



# Victorian-based print media coverage of Aboriginal Family Violence

## Stage 1: Research for the Strategic Framework for Working with Media to prevent Aboriginal Family Violence

This research study investigated how family violence is framed in relation to Victorian Aboriginal people by Victorian-based print media.

We used a mixed-methods approach to look at articles published over a period of 5-years (2011-2016). We then focused in on 12-months (July 2015-July 2016) for in-depth qualitative analysis.

### Background

Nationally, Aboriginal women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalized from family violence than non-Aboriginal women (Australian Productivity Commission, 2014, p. 492). Within Victoria, Aboriginal people are 6.5 times more likely than non-Indigenous Victorians to report a violent assault as an incident of family violence (Koori Justice Unit as quoted in FVPLS Victoria 2015, p. 13).

Significant research has identified that the media is a 'powerful setting for, and influencer of social change', particularly in the area of primary prevention of family violence (DV Vic, 2015, p. 1). In response, Domestic Violence Victoria developed *Working with News and Social Media to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children: A Strategic Framework for Victoria*. But consultation has demonstrated there needs to be a specific framework for Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

This project is a first step towards developing a more effective framework through providing an overview of how the unique experience of Victorian Aboriginal family violence is contended with in Victorian print media.

### Findings

3. There is an absence of media coverage about Victorian Aboriginal women as victims of violence. In 2015-2016 for example, the Herald Sun and The Age published 28 articles which made specific reference to Victorian Aboriginal people. Only 13 of these articles went beyond briefly mentioning Aboriginal family violence in relation to Victorian Aboriginal women.
2. For the media coverage that does exist, it tends to deal with complexity only if the journalist has spoken directly with an Aboriginal controlled community organisation, or an informed community representative. Over 5-years, 21.5% of all articles published about family violence in relation to Victorian Aboriginal communities referenced an Aboriginal controlled community organisation.
3. Coverage generalizes Aboriginal family violence. That is, it tends to assume violence is part of Aboriginal communities and doesn't question why. This is magnified in reportage that does not directly reference Aboriginal controlled community organisations. In 5-years, only 2 articles noted that not all perpetrators of violence against Aboriginal women and their children are Aboriginal men. This is particularly important as 85% of Aboriginal women in Melbourne, 67.9% in Shepparton and 82.4% in Bendigo have a non-Indigenous partner (Biddle 2013, p. 12).