

KEY SUCCESSES

Priority Action Area 1: Mental Health and Wellbeing

Initiatives 1.1 and 1.2: Safety for women in inpatient units

The Mental Health Branch has funded two initiatives to address women's sense of security and safety in inpatient units. The work acknowledges that the experience of safety is multidimensional. It encompasses physical, environmental and psychological dimensions, with appropriate treatment delivered in environments experienced as safe by consumers, their families, carers and staff.

The *Gender sensitivity and safety in adult acute mental health inpatient units* project has conducted site visits, literature and policy review and interviews with key stakeholders to identify areas for future development. Practice guidelines are a likely outcome over the coming year.

Once off funding (\$20,000) provided through the *Inpatient Environmental Improvement Grants* has seen all Mental Health Inpatient Services consult with consumers and plan measures to improve inpatient units to address some of women's safety and security concerns. This initiative has provided a tangible improvement to the safety of inpatient environments for women throughout the state. Service activity has included the review of internal policies and practices, minor refurbishing works and the establishment of a women's room in an inpatient unit.

Initiative 1.31: Say No to Family Violence Community Awareness Program

Gippsland Women's Health Service (GWHS) has developed this project with the Sale City Football Netball Club to raise awareness of, and improve local responses to, family violence. The model developed by the AFL and VicHealth (Respect and Responsibility program) makes use of the valuable role of sporting clubs in rural communities. The project has improved awareness while also taking steps to provide a supportive environment for those witnessing or experiencing violence. Activities have included:

- 'Say No to Family Violence' message displayed on uniforms and signs around the club
- Co-facilitation of family violence awareness sessions with the U18s football players by Relationships Australia and Central Gippsland Health Service.
- Delivery of information sessions by GWHS to netball and football players focused on raising awareness of the impact of abuse and how to support someone affected by violence. Sessions with male players also included how to talk to a mate about his use of violence.
- *Duty of Care* sessions to the Board, Junior and Senior Committees by Child Wise, a child protection charity working to prevent child abuse. As a result GWHS will continue to support the club in the development of appropriate policies related to family violence.
- Resources located within the club rooms advising of local and regional supports and networks for the whole of club community.

Through the creation of a supportive environment, there has been an increase in netballer registrations for the 2008 year and a commitment by the club to improve policy and practice. Sale City Football Netball Club initiated contact with the *Good Sport* program for 2008 season as a result of understanding the direct impact of attitudes towards alcohol and violence.

Initiative 1.33: Emotional Strength Building Program

Women's Health Loddon Mallee and St Luke's run this 10 session program twice a year in Bendigo and Ouyen. Using a strengths-based approach that promotes coping and resilience, the program aims to build knowledge about the physiological, psychological and social factors contributing to depression and anxiety.

The program has attracted 10 women per program with a waiting list for future programs. Women attending the sessions report:

- greater confidence regarding involvement in community activities
- friendships enduring past the life of the program
- support from other group participants, reducing social isolation
- awareness of rights and greater assertiveness to assert their rights in their personal lives.

Since a positive evaluation by the University of Western Sydney, Women's Health Loddon Mallee and St Luke's are considering adapting the program for drought affected areas.

Priority Action Area 2: Sexual and Reproductive Health

Initiative 2.15: Girls Talk – Guys Talk

Women's Health West has coordinated a whole school program focused on young women's sexual and reproductive health. From the outset, teachers, parents, students and local agencies identified teenage motherhood as a prominent issue for Laverton Secondary College. It was apparent during focus groups that Year 9 boys and girls had vastly different views on the subject; the boys had little interest in the topic whereas the girls viewed themselves as supportive of their friends with babies and saw having the baby as the only "right" option for a pregnant teenager. Whole school interventions have included:

- Year 9 student assessment of school sexual and reproductive health issues
- establishment of an ongoing student working group of 18 members
- development and support of student mentors and peer educators
- development of the Year 9 sex education course which recognised and addressed gender differences
- curriculum and policy development, including equal opportunity which will assist the school in its planning for future years.
- train the trainer and sex education package for teachers
- education and information for parents, including a student performance "Should I or Shouldn't I?".

Girls Talk- Guys Talk is currently undergoing its final stages. This includes:

- embedding sex education into the curriculum
- professional development to support teachers to be comfortable co-delivering sexual and reproductive health training
- school policy review and development, based on the surveys and focus groups
- linking *Girls Talk – Guys Talk* with Hobson's Bay Mentoring Program
- increasing involvement of Hobson's Bay Youth Services with Laverton Secondary College
- a project evaluation report.

Priority Action Area 3: Social Connectedness

Initiative 3.1 The Public Tenant Employment Program

The aim of the Public Tenant Employment Program (PTEP) is to create employment and training opportunities for people living in public housing. There are 73,000 working age Victorians in public housing, with only 10% employed full time compared to close to 40% in the general population. This is of concern given the well documented link between employment and good health and well being. 56% of public tenants are women.

The initial program brief was to create employment through the contracts generated by the Housing and Community Building Division. The nature of the work in this industry (construction, cleaning and maintenance) meant that the majority of positions were being filled by men, despite strong encouragement for women to apply for these roles. Women made up only 6% of tenants employed through the program at this time.

PTEP approached the DHS program areas responsible for Home and Community Care, Aged Care and Disability Services. These are industries employing a high proportion of women and it was hoped that more women would be attracted to work in these fields. The proportion of women employed in the program has risen from 6% while the program was restricted to employment in housing to 30% currently.

The provision of training is a critical next phase in the pathway to employment for disadvantaged and socially isolated people. The PTEP program has begun providing nationally accredited, pre vocational training for public tenants and the aim is to ensure that number of women have access this opportunity proportional to their representation in the public tenant population. To date 70 women have accessed nationally accredited, pre vocational training courses. This will ensure the delivery of better opportunities for employment outcomes, in turn improving health and wellbeing for women.

Initiative 3.2 Count Us In!

The Count Us In! initiative has provided funding to 16 community based agencies and health services to promote social inclusion for people living in aged care facilities. The majority of aged care residents are women, given women are statistically more likely to live longer than men and outlive their partners, leaving them without a resident carer.

Initial findings indicate social inclusion activities have improved older people's health and wellbeing. Relationships have been developed with volunteers, local clubs, sporting groups, students at primary and secondary schools and leaders of community organisations. Social inclusion has seen people become more enthusiastic, happy, active and forward looking, contributing to their self esteem and confidence.