

Priority Action Area 3: Social Connectedness

Initiative 3.1 The Public Tenant Employment Program

To create employment and training opportunities for women living in public housing.

Progress and Achievements:

Seventy women have been employed in the program since December 2007. Of these, 34% are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, 21% are youth (under 25), 28% are mature (45+) and 6% are Aboriginal. See also Key successes.

Initiative 3.2 Count Us In!

To promote social inclusion of people living in residential aged care.

Progress and Achievements:

Funding has been provided to 16 community based agencies and health services to promote social inclusion for people living in residential aged care. A forum in May 2008 will share learnings and outcomes of projects, reflect on the success, challenges and highlights experienced by all participants and explore future directions and integration of the Count Us In! social inclusion principles. A report documenting all project achievements and outcomes will be available in late 2008. See also Key Successes.

Initiative 3.3 The Turkish Women's Voice Group

To act as a support network, build confidence and empower Turkish women to actively participate in the community through training and employment opportunities.

Progress and Achievements:

Ten members have completed a Food Safety Handling course and have joined the catering committee. Eight members have participated in Governance and Event Management training. Twenty women participated in a wellbeing day out to enhance their assertiveness, build self esteem and confidence. Women are actively involved in community events held by local council and agencies.

The group are doing research into the use of drugs amongst Turkish youth, educating parents in understanding the effects of drugs and where they can get assistance.

Initiative 3.4 Young Parents Access Program

To enable young women who are parents to continue or return to education.

Progress and Achievements:

In 2007 the Corio Bay Senior College 'Hub' initiative was Highly Commended by the Best Start Early Years Award program. The initiative co-locates integrated formal and informal education, affordable childcare, outreach health and support services and recreational activities.

Childcare is provided onsite in a registered 43 place, purpose built centre and is utilised by student parents and the general community. The Young Parents Access Program Support Worker position is now fully funded by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, for all schools with access to an onsite childcare facility.

Initiative 3.5 Seymour Neighbourhood Renewal redevelopment and development of local parks

To develop more appropriate and family friendly parks and recreation facilities in partnership with Neighbourhood Renewal residents.

Progress and Achievements:

Two parks have been totally refurbished and replaced with new play equipment, secure fencing, shade areas and barbeques. The community were actively engaged in the planning and implementation of the upgrades and have taken ownership of the new environments. Women now meet in the parks as they have become safe and friendly environments. This has increased the level of activity and participation in the community.

Initiative 3.6 Islamic Women's Project

To develop an understanding of health promotion practices which meet the needs of Islamic women.

Progress and Achievements:

A final report, consisting of a demographic analysis of Muslim women in Victoria and a literature review identifying issues such as identity, faith, gender, health belief models and access to health services, is due June 2008.

Initiative 3.7 Bail Support Program - Better Pathways Housing Initiative for Women

To better support Aboriginal women at risk of offending or re-offending through meeting their need for stable housing.

Progress and Achievements:

Cross agency collaboration has provided holistic responses to clients' needs and immediacy of intervention and ongoing support. Gender responsiveness has targeted a range of prevention, early intervention, diversion, rehabilitation and transitional support programs. Includes Aboriginal women in Hume and Loddon Mallee regions.

Initiative 3.8 Mums in Bayswater - Knox Community Health Service

To enhance the social connectedness of Bayswater mothers parenting in difficult circumstances.

Progress and Achievements:

A peer to peer audit is underway examining infrastructure, safety, open space, connectivity of open spaces and support needed to increase the physical activity of mums parenting in difficult circumstances.

A range of community events have been held to inform Knox Council's planning around infrastructure needs to support increased physical activity and inform action planning. Finalist in the Victorian Healthcare Association awards in 2007.

Initiative 3.9 Engaging culturally and linguistically diverse communities and family violence services in Casey and Greater Dandenong

To improve the levels of access by CALD families to family violence services.

Progress and Achievements:

The Southern CALD Regional Network has been established to increase awareness of family violence services that are culturally appropriate. It continues to grow and has approximately 50 participants.

Initiative 3.10 Afghani Women's Group

To enable Afghani women to engage with their local community, organise their own activities, and participate in regular exercise.

Progress and Achievements:

Established in 1992, the Frankston Afghani Women's Group is now classified as a self help group which requires minimal support from Women's Health in the South East. Members of the group have indicated an increase in confidence and the ability to advocate on their own behalf.

Initiative 3.11 Talking Realities Peer Education Program

To increase awareness about the relationship between teenage parenting and social connectedness for young women attending secondary schools in the Bayside and Kingston areas.

Progress and Achievements:

In 2007, the program was delivered in 9 secondary schools across the Bayside and Kingston catchment area and to Victorian Certificate Applied Learning students at Holmesglen TAFE.

Initiative 3.12 Girlsational

To engage young women in the City of Casey in a program to promote their self esteem.

Progress and Achievements:

This ongoing initiative has actively engaged 6 young women per week. The young women have formed positive relationships with their peers, workers and the local community. The initiative has formed a partnership with a local secondary college, allowing expansion to an additional site.

Initiative 3.13 Drought assistance in rural Victoria

To provide counselling services to support people affected by the social impacts of the drought including family breakdown, economic hardship, health, welfare and mental health issues.

Progress and Achievements:

Additional drought focused counselling positions have been created. The Bouverie Centre has provided specialist training and support to counselling practitioners to provide courses. These include empathy/communication skills for the general public to support friends & family, and networking skills for farmers to set up rural neighbourhood networks.

Initiative 3.14 Women's Network Grampians

To develop a network of women to support and increase women's participation and leadership in the Grampians Region.

Progress and Achievements:

Two Women's Network Forums have been held with 350 women in attendance. The Network provided a framework to disseminate information and build the capacity of women in the region and understand the political structures and strategic directions in their region and/or community. Ensuring that drought affected communities have access to these forums continues to be a priority.

The Gender and diversity lens for health and human services

The **Gender and diversity lens for health and human services** is a key action of the *Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy Stage 2: 2006-2010*. It has been developed with input from a range of funded organisations, departmental staff and consumers. The lens is a practical resource for departmental policy makers and funded specialist and mainstream services to improve responsiveness to the interactions between gender, diversity and disadvantage during the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of service delivery.

The department and Women's Health Victoria have used the lens as part of five one day workshops for funded agencies about the gendered patterns of behaviour affecting the health and wellbeing of women and men.

The workshops assisted participants consider gender implications through an organisation's planning cycle and provided practical resources, a local snapshot of gendered health and human services issues, good practice and case studies to assess initiatives and plan sustainable responses.

Practice Forums

Since its inception, the *Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy* has been committed to conducting regular forums to inform, review and focus our work. In November 2007, a *Women's Health and Chlamydia Practice Forum*, held jointly by the Public Health and Social Policy Branches of DHS, highlighted policy, research and good practice models addressing and preventing the transmission of chlamydia and its impact on women's health and wellbeing.

Other collaborative Practice Forums planned for 2008-2009 will include:

- Gender Analysis for DHS staff
- Women and Social Connectedness