



# **Organisational Strategy to Strengthen our Intersectional Approach 2018-20**

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# About this Strategy

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## Rationale

Our Watch has developed this *Organisational Strategy to Strengthen our Intersectional Approach* in order to:

- continue to strengthen and upskill staff to take an intersectional approach, and encourage active participation in our evolving understanding and application of this approach;
- embed practices within the organisation, particularly in relation to our current thinking and practice, that will enable staff to adopt an intersectional approach to all of our work; and
- enable Our Watch staff to work more effectively with those affected by different forms of social inequality, discrimination and disadvantage (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, women with disabilities, older women, people of various socio-economic backgrounds, and the LGBTI community).

The (inaugural) 2017 Strategy enabled the organisation to embed processes that allowed for capacity building, created a safe environment to allow for challenging conversations, increased the accountability of all staff, and built a strong foundation for us to continue to evolve our understanding and improve our application of an intersectional approach to our work.

Updating this internal strategy is an opportunity for critical reflection, goal-setting and improvement within the organisation, particularly as Our Watch develops expertise as a backbone organisation and national leader, and to guide and encourage external stakeholders to take an intersectional approach to their work. It is important that we continue to embed an intersectional approach in all aspects of our work internally so that we can demonstrate how to effectively apply an intersectional approach to primary prevention, as well as to be in a strong position to assist our external stakeholders in best practice.

Since Our Watch publicly committed to taking an intersectional approach to the prevention of violence against women (PVAW), we have become a thought leader in this space. We have produced a number of resources that reflect our evolving understanding of an intersectional approach to PVAW including:

- *2016 Conference Reflections* report;
- *Counting on Change: A guide to prevention monitoring*;
- *Primary prevention of family violence against LGBTI people literature review*;
- *Changing the picture: Preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and their Children*;
- Violence against women with disabilities (emerging work in 2018); and
- Violence against older women (emerging work in 2018).

Given the nature of our work, it is critical that Our Watch staff are able to confidently articulate and understand our intersectional approach, particularly as it applies in each of these resources.

## **Our Watch’s evolving understanding of an intersectional approach to the prevention of violence against women and their children:**

*Change the story* found the key drivers of violence against women are particular expressions of gender inequality, and also noted that gender inequality is not experienced the same way by all women, nor expressed the same way in all contexts. *Change the story* also emphasised that the probability of violence against women is higher when the consequences of gender inequality intersect with the impact of other forms of inequality and discrimination (e.g. racism, colonisation and dispossession, discrimination against people with disabilities, and discrimination on the basis of sexuality or gender identity).

*Change the story* articulated three key elements of taking an intersectional approach to prevention as being *inclusive*, *tailored* and applying *intensity of effort and investment*.

- *Inclusive* - a whole-of-population approach that is accessible, and engages people in all demographic groups, from all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, of all ages, abilities, genders and sexualities, and in urban, rural and remote locations. Inclusivity is at the core of current global approaches that address basic human rights. In its application this has included diverse representation in imagery, and messaging that can speak to a broader audience.
- *Tailored* - includes tailoring prevention strategies to fit the context in which they are applied and to make sure that they ‘speak’ to their particular intended audience, because gender inequality, discrimination, power and privilege are experienced in diverse, multiple and intersecting ways across the Australian community. Different communities will also have different cultural understandings and interpretations of some of the key concepts important in prevention work, such as gender, gender relations, and men’s and women’s roles and identities. Its application is a facet of all best practice prevention programming that has helped us to understand that different groups experience violence and gender inequality differently.
- *Intensity of effort and investment* - requires additional effort and resources for communities affected by multiple forms of discrimination and social inequalities. Such communities are likely to experience a magnification in the drivers and reinforcing factors for violence against women (resulting in higher rates of violence experienced women in those groups), as well as a magnification of other social problems.

In developing our understanding based on these elements, we looked to other models such as the public health approach to the reduction of health inequalities through *proportionate universalism* that involves allocating resources in proportion to need<sup>1</sup>.

Since the publication of *Change the story* we have continued to reflect on these principles. We continue to understand ‘inclusivity’ and ‘tailoring’ to be elements of good practice prevention programming. However, we now feel that while valuable, these terms alone may not fully explain and capture what is meant by a truly intersectional approach.

Considering intersectionality in its purest form as Kimberlé Crenshaw intended, intersections between group identities are more than, and different to, the sum of the group. It may not always

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<sup>1</sup> Director of Public Health, A Public Health Annual Report (2013), Report No. 14/2014, found at: <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/pdf/Report%20No.%2014-2014%20DPH%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

be appropriate or effective to try to 'include' different groups in a given approach, program or strategy, or to 'tailor' that approach to different groups. In some cases, different approaches or strategies may be needed. Similarly, the 'intensity of effort and investment' element is better described as a redistribution of investment and effort to achieve equality of outcomes.

As our organisation has grown and the nature of our work has evolved, we are deepening our understanding and challenging ourselves with how we can best apply an intersectional approach, and how we might do that differently in our respective work areas (namely policy, practice, and marketing and communications). We are also aiming to be transparent with our external stakeholders regarding our application and approach, and our ongoing reflection, evaluation and learning processes.

### **The Our Watch definition of an intersectional approach:**

Our Watch has agreed to the following working definition with the understanding that this will be reviewed and modified in the coming year to reflect our evolving understanding. This definition has been developed to guide our internal understanding of an intersectional approach.

*The Our Watch intersectional understanding of violence against women: acknowledges that while gender inequality is a necessary condition for violence against women, it is not the only or necessarily the most prominent factor in every context. Violence against women is often experienced in combination with other forms of structural inequality and discrimination. Examining how other forms of structural inequality and discrimination intersect with gender inequalities to exacerbate violence is necessary to effectively address the root causes of violence against all women, across the diversity of the Australian population.*

While our understanding continues to evolve, the organisation is committed to testing our approach and definition.

The following objectives have been developed for this Strategy to achieve by the end of the 2018-2020 period:

- 1. All staff believe an intersectional approach is important to their work and feel confident they understand how to apply it in their work (recognising these understandings and skills will continually evolve)**

#### **Actions include:**

- Strengthen internal communications
- Improve accountability of all staff
- Develop staff recruitment practices that improve the diversity of staff

- 2. Apply an intersectional approach to our external messaging and communications**

#### **Actions include:**

- Strengthen external communications
- Embed an intersectional approach to campaigns

- 3. Strengthen stakeholder engagement with specialist organisations, and representation from specialist organisations on our project advisory structures**

#### **Actions include:**

- Embed stakeholder engagement principles in our work
- Strengthen procurement process
- Establish external pathways

**4. Demonstrate continuous improvement in the articulation and application of an intersectional approach when building our evidence base and our approach to evaluation**

**Actions include:**

- Identify emerging evaluation and research principles and practices
- Improve external data collection
- Build policy evidence-base

**5. Drawing on the principles in the handbook and the Indigenous resource, continue to improve the integration of intersectionality in our setting and system based work, and our other projects**

**Actions include:**

- Identify emerging practice principles
- Document and disseminate principles
- Strengthen and integrate an intersectional understanding into RRE

Intersectionality Working Group

The Intersectionality Working Group is comprised of representatives from across the organisation. At the time of drafting the 2018-20 Strategy they include:

- Senior Policy Advisors, Intersectionality
- Marketing and Communications Advisor
- Manager, Media and Communications
- Human Resource Officer
- Senior Advisor, Practice Leadership
- Senior Education Advisor

The development and implementation of the Strategy is led by the Senior Policy Advisor, Intersectionality.

**Monitoring and evaluation of Strategy:**

The Intersectionality Working Group will oversee the progress of the Strategy and provide quarterly updates to the Senior Executive Team. The Strategy will be reviewed in January 2019 and updated for 2019-2020. At the end of the Strategy information collected by an internal survey, which will be distributed during the course of the Strategy to measure and evaluate its effectiveness.

**Timelines:**

Launch: 12 April 2018

Implementation: February 2018 - 2020

Mid-point evaluation: February 2019

Final evaluation: February 2020