This includes the development of model policies and codes management in Leagues, and to ensure leagues are work is indicated to formalise the introduction of change in all football development work in future. More embarked on an program to embed Changes at AFL Victoria of the innovations in clubs grew out of discussions between the most from the seminars was the opportunity to meet in a support together. One of the things club Drivers enjoyed the most from the seminars was the opportunity to meet in a setting where they were able to learn from each other. Many of the innovations in clubs grew out of discussions between drivers.

Changes in the club rooms

• Clubs made improvements to lighting and general maintenance in the clubrooms to make them more women- and family-friendly.
• Fair Game Respect Matters posters were used by some clubs to demonstrate a more inclusive environment.
• Wheelchair access to the clubrooms and toilets has been introduced in some clubs.
• Attention was paid to the cleanliness of female toilets and sanitary disposal units and sanitary disposal toilets were introduced.

Increasing Female Participation

• After the first season of Fair Game Respect Matters in clubs, the number of women in decision making positions had increased.
• Some clubs amalgamated with local netball teams and others offered female football to increase the participation of women. Some clubs recruited female coaches, score keepers and umpires.
• Many clubs formed women’s groups and held women’s events to learn how to become more inclusive.

Changes at AFL Victoria

Top down-bottom up change

It is important for changes to happen not only in clubs, but also in Leagues and at AFL Victoria. AFL Victoria has embarked on an program to embed Fair Game Respect Matters in all football development work in future. More work is indicated to formalise the introduction of change management in Leagues, and to ensure leagues are responsible for the sustainability of change in the long term. This includes the development of model policies and codes of conduct for use in clubs.

The evaluation recommended that, appropriate to the different levels, codes of conduct and policies should include messages that:
• Expect respectful behaviours between all members on and off the field.
• Encourage women and girls to participate in all on and off-field football related activities.
• Make all kinds of sexism, racism and homophobia unacceptable under any circumstances.
• Make coaches responsible for ensuring players abide by the expected standards of behaviour on the field.
• Create minimum standards to ensure that entertainment in clubs is appropriate for a family-oriented environment. For example, male and female strippers and comedians whose material is racist, homophobic, sexist or sexually explicit are inappropriate and should never be associated with club activities.
• Develop incident protocols for when there are breaches in expected standards, and guidelines for the management of incidents when they occur.
• Develop processes to deal appropriately with breaches of these policies.

This is just the beginning:

The evaluation found that more work is needed, and VicHealth has supported this by funding the program’s roll out and evaluation in other Leagues for a further four years. Some recommendations for further research include:
• Increased understanding about the different needs of junior and senior clubs.
• Increased education concerning respectful and bystander behaviours in football clubs.
• Continued identification and development of resources.
• Understanding how coaches and the player leadership group can become leaders in clubs for promoting respectful behaviours.
• Understanding how to recruit long term members as champions of change in their clubs.

COMMUNICATE THE PROGRAM’S KEY MESSAGES

Clearly to everyone. Provide clear and accessible resources to everyone and make sure changes at head office are visible to clubs.

The Fair Game Respect Matters program was funded by VicHealth and introduced as a pilot program in the Northern Football League (NFL) in 2008. The program complements the AFL’s Respect and Responsibility Program, which ensures that people throughout the football industry are aware of, and have structures in place, that recognise that violence against women and behaviour that harms or degrades women, is never acceptable. Fair Game Respect Matters is about changing the culture in community football clubs to make them more inclusive and friendly towards women and girls. The men and women involved in Fair Game Respect Matters in the NFL are working towards creating more vibrant, family friendly and most importantly, inclusive clubs that value and demonstrate respect for all members.

The key components of the first phase of the program in clubs has included:
• A Toolkit that provides information about the program and how to introduce it into a club, as well as posters and brochures to communicate key messages about promoting respectful environments.
• Recruiting and training Drivers in each club to be responsible for introducing and driving change.
• Providing ongoing resources to support clubs as they introduce changes.

Sport as a setting for the prevention of violence against women

Evaluation of Phase One: AFL Victoria’s Fair Game Respect Matters Program 2009

November 2010

Fair Game Respect Matters is a program that aims to introduce culture change in community football clubs as a way to prevent violence against women. The program is based on research that shows that where relationships between men and women are equal and based on respect the rates of violence against women can be reduced. This summary outlines the evaluation of the program’s first two years in the Northern Football League in metro Victoria.

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Fair Game Respect Matters

Promoting respectful environments: A Fair Game Respect Matters club is one in which everyone:
• Feels safe and included.
• Acts responsibly on and off the field by refusing to engage in sexist, homophobic or racist behaviour.
• Understands that sexism, bullying, or abusive behaviour is unacceptable under any circumstances.
• Values women’s involvement and promotes their participation in all roles.
• Supports men as they work as champions of violence prevention.
• Understands that drunken behaviour makes people feel uncomfortable and can be intimidating.
• Values and promotes good sporting behaviour on and off the field.

Violence against women in Australia

Violence against women is one of the least visible yet most widespread forms of violence within Australia.
• One in five women in Australia experience sexual violence after the age of 15.
• Domestic violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44.
• The total estimated cost of domestic violence in Australia in 2009 was $13.6 billion.
Violence against women can take many different forms, from bullying and harassment through to rape and physical assault. It happens in domestic relationships and can be inflicted by acquaintances, family members or strangers. While men can also be victims, they are usually the perpetrators of violence against women, and women are usually the victims.

**Sport as a platform for shifting attitudes in the community**

Primary prevention aims to lessen the likelihood of gender-based violence occurring in the first place, through education and attitudinal and behavioural change strategies. Some male-dominated team sports have been associated with attitudes and behaviours which support violence against women. Environments in which ‘group disrespect’ is common can foster or support violence against women. However, not all men are violent and many feel uncomfortable when they are with other men who make jokes about, or harass women.

Research has found that in situations like this men who are uncomfortable feel like they are the only ones, and hold back from speaking out because they are unsure about what to say or do.

**Group disrespect can include rude and aggressive behaviour, using or displaying pornography, sexualising women and excessive group drinking. Where behaviours such as these are accepted as normal, violence against women is supported. Fair Game Respect Matters aims to recruit men as partners in prevention.**

**Change is possible.** In many community sporting clubs change has been underway for some time with a shift towards a more family-oriented environment, and a greater inclusion of women and girls. In 2009, the Victorian Government introduced a 10 year plan to prevent violence against women. The plan recognises that programs in local communities such as sporting clubs have an important role to play in changing environments that support or promote violence against women. By creating a physical environment that is safe, inclusive and respectful towards everyone, and that empowers men to speak out against behaviour that is disrespectful and sexist, we see cultures of disrespect that empowers men to speak out against behaviour that promotes, cultural change.

**Being a responsible bystander:** men who are approached as bystanders and witnesses to violence and not as potential perpetrators are more likely to be motivated to learn how to intervene to prevent violence.

**Learning from Experience**

**The Fair Game Respect Matters Program and Toolkit**

Before the program was introduced into clubs the AFL worked with AFL Victoria to consult with women in community clubs to understand what needed to change to make the clubs safer and more inclusive. Based on the findings of the research a toolkit was developed to guide clubs through a change process.

The Fair Game Respect Matters toolkit was evaluated as it was being rolled out to clubs, and as the need for change was identified, the toolkit was modified. It is important that the toolkit is continually added to with new resources to support and assist clubs as they work towards change.

**Driver Orientation and Training**

**Program drivers** – in most cases a man and a woman nominated by their clubs – were introduced to the program through attending a small number of seminars. They were given information about the scope and impact of violence against women in Australia and introduced to the Fair Game Respect Matters toolkit and how to use it. The next step for Drivers was to go back to their clubs and introduce the program to their committee of management members and take them through a review of club operations. In the review the whole committee worked together to examine different aspects of the club such as values, communications, the role of women and the general environment. Information was shared and areas identified where the club could make improvements. Clubs were asked to set a series of goals for change and an implementation strategy/timeline/outline.

**Success breeds success:** groups are more likely to want to get involved if they can see positive results from others. Promote club successes and share stories about innovative solutions and creative changes. This way, others can see the benefits of getting involved.

Many Drivers found it difficult to communicate the messages that they heard in orientation seminars about violence against women to their club committees. The orientation seminars were modified to assist Drivers to better communicate about the program and what is expected of clubs. Resources were also developed to assist Drivers in this task.

All clubs are different. Junior and senior clubs have different needs, some clubs are strong and well resourced, and others struggle for a variety of reasons. The program needs to understand these differences and modify the Driver orientation and support to be responsive to the particular needs of clubs.

**Community football clubs are not alone.** There are many agencies in local areas to support cultural change work. By including information about community resources in the Fair Game Respect Matters toolkit, clubs can make links with these agencies when they need assistance.

**Community Football Clubs**

Clubs which nominated Drivers with positions of influence in their clubs enjoyed greater success than those in which Drivers had little influence. Clubs which Made Fair Game Respect Matters a regular item on the management committee’s agenda were more able to introduce and sustain changes.

**Volunteers are valuable resources**, but there can be a high turnover of those people in positions of responsibility. This is because they take on multiple roles and become overloaded. Club drivers should not burdened with multiple roles so that they can carry out their work effectively. A long term view is important, so clubs and drivers need to have succession plans in place to ensure the role is not lost when Drivers (and other decision makers) move on.

There are people in clubs who carry the culture – long term members, coaches and the player leadership group, as well as committee of management members. It is important that all of these club members become partners in prevention; in clubs where they did, many exciting and innovative changes were observed.

**We learned that small changes can have a huge impact.**

Some of these changes are described here.

**Communication – in some clubs:**

- Booklets and posters were developed and distributed to communicate the club’s codes of conduct and policies to all members.
- Orientation kits were developed for new committee members to ensure codes of conduct and policies were clearly understood by all.
- Fair Game Respect Matters was introduced as a regular item in newsletters.
- The club’s values were made clear in their mission statements. For example, one junior club’s statement says: ‘We’re not about winning; we’re about developing team spirit and having fun’.
- Education events were run for members to communicate about the inclusion of women and to promote respectful behaviours.

**Change in community football clubs**

- Education events were run for members to communicate about change.
- Some of these changes are described here.
- Orientation kits were developed for new committee members.
- Booklets and posters were developed to support cultural change.
- Clubs made fair game respect matters a regular item on the management committee’s agenda.
- Clubs enjoyed greater success than those in which drivers had little influence.
- Clubs which made fair game respect matters a regular item on the management committee’s agenda were more able to introduce and sustain changes.

**Better clubs**

- Clubs which nominated drivers and carried out a high turnover of drivers.
- Clubs where drivers had little influence.
- Clubs which made fair game respect matters a regular item on the management committee’s agenda were more able to introduce and sustain changes.

**Better drivers**

- Drivers who carried out a high turnover of drivers.
- Drivers who had little influence.
- Drivers who made fair game respect matters a regular item on the management committee’s agenda.

**Better communities**

- Communities where drivers had little influence.
- Communities where drivers made fair game respect matters a regular item on the management committee’s agenda.
- Communities where drivers had a high turnover of drivers.