BSCW project workers and organisations with tools to support ongoing use of action research in everyday practices<br>• To build capacity and confidence of BSCW project workers in documenting and sharing findings<br>• To encourage innovation and reflection by BSCW projects | • Individual BSCW action research project stories<br>• ANROWS website ARS page analytics (statistical reports of access to the resources)<br>• ARS team reflective notes |
| Individual project support (at least one on-site visit from ARS staff, as well as regular email and phone support) | • To support BSCW projects to develop and implement action research, and to document and share research processes and findings<br>• To support implementation of stakeholder engagement processes, including establishing formal partnerships, to involve local participants in the BSCW projects<br>• To explore and support sustainable embedding of reflective practice in everyday work<br>• To provide feedback and consult on specific BSCW research activities, including survey design, resource development, and training programs<br>• To facilitate connections between similar and diverse BSCW projects<br>• To explore and support ways for action research to facilitate project sustainability<br>• To provide individualised and responsive research content, and supporting practitioners to draw on the available evidence base in their work | • Meeting minutes<br>• Observation notes<br>• Feedback surveys<br>• Log of phone and email support<br>• ARS team reflective notes |
| *Stories from the field* | • To support BSCW projects to document and share their action research processes, challenges, and findings with other BSCW projects, with their project participants and other stakeholders, with other practitioners working in the prevention of violence against women field, and a broader range of organisations and researchers through publication on the ANROWS website<br>• To build capacity and confidence in BSCW project workers<br>• To encourage self-reflection and sharing findings along the life of the project<br><br>All *Stories from the field* are available at:<br>https://anrows.org.au/research-program/action-research-support-0 | • *Stories from the field* PowerPoint presentations<br>• ANROWS website ARS page analytics (statistical reports of access to the presentations)<br>• ARS team reflective notes |

| Methods | Purpose | Data sources |
|---|---|---|
| Supported production of individual project stories | • To contribute to the evidence base about what works in building safer communities<br>• To document and disseminate action research processes and project outcomes<br>• To build the capacity of project workers and their organisations to share their expertise and learnings with the sector | • Individual BSCW action research project stories, including drafts and developmental notes |
| Community of Practice (online and face-to-face) | • To provide background information and options about communities of practice<br>• To build connections between practitioners<br>• To encourage joint problem-solving and knowledge development about the use of action research in the area of building safe communities and the prevention of violence against women | • BSCW Community of Practice background paper and literature review<br>• Community of Practice terms of reference<br>• Meeting minutes<br>• Meeting recordings<br>• Resources shared by members<br>• ARS and Our Watch team notes<br>• Independent evaluation (next) |
| Independent evaluation of the establishment phase of the BSCW Community of Practice | • To determine whether the BSCW Community of Practice was achieved<br>• To gather feedback on the effectiveness of Community of Practice meetings<br>• To guide phase two of the BSCW Community of Practice | • Community of Practice evaluation report |

**FIGURE 4**
Summary of action research support methods, events, activities, and data

## ANROWS ACTION RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE ACTIVITIES AND REACH

### WORKSHOPS




### WEBINARS

ACTION RESEARCH
&
TIPS AND TRICKS

### COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

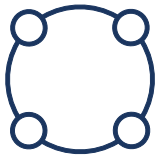
FACE TO FACE MEETINGS

TELECONFERENCE

12 PRACTITIONERS
4 ACTIVITIES

Project updates–sharing dilemmas
future direction

### BSCW PROJECT SITES



SITE VISITS
**40**

# 3. Evidence from local action: findings from the ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative

The research review informing the national prevention framework *Change the story* identified that work is required to drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours, and gendered power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children (Webster & Flood, 2015). Work needs to occur at the individual, group, family, school, institutional culture, community, and social policy levels in order to be effective in preventing violence against women. Meeting with people in 36 communities across Australia, the ANROWS action research support team found strong interest and bipartisan willingness to address what is referred to as "a national crisis" or "an epidemic". The safety of women and children must always be included in prevention work, but, while discussions and investment around violence against women and domestic and family violence have focused on crisis responses—managing risk for victims and programs to interrupt the behaviour of perpetrators of violence—attention also needs to be given to preventing and reducing violence against women.

### Finding 1

There is significant enthusiasm across Australian communities to better respond to and prevent violence against women and their children. Initiatives such as the BSCW grants and their incorporated action research approach provide opportunities for a broad range of service providers and community members to engage in locally led and context-specific prevention strategies.

BSCW projects identified that action to prevent violence against women and their children requires significant work with men and boys and substantial work by some projects aimed at addressing the behaviour and attitudes of boys and men. This work included providing information about Australian laws and services, resources to support new fathers at a time of potential openness to new ways of behaving and becoming more socially connected, school-based bystander approaches that encourage boys to question and step up against violence towards girls and women, and approaches that seek to engage men in activities at sporting and recreation locations to explore gender stereotypes and behaviours.

## Finding 2

**Challenging the harmful gender-normative attitudes and behaviour of boys and men is an important foundation for the prevention of violence against women across Australia's communities.**

The BSCW projects' feedback at the workshops indicated that they see work with boys and men as foundational in prevention work, with findings from many of the projects supporting this. For example, the Dads Group (Project 28) reports that while its work does not directly focus on prevention of violence, some men are very receptive to information about new ways of supporting and interacting with their partners at the birth of a first child and subsequently during parenting. The Channels of Hope Lajamanu (Project 9) also reported the importance of engaging with men to stop a misinterpretation of Christian scriptures to justify disrespect and violence against women. These findings are also supported in the literature about engaging boys and men in prevention work (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015; Pease & Flood 2008).

As will be described in the next section, projects sought to open up conversations for change and to incorporate ideas from local citizens about what might work to reduce violence against women (Conversations for Change, Shepparton, Victoria—Project 26; Community, Equality & Respect, Geraldton, Western Australia (Project 17). Strong regional service alliances have been developed to inform and create local and regional plans to improve service accessibility, co-ordination, and prevention work (Stand Strong Safe Communities for Women Women's Health, Lodden Mallee—Project 25; Act Local Save the Children Queensland and Cross Border—Project 21).

## Finding 3

Documenting and reflecting on work with local communities contributes to building and deepening our understanding of how to change gender stereotypes across the life span, over time, and in diverse geographic communities, thereby contributing to the evidence about what works and what doesn't work in this emerging field of work.

At a local level many projects demonstrated a great capacity to engage cross-sectoral stakeholders in building coordinated service responses and prevention of domestic and family violence activities. For example, Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service (Project 20) engaged with and built partnerships with a range of businesses, services, and institutions (e.g. local tradespeople, defence force organisations, sports groups, universities, religious groups, and community organisations), which facilitated an increased reach of conversations about domestic and family violence and building safe communities.

Other projects aimed to involve a whole of community or "all of population level" approach, including the use of collective impact and service alliance models (Together We Can, Cardinia Shire, Victoria—Project 24; Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre, Western Australia—Project 14).

## Finding 4

Collective impact and whole-of-community strategies to build safe communities for women and their children encourage greater community involvement and closer relationships between diverse groups, service providers, and organisations involved in the prevention of violence against women and their children.

About a quarter of the BSCW projects participated in the establishment of a BSCW Community of Practice that explored, and supported them with, the use action research and primary prevention of violence tools to reflect on their emerging practice. Evaluation of the Community of Practice indicates that a mixture of face-to-face and online meetings can sustain interest by participants and that a community of practice is an effective way to build skills and confidence in using action research and working to prevent of violence against women and their children.

Launch of collective impact as part of Project 24, Family Life: Together We Can - stop family violence in Cardinia Shire.

## Finding 5

Communities of practice, delivered in flexible ways (e.g. online, face-to-face), are an effective way of supporting practitioners in Australia's emerging workforce of prevention of violence against women practitioners. The BSCW Community of Practice increased participants' capacity to conduct action research, as well as contributing to the capacity and confidence of participants to engage in prevention work.

"Priority populations" is the term used by ANROWS to refer to specific groups in society that may experience a heightened risk or unique forms of violence, as well as additional barriers to securing safety, due to the compounding effects of multiple forms of social discrimination and structural disadvantage. This includes people with a disability; rural and remote, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations; and, in some communities, young people. Where these population groups are small, or where confidentiality is not guaranteed, they have specific safety concerns. Juggling action research with establishing reference groups and designing research and evaluation can present even greater challenges for these groups and requires targeted planning and resources.

There are many examples of how BSCW projects managed these complexities but only some examples can be included here to elucidate how community-based projects can specifically manage some of the safety and engagement complexities.

The main aim of the Arab Council (Project 32) was to raise awareness about the nature of domestic and family violence and where to find support through the provision of culturally appropriate and accessible information for CALD women, men, and young people. A secondary aim was to use the project learnings to inform local services and community groups about approaches to working effectively with CALD groups. The following success factors may be of interest to community practitioners:

- Cross-sector partnerships assist to address additional competing needs of the target group. Arab Council Australia collaborated with several organisations, such as English language providers, local social support services, CALD-specific and settlement services, and local police.
- Delivering activities where possible within existing programs and support groups was integral to ensuring access to the target group.
- Using facilitators or at least interpreters from a similar background, and with an understanding of the target group's culture, settlement journey, and the intersectional nature of domestic and family violence, was imperative to connect to the target group. Further, it is imperative that these facilitators are trauma-informed.
- Ensure that workshop content is developed through and provides evidence-based, trauma-informed psychoeducation and information regarding the cycle of violence, types of abuse, impacts of abuse, and options for assistance.
- Having accessible domestic violence–specialised time for private consultations for women immediately after the workshops and between workshop sessions is more effective than only providing a 1800RESPECT phone number.
- Having clear referral options (preferably in the local area) to provide to participants is necessary. These included providing clear information about resources available to women, advising women to use their phones to take photos of referral options, and distributing multilingual resources. Further, having facilitators from local domestic violence services was even more impactful to building trust.
- Providing clear examples of different types of abuse to elucidate the difference between "normal" conflict and forms of domestic violence.
- Survivors' participation in the radio interviews was very powerful.
- Distributing hard copy resources in places that women can access, such as general practitioner clinics, hairdressers, and grocery stores, etc., to capitalise on the limited "windows of opportunity" for those women suffering from social abuse.

In developing video resources, the Sutherland Shire project, "Pull Ya Head In" (Project 30), noted the importance of taking the time to ensure that the script is reflective of authenticity. A key message from them to community practitioners is: "Don't be afraid to challenge when you are not completely comfortable with a scene or parts of a script."

The Safer Relationships Project that was run through CORE in Cabramatta (Project 39) found a strengthening of relationships between CORE and the many organisations that supported the project. They report that building an understanding of the attitudes that men and women from African and Middle Eastern backgrounds hold in relation to gender norms helped them to devise effective programs.

The Gateway Project in Victoria suggested that practitioners:

- use social media and existing networks and relationships to reach the target audience;
- involve members of emerging refugee communities in co-designing workshop invitations and material; and
- encourage reflective practice and flexibility in project activities and timelines to enable project partners to adjust their plans. This increases the likelihood of engaging multicultural young people in prevention of violence against women activities.

They note that use of culturally sensitive language and imagery, developed with input from the target group, plus an invitation being sent in a very targeted and personal manner relevant to the young people involved by people they respect, was important for engaging this group.

The Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group (TWFSG) (Project 11) stressed the importance of reflecting on the type of engagement that an organisation or department intends to have with the Aboriginal community. The TWFSG adapted a resource on community engagement from *IAP2 Best Practice Standards for Public Participation* which was used to measure engagement intentions. Reference to the original image and resource can be found here.

The Domestic Violence Against Older Women Project (Project 13) noted the challenges of inclusive service promotion. They found that older women may not view domestic violence services as appropriate for them and so may choose not to access those services. This is compounded by the fact that current promotional campaigns rarely feature images of older women and refer to "women and children", which can be misunderstood as not being inclusive of single older women.

The Doors to Safety Project for women with a disability also identified that disadvantages are further compounded for women with a disability and are also:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander;
- culturally and linguistically diverse;
- living in a rural or remote area;
- older; or
- LGBTQI.

An important learning for the Doors to Safety team was the need for flexibility and a willingness to modify the project through engagement with key stakeholders and in reflection of practice and feedback. Though not always easy, they report that respectfulness and compromise are essential. Collaboration at the peak body level was found to be

very useful in terms of getting traction on important issues, but also in informing their own work and practice. Carers and disability support workers do not necessarily make the connection between mainstream education campaigns and the people with disabilities for whom they are working or caring. They noted that a targeted or tailored approach is required if there is to be a shift in attitudes regarding what are acceptable and unacceptable ways to treat people with a disability. Ambiguity around what is being "protective" or "understandable under the circumstances" are factors that need to be considered in deciding what a good first respondent or an active bystander approach might look like in these contexts.

### Finding 6

Prevention of violence against women and their children initiatives must be appropriately tailored to their target population. Diverse communities often have specific needs and unique experiences of domestic and family violence, and it is important that an intersectional framework, which seeks to understand how different factors associated with a person's identity or situation, may intersect and lead to increased vulnerability to violence for members of priority population groups.

The engagement and sharing of findings of the BSCW projects by the ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative, as described in this report, demonstrates the steps and approach for the successful implementation of a national program for preventing violence against women. Challenges in working at the local community level were the importance of finding a common language with community members to explain and understand the full range and dynamics of violence against women and their children. The ANROWS action research primer, project story template, and links to other action research resources were highly accessed from the action research support webpage. Use of these tools may go some way towards encouraging reflection and innovation to document current practice and to address the knowledge gaps among community-based practitioners about prevention of violence against women and their children. Access to up-to-date resources and developments such at the *Change the story* framework, training, and refreshers to reflect and incorporate new developments in research and practice would further enhance community-based projects' knowledge and skills and support the current enthusiasm and community willingness to address violence against women and their children.

Respectful and careful engagement with projects at the level at which where they are; scoping and assessment of skills and knowledge levels; purposeful development of accessible action research tools; and structured opportunities for networking, conversations, and sharing of stories about the work are key steps in supporting community-based prevention projects.

## Finding 7

Community-based prevention work benefits from access and support to implement an evidence-informed theoretical and practice framework. Action research approaches to prevention are a powerful community engagement tool and are complimentary with the national primary prevention framework to prevent violence against women, *Change the story*.

Adequate resources to implement project activities and to participate in action research capacity-building activities are vital to the longer term success of this work. While the projects achieved some positive short term outcomes, evidence shows that culture and attitude change can take some time, which could be facilitated by the projects through exploring future government and non-government funding opportunities beyond the one-off BSCW grants program. Facilitating similar or extending the current BSCW community-based prevention of violence projects would enable a more rigorous evaluation of what works and what doesn't work in implementing prevention approaches and strategies at a national level. A longer term planned and tested approach would allow more detailed investigation to evaluate the longer term outcomes of work by the BSCW projects in communities across Australia.

## FINDING 8

Changing attitudes and behaviours to prevent violence against women takes time. Adequate investment in relationship building, material resources, and human resources is imperative for community-based prevention projects to sustain and build upon their achievements.

The relatively small BSCW grants were leveraged to the maximum by the workers, organisations, and communities in which they were located. Successful grant applicants had shown how they would use evidence, particularly evidence about the incidence of and responses to domestic and family violence in their local area, to inform a program, project, strategy, or action to build a safe community. Using an action research approach, the projects went on to document and evaluate their activities. The information about the actions they implemented is evidence for further action.

The ANROWS action research support team provided limited support to projects in their search for further grant opportunities. The team provided links to possible funding sources, such as the National Australia Bank domestic and family violence–specific grant programs, and letters of support for applications.

## FINDING 9

Action research support, provided through activities such as workshops, webinars, and communities of practice, was found to improve practitioner confidence and can lead to improved outcomes for community-based prevention projects.

Communities with BSCW projects report that they feel they are just at the beginning of their prevention work. Collaboration with local community organisations and researchers in universities and research organisations are strategies to ensure ongoing evaluation of prevention work. For example, Working Together With Men (Project 27) established an evaluation collaboration with an independent researcher based at a university. Further funding to support ongoing work, both through government and partnerships with the private sector leveraged for in-kind support or pro-bono support, and cross-sector partnerships that may lead to new and innovative funding streams would enable a more realistic timeframe for the development of measures of success and implementation of a robust research program to gather and analyse the evidence over a longer period of time.

Organisations that hosted and sponsored the BSCW projects continue to use the evidence and networks generated through the project for further action. Their project stories provide important evidence that can be used to apply to other funding sources, but, at present, there are few prevention-focused funding programs, and this varies widely between jurisdictions. The link between the BSCW program with the National Plan demonstrated leadership and support at the national level and may have been an additional factor in the good local engagement and overall success of the program. Support is needed at a national level to further develop and define principles of good practice for community-based prevention of violence against women and their children.

BSCW grant recipients are actively seeking further support to continue to document and share their action research and thus contribute to the emerging evidence base about what works and what doesn't work in creating safe communities for women and their children across Australia. In addition to government funding, some projects have harnessed additional funding and in-kind support from local businesses, philanthropic groups, and the creation of local partnerships with schools, service organisations, craft and recreation groups, and local councils. Women's Community Shelters NSW (Project 35) provides a good example of leveraging this approach with private sector support.

## FINDING 10

Evaluated programs that aim to prevent violence by changing gender attitudes and behaviours and challenging practices, cultures, and institutions that condone, excuse, or reinforce violence against women are needed in all jurisdictions in Australia.

# 4. Lessons and findings about how to build safe communities for women and their children

This section presents findings from the BSCW projects about what works and what doesn't work, and for whom, in projects and activities aimed at preventing violence against women and their children.

The BSCW action research project stories provided the primary source of data for the analysis shared in this section. The action research project stories were developed based on a project story template co-designed by ANROWS's action research support team and BSCW practitioners. The project story template was designed to allow BSCW projects to share the findings of their action research through a brief outline of their project processes, successes, challenges, outcomes, and learnings.

In keeping with the principles of action research, which maintain that practitioners are the experts in their field of work and are best placed to produce knowledge and evaluate the effectiveness of their projects and services, the findings presented in this section provide a significant contribution from local communities and services to the growing evidence base about promising practices—that is, what works and what doesn't in prevention of violence against women initiatives and activities across a range of Australia's diverse communities.

## 4.1 PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE STARTS FROM AN UNDERSTANDING OF A COMMUNITY AND ITS NEEDS

Project workers demonstrated that to understand the level of "readiness" of a community, it is best to involve the participants of the project in the design and implementation of project activities. There needs to be consideration of the willingness and specific needs of the community to take action to prevent violence against women and their children.

Community readiness can be gauged by considering: levels of understanding of domestic and family violence; attitudes towards gender equality; the presence of strong community leadership around creating safe communities for women and their children; and through an assessment of the resources available to enable local action to prevent and appropriately respond to violence. The University of Kansas scale of community readiness is suggested for assessing "community understanding and attitudes about violence against women" in *Change the story* (Our Watch, 2015).

Stages of community readiness occur along a spectrum, ranging from the local community or target population denying that there is domestic and family violence or having little awareness of violence against women, through to the presence of sophisticated knowledge, frameworks, or action plans that address the gendered drivers of violence against women and encourage community members to challenge them. These stages are outlined in Figure 5. Identifying where a community is at along this spectrum can facilitate the planning of prevention of violence against women and their children activities such that the community or the project's target participants can be supported to develop and implement effective prevention programs.

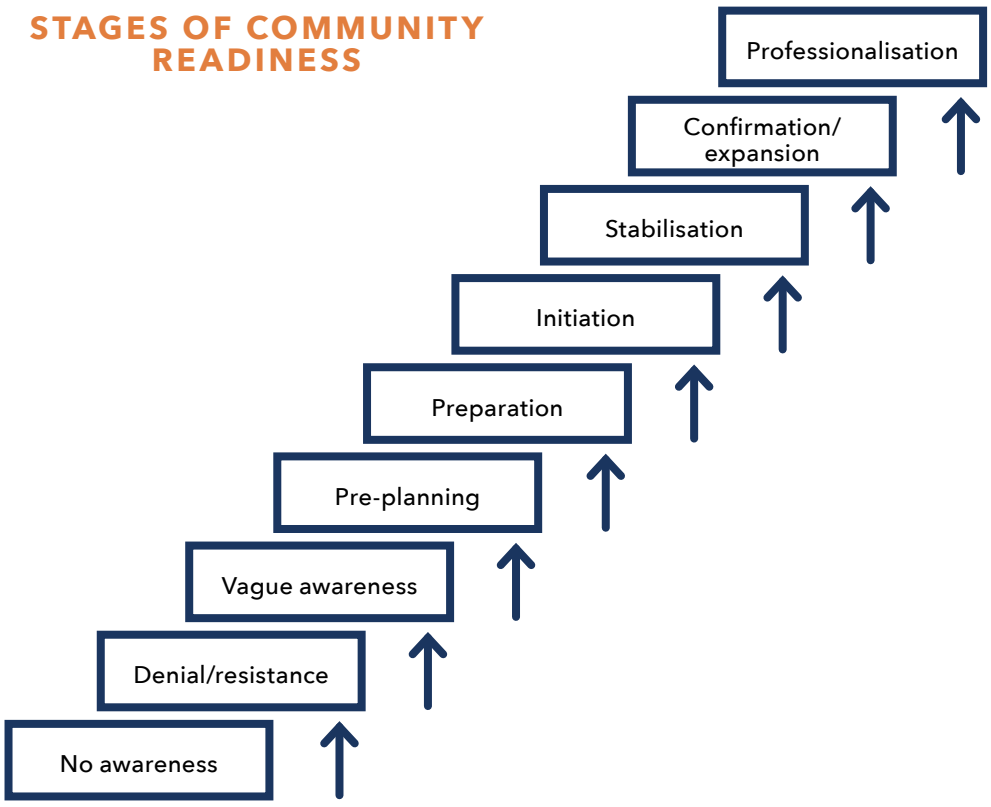



**FIGURE 5**
Stages of community readiness

(Center for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas) See: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/toolkits

Ravenswood Tasmania, Project 3, Our Community Talks, Listens, and Acts

Participatory approaches to the assessment of community readiness, and in designing effective strategies to engage community members in appropriate and context-specific ways, was observed by several projects as key to the achievements of BSCW project activities across a range of settings. For example, a BSCW project worker from World Vision working in Lajamanu, Northern Territory, suggested:

> …using a collaborative approach to unlock pathways to cultural knowledge on how you talk about highly sensitive issues without offending people. If you don't use culturally appropriate ways to talk about sensitive issues, people may not return and engage on these topics. (Project 9)

Project workers commented on the challenges for community engagement and participant recruitment. For example, in a conversation about the effects of violence against women in the community, a project worker from Colony 47, Launceston, Tasmania, (Project 3) said:

> Attempting focus groups as a first activity was somewhat threatening so early in the project. Participants were concerned about retribution. Time needed to be taken to get to know the community.

Recognising the level of "community readiness" informed this project's further work approach. The project worker and steering group took the time to build relationships with community members and families through attending school events, and connecting with significant community leaders and other organisations. Their work focused on

communicating the need for violence reduction or prevention. This also occurred through the use of art and music. A communal art activity to design and paint a community banner—"Break the silence about family violence"—and a collaboration with a songwriter to develop a song with local school children were non-threatening but nonetheless successful awareness-raising activities. These activities brought diverse members of the community together and are reported to have increased a sense of community cohesion and pride. (Project 3).

The settings of different projects and their geographic locations were acknowledged as barriers for some BSCW projects. For example, in the Safe in Our Town project, in a rural area of NSW, it was observed that domestic and family violence is a lower priority than other issues. Unemployment, the centralisation of health services, and the closing of local businesses were thought to command greater attention by some local services. Conversely, it was noted that "human service professionals are busy people and this issue [DFV] is exacerbated in a rural area where there is a general paucity of services". This meant that it often took multiple phone calls or emails for the project workers to speak with someone about the project. Communicating the need for violence reduction and prevention in itself assists to build community readiness and continuing conversations with leaders and community members is required to move towards action. Persistence is a key attribute of prevention workers and within projects.

At a practical level, community-based projects can look at how local newspapers are reporting on domestic and family violence, and consider what is being said in public forums by local leaders to measure the community awareness and understanding of the issue of violence against women and children.

There were many examples of persistence and adapting a project to meet the level of organisational and community readiness among the BSCW projects. Clear examples were the changes made to the scripts of several video resources in the Northern Territory and Tasmania projects.

It is also important for the implementation organisations to take into account contextual factors that influence the target community's readiness to undertake actions in preventing violence against women and children. These include location, culture, ethnicity, employment, religion, current issues, socioeconomic status, existing relationships with services, and, for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the stage they are at in the settlement process and, particularly, the way in which men and women may experience these factors. The tool kit for practitioners developed by Our Watch has further ideas about how to assess the contextual factors (Our Watch, 2016).

## 4.2 BUILDING SAFE COMMUNITIES REQUIRES ACCESS TO A RANGE OF RESOURCES

This section explores the range of resources both used and developed by BSCW projects to achieve their aims. Key resources identified as critical to successful implementation

of BSCW project activities included: knowledge and understanding of domestic and family violence, sexual assault, and the prevention of violence against women; skills in prevention practice; human and material resources, such as adequate funding, transport, and internet access; and domestic and family violence and gender equality training.

Access to appropriate resources played a significant role in BSCW projects' community engagement prevention activities. Practical resources were developed where they were lacking, for example:

- The Queensland-based YFS #R4Respect project (Project 22) saw young people in Logan City leading discussions and actions towards ending gender-based violence. Teaming up with Griffith Film School, YFS #R4Respect produced short animated clips titled "Don't Be a Bad Apple", which sought to challenge harmful behaviours in relationships, and which were aimed at young people.
- The Northern Territory–based Tangentyere Council (Project 11) produced the videos "#StandWithMe" and "#Stand UP", as well as online DFV training.

In some instances there were challenges for BSCW projects wanting to develop and promote local awareness-raising resources. For example, projects in several jurisdictions with plans to advertise informational and advocacy messages about domestic and family violence did not get approval at an organisational or local authority level.

## 4.3 CHANGE THE STORY: A SHARED FRAMEWORK FOR THE PRIMARY PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN IN AUSTRALIA

The national prevention framework, *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* (Our Watch, ANROWS & VicHealth, 2015), was introduced to BSCW project workers through the action research support workshops; the BSCW Community of Practice; and through individualised support to BSCW projects. *Change the story* proved, in many cases, to be an effective tool to facilitate BSCW project workers to develop a shared understanding of violence against women, and of the gender drivers that enable this violence. Providing access and support to understand and implement this evidence-informed framework facilitated project workers to target and focus their BSCW prevention activities towards the underlying gender drivers of violence against women.

Four BSCW projects specifically used the *Change the story* framework, and an additional seven referred to the Our Watch resources (totalling eleven; over a quarter of the projects). For example, the City of Parramatta (Project 37) used the framework to develop criteria for assessing local project applications for funding and also promote a broader training session for local government services in New South Wales. Application of the national framework proved a successful strategy in a context-specific engagement supporting the local ownership of that project.

Additionally, *Change the story* was found to facilitate the development of a shared understanding and language about preventing violence against women, based on the premise that domestic and family violence and violence against women are crimes with gendered drivers, which, in turn, assisted BSCW projects to communicate the specific dynamics of domestic and family violence with community members and project participants.

Additional suggestions for effectively using prevention resources among CALD communities included for project workers to look at the cultural norms and values that reflect gender roles. For example, the Gateway project coordinator (Project 30) suggested that this could be done through interactive, experiential, and culturally relevant activities as a bridging step before linking gender roles to domestic violence. Specifically, she observed:

> Initial discussions identified a need to adjust the flyer previously used by White Ribbon Australia to include an image on the flyer with multicultural overtones, changing standard White Ribbon information to a focus on inviting young men to a conversation to support respectful relationships. These changes were based on the feedback that focuses on a positive outcome that has meaning to people in emerging refugee communities and the project.

Focusing on the participants' strengths and acknowledging positive elements of their culture is more engaging. This approach was found to engage participants, particularly men, to enter the discussion without creating concern about being judged. Using culturally relevant examples also helped audiences from diverse cultures to connect to the messages. To further support this approach, a project worker from the Arab Council project (Project 32) suggested:

> It is also vital that those who deliver DFV supports have an adequate understanding of both the pre-arrival experience and the challenges of resettlement faced by new and emerging communities. Ultimately, the majority of CALD community members feel a sense of safety in receiving these messages from people from their community.

The *Change the story* framework and approach to implementing it in diverse communities is formative, with additional and supplementary materials continuing to be developed by Our Watch in order to address strategies for prevention in specific contexts (e.g. in sporting organisations) and for specific priority populations (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women).

While the development and use of resources afforded through the relatively small BSCW grants demonstrate that a little can go a long way, it is also evident that resources are required over the long term to maintain community momentum and sustain change. This includes non-financial resources such as leadership commitment and community engagement, which are also vital to creating long-lasting change.

Sharing ideas at one of the workshops, Brisbane, 2016

## 4.4 TRAINING: SPECIALISED KNOWLEDGE ENABLES GREATER REACH

Several BSCW projects acquired, had access to, or already held existing specialist expertise in domestic and family violence; its impacts on women and their children; or practice experience in strategies for the primary prevention of violence. These projects were able to capitalise upon this specialised knowledge in order to provide training and education activities or targeted community development planning as part of their BSCW projects. This enhanced the capacity of a broad range of community members and organisations to engage in building safe communities for women and their children.

For example, the Doors to Safety project led by the Women's Community Health Alliance, Western Australia (Project 15), developed and is delivering a two-way learning and training program with specialist domestic and family violence and disability services. The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MATES) program facilitated by the Uniting Church in Gosford (Project 36) has delivered to high schools, church groups, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) students, and community groups as part of its BSCW project. Additionally, MATES training was provided to 25 participants, including school professionals, teachers, chaplains, youth workers, and domestic and family violence workers. Early intervention (Safe from the Start) training was also provided by the Uniting BSCW project (Project 36) to 80 people working directly with young children aged 0-8 years to strengthen their domestic and family violence response.

The Benevolent Society in Macarthur, New South Wales (Project 33), and the Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS), Western Australia (Project 16), also delivered train-the-trainer projects with volunteers. The ASeTTS BSCW project, working with three ethno-specific communities and their bi-cultural workers, facilitated

community events and activities, including an International Women's Day lunch (with men serving food) that attracted over 300 members of the Hazera community.

## 4.5 PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE IN DIVERSE COMMUNITIES REQUIRES TAILORED, CONTEXT-SPECIFIC, AND COMMUNITY-LED INTERVENTIONS

The BSCW projects worked across a diverse range of Australian communities and with a wide variety of cultural and language groups.

The topic of domestic and family violence is sensitive and is considered taboo and shameful to discuss in some cultures. Project workers need skills to address the issue in a way that is culturally appropriate and accommodates the level of knowledge and understanding expected by the community. This can be a challenge, particularly for project workers who do not share the cultural background of their project participants. For example, a project worker in Doomadgee, Normanton, and North Burnett, in Queensland, highlighted:

> The role of the project worker was not to colonise participants into her/his way of thinking but rather engage in conversations about values and beliefs currently held and how that might underpin action or inaction. (Project 19)

The BSCW project undertaken by Flinders University (Project 8) found that for some women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, sharing their stories was uncomfortable because they had a fear of being judged based on historical legacies and current experiences of social and cultural discrimination.

Another project led by World Vision in Lajamanu (Project 9), aimed to build the capacity of faith leaders, congregation members, and local services to work together to prevent and address domestic and family violence in this Aboriginal community. This project highlighted the importance of seeking to understand the cultural values and norms that shape gender norms in local contexts, and in tailoring culturally and geographically appropriate project activities and resources. They used a strengths-based approach to examining gender relations from the perspectives of traditional cultural and spiritual wellbeing, as well as Christian faith traditions specific to the communities in which the project was implemented.

Adapting a promising international intervention called Channels of Hope and factoring in community readiness, the project workers allocated time for project participants to proceed at the speed they preferred. They also employed process of developing, reflecting, testing, and modifying a local painting to be used as a training resource as they went along. During community consultation, the project team identified and examined important gender-related values and, in particular, looked at aspects of local Aboriginal culture in Lajamanu that are about safe families, positive relationships, and respectful identities. They sought to amplify these values to drive attitudinal and behavioural change.

| Standards | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organisation | Has DFV education already occurred? | Professionalism–i.e. communication | Capability for the project–i.e. resources, time commitment | Capacity for sustainability–i.e. size of the service, long-term outlook for the service | Reach–i.e. connection to community groups | Further notes |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

**TABLE 2**
InTouch (Project 23) guide to choosing partner-ethno-specific service

Note: Rating: 1-5 (5: strong/good; 1 weak/ not good)

InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence (Project 23), a statewide service in Victoria, developed a simple tool to guide the organisation on how to select ethno-specific partners to collaborate with when reaching target communities (Table 2). The tool gave a rating about domestic and family violence education delivery, level of organisational resources, capacity for longer term sustainability, and connectedness with target communities. The ratings were combined to provide an overall score of organisation suitability.

### 4.5.1. PRIORITY POPULATIONS AND INTERSECTIONALITY

The BSCW projects involved working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, rural and remote populations, older women, women with disabilities, and across a wide variety of settings. The specific needs of priority populations and the importance of an intersectional approach to all work involved in building safe communities for women and their children emerged as a strong theme from the action research project stories.

Gender values and cultural norms can impact on discussions of domestic and family violence among all family and community members. For some people, there can be additional barriers to engaging in discussions around violence, and specific and additional constraints to seeking support can derive from migration experiences. For example, a

project worker from Gateway Health (Project 30) said:

> These [constraints] include an increased financial and personal reliance on partners and other family members during settlement and whilst negotiating visa processes, heightened vulnerability to the "shame factor", and isolation. This is because of additional reliance on other refugees for support during settlement. Asking for support from English-speaking neighbours and friends to "break the silence" is difficult due to language barriers. Not knowing about or being comfortable accessing local support services, cultural expectation that children will stay with the father's family, and financial commitments to extended family members can also complicate decisions to leave an abusive relationship. (Project 30)

Unique and additional barriers to safety were also experienced by other priority population groups. The Doors to Safety (Project 13), reflected that:

> Women with a disability face multiple challenges, as they may be discriminated against both on the basis of gender and the basis of their disability. They may also confront additional societal challenges as mothers and carers. Women with disability are less likely to be in the paid workforce and have lower incomes than men with disability. They are also more likely to be sole parents or in their parental family than men with disability. Disadvantages are further compounded if you are a woman with a disability and are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, CALD, living in a rural or remote area, older, or LGBTQI. (Project 13)

Engaging men to support gender equality and equity was sometimes challenging and required BSCW project workers to engage with and confront ideas and practices of male privilege and normative masculinities. In some culturally and linguistically diverse communities, as with many cultures, men are traditionally the heads of families. The Arab Council in New South Wales (Project 32) highlighted the challenges that can arise for some men in renegotiating traditional gender roles, and how this can intersect with migration and settlement experiences, and seeking support. The Arab Council also reminded us that building safe communities for women and their children through addressing gender inequality is also beneficial for men, shifting harmful social norms around masculinity and how men should behave.

> The men [were] concerned that Australian law gives more rights to women and that the Arab Council Australia was there to teach their partners how to complain about them. They also seemed to shoulder much of the responsibility and keep their concerns about issues during settlement to themselves in their role as the head of the family. (Project 32)

This confirms the understanding that shifting community members' understandings about gender equality and building respectful relationships will not happen overnight. Greater discussion about gender norms and how they impact on gender equality, and attitudes about violence and changes in behaviour, is needed. Such discussion can be framed as a learning opportunity and can incorporate information about the law and support services.

### 4.5.2. ADDRESSING SPECIFIC NEEDS IN PRIORITY POPULATIONS

Several BSCW projects highlighted specific gaps in mainstream service responses and useful pathways to address these gaps: "older women may not view DFV services as appropriate for them so may choose not to access these services" (Project 8). The Safer Steps project in Western Australia argued that organisations "are not sufficiently resourced to make their services more accessible on a day-to-day and ongoing basis or to proactively disseminate information about their services to women with disabilities" (Project 13).

To ensure successful preventative interventions within various priority populations, their specific needs should be well understood and addressed. For example, the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia described how a lack of input from Aboriginal people and the failure of mainstream approaches was contributing to disproportionately high rates of domestic violence in Aboriginal communities. Similarly, Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi, which works with senior women leaders in remote communities of Central Australia, found a lack of culturally appropriate resources:

> A lot of the currently available resources and information about domestic and family violence are not very helpful: not culturally relevant, focusing on people living in urban and regional centres, the language is not clear simple English, the imagery is not engaging to Aboriginal readers/viewers, and DV issues that are presented are not the issues most relevant to remote Aboriginal community contexts. (Project 12)

Developing training with the input of priority populations was found to be a successful engagement strategy; see, for example, the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group project (Project 11), the Benevolent Society (Project 33), and ACCESS (Project 19). Furthermore, the TWFSG not only made two videos to address the lack of culturally appropriate resources but have also created a sustainable and locally relevant online domestic and family violence training program, which can be accessed on its website.

### 4.5.3. CULTURAL VALUES AND CHALLENGING ONE-DIMENSIONAL ATTITUDES TO "CULTURE"

Some BSCW projects reported the use of culture to condone men's violence against women, but also cautioned against understanding particular cultures as "accepting" of violence. The Migrant Resource Centre in Tasmania (Project 2) found that:

> The attitudes to, and understanding of DFV of people from CALD backgrounds differs greatly from group to group, culture to culture, community to community, and within community. Custom, tradition, or religion have been used in all cultures, including mainstream Anglo-Australian culture, to justify violence against women and their children. (Project 2)

Workers in Tasmania also noted that some CALD community members were apprehensive about reporting suspected cases of domestic and family violence as they believed that it was "part of the culture" (Migrant Resource Centre, Project 2). Some community members who participated in a Western Australia–based project (Project 29) downplayed

Perth workshop, 2016

the importance of men's violence against women, arguing that domestic and family violence issues among women, such as mother in-law versus daughter in-law, were more serious than those between men and women in their community.

Engaging cultural and faith leaders to challenge misconceptions about "culture" and to conversely promote women's rights as human rights are possible strategies to challenge these beliefs. Prior assessment and discussion with women leaders about who are the supportive leaders should be undertaken alongside this strategy.

A worker from the FLOW South East Community Links (Project 29) noted the difficulty in engaging faith-based leaders with more conservative attitudes:

> Engagement of religious leaders is very challenging, [due to] some holding very rigid beliefs and approaches in supporting victims of violence. When asked how they would support a woman who disclosed experiencing violence, their response was to "bring the couple together so they can talk about their issues". (Project 29)

Prevention work requires knowledge and skills to handle backlash in a culturally sensitive way. For example, it was suggested that when responding to the use of cultural values to condone domestic and family violence, it is important for the project workers to refer to domestic and family violence as a human rights issue, meaning cultural justifications cannot be excused. To address the condoning of violence, a Tasmanian project (Project 2) provided a suggestion to project workers that when working with CALD community members:

> …it might be useful to focus more on the international human rights standards in which the United Nations state that "States cannot invoke any cultural discourse,

including notions of custom, tradition, or religion, to justify or condone any act of violence. This also means that they may not deny, trivialise, or otherwise play down the harm caused by such violence be referring to these notions. Instead, States are expressly required to condemn such violence, which entails denouncing any cultural discourse put forward to justify it." (Buitenweg, 2011)

### 4.5.4. THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND ENGAGING INTERPRETERS, CULTURAL WORKERS, AND CULTURAL ADVISORS

The importance of cultural competence and challenges in project workers achieving cultural competence was documented. This included ineffective use of interpreter services, insufficient recruitment of bilingual workers, and inadequate development of culturally relevant resources.

The Further Life Opportunities for Women (FLOW) research team based at South East Community Links in Dandenong, Victoria (Project 29), identified a lack of professionally trained interpreters in newly arrived communities. This hinders support for these communities. In addition, South East Community Links indicated that building the knowledge, facilitation skills, and confidence of bilingual facilitators required more time and resources than the project allowed.

ASeTTS in WA (Project 16), noted similar challenges in recruiting bilingual facilitators, particularly women, and the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania (Project 2) reported not only a lack of confidence among service providers in using interpreters but also a lack of culturally sensitive understanding when it comes to interpreter service use. Because Tasmanian communities are small and well-connected, many people are wary of working with face-to-face interpreters due to concerns about confidentiality. Therefore, "understanding that the effective use of interpreters is vital when working with people from CALD backgrounds appears to be one of the biggest take-home messages from services" (Project 2).

Many projects employed bi-cultural workers; an example of specifically engaging Aboriginal cultural workers is World Vision's employment of local Aboriginal community members as facilitators, who "contributed to community ownership of the project and [developed] capacity to speak with service providers and community members about the many complexities of gender-based violence" (Project 9). This approach allows community engagement to be strengthened, and provides employment and skill development to local workers assisting project sustainability to be ongoing.

Lack of culturally relevant resources for CALD and Aboriginal communities was identified as a problem. Resources and training were often delivered in English to those priority populations, and "running workshops in English was not good. [It was] difficult to understand new concepts" (training for Afghan, Burmese, and Middle Eastern communities in WA, ASeTTS, Project 16).

To solve this issue, some project workers encouraged the use of community and Aboriginal languages (e.g. Warlpiri) in materials to embed local ownership (World Vision, Lajamanu—Project 9). The Dads Group (Project 28) used ethnic radio programs to translate and deliver information about local services to communities with low literacy. Similarly, the Salvation Army Dads for Kids Tasmania (Project 4) developed vignettes containing simple but effective visual messages for groups with low literacy or first languages other than English.

The Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (Project 7) noted that:

> Aboriginal family violence is a complex issue intertwined with the ongoing impacts of colonisation, dispossession, forced child-removals, racism, and discrimination.

To address these interconnections it was suggested:

> Family violence eradication and prevention efforts must therefore also address intergenerational trauma, grief and loss, lateral violence, and socio-economic disadvantage if they are to succeed. (Project 7)

Examples from projects in this section aim to highlight the importance of taking intersectionality into consideration when working with priority populations on prevention of violence against women and children.

## 4.6 ENGAGING MEN IN PREVENTION WORK IS ESSENTIAL

Men were shown to play an important role in violence prevention efforts (Working Together with Men Victoria, Project 27), and while prevention resources aimed specifically at engaging boys and men are formative, eleven BSCW projects (over a quarter of the projects) referred to using resources or engaging with the White Ribbon campaign materials and staff.

> A topic that arose often was that more men need to be involved in violence prevention work, which is why the healthy relationships workshops were essential. (ACCESS Qld, Project 19)

> Both men and women can struggle to see the importance of the role of men in preventing violence against women. Of the sixteen participants in the bystander training across two locations, only two participants were men. This highlights that violence against women is still seen as a "women's issue". (Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service Qld, Project 20)

> Men's programs initiated by Aboriginal men, for Aboriginal men, with Aboriginal men are needed to foster cultural connection, and encourage ownership of positive change. (Aboriginal Health Council of SA, Project 7)

This evidence suggests a community readiness for culturally relevant prevention resources for boys and men.

## 4.7 COLLABORATIVE AND COLLECTIVE IMPACT APPROACHES TO PREVENTION ENCOURAGE GREATER COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND INVESTMENT

Several BSCW projects applied a holistic approach to engaging people across sectors and settings through partnerships and community mobilisation. This allowed knowledge, skills, resources, and good practices to be shared, contributing to the collective impact of violence prevention efforts.

The collaborative approaches to prevention also offered unique opportunities to address the needs of more vulnerable population groups, who may experience additional barriers to seeking support from violence, such as older women. For example, at its planning stage, Domestic Violence Against Older Women: Developing Networks to Improve Service Provision (Project 8), formed a governance group with representatives from the domestic violence, homelessness, and aged service sectors. Joining this governance group were representatives from Aboriginal and CALD services. The governance group met regularly to oversee the project and provide strategic direction across all phases of the action research. The project coordinator, a researcher from Flinders University, highlighted:

> New relationships between DV, homelessness, and older person support services were formed and awareness was raised about the role and function of these services in supporting older women. This was the first time that these services had come together to consider issues specific to older women and what they could collectively do about them. (Project 8)

Developing partnerships as part of the design and implementation of BSCW projects sometimes led to unexpected alliances and participation from a broad range services or community groups. For example, the All of Us Preventing Violence Against Women BSCW project (Project 37) led by Parramatta City Council noted that services that "had not previously identified they had a role in preventing violence against women" became engaged, and with this community. Buy-in to the project also enabled Our Watch to provide training on the *Change the story* framework, so that "50 NSW local government officers from 15 councils gained knowledge on violence against women and primary prevention".

Practical advice for workers seeking to engage local community members, local services, and organisations in prevention work included using local media to highlight the extent of domestic and family violence in the local community, holding meetings at welcoming venues, having engaging speakers, offering training, always having good food, having some clear and useful roles for people to step into or up to, and using the arts and recreation avenues.

Significantly, holistic, and collaborative approaches offered pathways for creative and sustainable community-led action to build safe communities for women and their children. The work required to prevent and end gender-based violence takes time and

ongoing investment. Projects such as No More Excuses, led by the City of Salisbury in South Australia (Project 6), found through their BSCW activities that "collaboration between the council, schools, an internal council reference group, and community service providers was increased and relationships strengthened. As a result, prospective partnerships have been formed for future projects beyond the lifetime of this project."

Sustainability of BSCW project work beyond the life of the grants was an important aim for many practitioners. The Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service (Project 20), working from a collective impact approach, used its specialist domestic violence expertise to extend the capacity of diverse community members to engage in building safer communities. They developed a partnership with James Cook University to deliver specialist training to a large cohort of dentistry students on how to respond and refer appropriately to disclosure or identification of domestic violence. Consequently, "key members of James Cook University were invited on to the Cairns Collective Impact on Domestic and Family Violence to continue to nurture the partnership, despite the ending of the project" (Project 20).

Other examples of whole-of-community approaches included Dads Group (Project 28), which gained support from Rotary Australia, local governments, and local businesses in its BSCW project focused on engaging new fathers, and Working Together With Men (Project 27), which engaged local councils, community health organisations, specialist women's organisations, and a university in co-designing and co-planning the project.

## CHALLENGES

The holistic approach of BSCW projects also came with challenges, particularly in engaging stakeholders, service providers, and priority populations. For example, time and workload pressures prevented some service providers from the Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre in Fitzroy Valley, Western Australia (Project 14), from consulting as widely as they would have liked with their community.

> It was difficult to engage services in the importance of hearing community voices. Service providers have explained how they feel a lot of time pressure and stress in responding to day-to-day work and crises management. People have said that they do not have the time to respond to new suggestions of work. (Project 14)

Changes of staff and low meeting attendances were mentioned as harmful to communication and task realisation in some BSCW projects. For example, the Act Local projects of Save the Children (Project 40) said: "outsiders/fly-in fly-out workers are often viewed [by local community members] as detrimental to communities as staying only for short periods of time (does not enable workers to understand the dynamics in the community) before moving on". This raises the issue of building trust and interpersonal relationship with the target community and confidence in service delivery in rural and remote areas. The evaluation of the BSCW Community of Practice by Kiri Bear Consultancy found that alternative means of communication, such as online meetings and teleconferencing, contributed to building effective relationships.

In some settings, projects had difficulty in engaging with community groups. A worker at the Sammy D Foundation in South Australia noted that "it has been extremely difficult to gain the support of sporting clubs as they have not identified domestic violence awareness training as a priority". Working with schools was also found to be difficult and time consuming because, as identified by the FLOW project in Victoria, "each school differs in the way they operate and their policies and procedures" (Project 29).

Community engagement requires assessing where diverse community members are, and most BSCW grant recipients found they ended up with broader than expected community engagement, achieved through collaboration and partnership approaches. This seems to indicate that there is significant appetite and commitment across Australia's communities to being involved in and committed to ending gender-based violence and building safe communities for women and children.

What is clear is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to prevention of violence and the building of safe communities for women and their children. The BSCW grants stimulated communities across Australia to take action to prevent violence against women and their children. By documenting and sharing their practice through action research, these communities are contributing to the growing national evidence base about this work.

The next section presents the findings of the ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative to support BSCW projects.

# 5. Lessons and findings about what works to support community-based projects to build safe communities

Reflecting on ANROWS's action research work alongside BSCW projects, this section shares learnings about supporting community-based projects to engage with action research to build safe communities and engage in prevention of violence against women work. These findings have been drawn from a thematic analysis of the data collected throughout the course of the Action Research Support Initiative, as indicated in Table 1 (page 20).

## 5.1 REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

The Action Research Support Initiative team reflected in an ongoing and formalised way (e.g. through reflective journaling practices and regular debriefing and reflection meetings) on the challenges and enablers of the action research support provided to BSCW projects, and about the work of the individual BSCW projects.

In considering the overall objectives of the ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative (outlined on page 15), lessons about facilitating action research with community-based projects are presented according to the following key factors:

1. the engagement of BSCW projects with the ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative;
2. the development and use of the action research tools and resources by BSCW projects;
3. the adaptation of the action research support to include and integrate an additional 12 new BSCW projects into the ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative;
4. respectfully managing the diverse needs and dynamics of projects from all jurisdictions, and implemented by a range of service organisations from specialist

domestic and family violence services and community-based services with very little knowledge of domestic and family violence;

5. engaging BSCW projects to publicly share their learnings with other community-based projects and workers and the broader community; and
6. a partnership with Our Watch and a small grant from VicHealth to establish a national BSCW Community of Practice.

The additional success factors that emerged over the life of the ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative were the leveraging of a partnership with Our Watch and attracting funding from VicHealth to establish a more formal and national community of practice. A second phase of the BSCW Community of Practice is supported by DSS. The Community of Practice has a focus on using action research in the primary prevention of violence against women and introducing the BSCW projects to the national primary prevention of violence against women framework *Change the story*.

The above elements and factors mirror the processes and methods found to be effective by the individual BSCW projects. These factors are now discussed in more detail and in the context of outlining the overall lessons about supporting community-based projects.

## 5.2 ENGAGEMENT OF BSCW PROJECTS WITH ANROWS ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORT

According to Wicks and Reason:

> The success or failure of an action research venture often depends on what happens at the beginning of the inquiry process: in the way access is established, and on how participants and co-researchers are engaged early on. (Wicks & Reason, 2009, p. 243)

Kemmis similarly states:

> The first step in action research turns out to be central: *the formation of a communicative space* which is embodied in networks of actual persons…A communicative space is constituted as issues or problems are opened up for discussion, and when participants experience their interaction as fostering the democratic expression of diverse views…[and as permitting] people to achieve mutual understanding and consensus about what to do. (Kemmis, 2001, p. 100)

A "communicative space" was established between the action research support team and BSCW projects at the commencement of ANROWS work by emailing an introductory letter explaining the role of ANROWS to support the projects with action research and sharing with them a succinct statement of the action research support plan. This was followed up with phone calls to each individual project requesting copies of their grant application and activity work plan. During this establishment phase, the ANROWS action research support team conveyed that they would respect the "self-determination" of BSCW projects about what and how they would be researching. This non-directive approach created an open relationship between the BSCW projects and the action

research support team and facilitated an atmosphere whereby the BSCW projects were willing to communicate about the nature of the BSCW projects and to share information about both the successes and the challenges of their work.

Written and verbal feedback was provided to projects about the feasibility of their initial planned activities, how to document and use processes for reflection, and the methods they might consider using to implement and assess the progress of their project using action research.

The ANROWS action research support approach, as outlined in section three of this report, was explained as both action research capacity-building and information-sharing about domestic and family violence. The team introduced themselves as co-researchers with skills and knowledge to share and a willingness to provide some hands-on support with research and project activities. Content knowledge and resources about domestic and family violence was shared without judgement.

Successful engagement with the BSCW projects was assessed on the basis of the projects sharing their project documentation and their high attendance at workshops. Only one project did not attend any of the four workshops. That project had a strong engagement with a university, which was also providing it with research evaluation support. Engagement and communication between the ANROWS action research support team and the BSCW projects were further facilitated by the face-to-face networking opportunities at workshops and a shared email list. On this basis it can be said that the first step of forming a "communicative space" between ANROWS and the BSCW was achieved.

### 5.2.1 ANROWS ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORT WEB PAGE STATISTICS

A web page to share information and tools with the BSCW projects was developed and went live in August 2016. The ANROWS action research web page includes links to the individual BSCW project summaries, the four 1-hour webinars, reports and presentations from each of the four workshops, and downloadable action research resources. Forty BSCW project summaries were posted on the ANROWS action research support web page in January 2017, and this section of the action research support web page accounts for about one-quarter of all views. The profile and purpose of the views is unknown, but there is a significant and clear interest from people visiting the action research support web page to find out more about the nature of community-based approaches to preventing violence against women.

Table 3 summarises the number of views recorded for key action research support activities. It shows the overall number of hits or views for each of these activities as subtotals and combined over three time periods, and as an overall total. The time periods are not uniform and therefore not comparative, but, importantly, the numbers show that the use of the web page has been consistently high.

The resources and activities, reported upon in the web page statistics, were specifically developed for the BSCW projects. The more than 4000 views suggest that either the

**TABLE 3**
ANROWS action research web use

Note: a. disaggregated data not available

| Site/resources | 17 August 2016-12 February 2017 | 13 February 2017-26 April 2017 | 27 April-13 November 2017 | **TOTAL** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Landing page | 625 | 350 | 689 | **1664** |
| Webinars | [a] | [a] | [a] | **315** |
| Workshops | 211 | 44 | 78 | **333** |
| Project story template | 4 | 159 | 150 | **313** |
| Project summaries pages | 348 | 767 | 883 | **1998** |
| **TOTAL** | | | | **4623** |

staff and participants in the projects visited the web page quite a lot or that interest in the action research support resources and information about the BSCW projects was being accessed beyond the BSCW grant project staff.

Numbers for views on the landing page alone we distinguished from the other categories to ensure there was no double-counting. The highest category of views is of the project summaries, followed by views of the project story template and the introduction to action research webinar. Table 3 shows a consistent use of the web page; it can be inferred from the large number of views compared to the number of projects that the web presence has provided BSCW with support to access and make use of the action research support tools.

## 5.3 MODELLING THE USE OF AN ACTION RESEARCH APPROACH AND TOOLS BY THE ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORT TEAM

Using action research as a planning, evaluative, and continuous quality improvement approach to the prevention of violence against women has been central to the action research approach taken by the action research support team in its work with the BSCW project workers. The overall feedback about the approach and tools developed by the ANROWS action research support has been highly positive. In particular, feedback from BSCW projects highlighted the sharing of stories of practice at workshops as the most highly appreciated activity. The action research project design, action resource templates development, the individual project site visits, and phone and email support were designed to demonstrate the ease of using action research in "real time" and as a legitimate part of project work.

Brisbane workshop, 2016

### 5.3.1 ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES

An online questionnaire, delivered via SurveyMonkey, was used to assess the level of knowledge and experience with action research and the areas in which project workers wished to gain more knowledge and skills. This method provided useful information about levels of action research skills and knowledge and was used to shape the first workshop and inform activities during the site visits. This method for gaining feedback and information from the BSCW project workers proved to be effective, and further questionnaires were used to inform the content and to shape each of the subsequent workshops.

Significantly the initial scoping questionnaire revealed three levels of skill and confidence about using action research among the BSCW project workers. This informed the decision to aim workshops at the lower levels of skill and confidence and to use the more experienced and confident workers as workshop presenters. They were supported to share their skills and knowledge through presentations we called *Stories from the field*. In total, 29 of the *Stories from the field* were presented. These are downloadable from the workshop sections of the ANROWS action research support web page.

As such, information from the online questionnaires unexpectedly led the action research support team to develop a mentoring and sharing approach in the workshops, which was a successful ongoing engagement strategy.

### 5.3.2 SITE VISITS AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECT SUPPORT

Meeting with BSCW staff in person enabled relationship building and the provision of real-time support. During the site visits, BSCW projects were walked through the

action research primer (Appendix A), and assisted to refine their action research plan, and to consider appropriate methods to document and share research findings with their communities. Physical visits to the BSCW project sites enabled the ANROWS action research support team to see firsthand the geographic and physical spaces where projects were working and discuss the opportunities and challenges of their work.

The action research support team discussed with the projects the ways they would engage stakeholders, develop partnerships, and include local participants in the BSCW projects; explore and support sustainable embedding of reflective practice in their everyday work; design and evaluate local domestic and family violence resources and training programs; and explore and support ways to use their action research findings to facilitate project sustainability and leverage future or additional resources. Some project workers commented that the ANROWS site visits raised the profile of their work in the host organisation.

During follow-up phone and email engagement, the action research support team provided individualised and responsive research content, supporting practitioners to draw on the available evidence base in their work. For example, BSCW projects were linked up with university researchers and provided with information about campaigns, relevant policy documents such as risk assessment policies and tools, ANROWS and other domestic and family violence resources and conferences, and specific connections between similar and diverse BSCW projects.

### 5.3.3 TEMPLATES: ACTION RESEARCH PRIMER, *STORIES FROM THE FIELD*, AND PROJECT STORY TEMPLATE

The ANROWS action research support action research primer was designed for BSCW projects to use as a planning and reflection document to guide their action research as they planned and then implemented and reflected upon their projects. A lesson from the early phase of the action research support for similar support projects and for future ANROWS initiatives is the importance of clarifying with projects the value of and expectation for them to submit an action research plan for feedback from the action research support team.

The success of the *Stories from the field* presentations at the workshops, as described earlier, led to the idea for a reporting template called a project story template (Appendix B). The template was discussed, changed, and in many ways "co-designed" through feedback from the BSCW projects at the second and third workshop. The action research support team developed tips and guidance notes that were sent to the BSCW projects to support them to share their findings within their organisations, with DSS, and subsequently as a finished BSCW project story to share publicly.

## 5.4 INCLUDING ADDITIONAL BSCW PROJECTS

A similar process of engagement was followed with all BSCW projects, emails, an online questionnaire, and phone contact. This was successful and also used to engage

the additional 12 BSCW projects that were added to the Action Research Support Initiative in August 2016.

Project visits and individual phone and email contact was prioritised to build the "communicative space" with the newer projects. Ideally, and with resources permitting, it would be preferable to hold an introductory workshop about action research at the commencement of all new projects. The introduction to action research webinar posted on the ANROWS web page was reported as a useful resource to the additional projects and had the largest number of views (161) for the webinars. Furthermore, many of the projects suggested that similar support would be a good idea for other grant projects, as there is little time for professional development and reflection on practice in the community sector.

## 5.5 WORKING WITH BSCW PROJECTS IN ALL JURISDICTIONS AND IN DIVERSE SETTINGS AND FINDING COMMON ELEMENTS

Assessment of the effectiveness of community-based interventions to improve responses and implement successful violence against women and their children prevention strategies across Australia is evolving. While a "prevention–response continuum" is language commonly used to describe the important relationship between prevention and response in direct service and crisis services, the action research support team found it was a relevant conceptual tool to apply to understand and explain this range of practice issues in prevention work in diverse community settings across Australia.

"Raising awareness" of violence against women is commonly understood to lead to increased reporting and demand on specialist services, and some BSCW projects based in specialist domestic and family violence services reported direct experience of this. This evidence supports the argument that prevention funding should include accompanying funds for local domestic and family violence response services. It could equally be argued that response services have insight to offer to prevention practitioners, and therefore all response funding should include accompanying funds for local work to prevent violence against women and their children.

The BSCW project stories produced by the projects describe work along a prevention–response continuum with a diverse range of groups and communities and indicate community readiness to challenge the drivers of violence against women.

The following table summarises elements along the prevention–response continuum derived from the diverse BSCW project stories across all jurisdictions, and conversations with projects about the significance of understanding the prevention of violence against women and response to domestic and family violence. All elements along the continuum are desirable and require targeted actions to be achieved. However, they are not exclusive of each other, sequential, or intended to propose a linearity of action.

**FIGURE 6**
Elements of the prevention of violence against women–response to domestic and family violence continuum for community-based projects

**Building Safe Communities for Women and their Children and the prevention–response continuum**

- Knowledge of local populations in the community
- Knowledge of criminal, health, education, and child and community service systems
- Responding to the safety of women and children is foundational to prevention
- Assessing community readiness and engaging with community providers and members
- Challenging gender stereotypes across the life course
- Building gender equality in families, schools, workplaces, faith communities, and governance structures
- Interrupting male violence-response at individual, group, community, institutional, cultural, and societal levels
- Engaging men in prevention

## 5.6 SUPPORTING PROJECTS TO PUBLICLY SHARE THEIR LEARNINGS WITH OTHER COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS AND WORKERS AND THE BROADER COMMUNITY

Presentations of *Stories from the field* is a powerful avenue for BSCW projects to share information with each other while at the same time increasing their confidence at public presentations in a non-threatening and receptive environment. The ANROWS Action Research Support Initiative project story template was developed as a guide for BSCW projects to share their findings. This template had several versions in response and in co-design with BSCW projects. Projects are further encouraged to discuss their project stories with local service providers and the participants in their action research. BSCW projects are also sharing their findings via published journal articles, community forums, and workshops, at conferences, through radio, and in local and social media.

## 5.7 COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AND PARTNERSHIP WITH OUR WATCH

A widely accepted definition of the term from Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder (2002) describes communities of practice as:

> Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis…These people don't necessarily work together on a day-to-day basis, but they get together because they find value in their interactions, as they spend time together, they typically share information, insight, and advice. They solve problems. They think about common issues. They explore ideas and act as sound boards to each other. (Wenger, McDermott, & Synder, 2002, in VicHealth, 2014, pp. 5-6)

The action research support team continually reflected on the processes and outcomes of the support provided to the BSCW projects. The Action Research Support Initiative

in itself facilitated the development of an informal community of practice and engaged the emerging workforce of primary prevention of family violence practitioners across Australia.

ANROWS action research support and Our Watch saw a likely benefit to these practitioners from the opportunity to share knowledge and contribute to building the evidence base about what works in primary prevention in a more formalised and deeper way. To model a sustainable approach in prevention work and to demonstrate through practice the significant value ANROWS sees in action research as a mode of evaluating projects, programs, and service delivery, ANROWS applied for and received a small grant from VicHealth to partner with Our Watch to establish a formal BSCW Community of Practice.

The establishment and co-facilitation of this more formalised BSCW Community of Practice with Our Watch is demonstrative of the *principles* of action research that the action research support team has been seeking to employ internally and to develop with practitioners.

A formative literature review informed a background paper about establishing a BSCW Community of Practice which was sent to all BSCW projects to inform them about the purpose and possible structure for a community of process. The expectation that BSCW participants commit to attending all four of the planned community of practice activities saw a workable number of people form a core community of practice group (from 27 at the first meeting to 12 as a core group). This is important because, as the 2017 Community of Practice evaluation conducted by Kiri Bear Consultancy found, using an online meeting format is best managed with between 10-14 participants.

The independent evaluation of the establishment phase of the 2017 Community of Practice by Kiri Bear Consultancy considered process and impact data gathered through four feedback online questionnaires about each Community of Practice session; an online questionnaire delivered at the end of the evaluation period; and semi-structured interviews with four participants and two facilitators.

The evaluation found that members of the Community of Practice had improved confidence in their ability to do action research and increased their knowledge about primary prevention of domestic and family violence.

> The two themes [problem solving and reflection] were the most consistently mentioned benefits of the Community of Practice by interview participants. The questionnaire results suggest that problem solving and reflection are the community of practice's strongest area of impact. (Independent evaluator)

Key lessons from the Community of Practice were that the combination of face-to-face and teleconference meetings enables both sufficient connections, and the establishment of trust among participants to discuss both what works and the challenges of this work.

The BSCW Community of Practice is the first national prevention of violence against women and their children community of practice in Australia. Findings of the evaluation of both the first and second phase of the Community of Practice are therefore instructive about what it takes to support a prevention of violence against women and their children community of practice at a national level.

# References


The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (2011). *Chapter 10: Priority Populations*. Retrieved from https://archive.ahrq.gov/research/findings/nhqrdr/nhdr11/chap10.html

Australia. Department of Social Services. (2014). *Second action plan 2013-2016 of the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010-2022*. Canberra: DSS.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). *Personal Safety* (4906.0). Retrieved from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0

Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2015). Participatory action research (CFCA practioner resource). Retrieved from https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/participatory-action-research

Buitenweg, R. (2011). *Human rights, human plights in a global village*. Atlanta: Clarity Press.

Chilisa, B. (2011). *Indigenous research methodologies*. London: Sage Publications.

Council of Australian Governments. (2011). *The national plan to reduce violence against women and their children: Including the first three-year action plan*. Canberra: FAHCSIA.

Carmody, M., Salter, M., Presterudstuen, G. H. (2014). *Less to lose and more to gain? Men and Boys Violence Prevention Research Project final report.* Sydney: University of Western Sydney.

Cox, P. (2015). *Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey, 2012: Key findings and future directions* (ANROWS Compass, 01/2015). Sydney: ANROWS.

Crane, P., & Richardson, L. (2000). *Reconnect action research kit*. Retrieved from: https://eprints.qut.edu.au/29347/1/Reconnect_AR_Kit_2000_%282%29.pdf

Darroch, F., & Giles, A. (2014). Decolonizing health research: Community-based participatory research and postcolonial feminist theory. *The Canadian Journal of Action Research, 15*(3), 22-36.

Dick, B. (2016). *Action research and action learning for community and organisational change*. Retrieved January 23, 2016 from http://bobdick.com.au

The Equality Institute. (2016). *Family violence primary prevention: Building a knowledge base and identifying gaps for all manifestations of family violence*. Retrieved from https://www.vic.gov.au/system/user_files/Documents/women/Family_Violence_Primary_Prevention_%E2%80%94_Building_a_knowledge_base_and_identifying_gaps_for_alll_manifestations_of_family_violence.pdf

Finucane, M., & Finucane, S. (2004). *101 ways great and small to prevent family violence*. Retrieved from http://www.dvrcv.org.au/publications/books-and-reports/101-ways

Greenwood, D., & Levin, M. (2007). *Introduction to action research: Social research for social change* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jewkes, R., Flood, M., & Lang, J. (2015). From work with men and boys to changes of social norms and reduction of inequities in gender relations: A conceptual shift in prevention of violence against women and girls. *The Lancet, 385*(9977), 1580-1589.

Lienert, T. (2002). Doing an action research evaluation. *Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin, 1,* 16-20.

Mason, C. N. (2010). *Leading at the intersections: An introduction to the intersectional approach model for policy & social change*. Retrieved from http://cnicolemason.com/index/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/wcpn.intersections.pdf

Our Watch. (2016). *Community prevention of violence against women and children: A tool kit for practitioners.* Melbourne: Our Watch.

Our Watch, ANROWS, & VicHealth. (2015). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children*. Retrieved from https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/0aa0109b-6b03-43f2-85fe-a9f5ec92ae4e/Change-the-story-framework-prevent-violence-women-children-AA-new.pdf

Reason, P. (1998). Three approaches to participative inquiry. In *Strategies of Qualitative Research* (pp. 261-291). London: Sage.

Reid, C. (2004). Advancing women's social justice agendas: A feminist action research framework. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3*(3), 1-15.

United Nations General Assembly. (1993). *Declaration on the elimination of violence against women*. New York: United Nations.

VicHealth. (2014). *Project report (including evaluation findings): Building a community of practice for prevention: Reducing Violence against Women and their Children grants program*. Retrieved from http://assets.justice.vic.gov.au/ccp/resources/271f5379-35da-40b6-aeae-d8595000440e/rcawc_cop_evaluation_report_vichealth.pdf

VicHealth. (2017). *Preventing violence against women: From policy to practice*. Melbourne: VicHealth.

Wadsworth, Y. (2011a). *Do It Yourself Social Research* (3rd ed.). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Wadsworth, Y. (2011b). *Everyday evaluation on the run* (3rd ed.). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Webster, K. (2016). *A preventable burden: Measuring and addressing the prevalence and health impacts of intimate partner violence in Australian women: Key findings and future directions* (ANROWS Compass, 07/2016). Sydney: ANROWS.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge.* Boston: Harvard Business School.

Wicks, P. G., Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2008). Living inquiry: Personal, political, and philosophical groundings for action research practice. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Wright, M. (2011). Research as intervention: Engaging silenced voices. *ALAR: Action Learning and Action Research Journal, 17*(2), 25.

# APPENDIX


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| APPENDIX A | ANROWS action research primer | 64 |
| Attachment 1 | Overall action research process guide | 66 |
| Attachment 2 | Key stakeholder template | 71 |
| Attachment 3 | Action research primer | 73 |
| APPENDIX B | ANROWS project story template | 78 |

APPENDIX A

# ANROWS action research primer

*Liz Orr and Dr Peter Ninnes*

## INTRODUCTION

When we do action research, there are no right or wrong questions or answers. Instead, action research aims to assist our understanding of issues and what works and what can be improved or changed.

Action research is research you do in the course of your everyday work.

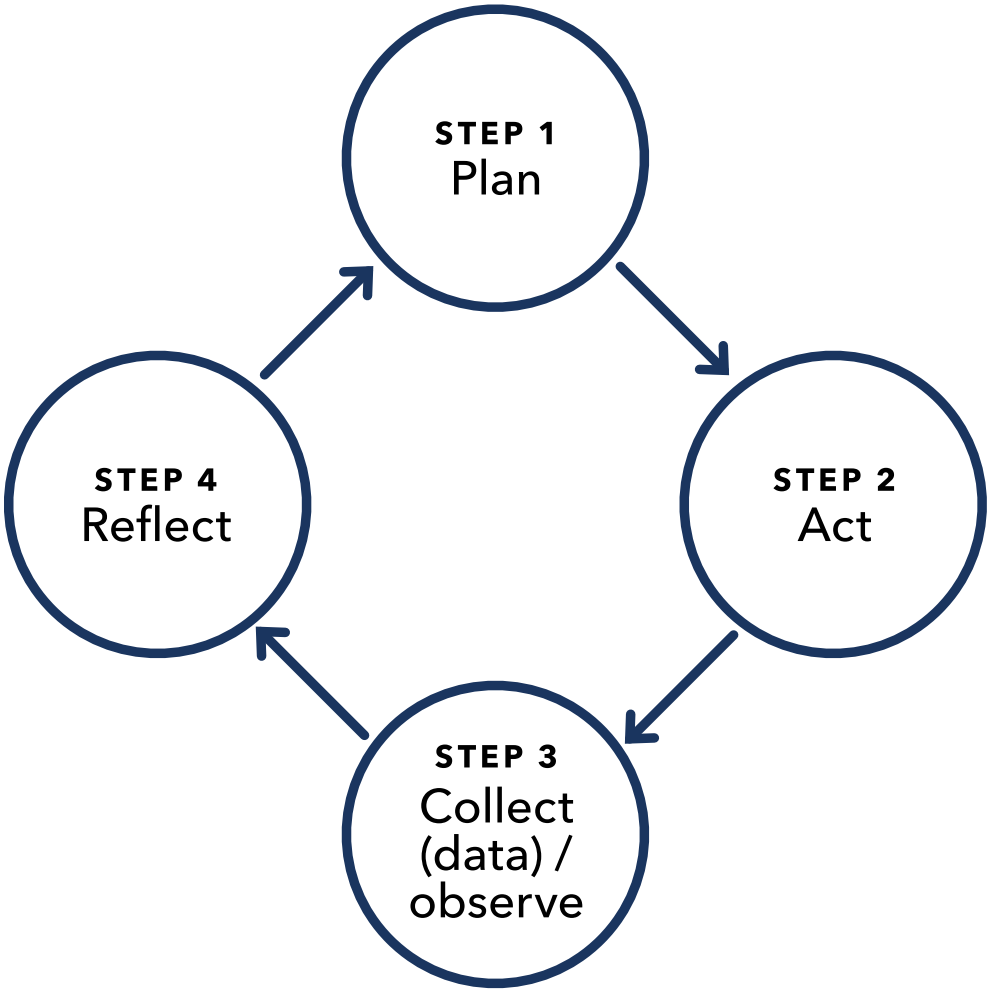
The aim of action research is to document and reflect on what you are doing. As a result, you may be able to improve the outcomes of your work.

Action research is an integral part of the Building Safe Communities for Women grants. The purpose is to use research to show clearly what works and what doesn't work in preventing violence against women and their children.

Designing your action research project well, and collecting and analysing good quality data, will help you see if what you are actually doing makes a difference, and what can be improved.

# APPENDIX A
## ANROWS Action research primer

Action research is usually thought of as involving a cycle of steps:




The main steps in the overall action research process are shown in Attachment 1 below. Use the template to plan your whole action research project. Attachment 2 is a key stakeholder template, and an example of the template filled in for a fictitious project is in Attachment 3.

ATTACHMENT 1

# Overall action research process guide

*Some of the information to be included in this template may be in your project proposal or activity work plan. If so, summarise it in the relevant part of the table.*

Project title: _____ Your names: _____

Your organisation's name: _____ Other organisations involved: _____

| Step | Activity | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **PLAN**<br>1. Address the ethical aspects of the research | Who may be affected by the issues and the results of the research? | People who will be affected: |
| | How does your project aim to include a diverse range of views and people? If your project has a specific target group or perspective, write down the reasons for this. | Describe how your project will include a diverse range of views:<br><br>If your project has a specific target group or perspective, write the reasons here: |
| | During your action research project, how will you respect the views of those being researched? | How you will respect the views of those being researched: |
| | How will you obtain informed consent from the research participants? | How will you obtain informed consent: |

| Step | Activity | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| 2. Identifying the focus of your action research | Identify:<br>• The issue that you want to address; and/or<br>• Some weakness you want to improve; and/or<br>• Some strength in your processes that you want to enhance. | What issue do you want to address, what area do you want to improve, or what strength do you want to enhance? |
| | Identifying an issue should involve consultation—with your team members, management, other teams in your organisation, and other stakeholders (see the stakeholder analysis template in Attachment 2) about the action research. | Make a list of who you will consult with. Cross each one off after you've completed consultations. |
| | Think about the best way to consult, for example, in writing, in a meeting, individually, using interpreters. | How will you consult? |
| | What information, that is, data or evidence do you have already about the focus area? For example, case notes, evaluations, questionnaires, interviews, consultation notes, DV action plan, service map, etc. | Briefly describe the evidence you have: |
| | What does this data tell you about the issue or the current state of affairs? Does this data provide a baseline that you can use to compare any changes that result from your project action?<br>(see notes 1 and 2 below) | Briefly describe what your evidence suggests: |
| | Do you need more evidence? If so, what kind? | Describe the evidence you need, and how you will get it. |
| | When you have documented what you know about the issue, write a key action research question or questions, and discuss the question or questions with relevant stakeholders. | Key action research question or questions:<br><br>Feedback from stakeholders: |

| Step | Activity | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **ACT** | What action do you plan to take? For example consultations, training, resource development, creating a network, and so on. | Actions: |
| | Who will do the action, where, and when? | Who:<br><br>Where:<br><br>When: |
| | What resources will you need for the action? For example, facilitators, interpreters, transport, food, stationary, rooms, etc. | Resources needed: |

| Step | Activity | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **COLLECT** | How will you collect data, who will do it, where, and when? (see notes 1 and 2 below) | Method 1:<br><br>Method 2:<br><br>Method 3: |
| | What will be your data sources; that is, where will you get your data, when, and who will collect it? | Source 1:<br><br>Source 2:<br><br>Source 3: |
| | What resources will you need for the data collection, for example, develop and print evaluation forms or questionnaires, data collectors, data entry personnel, interview transcribers, IT needs, etc. | Resources needed: |
| | How will you share information about the project, and what permission will you need or what obligations may arise from sharing the information? | How information will be shared:<br><br>Permissions or obligations: |

| Step | Activity | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **REFLECT** | How you will analyse the data? | Analysis method 1:<br><br>Analysis method 2:<br><br>Analysis method 3: |
| | Who will analyse the data, and when? | Who:<br><br>When: |
| | How will you reflect on the data, and who will do this? (See note 3 below) | How:<br><br>Who: |
| | Will you have another action research cycle? If so, when will it start? | Next action cycle starts (date): |

NOTES

1. If you are collecting statistical or survey data, they should be comparable with data you already had collected before the action, or similar data you will collect as part of your plan. E.g. if you did a questionnaire to find out the current state of affairs, then repeat the questionnaire at the end of the action, to see if there was a difference in responses.
2. If you are using narratives, observations, or other forms of qualitative data, you should try to use a similar framework to make sense of the data at different times during the research. E.g. an interview schedule or consultation evaluation method asking similar questions at the beginning, during, and after the action.
3. It's not necessary to leave the reflection until the end—you might consider keeping a project diary and collecting photos to aid your ongoing reflection.

ATTACHMENT 2

# Stakeholder analysis template

Project title: _____ Your organisation's name: _____

| Stakeholder | How will the stakeholders benefit? Are they supportive or not? | What can they do to influence it (both positively and negatively) | Action to get support and reduce opposition. How will you involve and/or inform them? What existing forums could you use? |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Source: Adapted from Tasmania (2012) *The Action Research and Learning Toolkit*. Department of Health and Human Services, p. 41.

ATTACHMENT 3

# Fictitious example of a completed overall action research process guide

*Some of the information to be included in this template may be in your project proposal or activity work plan. If so, summarise it in the relevant part of the table.*

**Project title:** *Improving access to family & domestic violence services for Hali-speaking women*

**Your names:** *Ethel and George*

**Your organisation's name:** *Lokal Town Women's Domestic Violence Service (LTWDVS)*

**Other organisations involved:** *Hali Cultural Association (HCA)*

| Step | Activity | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **PLAN**<br>1. Address the ethical aspects of the research | Who may be affected by the issues and the results of the research? | People who will be affected:<br>*Clients of the LTWDVS* |
| | How does your project aim to include a diverse range of views and people? If your project has a specific target group or perspective, write down the reasons for this. | Describe how your project will include a diverse range of views:<br>*Interview all relevant stakeholders.*<br><br>If your project has a specific target group or perspective, write the reasons here:<br>*The project focuses on female Hali speakers because they are known to be under-represented in LTWDVS service use.* |
| | During your action research project, how will you respect the views of those being researched? | How you will respect the views of those being researched:<br>*Keep interview records confidential, and, when not in use for data analysis, in a locked filing cabinet in the LTWDVS office. Share research report with participants.* |
| | How will you obtain informed consent from the research participants? | How will you obtain informed consent:<br>*Through a consent form written in Hali and verbally with an interpreter prior to participation in the project.* |

| Step | Activity | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| 2. Identifying the focus of your action research | Identify:<br>• The issue that you want to address; and/or<br>• Some weakness you want to improve; and/or<br>• Some strength in your processes that you want to enhance. | What issue do you want to address, what area do you want to improve, or what strength do you want to enhance?<br>*56% of the population in the service catchment area are speakers of Hali but only 15% of clients using the service are Hali speakers. This suggests the service is not reaching members of this major demographic group.* |
| | Identifying an issue should involve consultation—with your team members, management, other teams in your organisation, and other stakeholders (see the Stakeholder Analysis Template in Attachment 2) about the action research. | Make a list of who you will consult with. Cross each one off after you've completed consultations.<br>*Hali ethnic community leaders*<br>*Health providers*<br>*LTWDVS staff* |
| | Think about the best way to consult, for example in writing, in a meeting, individually, using interpreters. | How will you consult?<br>*Have a roundtable at the Hali community centre*<br>*LTWDVS staff meetings* |
| | What information, that is, data or evidence do you have already about the focus area. For example case notes, evaluations, questionnaires, interviews, consultation notes, DV action plan, service map, etc. | Briefly describe the evidence you have:<br>*2011 Census data on Hali speakers in Lokal City*<br>*LTWDVS client demographic data* |
| | What does this data tell you about the issue or the current state of affairs? Does this data provide a baseline that you can use to compare any changes that result from your project action?<br>(see notes 1 and 2 below) | Briefly describe what your evidence suggests:<br>*The service is under-used by Hali speakers.* |
| | Do you need more evidence? If so, what kind? | Describe the evidence you need, and how you will get it.<br>*The census data is 7 years old, but it is the latest available.*<br>*We need data on Hali women's awareness of the service. We will do a random survey.* |
| | When you have documented what you know about the issue, write a key action research question or questions, and discuss the question or questions with relevant stakeholders. | Key action research question or questions:<br>*How effective are various approaches to increasing the awareness and use of LTWDVS services by Hali-speaking women in Lokal City?*<br>Feedback from stakeholders:<br>*Stakeholders suggested adding "in Lokal City" to make the question more specific.* |

| Step | Activity | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **ACT** | What action do you plan to take? For example consultations, training, resource development, creating a network, and so on. | Actions:<br>*Produce Hali brochures, posters, web page. Distribute posters, brochures, and web page info to doctor's surgeries, libraries, community centres. Employ a part-time Hali speaking DV counsellor. Analyse client data.*<br>Reasons:<br>*[After doing the survey above] The survey showed that only 10 percent of Hali language speaking women know about LTWDVS services. Brochures, posters, and websites will enhance knowledge of the service. Distribution points are places frequented by women in our community. The survey also showed that language is a barrier to accessing our services (we have no Hali speaking counsellor)—Hali speaking women want to be able to use their home language.* |
| | Who will do the action, where, and when? | Who:<br>*Brochures and posters production; client data analysis—TWDVS staff*<br>*Brochure and poster distribution—contracted distributor*<br>*Website—contracted web site company*<br>Where:<br>*Brochures and posters production; client data analysis at LTWDVS office*<br>*Brochure and poster distribution — all doctor's surgeries, libraries, community centres*<br>*Brochures— all households in Lokal City*<br>*Website— cyberspace*<br>When:<br>*Brochure and poster production— June–August 2018*<br>*Distribution Sept–Oct 2018*<br>*Website—June 2018 onwards* |
| | What resources will you need for the action? For example facilitators, interpreters, transport, food, stationary, rooms etc. | Resources needed:<br>*Interpreters for posters and brochures in English and Hali* |

| Step | Activity | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **COLLECT** | How will you collect data, who will do it, where, and when? (see notes 1 and 2 below) | Method 1:<br>*Collect and collate client data on service use*<br>Method 2:<br>*Replicate survey re awareness of LTWDVS services*<br>Method 3:<br>*Website hit count*<br>Method 4:<br>*Count of brochures taken from distribution points* |
| | What will be your data sources; that is, where will you get your data, when, and who will collect it? | Source 1a:<br>*LTWDVS client data files*<br>Source 1b:<br>*Client feedback on visit to service ("How did you hear about us, etc.")*<br>Source 2:<br>*Random sample of Hali speakers in Lokal City*<br>Source 3:<br>*Website company*<br>Source 4:<br>*Re-stock brochures each month and record how many remain and deduce how many have been taken.* |
| | What resources will you need for the data collection, for example develop and print evaluation forms or questionnaires, data collectors, data entry personnel, interview transcribers, IT needs, etc. | Resources needed:<br>*Develop and print survey*<br>*Develop and print client feedback form* |
| | How will you share information about the project, and what permission you will need or what obligations may arise from sharing the information? | How information will be shared:<br>*The information will be shared with the HCA through a feedback session/community roundtable.*<br>Permissions or obligations:<br>*All publicity materials will be checked with key officers in the HCA.* |

| Step | Activity | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **REFLECT** | How you will analyse the data? | Analysis method 1a: *Client data software allows numbers of speakers of various languages to be reported each month. These will be compared month by month to look for trends in service use.*<br>1b: *Collate data on how clients heard about the service and calculate numbers presenting per 1000 brochures produced or per poster produced.*<br>Analysis method 2: *The number of responses of each kind for each survey question will be collated and frequencies calculated for both the baseline and the replication. The changes in awareness etc will be compared before and after the intervention.*<br>Analysis method 3: *Frequency of website: unique visitors will be collated each month and trends in numbers of unique visitors plotted.*<br>Analysis method 4: *Count the number of brochures each month. Plot number taken against time (in months).* |
| | Who will analyse the data, and when? | Who: *LTWDVS staff and HCA officials (the latter for non-confidential data only)*<br>When: *Monthly* |
| | How will you reflect on the data, and who will do this? (See note 3 below) | How: *Review data within LTWDVS and with HCA. Hold a community roundtable to present the results and discuss next steps.*<br>Who: *LTWDVS staff, HCA officials, Hali community members.* |
| | Will you have another action research cycle? If so, when will it start? | Next action cycle starts (date): *Depends on the outcome of the community roundtable. Another cycle could occur from January-June 2019.* |

NOTES

1. If you are collecting statistical or survey data, they should be comparable with data you already had collected before the action, or similar data you will collect as part of your plan. E.g. if you did a questionnaire to find out the current state of affairs, then repeat the questionnaire at the end of the action, to see if there was a difference in responses.
2. If you are using narratives, observations, or other forms of qualitative data, you should try to use a similar framework to make sense of the data at different times during the research. E.g. an interview schedule or consultation evaluation method asking similar questions at the beginning, during, and after the action.
3. It's not necessary to leave the reflection until the end—you might consider keeping a project diary and collecting photos to aid your ongoing reflection.

APPENDIX B

# ANROWS action research project story template

*Liz Orr, Stephanie Howard, and Corina Backhouse, May 2017*

This **Action Research Project Story Template** is intended as a guide for Building Safe Communities for Women and their children (BSCW) projects to capture, analyse, and share their project processes, successes, challenges, outcomes, and learnings. The project story can be used as a tool for reflection, evaluation, or "stocktaking" where a project is up to. This includes: sharing with your community, sharing as part of reporting to DSS, and sharing with ANROWS. The project story is not limited to text, and may include photographs, audio, or other multimedia. There may be aspects of this template that are not relevant or useful for your work, and modifications can be made to the questions so that you can best reflect your project story. Documenting and sharing the action research of BSCW projects in this way will provide an **important contribution to the growing evidence-base** around best practices for preventing, reducing, and responding to violence against women and their children.

APPENDIX B
ANROWS action research project story template

# BSCW Project Title

**WHAT IS THE STORY ABOUT?**

Provide a short background. Say what your action research focus is, both topic and process. For example:

"The Lokal service is using the grant to facilitate training of bi-cultural workers about family violence laws and services in the Lokal Region. This is a brief summary of how we went about providing the training, the successes and challenges the project encountered, and what we learnt about doing this work..."

**WHY WAS THE PROJECT CONDUCTED?**

For example:

"Documented local evidence of the prevelance and concerns about family violence..."

"What does the reseach literature and other evidence say? You may look at local, national, and other research findings, as well as the "grey" literature—usually reports from NGOs and government..."

"Are there other successful projects and programs that suggested your approach would work?..."

**WHERE WAS THE PROJECT CONDUCTED?**

Decide if you will identify the town, community, region and/or state and territory.

**PROJECT AIMS**

Briefly describe two or three aims of your BSCW project. For example:

"1. design training program;
2. recruit participant bi-cultural workers;
3. deliver family violence information in a culturally safe setting; and
4. evaluate the project and share lessons with local services and on the ANROWS action research support web page..."

**THE TIMEFRAME**

For example:

"The planning for the work commenced in March 2016 and project funding will cease in December 2018; however, this project aims for sustainable, ongoing training, through documenting outcomes and exploring possible ongoing funding sources..."

**SERVICES/ ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED WITH THE PROJECT**

Stakeholders/funders/supporters/partners

APPENDIX B
ANROWS action research project story template

## PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

Names of community organisations, service providers, and community members, including role or title within organisations where appropriate.

## WHAT WAS DONE DURING THE PROJECT?

For example:

**Activities:** Plan, deliver, evaluation training module, develop resources.

**Events:** Community forums descriptions; number of training sessions and participants; and comments or feedback.

**Research:** Data collected and analysed, including details on how the data was presented and shared.

**Relationships and partnerships:** What partnerships were made? Who did you build relationships with?

**Knowledge, skills, policies, and services:** What knowledge, skills policies, or services were developed during the project? What gaps did you identify? Were changes made in your practices, policies, or approach? Were new or unexpected groups or communities included in your project? Include a story of individual, group, or organisational action and reflection.

**Evaluation:** How did you evaluate the successes and challenges in your project?

**Consultation:** Consultation from an action research perspective is often creative and ongoing. What did consultation look like in your project?

## WHAT HAPPENED?

For example:

"**Relationships developed/improved** service providers and community members; for example, relationships improved between local ethnic community groups, police, and schools..."

"**Collaboration** worked, for example, through MOUs, mapping referral pathways, shared campaigns, or projects..."

"**Increased understanding and awareness of family violence**. How do we know? We observed an increased use of services, programs on ethnic radio about family violence, and faith-based groups advertising services in newsletters..."

"**Challenges.** The responsiveness of services related to their resources and skills, particularly around interpreting and training for working with culturally diverse communities. Additionally, some communities withdrew, whereas other became passionately involved..."

## LEARNINGS FROM THE PROJECT?

For example:

"Need to work in a very flexible way. Timelines and priorities of the community and service providers, need to find common ground..."

"Service providers had difference expectations about time and change than local community organisations..."

APPENDIX B
ANROWS action research project story template

"Definitions of family violence vary widely. In some CALD communities, the definition involves extended family such as in-laws, not just intimate partner violence..."

**WHAT WORKED WELL?**

Critical success factors. For example:

"Commitment to project from service managers and community leaders..."

Linking training about attitudes with information about how to access services..,."

"Ethnic radio programs translated and delivered information about local services from written pamphlets, as some people are not literate..."

"A further critical success factor was having the time to invest on the collaboration work and in building relationships. For example, involving local businesses in event built trust across communities..."

"Consistency of staff contributed to relationship building and local knowledge..."

"Engagement with diverse of community leaders..."

"Creative and ongoing consultations..."

"Plans, events, and activities are community driven. For example, training was held in various venues acceptable and accessible to the community..."

**WHAT DID NOT WORK WELL?**

Challenges and barriers. For example:

"At the start, community leaders were resistant, but once they found the process was working and client information was shared between service providers only with client consent, resistance was resolved..."

"The evaluation process that worked well for young women was not always successful for older women and depended on technology literacy levels and social connectedness. An additional evaluation process has been adapted to make feedback easier for participants with a lowered technological literacy level..."

**WHAT CAN OTHERS LEARN FROM THIS WORK?**

For example:

"Approaches for co-located services provide additional challenges and work, but the success of the project is evident from the benefits of relationship building and increased accesses to services, and therefore safety for women and their children..."

"The commitment of time, consultation, relationship building, and continuing work on the partnerships, despite any challenges, are crucial..."

"Maintaining flexible and creative approaches is best if possible..."

"Variety of times for activities and events will engage a broader range of community members..."

"Without information about support services, it would have been more challenging to open doors to broader family violence prevention work..."

APPENDIX B
ANROWS action research project story template

**SUGGESTIONS TO POLICY-MAKERS/ EDUCATORS/ SERVICE PLANNERS**

For example:
"This model of practice is transferable to other family violence prevention practice and settings..."

**PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY: WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

For example:
"This project has established a collaborative partnership of organisations that want to continue to undertake and evaluate safety of women and their children in this community...."

"Keeping the partnership strong will provide more opportunities to build safe communities and family violence prevention. The challenge is to find time and ways to share success stories with other organisations..."

**PEOPLE TO THANK**

For example:
"This work would not have been possible without the community members who have generously participated, and commitment from our organisation's management staff …"

You could list partner services, reference group members, community leaders, and acknowledge your funding sources.

**STORYTELLER DETAILS**

For example:
"This project story was complied by Elizabeth, Stephanie, and Corina from the ANROWS action research support team. Contact: ...

ANROWS

ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

*to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children*