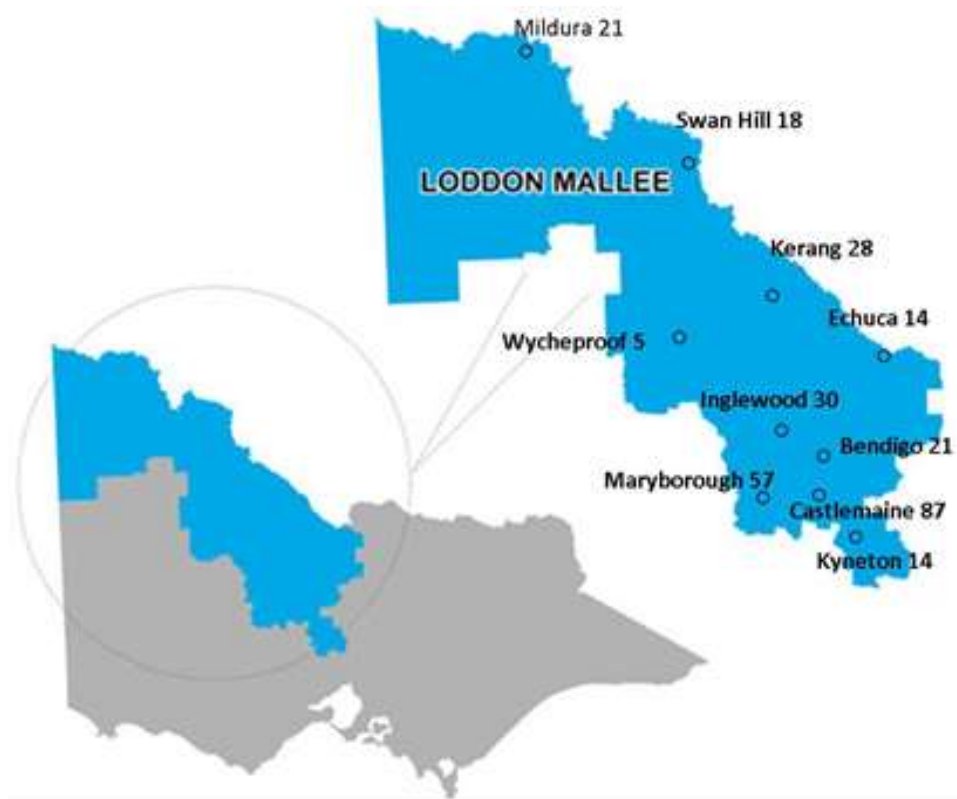




Women's Health and Local Government Health Plans



Health Issue

- A lack of a gendered approach to health planning.

Goal

- LGAs in the Loddon Mallee Region include a gendered perspective in health planning in relation to the specific needs of women.

Objectives

- In 2013 there will be a double in the number of Municipal Public Health Plans (MPHP) that prioritise women specific to their needs.
- In the 2018 MPHP cycle, there will be an increase in the number of LGs utilising WHLM as a resource to guide their planning.

A resource to enable local governments to include women's health in their plans.

Developed after consultation with each of the 10 local governments in our region.



Women's Health and Local Government for Central Goldfields Shire Council

**An Essential Guide for
Council Staff responsible
for writing Municipal
Public Health Plans.**

- *Strategic Planners*
- *Community Development*
- *Community Service*
- *Health Promotion Officers*

Incorporating the Victorian women's health services shared goals.

Highlighting some general priorities.

What Actions Can Council Take?

You can plan, move and support motions to introduce these nine actions: (Women's Health West, 2008).

Develop a women's health and wellbeing strategy and action plan that:

- Addresses issues for all women in your municipality including women with a disability, women carers, lesbians, indigenous women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, older and young women including young mothers, and women with low socio-economic status;
- Addresses economic participation, mental health, sexual and reproductive rights and violence against women;
- Is developed and overseen by a women's committee that includes representation from each of the above target groups;
- Develops a demographic profile for women in your community, including for each of the above target groups; and
- Ensures that women's needs are considered in council research, planning and reporting. (WHW, 2008).

Women's Safety

- Partner with other agencies to develop a strategy to prevent violence against women;
- Introduce a local law making it mandatory for licensed brothels to post a sign stating that sexual slavery is a crime and outlining where to seek help.

Women's Wellness

- Sponsor one officer and one community member to attend the 7th National Australian Women's Health Conference, to be held in Sydney, 7-10th May 2013;
- Address women's mental health in your Council's Municipal Public Health Plan, Consider mental illness, psychiatric and intellectual disability in Council disability strategies.

Women's Connectedness

Improve women's economic participation by:

- Introducing a disadvantaged jobseekers employment and training program that aims to ensure women's access to Council employment;
- Supporting family friendly employment practices within Council;
- Providing adequate and affordable council and community-based childcare and playgroups.
- Increase Council recreation, exercise and gathering opportunities for women;
- Advocate for more frequent, reliable and accessible public transport, including the provision of new routes and services where applicable.

General

- Recognise and encourage women's participation by holding an annual council awards ceremony that recognises the contributions of women in your municipality;
- Consider appointing a councillor for women.

A page on each of our priority areas with:

- Key data
- Some explanation
- Why it is significant
- What can be done

The most highly appreciated information was – what can be done.



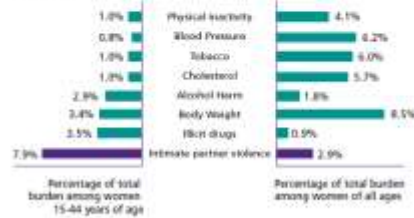
Prevention of Violence – A Human Right

“Domestic violence, family violence or relationship violence, intimate partner violence refers to violence occurring between people who are, or were formerly, in an intimate relationship. Intimate partner violence can occur on a continuum of economic, psychological and emotional abuse, through to physical and sexual violence” (VicHealth, 2004).

Violence against women refers to violent acts or the threat of violent acts that are aimed exclusively or specifically at women and girls. It is “any act that results in or is likely to result in physical, emotional or mental harm or suffering of women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (UN, 1993). Violence has serious health consequences for women, from injuries to unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, depression and chronic diseases (World Health Organisation, 2012).

Key Data #1

Violence against women is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15-44.



A significant amount of violence against women is not reported to police; the Personal Safety Survey Australia found that only 36% of women who experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator reported it to the police (ABS, 2005).

Women are overwhelmingly the victims of intimate partner violence; one in five women report being subjected to violence at some time in their adult lives (VicHealth, 2004).

What does this mean?

Violence against women has very serious consequences for individual women, their families and the wider community. Violence poses a significant risk to women's health and wellbeing.

What can we do?

Maternal and Child Health services (M&CH) can create appropriate client risk assessment for women experiencing family violence by attending specialised training and incorporating risk assessment questions in visits. Gender Equity programs are being developed that target new parents, you can deliver a program that supports parents to be aware of the changes in relationships and the importance of gender equity within relationships. Engaging with new parents at M&CH visits is the perfect opportunity to invite parents along to the program.



Key Data #7

Depression is known to be more common among people who are economically vulnerable or who live in poverty, and this is predominantly women and children (VicHealth 2004).

Mental health and wellbeing is directly related to social context, with depression more common in situations of extreme stress combined with inadequate support, such as that experienced by newly-arrived migrant and refugee women, aboriginal women, women with disabilities and new mothers (Public Health Group DHS, 2005).

What does this mean?

This means that women are overall more financially vulnerable than men, and therefore require support. There are key women in your community that are in

extreme stress and are at higher risk of developing mental ill-health, whom then often need to be supported by (government funded) mental health services. Local government is in a position where they can help this to be prevented.

What can we do?

Create opportunities for women to support each other. Hold a weekly women's community Free Lunch in a space that's accessible – easy access, close to transport and businesses, welcoming for nursing mothers. You could also support a community garden – run by women, for women. Encourage your council staff and other women who are not in extreme stress to also participate. Diversity supports inclusion; create a council program that supports migrant women moving to your area, build relationships with your local Aboriginal Cooperative.

We provided examples of projects that could be considered.

Examples of Mental Health Projects

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE ISSUES	Determinant/s	Local Gov. Priority Area	Examples of Champion Projects you could be involved in or consider for planning.
Depression	Economic vulnerability Extreme stress Gender equity	Mental Health Healthy Lifestyles	Recognising and naming Postnatal Depression www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/default.asp?iDocId=10676&iSubCatID=3413&iNavCatID=3357
Isolation	Family violence Women as carers Lower income	Connected community Transport Public Spaces	Women's Networks www.awhn.org.au www.loddon.vic.gov.au/Page/page.asp?Page_Id=1645&h=0
Disproportionately high rate of eating disorders among girls.	Gender equity	Healthy Lifestyles Mental Health	Solving the Jigsaw – primary school bullying and violence prevention strategy www.solvingthejigsaw.org.au/



Healthy Lifestyles in Central Goldfields

A page on core priorities of each council – identified from their most recent plan.

We included information to prompt thinking about improving women's health in these areas.

The CGSC MPHP indicates that they will promote and encourage physical activity, and increase opportunities to physical activity by maximising the use of existing facilities, resources and open spaces. Coming from a gendered perspective, we could then consider these population groups and settings in the context of women, and how then the action areas for these strategies may need to become more specific, and relevant to women's health needs.

For example, in recreational planning, consider these questions from a gender sensitive approach;

- Does the space we're providing have a sense of safety (lighting, open area) and ease of access to it?
- Is the facility/service open at appropriate times for working/mothering women?
- Does the facility support nursing mothers?
- Are there appropriate spaces for children to access this?
- Do we provide women only activities such as swimming times, gym access, and classes?
- Is there nutritious food available at events for women and their children?
- What female managed/orientated recreational clubs do we provide support to?
- Are we inclusive in the language that we use? ie – inappropriate language may include "married ladies netball".
- Do we acknowledge and celebrate the importance of women's clubs and activities?

"Compared to Victoria, a higher proportion of females from CGSC and Macedon Ranges were overweight and a higher proportion of females from every LGA were obese" (Vaughan, 2012).

The context of women's lives impacts on their ability to participate in regular physical activity. Some of the gendered barriers that women face to participating regular exercise, include caring responsibilities, body image, access to safe and affordable exercise/clubs and safety. Inadequate levels of physical activity in women and girls are linked to obesity which can contribute to a number of interrelated health issues. These include earlier onset of puberty, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), gestational diabetes, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis (WHV, 2010)

30.9% of Australian women are overweight and an additional 24% of women are obese (ABS, 2009).

Definitions of key terms provides an awareness raising component to further improve understanding about gender sensitivity.



Definitions

Gender Blind

Gender blind policy and practice either ignores or deliberately does not address gender, on the assumption that no gender-based differences apply. It is often based on the principle of treating everyone the same.

Gender Exploitative

Policy and practice takes advantage of rigid gender norms, harmful gender stereotypes and unequal power relations between women and men to achieve policy or program goals.

Gender Sensitive

Policy and practice takes gender into account, acknowledging the different experiences, expectations, pressures, inequalities and needs of women, men, transgender and intersex people.

Gender Transformative

Policy and practice examines challenges and ultimately transforms structures, norms and behaviours that reinforce gender inequality, and strengthens those that support gender equality.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women refers to violent acts or the threat of violent acts that are aimed exclusively or specifically at women and girls. It is any act that results in or is likely to result in physical, emotional or mental harm or suffering of women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.



Feedback from council staff

3 councils (staff) have completed a phone survey, with positive results.

Comments such as :

“Yes, it absolutely increased our knowledge of women’s health issues. We don’t always have the opportunity to consider things such as this, and your guide has given us the support and language we’ve been looking for. It gives us evidence that resources need to be in this area! This will support our Healthy Communities project too.”

“Congratulations to Women’s Health Loddon Mallee on the excellent resource provided to individual Councils for the development of their Public Health and Well Being Plans.

The work is fantastic and because it is targeted to each Council, (specifically written for each one) it is sure to have an impact.

That will ensure our Health Promotion Planning leaders have a copy each and will use the information to assist in the development of our Health Promotion Plans.”

CEO, BLPCP.

Early Evaluation Results

- The Municipal Public Health Planning (MPHP) Project has raised awareness of women's social determinants of health, and how to incorporate this into planning within 10 Local Government Areas (LGA) in the Loddon Mallee Region.
- Ten local governments were consulted and then provided with a detailed and locally specific "Women's Health Guide to Municipal Public Health Planning".
- This has resulted in an increase of knowledge of gender sensitive planning amongst council staff, as well as an increase in the number of MPHP's that meet a standard score for gender policy mainstreaming.
- Over 120 people made up of council staff, councillors, council CEO's and health managers, Primary Care Partnership Executive Officers, and Community Health Centre managers we given a copy of the guide.

Improvements

- We will analyse each of the new plans for their level of gender sensitivity.
- We will gain feedback from workers about the format, timing and content of the information provided.
- We will find ways to give our information more 'life' to further increase the likelihood of being used – small videos, stories, more ideas about responses to issues