# Crime Prevention Strategies to End Violence Against Women

## By Tiffany Kappen

Crime prevention aims to prevent crime by designing interventions to reduce both offending and reoffending. Crime prevention focuses on what causes crime rather than the specific effects of crime. It uses many strategies to achieve these goals, including increasing access to support networks, raising awareness of issues and addressing problems at multiple stages. Crime prevention refers to all initiatives and state policies, it is never a replacement rather it co-exists with corrections, law enforcement and the criminal justice system to reduce crime and improve economic growth and community cohesion. The Australian Institute of Criminology (2015) states 'effective crime prevention initiatives can contribute significantly to the achievement of safe and secure societies'. Violence against women is a major focus for numerous crime prevention strategies. White Ribbon, Rise Above the Pack, Auburn City Council's No Excuses Campaign and the New South Wales EQUIPS Domestic Violence Program will all be discussed in this article. These examples will highlight the different stages that must be addressed in order to end violence against women.

Violence against women is a significant but also very distressing topic, it is a global issue that needs to be addressed in ways other than simply through the corrections system. Amnesty International (2008) emphasises the importance to address violence against women, due to the widespread, systemic and culturally entrenched nature of overlooking violence. Amnesty International and the United Nations further stress that violence against women is an abuse of women's rights and freedoms, as citizens and as human beings. The United Nations (1993, cited in VicHealth 2011, p.2) defines violence against women as:

> "any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life"

Crime prevention designed for violence against women tackles the problem at three stages, primary, secondary and tertiary. All three phases have an overall goal of reducing violence, health problems associated with violence and addressing issues of gender inequalities, social norms and improving access to resources.

There are numerous facts and figures surrounding violence against women that drive home the severity of an issue that can easily be ignored. Crime prevention concentrates on creating awareness, to make this issue visible so people cannot simply ignore the severe nature of it. The World

Health Organization (WHO) found that 35 percent of women across the globe experience issues of violence. This includes both physical and sexual violence by a partner or non-partner (WHO 2013). In 2013 the world population was just above 7.16 billion people and 3.47 billion were women. Using the WHO statistics of women experiencing violence, roughly 1.21 billion women suffered from violence in 2013 (Worldometers n.d.). This is definitely an alarming number of women suffering from violence. Bringing the statistics, a little closer to home, on average one women is killed by a partner or former partner per week in Australia (Australian Institute of Criminology 2015) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience higher rates and more severe forms of violence than other women in Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) found that women are at least three times more likely to experience violence from a partner than men, and women aged between 18 and 24 experience the highest rates of violence compared to older age groups. These statistics highlight how important it is to address issues of violence, these statistics are shocking and need to improve. The three stages of crime prevention highlight different ways of addressing this paramount issue.

The three stages of crime prevention are designed for people with differing levels of experience with violence against women. The primary stage of crime prevention concentrates on prevention of violence against women before issues begin, such as creating awareness that violence against women is *not* acceptable and should *not* be kept silent. Primary prevention strategies aim to reduce the likelihood of someone going down a life of crime and participating in violent acts by reducing the opportunity of crime and strengthening community and social structures. White Ribbon is a great example of an international primary prevention approach to ending violence against women. It is a male led movement, which took off in Toronto in 1991 and then began in Australia in 2003. It is now represented in over 57 countries, highlighting the success of this primary approach. White Ribbon Australia receives 90 percent of its funding from the community and 10 percent from local, state and federal governments. The movement aims to end violence against women before it occurs. It is specifically aimed at men to pledge never to commit, excuse or stay silent about violence against women. The White Ribbon campaign is a global movement with over 200,000 people taking the oath to 'stand up, speak out and act to prevent men's violence against women'. Furthermore, it aims to challenge 'the deeply ingrained attitudes, social norms and power inequalities that give rise to men's violence against women and gender inequality' (White Ribbon Australia 2016). In 1999 White Ribbon day was declared as the 25th November, this day is dedicated to creating awareness and to increase the number of men pledging to never participate in violence against women. White Ribbon is a very visible and well know movement which has developed from creative awareness-raising campaigns, youth programs in schools, social media reach and successful community and corporate partnerships. White Ribbon is a

very successful primary prevention approach addressing issues of gender power imbalances, gender stereotypes and gender equality.

Another great example of a primary prevention approach is Rise Above the Pack, this is a local level campaign funded by the South Australian Government's Attorney-General's Department. Rise Above the Pack is a community safety campaign which aims to increase women's safety by raising awareness of violence against women. The campaign emphasises the need for people, specifically men to stand up and be a positive bystander, that is, do something to improve the situation instead of ignoring it. 'It is a whole-of-community responsibility to address safety and to reduce violence against women' (Rise Above the Pack, 2017). Rise Above the Pack also focuses on the need to change perpetrators behaviours and attitudes rather than telling women how to stay safe.

> 'When a man is murdered in a pub by a coward punch, men are *not* told to stop going to pubs. When a woman is murdered walking through a park, women *are* told to stop going to parks. Women are also told to walk in well-lit areas, to hold keys between their fingers, to make sure no-one is following them and to tell a friend the route they are taking home' (Rise Above the Pack, 2017)

Rise Above the Pack emphasises that gender imbalances are a strong contributor to issues of violence. These gender imbalances are often unreasonable and definitely need to change to create a safer environment. Rise Above the Pack received a Bronze award at the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards in 2016 for its success in helping to prevent and reduce violence in Australia. The campaign made a huge presence within the community making the issue of violence visible and the need to improve women's safety an issue that cannot be ignored.

The secondary stage of crime prevention focuses on prevention when symptoms of risk are apparent and individuals have high potential of pursuing a criminal career. This stage focuses on disadvantaged neighbourhoods, indigenous communities or where violence runs in the family. This stage can be implemented through community support groups, youth programs or in high schools as early intervention programs. For example, the No Excuses campaign launched by the Auburn City Council in Greater Western Sydney. This campaign began after a horrific number of domestic violence cases were reported. It is an early intervention program presented to high school students in years ten, eleven and twelve. The program includes an interactive workshop focusing on creating healthy relationships, how to recognise danger or domestic violence and how to support someone experiencing domestic violence (Auburn City Council 2013). School programs can target high-risk groups or can simply be used as a tool for creating awareness for adolescences. School programs teach children that violence is not acceptable and that no one deserves to be a victim. Amnesty

International's 'Setting the Standards' report emphasises that reduction of violence against women can only be achieved through education. Amnesty International (2008, p.7) states "education is key. The development of an education program for implementation in every high school across Australia must be a cornerstone of the NPoA" (National Plan of Action). Commitment to creating an education strategy is paramount, research stresses that education can end the cycle of violence for future generations.

The final stage of crime prevention is tertiary, which concentrates on rehabilitation of an offender after an event has occurred. Tertiary aims to prevent relapse and includes direct participation programs in prison, as well as post-release programs. These programs address issues of gender power imbalances, anger and control issues as well as drug and alcohol abuse. Tertiary programs aim to prevent violence by changing attitudes and behaviours. For example, New South Wales "Aggression and Violence Programs identify and explore the participants' unhelpful beliefs, thinking patterns and emotions that contribute to their aggression, abusive and violent behaviour. Participants are encouraged to take responsibility and ownership for the way they think, feel and behave." (Department of Justice 2016, p.39). The EQUIPS Domestic Abuse Program focuses more closely on domestic/family violence and violence against women. This program uses a psycho-behavioural framework and therapeutic techniques to encourage offenders to take responsibility for their actions. EQUIPS is a 40-hour program covering five main areas, including managing emotions, relationship skills and identifying abuse. There are several additional programs that an offender may also go through to further their rehabilitation, such as EQUIPS Foundation and EQUIPS Addiction, which address issues of anti-social behaviour, relapse of addiction and employment problems that may lead to reoffending. Crime prevention must address the tertiary phases because domestic violence will not be eliminated if offenders and reoffenders are ignored or forgotten. These behaviours need to change to solve the issue. The primary and secondary stages and key to avoiding a life of violence and crime however the tertiary phase is equally important to reduce the chance of offender recidivism.

These are just a few examples of crime prevention strategies, there are many more operating to address the significant problems of violence against women. Crime prevention cannot be a short-term solution; it needs to be a long-term goal that continues to improve the ongoing situation. These examples have highlighted the need to raise the publics' attention to such issues and to motivate them to help change the way we see and act towards problems of violence. Using media campaigns to create

and maintain public awareness will support the goal to end the cycle of violence against women. Crime prevention will be most effective if national, state and local governments continue to work together at all stages, primary, secondary and tertiary, to create an education system that incorporates teaching young Australians how to create healthy relationships and how to recognise and reject violence as well as maintaining programs targeting rehabilitation.

**References**

Amnesty International 2008, *Setting the Standard*: International good practice to inform an Australian national plan of action to eliminate violence against women, Amnesty International Australia, New South Wales.

Auburn City Council 2013, Auburn Crime Prevention Plan 2013-2016, Auburn City Council Auburn, New South Wales.

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, 'Personal Safety Australia', 11 December, viewed 7 March 2017, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Main+Features12012?OpenDocumen>

Australian Institute of Criminology 2015, '*Crime Prevention',* 15 May, viewed 7 March 2017, <http://www.aic.gov.au/crime_types/in_focus/crimeprevention.html>

Department of Justice NSW (2016), '*Compendium of Offender Behaviour Change Programs in New South Wales*', June, Offender Services & Programs, viewed 18 May 2017, <www.correctiveservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/programs/CSNSW%20Compendium%20of%20Offender%20Behaviour%20Change%20Program.PDF#page16>

Rise Above the Pack 2017, 'About', viewed 7 March 2017, <http://riseabovethepack.com.au/about/>

VicHealth 2011, '*Preventing violence against women in Australia: Addressing the social and economic determinants of mental and physical health*', Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Carlton South, Victoria.

White Ribbon 2017, 'White Ribbon Australia', viewed 18 May 2017, <http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/>

World Health Organisation 2016, '*Violence Against Women*: Intimate partner and sexual violence against women', November, viewed 7 March 2017, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>

Worldometers n.d., '*Population by Gender, Age, Fertility Rate, Immigration'*, viewed 10 May 2017, <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/world-population-gender-age.php>