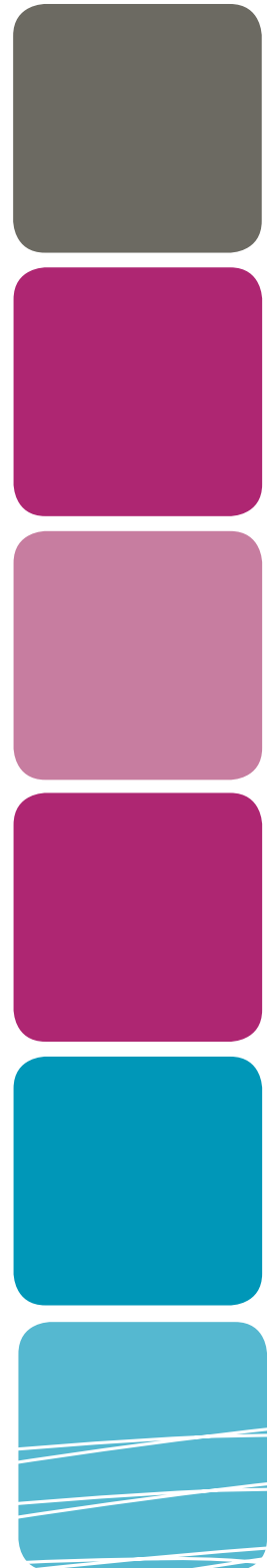


Victorian Government Achievements: Women's Progress Report 2007-08



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Foreword



Each year we report to the community on the government's progress towards our goal of achieving equality for women in all areas of society.

This report highlights achievements between July 2007 and June 2008 in four priority areas: justice and safety; education, work and economic independence; health, wellbeing and community strengthening; and representation and equity.

The Victorian Government is committed to reducing and ultimately preventing violence against women, with significant investment to build effective responses that have focused on the development of the family violence reforms and sexual assault reforms. A number of initiatives are under way to support women to return to the workforce and education and training, and to improve work-life balance. We are committed to improve the physical, mental and social wellbeing of Victorian women. We also continue to be fully committed to recognising the contribution of Victorian women and to promoting their leadership and participation in all aspects of Victorian life.

In 2008, we celebrated 100 years since Victorian women gained the right to vote in state government elections. During the year, thousands of Victorians participated in a series of events and initiatives to celebrate this important democratic milestone. The theme of the anniversary year celebrations was *Victorian Women Vote 1908-2008 – Knowing our past, transforming our future*. In understanding our journey we can continue to take on the challenges that remain to ensure everybody can participate in our community.

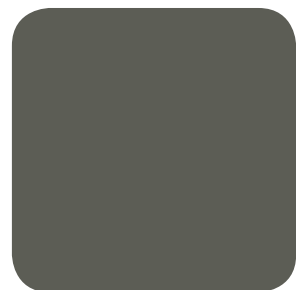
While significant progress has been made, the Victorian Government believes that more needs to be done to advance equal and full participation of women in our society.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that women can lead safe, productive lives, in the Victorian community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maxine Morand". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maxine Morand, MP
Minister for Women's Affairs

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Introduction

The government is committed to making Victoria a better place to live, work and raise a family. This means improving access to services, reducing barriers to opportunities and strengthening assistance for disadvantaged groups and places.

Significant legislative changes to advance women's capacity to participate equally in all aspects of life have commenced over the last twelve months. 2008 also brought into focus the contribution and participation of women as Victoria celebrated the centenary of women's suffrage.

More women than ever before are participating in paid employment and balancing work and family.

Women represent 51 per cent of the Victorian community, yet despite their increased participation, continue to be under-represented in management and leadership positions in most industries.

Women are more likely to work in temporary and low paid jobs and are more likely to fear violence and crime in the community.

The government has been addressing these and other areas of importance for women in four priority areas. These priority areas guide the development of government policies, programs and services for women.

Justice and safety

The government is committed to making Victorian homes, communities and workplaces safer for women and their families and addressing family violence, sexual assault, public safety, and violence in the workplace through specific activities. Initiatives have focused on:

- improving protection and justice
- integrating service responses
- strengthening prevention activities and community education, and
- strengthening community action and coordination.

Education, work and economic independence

Workplaces need to be supported and encouraged to ensure that they are fair, equitable, and meet the diverse needs of women. The value of unpaid and paid work must be recognised and access to education and training is essential. Initiatives have focused on:

- improving options to achieve a better balance between work and family
- increasing support for women in the workforce, and
- supporting the increased participation of women in the labour force.

Health, wellbeing and community strengthening

The government aims to support and strengthen the health system so that it can respond to and assist with the physical, mental and social wellbeing of women and their families. The capacity of local communities to address this needs to be increased. Initiatives have focused on:

- improving access to government services
- improving health outcomes for Victorian women, and
- increasing participation by diverse groups of women in community, cultural and recreational activities.

Representation and equity

The government aims to improve the representation of women in decision-making and leadership roles in our communities and promote the contribution of diverse women in all areas of public life. Initiatives have focused on increasing:

- participation by women in decision-making processes
- women's access to information
- opportunities for women to secure leadership roles, and
- participation by women in sport and recreation.

Achievements 2007-08: Justice and safety

Women's safety

Women's Safety Strategy

The *Women's Safety Strategy 2002-07* represented a whole-of-government commitment to work together under a single policy framework to reduce the level, and fear, of violence against women in Victoria. By the end of 2007, 62 initiatives had been implemented under the Strategy. These initiatives were designed to improve the safety of women in Victoria in four key areas of government activity:

- protection and justice
- options for women
- violence prevention and education
- community action and coordination.

An independent evaluation of the Strategy was completed in late 2007. The key findings of the evaluation were the substantial strengthening of the family violence service response and progress with the government's sexual assault reform package.

The Victorian Government will continue to work in partnership with non-government organisations through the Family Violence Statewide Advisory Committee and the Statewide Advisory Committee to Prevent Sexual Assault.

Women's Safety Forum

The fourth Annual Women's Safety Forum was held in July 2007 as a part of the *Women's Safety Strategy*. More than 150 women attended this year's Forum, 'Measuring Women's Safety', which provided an opportunity to share information on research and best practice and to discuss the effectiveness of different models for measuring women's safety and strategies for future implementation.

The Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework was launched at the Forum. The Framework provides a common approach to improve assessment of safety and risk in families so that service providers can better identify and respond to family violence.

Family violence

Victorian Integrated Family Violence Reform Strategy

The aims of the family violence reforms are to:

- improve the safety of women and children (particularly those at greatest risk of experiencing family violence)
- ensure men who use violence are held accountable for their actions
- prevent family violence from occurring.

The government has committed over \$75 million since 2005 to reform and integrate the system response to family violence, linking the police and legal response with increased services and support to victims.

As of end June 2008, the government has achieved the following key family violence reforms:

- The establishment of regional partnerships improving service access and bringing together family violence, police courts and mainstream services in every region.
- The training of over 6,400 operational police in the new *Police Code of Practice* to ensure a more effective police response – application of intervention orders by Victoria Police have increased by 169 per cent since 2004, and charges laid have increased by 183 per cent since 2004.
- The funding of additional services across Victoria to supply refuge accommodation, intensive case management, after-hours support, women's and children's counselling, and men's behavioural change programs.
- Specialised court responses, including the Family Violence Court Division (located in Heidelberg and Ballarat Magistrates' Courts) and three new Family Violence Specialist Services (Melbourne, Frankston and Sunshine/Werribee Magistrates' Courts).

Indigenous family violence

The Indigenous Family Violence 10-Year Plan *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities* was launched in June 2008. It was developed in partnership with the Indigenous community and aims to improve the safety of Indigenous victims, especially women and children, and increase accountability of perpetrators.

Family Violence data collection

Victorian Family Violence Database

Seven years of Victorian family violence data has been collected from Victoria Police, the Magistrates' and Children's Courts and Department of Human Services (DHS) Supported Accommodation Services to provide an improved evidence base for family violence services and policy. As of 2008 the database will include data from the Department of Justice (DoJ) Victims of Crime Helpline, DHS Victorian Public hospital emergency data and the DHS Integrated Reporting Information System database. The third report for this project is currently being finalised.

Family Violence Benchmark Data project

The Family Violence Interdepartmental Committee funded a Benchmark Data project in 2007 to strengthen capacity to effectively measure the family violence reforms. The project provides time-series data collected every six months over a two-year period from the police, courts and family violence service providers that focus on a range of indicators of reform. Data was collected over two two-week periods in September 2007 and March 2008. The final two data collections will be in September 2008 and March 2009. An analysis of this data will then be undertaken.

Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework

The Victorian Government is committed to providing a consistent approach to family violence risk assessment and risk management and training to family violence workers. A Common Risk Assessment Framework was launched in July 2007 to improve assessment of safety and risk in families so that service providers can better identify and respond to family violence. The Framework manual was distributed to service providers throughout Victoria. An audit of risk assessment and risk management practices across Victoria was conducted during 2007-08 to inform the development of a training program to be delivered in 2008-09 to 3,500 family violence workers and related mainstream services.

Mothers' Advocates in the Community (MOSAIC)

MOSAIC is a project which enhances the capacity of local volunteer and paid community mentor mothers to support mothers at risk of partner abuse. The model innovatively involves the mothers (as mentors) as well as recipients of support. The core of the project is to create local support networks with community members and to ensure that support is sustainable.

Sexual assault

Sexual Assault Reform Package

The \$34.2 million Sexual Assault Reform Package incorporates the justice, police and corrections portfolios and implements the recommendations of the Victorian Law Reform Commission's *Sexual Offences: Law and Procedure Final Report* (March 2004).

The main objectives of the package are:

- strengthening and improving the criminal justice system response to sexual assault cases, through specialisation
- prevention and early intervention of sexual assault
- improved support for and responsiveness to the needs of sexual assault victims.

Key outcomes in 2007-08 included:

- The County Court extended the Sex Offences list to all regional and rural locations across Victoria following the introduction of the *Crimes (Sexual Offences) Act 2006*.
- Two multi-disciplinary centres were established to provide justice and human services in the one location, at Frankston and Mildura. Services include specially trained police teams – Sexual Offences and Child Investigations Teams, sexual assault support services from local Centres Against Sexual Assault staff, and forensic medical examiners.
- Continued development of the Forensic Nurses Network which trains and supports nurses so they can provide timely forensic examination for adult victims of sexual assault. The Network complements existing services to ensure timely and appropriate services. Twelve nurses completed the Graduate Certificate of Nursing (Forensic) with a further 12 nurses enrolled.

Trafficked women project

During 2007-08 the Victorian Government, through the Victorian Multicultural Commission and DoJ, provided annual funding of \$80,000 as part of a three-year commitment for the organisation Project Respect. The project was undertaken in partnership with the Good Shepherd Social Justice Network. Project Respect provides outreach, support and accommodation to trafficked women in Victoria. This assistance will also contribute to a greater understanding of the issues and extent of the trafficking in women in Victoria.

Personal safety program for primary school-aged students

A personal safety program that incorporates physical, sexual and emotional safety for primary school students across all year levels was piloted and will be rolled out in 2008-09. The program aims to increase student, staff and parental awareness and knowledge of sexually appropriate behaviours and strategies about how to respond and get help.

Law reform

Family Violence Protection Bill 2008

The Victorian Government introduced the new Family Violence Protection Bill to better protect victims of family violence and hold perpetrators to account for their actions. The new Bill:

- extends the definition of family violence to economic and emotional abuse, as well as other types of threatening and controlling behaviour
- grants police more powers, including a new system of police-issued family violence safety notices, so they can respond more quickly and effectively to family violence
- creates an enhanced system of family violence intervention orders that can exclude the perpetrator from the home, and makes it easier to adjust tenancy

arrangements to support victims of family violence to remain in their home

- improves the court system to encourage greater reporting by victims, including restricting perpetrators from cross examining their victims
- provides protection for people with a disability who are in a 'family-like relationship' with their carer.

Abortion Law Reform in Victoria

Abortion is a significant legal and health issue for women in Victoria. The Victorian Government referred the issue to the Victorian Law Reform Commission. Victorian Law Reform Commission's subsequent report, *Law of Abortion*, was tabled in Parliament in May 2008 and provided three options to the government for the decriminalisation of abortion in Victoria¹.

Women prisoners and offenders

Better Pathways: An Integrated Response to Women's Offending and Re-offending

The *Better Pathways* strategy consists of 37 initiatives to reduce women's offending, imprisonment, re-offending and victimisation. A range of key initiatives were implemented in 2007-08, including:

- Practical support for women offenders on supervised community-based orders, with 2,000 travel and child care subsidies issued.
- Specialist sexual assault counselling, advocacy and support services for women prisoners, with more than 60 women receiving counselling and support services.

- Marmak Integrated Mental Health Service, a new flexible intensive support unit to accommodate and provide specialist care to women prisoners with mental health care needs commenced operation in July 2007 at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.
- The Women's Correctional Services Framework to ensure correctional programs and services are sensitive to the gender and cultural needs of women prisoners and offenders was completed in August 2007.
- A Multicultural Liaison Officer provided support to CALD women prisoners and promoted awareness of issues affecting women prisoners from CALD backgrounds, to ensure cultural sensitivity in correctional services. For example, a Problem Gambling Program for Vietnamese women was developed and implemented to address the high incidence of problem gambling among Vietnamese women offenders.
- Employment training opportunities provided for women offenders and women exiting prison to assist them to secure and maintain employment, with 80 women offenders placed in employment. Of these, 46 women had maintained their employment for at least 13 weeks.
- A pilot to assist women prisoners to manage and minimise debt.
- The post-release support period for women exiting prison was extended. As of end June 2008, more than 190 women had received support.

¹ The Abortion Law Reform Bill passed through the Victorian parliament without amendment in October 2008.

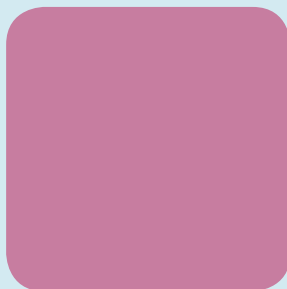
Case Study: Partnering to deliver a powerful anti-violence campaign

A communications campaign containing powerful anti-violence messages was the outcome of a strong partnership between Mildura police and the local Indigenous community.

The campaign, which consisted of a series of television advertisements and posters, also led to improved community and police relations.

Three television advertisements were developed and shown on local television in Mildura from October 2006 to December 2007. Each advertisement focused on different target groups: women, women and children, and men. One advertisement featured local women encouraging others to report violence, the impact of violence on children was the focus of the second advertisement, while the third featured a prominent Indigenous AFL player communicating that violence is not acceptable.

The advertisement which was targeted at men used black and white images of the faces of local Indigenous men with a voiceover of the anti-violence message, "Sexual abuse and violence is shame. Strong men walk away".



Achievements 2007-08: Education, work and economic independence

Education and training opportunities

Returning to Earning

Returning to Earning is a four-year \$13.2 million program to assist parents who have been out of the paid workforce for at least two years while caring for children, to upgrade their skills to prepare for re-entry into the workforce. Women are the major beneficiaries. 2,950 grants of up to \$1,000 were allocated in 2007-08.

ways2work

An online toolkit was developed to provide information for parents and carers returning to work and their employers. The ways2work website gives practical advice for people thinking about returning to work, including information on industries and occupations where skill shortages exist, as well as work/family balance and rights, responsibilities and entitlements.

Victorian Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for Women Network

The Victorian ICT for Women Network is an industry-driven initiative which aims to facilitate entry, retention and progression of women working in ICT. The Network offers mentoring for young women by experienced industry representatives.

During 2007-08 the Network delivered numerous events and activities including:

- a conference, workshops, seminars and networking events in regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne, and
- career expo 'Go Girl Go For IT'.

The Network has grown to 320 women from the ICT industry, government and education sectors.

Public Tenant Employment Program

The Victorian Government, through DHS, aims to create employment and training opportunities for people living in public housing. During 2007-08, employment opportunities for women were actively sought in the areas of Home and Community Care, Aged Care and Disability Services.

Improved career pathways and leadership opportunities in the Victorian Public Sector

Aspiring to Lead – Women in Management program

The Aspiring to Lead program is designed to help participants gain confidence and knowledge, to increase women's representation at all levels within the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, particularly in executive roles. Fifty-seven women have participated in Women in Management workshops since 2002.

Women in Education

Learning to Lead Effective Schools Strategy

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) has invested \$7.2 million in leadership programs for teachers. The Strategy aims to increase the representation of women in leadership positions and addresses the varying development needs and career stages of teachers.

This included a number of initiatives which have been attractive to female teachers. One was the Preparing for Leadership program, designed to prepare aspirant leaders to enhance their leadership capacity or move into a leadership role. Another has been the Leading Professional Learning program, designed to develop skills amongst participants to lead the professional development of others. In 2007-08, at least 75 per cent of participants in these initiatives were women.

In addition, the Eleanor Davis School Leadership program is designed to develop leadership capacity of female teachers to assist women become principals. The program provides training to 30 women each year and around half of all participants have successfully obtained promotions.

Workforce Development Strategy

The Workforce Development Strategy aims to support and improve the career development, progression, retention and training of women in the DEECD workforce.

- Refresher Courses for Teachers Returning to Government Schools, provided in metropolitan and regional locations to enable participants who have not taught for at least three years to update their knowledge and skills. Courses are flexible to suit participants' needs and include mentoring and support. In 2007-08, 136 returning teachers completed a refresher course and 88 per cent were women.
- The Teacher Professional Leave program, to provide teachers with opportunities to undertake professional learning. In 2007-08, 548 teachers participated and 80 per cent were women.

The Julia Flynn Scholarship program

The Julia Flynn Scholarship program targets female public servants for a leadership program to increase the representation of women in senior positions in DEECD. During 2007-08, 16 women participated in the program.

Women in Emergency Services

Victoria Police Equity initiatives

Victoria Police implemented a range of equity initiatives to support female police officers and increase the recruitment of women. Attraction and retention strategies for female police included the development and implementation of a range of flexible work policies, and the Victoria Police Diversity Strategy, which ensures that diversity competence is integrated into existing processes such as recruitment, transfer and promotion. Flexible work options introduced to meet the different needs of employees and improve work-life balance included regular part-time employment, buy-back of accrued time off and purchased leave.

Representation of women among police and recruits reached 23.1 per cent as of the end of June 2008, an increase of 5.3 per cent over the past five years. Victoria has the one of the highest retention rates for female police of any Australasian policing jurisdiction.

Diversity in Emergency Services Conference

The Diversity in Emergency Services Conference was held in November 2007. Hosted in partnership by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the United Firefighters Union, it ran over 2.5 days and attracted 300 participants. Presentations focused on gender equity in emergency services and analysed the current role of women in traditionally male environments.

Women's Leadership and Engagement Forums – Country Fire Authority (CFA)

These forums aim to draw on the experiences of women in the CFA and allow for networking and the sharing of ideas on how to enhance women's leadership in the CFA.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade International Women's Day Breakfast Seminar

More than one hundred young women attended the seminar, which aimed to encourage young women to consider a career in the emergency services sector. Speakers included a female firefighter, police officer, paramedic and SES operational controller.

Women and Career Fire Fighting

The Women and Career Fire Fighting Promotional Session provided an environment for women to learn more about the role of a career fire fighter and gave women the opportunity to learn more about the recruitment process. The CFA is committed to increasing the numbers of women joining the CFA.

Work and family responsibilities

During 2007-08 the government continued to promote work-life balance. Legislative reform and a range of initiatives encouraged flexible work arrangements to assist employees balance their work and family obligations. Initiatives included:

Equal Opportunity Amendment (Family Responsibilities) Act 2008

The *Equal Opportunity Act* now provides that employers should seriously consider how they may be able to accommodate their workers' parental or carer responsibilities in the workplace. The Act gives employees the right to make a claim of discrimination if an employer unreasonably refuses to accommodate family or carer responsibilities. The amendment is intended to benefit working parents and carers in returning to and remaining in work by encouraging employers to provide flexible work options.

Work and Family Balance in Regional Victoria

A three-year research program commenced to examine how workers, employers and communities are working to assist work and family balance across regional Victoria. This program builds on the success of a pilot project.

Women's rights and equality: What do they want now?

The research report *Women's rights and equality: What do they want now?* looked at women, work, family, equality and safety. It reflects on women's views 30 years since the first Victorian legislation dealing with discrimination on the basis of gender, and the 100 year anniversary of women's suffrage. The research report was launched by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission on International Women's Day in 2008.

The research report provides valuable insight into the views of women today on important issues such as combining work and family life, the challenges of finding flexible and secure work and paid parental leave.

Economic independence

Women's Access to Finance

The Women's Access to Finance program is a three-part seminar and mentoring series aimed at helping women business operators better understand and access finance so as to improve and expand their business. The program assists women who are running or intending to run a business to better understand and access finance for business expansion.

During 2007-08 there were 23 seminars with 233 participants.

Women's Financial Literacy

The Women's Financial Literacy project has developed workshops and seminars for women of diverse ages and backgrounds. More than 2,500 women are expected to attend a series of workshops and seminars over the next three years. This project was developed in partnership with a range of community organisations.



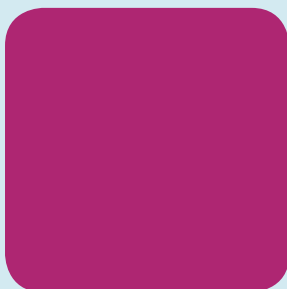
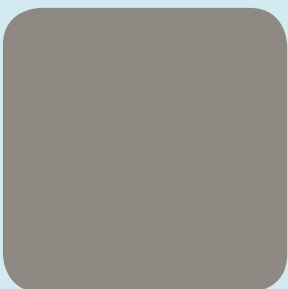
Case Study: Enterprising Women

Supporting marginalised women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities to start their own business or learn more about the financial systems and structures is at the core of the *Enterprising Women* project.

Women's Health in the North and Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre joined forces to develop and deliver the program for Melbourne's northern region which received financial support from the Victorian Government's Community Support Fund.

The project involved a community development approach to business education and financial literacy among women from CALD communities. Women involved in the project were those who may not have otherwise had opportunities to start small businesses or to participate economically in their communities.

As one participant said,
"Enterprising Women started everything! ... Working with the support and feedback from the group was very important. The networking between women is excellent and inspiring – women helping women gives you confidence. And meeting women from all nations ... nobody cares where you come from. We are all in business together; helping one another and motivating one another."



Achievements 2007-08: Health, wellbeing and community strengthening

Better health outcomes for diverse women

Women's health and wellbeing

The *Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2006-10* outlines the government's commitment to improving women's health and wellbeing, and focuses on three priority action areas: mental health and wellbeing, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing, and social connectedness.

The *Gender and Diversity Lens* was developed as a template to assist Victorian Government-funded health services to routinely assess and improve approaches to women's health and wellbeing issues. Training sessions were run across regions to support the uptake of this resource.

The new Royal Women's Hospital

The new Royal Women's Hospital constructed by the Victorian Government was opened on 13 June 2008. It is expected to perform 12,000 operations and 11,000 day procedures each year, providing an extensive range of outpatient, women's health, pregnancy day-care and breastfeeding education and support services.

Maternal and child health

A range of initiatives have been provided in 2007-08 to improve services for women and their families. The Victorian Government announced an additional \$54.9 million in June 2008 to boost Maternal and Child Health Services across the state.

Maternity services

Significant investment in maternity services was provided through \$35 million over four years for more inpatient births and post-natal home visits delivered through hospitals.

Koori Maternity Services Program

The Koori Maternity Services Program provides culturally appropriate support to women during pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. Midwives and Aboriginal health workers are employed to provide a range of clinical, linkage and health promotion services to women at 11 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation sites throughout Victoria. Positive links have been developed with mainstream health services and Koori maternity services, enhancing cooperation towards improved relationships and creating better outcomes for Indigenous health.

Post and antenatal depression support

Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services were supported by the Victorian Government to work with mothers with postnatal depression (PND), their infants and families. Mother/baby mental health initiatives provided consultations to MCH services in urban interface councils and delivered training and education about PND to MCH services across Victoria.

The Victorian Government funded the Post and Antenatal Depression Association (PANDA) (a Victorian, not-for-profit, self-help organisation) to establish supported parent and playgroups for women affected by post and antenatal mood disorders. PANDA conducted training workshops and provided materials to assist agencies establish support and playgroups for women affected by postnatal depression.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is increasingly recognised as important for the health and wellbeing of both children and mothers. Projects targeting areas of disadvantage, young mothers and CALD women to increase the incidence and continuation of breastfeeding were funded by the government and were delivered by the Australian Breastfeeding Association in the City of Yarra (Vietnamese women), Mildura (Indigenous women), City of Hobsons Bay (Burmese women) and Shepparton (Arabic women).

Human Papilloma Virus Immunisation Program

An immunisation program against Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) has commenced for Victorian girls and young women. The vaccine will greatly reduce the number of cervical abnormalities detected on Pap smears, meaning less medical intervention in investigating these abnormalities. In 2007-08, 70 per cent of girls in Years 7, 10, 11 and 12 completed the full course of three doses of the HPV vaccine through the school based program. Women aged 18-26 years are accessing the vaccine through GPs and other primary care providers.

BreastScreen

More than 186,000 women were screened as part of the BreastScreen program in 2007-08. Future focus is on increasing the number of women aged 50-69 screened for breast cancer, with a particular emphasis on increasing participation of hard-to-reach groups of women, Indigenous women and women who under screen or never screen.

The quality of breast screening in rural and regional Victoria is being improved through the use of digital technology in mobile screening vans through the Regional Broadband Digital Mammography Project.

Cervical Screening program

Most recent data found that 63.9 per cent of Victorian women aged 20-69 have a Pap test every two years, and 88 per cent have a Pap test at least once every five years. Strategies to improve Indigenous women's cervical screening participation rates in Victoria are being developed. This includes improving data collection to enable more tailored education and recruitment.

Eating Disorders Day Program

Southern Health trialled a new day program for young people with moderate to severe eating disorders. This program seeks to strengthen the continuum of care by providing a service that offers a new intermediate level of care that is more than specialist mental health outpatient care but less than 24-hour hospitalisation.

Participation in sport and physical activity

Women's Sport and Recreation

The Women's Sport and Recreation Initiative is a \$1.2 million commitment over three years to encourage and support women and girls from all backgrounds to participate at all levels of sport and recreation. In 2007-08, projects commenced in Flemington, Cranbourne, Werribee and Bendigo targeting teenage girls and young women aged 12 to 25 years. The project in Cranbourne, for example, targets teenage girls and young mothers.

Women in Sport research

Two three-year research projects which commenced in 2006-07 continued. One project is examining the factors affecting teenage girls' participation in sport and physical activity in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, while the other is examining the factors that assist women to achieve in advanced leadership roles in sport, such as coaching, officiating and administration.

Active Girls Breakfasts

The Active Girls Breakfasts encourage young women to participate in sport and active lifestyles. The program targets secondary school girls of 15 to 16 years and organises events that feature local female role models, who are either elite athletes or physically active, and work or volunteer in the sector. Eight Active Girls Breakfasts were held across Victoria in 2007-08; 1,700 students from 80 schools and 200 role models attended the breakfasts.

Roxy Surf Jam

The Roxy Surf Jam program is designed to teach young women water safety and surfing skills. It was delivered to 929 participants at a range of coastal locations across Victoria in November 2007. In February 2008, 43 girls from Indigenous backgrounds competed in the Indigenous Surfing Titles.

Roxy Pro Surfing

The Victorian Government supported the 2008 Roxy Women's Surf Festival, an internationally significant annual event in Phillip Island that celebrates women's surfing, had 186 female participants in 2008.

Women's Cycling events

The Victorian Government supported the 2008 Geelong Women's Tour and 2008 International Cycling Union's (UCI) Women's Road Cycling World Cup to promote the sport of cycling at an elite level and support women's cycling at an elite and grassroots level.

Community participation

Arts Participation programs

The government continued to fund a range of arts programs targeted at women in 2007-08, through initiatives such as events, workshops and performances, including:

- Brunswick Women's Theatre continued working with women from diverse cultural backgrounds in the Hume City Council region, exploring issues of discrimination and diversity, which will culminate in a mini-festival of theatrical scenes representing the diverse local groups in late 2008.
- The Women's Circus is a community arts organisation in West Footscray run solely by women. Some training programs, classes and workshops are women-only and approximately 150 women train with the Circus. In 2007-08, contemporary circus performances and workshops were run with women to assist them in developing their artistic literacy and performance skills. They also delivered an Outreach program which involves organisations hiring the Circus to provide circus training for health and wellbeing. The Circus worked with Year Nine girls at Gilmore Girls College to undertake physical activity and assist in building their self-esteem, body image and confidence.

- Three artists worked with a group of women from the Horn of Africa to create a book and a documentary about the experiences of parenting.

Rural Women, Drought and Climate Change initiative

The Rural Women, Drought and Climate Change initiative enables local women to work together and develop partnerships that improve their community's wellbeing. In 2007-08, Victorian Rural Women's Reference Groups on drought and climate change were established across regional Victoria and facilitated opportunities for rural women from across regions to meet, share information about local activities and approaches, and develop supportive networks to deal with drought and climate change.



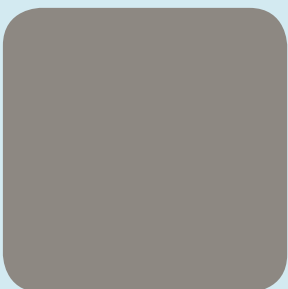
Case Study: *Count us in!*

The majority of residents, carers, staff and volunteers in residential aged services are women. *Count us in!* connected older people, staff, volunteers and others involved in residential aged care to a range of community projects.

Residents became more active and enthusiastic about re-engaging with past interests, family, and the broader community as a result of the project. Their confidence to participate in community activities improved as their involvement was acknowledged and valued – from saving endangered indigenous plants from extinction, to being invited to act as a disability support services advisor to the local council and to helping create blankets for people in Africa.

The community developed their understanding of life in residential aged care and their awareness that older people have much to offer. Volunteers of all ages saw great benefits in engaging with residents particularly through developing close friendships and sharing residents' life stories, including their experiences about, for example, wars and the Great Depression and their knowledge of local history.

Staff developed a greater understanding of the social, intellectual and emotional wellbeing of residents and grew in their capacity to partner with community groups and services to facilitate a more inclusive life for older people in residential aged care.



Achievements 2007-08: Representation and equity

Celebrating women's achievements

Centenary of Women's Suffrage

2008 marks 100 years since most Victorian women gained the right to vote in Victorian state elections. This major milestone has been marked with a program of activity, *Victorian Women Vote 1908-2008*. This program included funding to more than 50 community groups and organisations to organise projects and events that explore and celebrate the centenary of women's suffrage.

Signature Stories Exhibition

The Signature Stories Exhibition at the Victorian Archives Centre in North Melbourne focused on the personal stories of women who signed the 1891 Women's Suffrage Petition, acknowledging and celebrating their struggles for equality in work and for women's rights. The exhibition attracted wide interest with over 7,000 attendees, 70 per cent of whom were women. Among the important archival records were the 1891 Women's Suffrage Petition (the 'Monster Petition') and the *1908 Adult Suffrage Act*.

UNESCO Memory of World Register and Heritage Victoria Register of Significant Objects

The Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV) successfully nominated the Monster Petition for inclusion on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Australian Memory of World Register as well as the Heritage Victoria Register of Significant Objects. These listings acknowledge the importance of the petition's role in the struggle to gain the right for women to vote.

They Are But Women: the Road to Female Suffrage in Victoria

PROV supported Melbourne University students in researching, creating and writing stories about women's' suffrage for publication by Melbourne University. Students attended seminars on women's suffrage, an information and training program, and the Suffragists of Hotham Hill walk in North Melbourne.

Victorian Honour Roll of Women

The Victorian Honour Roll of Women recognises and celebrates the achievements of women from all walks of life who have made a significant contribution to Victoria through their chosen fields. A total of 30 women were inducted onto the Victorian Honour Roll in 2007-08, bringing the total number inducted to 419.

International Women's Day

International Women's Day was celebrated across Victoria in March, and several government departments marked the event through various activities, with the key theme being celebration of the Centenary of Women's Suffrage and recognising the achievements of women.

Trailblazers: Migrant women activists

Trailblazers is an Immigration Museum exhibition paying tribute to women from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds who established specialist services for migrant women in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Documentary and archival material validated the important work of these women in history and the exhibition material will be available as official archives for research purposes.

World of Women Film Festival National Tour 2007

The Australian Centre for the Moving Image supported the delivery of the World of Women Film Festival in 2007 as part of a national tour. This season of films by women about women, screened over four consecutive weekends, gave a strong platform to a broad range of social and political voices and practices. The festival importantly filled a gap in cinema programming generally and recognised the important and vital role of women in front of and behind the camera. There was a broad mix of storytelling styles, covering documentary, fiction, and drama and leading practitioners.

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) Rural Women's Award

The RIRDC Rural Women's Award recognises the efforts of rural women in research and in bridging the city/country divide. Recipients receive support and resources to further develop their skills and abilities and are also appointed to the Women in Primary Industries Advisory Panel. In 2007-08, awards were made to two Victorian women.

Women on Farms Gathering – Community Heritage project

The Women on Farms Gathering Heritage Collection of Museum Victoria is an evolving collection of artefacts, images and oral histories which embodies the collective memories of rural Victorian women.

Queen Victoria Women's Centre

The Queen Victoria Women's Centre offers women across Victoria a range of health and support services. The Centre's InfoHub website provides Victorian women with an online gateway to information, resources and support, and attracted more than 1,500 visitors each month in 2007-08. More than 4,200 women participated in events, training and programs at the Centre.

WIRE – Women's Information

WIRE, situated in the Queen Victoria Women's Centre, delivers a range of information services to women, including rural women, via telephone, internet, email, and drop-in face-to-face support. The government continued to fund the Walk In Centre for women in 2007-08; more than 5,500 women used the service in 2007-08.

Leadership capacity building

Rural Women's Network

The Rural Women's Network is a forum for women and women's groups around rural and regional Victoria that helps them get connected so they can share information, support one another and contribute to their communities. It also enables rural women to play a more active and influential role in informing government policy and programs.

It is supported by an ongoing range of activities including meetings, a quarterly newsletter, '*network*', distributed to 18,000 women, and monthly updates of events, news and funding opportunities.

Women Creating Harmony grants

The Women Creating Harmony grants aim to help women from many different backgrounds develop cross-cultural harmony and social cohesiveness at the community level. In 2007-08, 40 grants were announced, totalling \$200,000.

Scholarships for women

The government provides a number of scholarship programs for women to encourage their participation in non-traditional areas including:

- The Women in Freight, Logistics and Marine Management Scholarship is a \$10,000 scholarship awarded to a female in postgraduate study in a relevant field. The winner has the opportunity to work part-time with the Department of Transport in the freight, logistics or marine-related fields for the year.
- Three \$10,000 scholarships awarded by the Department of Transport to support and encourage women currently working in or aspiring to work in the fields of science, engineering, technology and construction.
- Two elite coaching scholarships for women were offered in golf and swimming, based at the Victorian Institute of Sport.

Sport Development for Women grants

A leading edge Women in Sport Development model has continued in 2007-08 with 10 grants awarded and an alumni program supported to help develop female coaches, officials and sports administrators.

Leadership and decision making

Victorian Women's Register

The Victorian Women's Register contains details of women interested in appointment to government boards and committees, and serves to link them with opportunities as they arise. The Register is part of a broad government strategy aimed at ensuring women are well represented among decision makers and leaders in the community, including at board and committee level. The Register provides a source of almost 1,800 skilled and experienced women to government departments.

Women on Boards

Women continue to be appointed to state government boards, committees and panels ensuring that they are well represented in leadership and decision-making positions.

In 2007-08, women made up 40.4 per cent of representatives on state government boards and committees, exceeding the target of 40 per cent.

State Coroner Appointments

The first female State Coroner, Judge Jennifer Coate, and the first female Chief Executive Officer at the State Coroners Office, Judy Leitch, were appointed in 2007-08.

Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria

The Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria (DSCV) ensures that there is at least one female mediator at every mediation session. When all parties are female, the DSCV ensures that both mediators are also females. These policies and

procedures also include the use of female interpreters in cases in which all the parties are females, or when either party has requested female interpreters due to the nature of the dispute or cultural requirements.

Women advising government

A number of women's ministerial advisory bodies provide the government with advice on issues of importance to women.

The Women in Primary Industries Advisory Panel

The Women in Primary Industries Advisory Panel advises the Minister for Agriculture on policy issues, programs and issues relevant to primary industries and rural communities, as they relate to women; promotes recognition of the role women play in primary industries; provides leadership and role models for women in primary industries; and encourages strengthened networks and participation amongst women in primary industries.

The Indigenous Women Going Places Ministerial Advisory Committee

The Indigenous Women Going Places Ministerial Advisory Committee was established in 2001 to provide advice to the government via the Minister for Women's Affairs on issues of concern to Indigenous women, their families and communities. The final meeting of the Committee's term of tenure occurred in February 2008. The Office of Women's Policy and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria will work together to present options for the best future representation of Indigenous women and their communities.

The Committee represented Victoria at the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Gathering in Hobart and participated in the development of the *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities 10 Year Plan* through the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum.

Women speak to government

The Victorian Government is committed to having a continuous conversation with women.

Women from metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, from CALD and Indigenous communities, and women with disabilities were engaged in the following activities and events held throughout 2007-08:

The Annual Premier's Women's Summit

The Annual Premier's Women's Summit was held in November 2007 in South Morang with the theme of 'Women into Work'. It focused on encouraging women's increased participation in the workforce. More than 200 Victorian women from a diverse range of backgrounds, including CALD and Indigenous women, shared their opinions, experiences and knowledge with the Premier, government ministers, members of parliament and other leading women active in their communities. The Premier launched a second round of grants for the Workforce Participation program at the Summit.

Conversations with Victoria's Women

The Victorian Government conducted a series of nine consultations with women in November and December 2007 as part of the development of the women's policy framework for 2008-11. Consultations were held in Box Hill, Colac, Moonee Ponds, Murtoa, Narre Warren, Shepparton, Swan Hill and Traralgon, followed by a stakeholder consultation at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre in early December. Women provided feedback and suggestions on issues that mattered to them, with a particular focus on areas of concern in their local community and suggestions to strengthen their communities in the future. An Outcomes Report was published on the OWP website.

Community Cabinet Women's Roundtables

Five Community Cabinet Women's Roundtables were held across Victoria during 2007-08 and provided opportunities for local female leaders and service providers to highlight issues relevant to women in their local community with the Minister for Women's Affairs.



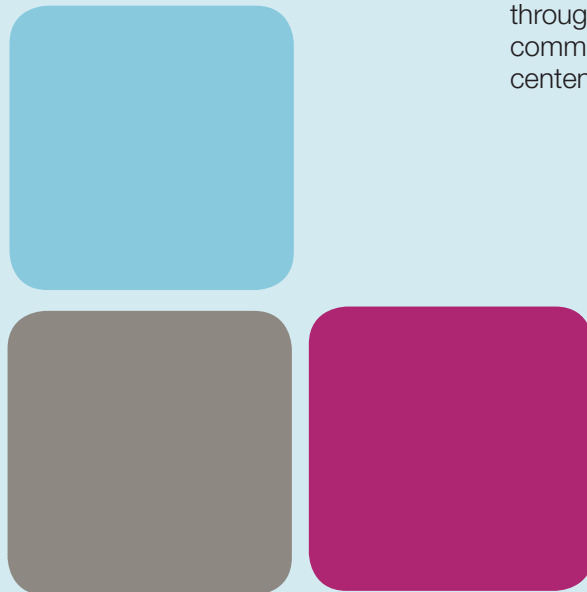
Case Study: Knowing our past, transforming our future

On a very hot day in February 2008, a large crowd including grant recipients, members of parliament, school students, and interested spectators gathered at Federation Square, Melbourne for the launch of *Victorian Women Vote 1908-2008*.

The centenary commemorates one of the most significant milestones in Victoria's democratic history – the achievement by Victorian women of the right to vote in State elections. The year of celebrations was launched by the Minister for Women's Affairs, Maxine Morand and the Deputy Premier, Rob Hulls.

Descendants of the original suffragists were among those to take the first ride on the especially commissioned heritage tram which will run until the end of November and which features the suffrage colours of violet, white and green and the *Victorian Women Vote 1908-2008, Knowing our past, transforming our future* theme.

The first six months of the anniversary year of the centenary have been very successful with a wide range of events and activities held throughout Victoria. These activities and projects raised, discussed and debated issues of importance to women and their communities; and many were supported by the Victorian Government through grants which encouraged community involvement in the centenary.



Next Steps 2008-09

A range of activities have been planned across government to improve the social and economic status of women during 2008-09:

Women's Policy Framework 2008-11

The third forward plan for women, the *Women's Policy Framework 2008-11*, will be released in early 2009. It will continue a commitment to:

- justice and safety
- education, work and economic independence
- health, wellbeing and community strengthening, and
- representation and equity.

Women's safety

State Prevention Plan

The Victorian Government has committed an additional \$24.7 million over four years to consolidate the family violence and sexual assault reforms and develop a State Prevention Plan to address violence against women. Participants from across government as well as the corporate, community and non-government sectors will contribute to the development of the plan.

Sexual Assault Reform Package Evaluation

This two-year project will evaluate the whole-of-government Sexual Assault Reform Package which aims to achieve cultural change by challenging entrenched attitudes and behaviours across the criminal justice system. The evaluation will be system-wide across police, courts, public prosecutions, corrections and treatment services and will follow formative, process and summative approaches. It will commence in late 2008.

Family Violence

The Victorian Government is further strengthening its response to family violence by introducing new legislation as a result of the recommendations of the Victorian Law Reform Commission. The *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* will replace the system of family violence intervention orders previously found in the *Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987*. It will include a range of new initiatives to help protect women and children against violence in the home and make perpetrators accountable for their actions. Community awareness will be integral to the next phase which will be supported through a \$1.5 million family violence communication campaign.

Women's health and wellbeing

Healthy Mothers and Babies program

The four-year program will target vulnerable women in outer suburbs that have high numbers of births, high rates of socioeconomic disadvantage and low service accessibility. It aims to support the best possible start for all children and reduce the likelihood of chronic health conditions for both mother and baby.

Mental Health Service guidelines on gender sensitivity and safety

Guidelines will be developed to direct and support mental health services and clinicians in delivering gender sensitive and safe treatment in adult acute inpatient units.

Women, Drought and Climate Change

Rural Women, Drought and Climate Change Conference

As part of the Rural Women, Drought and Climate Change initiative, a conference on women managing drought and climate change will be delivered in 2009.

Women Gathering in Dry Times

Women Gathering in Dry Times is a program in drought affected parts of the Hume region. It brings women together through a mixture of diverse activities including art, talks from local agencies and storytelling to share experiences and connect with local women.

Digital stories

Women from Latrobe and Loddon Mallee will share and exchange stories and experiences of drought and climate change and in doing so explore the differences and similarities of their experiences and learn from each other.

Circles of Influence Dinner Series

A series of dinners will be held across Gippsland where a diverse range of women will be invited to discuss what climate change is, what its impacts are on women as individuals, their families, and the broader community and what women can do to address some of these impacts.

Women's Financial Literacy

Financial literacy workshops and seminars will be provided to women of diverse ages and backgrounds and supplemented by information online as part of the Women's Financial Literacy project. More than 2,500 women are expected to attend a series of workshops and seminars from mid 2008 to mid 2011. These will be delivered in partnership with WIRE – Women's Information, the Queen Victoria Women's Centre, Women's Health in the North, First Nations Foundation and other community organisations.

Paid parental leave

The Victorian Government will contribute to the Commonwealth Government inquiry into paid maternity, paternity and parental leave. Paid parental leave is recognised as being important in helping working families to achieve a better balance between their work and family responsibilities.

Centenary of Women's Suffrage

Public Records Office Victoria suffrage website

As part of *Victorian Women Vote 1908-2008*, descendants of women who had signed the Monster Petition were invited to submit stories about their female ancestor(s). An online resource will be developed for descendants and others to add information about the women who signed the petition in 1891.

Women Matter in Local Democracies

Funded under the Victorian Community Support Grants program, this project will work towards encouraging women's participation in local government and civic activities, with a specific focus on participation by CALD women. The project will work closely with local government, women's and multicultural organisations and will be complemented by events celebrating the centenary of the women's vote, and the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter Awards.

