



## **ACTION PLAN FOR THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

### **Background**

In Mount Alexander there were 160 incidents of violence against women reported in 2014 and 11 incidents of sexual assault.

The Mount Alexander Shire Council Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013 – 2017 identifies the objective 'promote accessible and inclusive communities'. One of the targets in achieving this objective is the prevention of violence against women and children.

One of the goals of the Council Plan 2013 – 2017 is 'A vibrant and healthy community'. A priority under this goal is 'provide an environment for a healthy, active, prepared and resilient community'. In working toward this priority in 2015 – 2016, the Annual Plan commits to 'identify and implement initiatives that work towards decreasing rates of violence against women and children across the community.

### **Gender Equity Statement**

The recent publication "Change the Story" jointly published by Our Watch, VicHealth and ANROWS in 2015 outlines the essential actions to address violence against women as:

1. Challenging the condoning of violence against women
2. Promoting women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships
3. Fostering positive personal identities and challenging gender stereotypes and roles
4. Strengthening positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys
5. Promoting and normalising gender equality in public and private life

On 11 March 2014 Mount Alexander Shire Council endorsed the following statement:

*Mount Alexander Shire Council is committed to Gender Equity in the workplace and in the Shire. Gender Equity is equality of opportunity and the balanced participation of women and men in decision making in all areas of life. Mount Alexander Shire Council aims to ensure that women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all areas of life in the Shire, and believes that everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to work, to balance their career and personal life and to live without fear of abuse or violence.*

*Equality for men and women is a fundamental human right. Equal rights and opportunities are central to good governance.*

*Mount Alexander Shire Council will consider the impact gender has on all policies and programs so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men.*

The 2014 – 2015 Annual Report outlines the current gender profile of individual staff working for Council. It reflects the encouragement given to women in applying for positions in Council and human resources practices which support a positive work-life balance to assist staff with family commitments.

<b>MANAGEMENT LEVEL</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>CEO</b>		1	1
<b>Director</b>	2	1	3
<b>Manager/Supervisor</b>	7	4	11
<b>Other</b>	120	81	201
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>216</b>

In early 2016 The Loddon Mallee Action Plan for the primary prevention of violence against women was released by Women's Health Loddon Mallee (WHLM). This Action Plan was developed over 2015 and involved consultation with more than 40 groups across the region. In releasing the Action Plan WHLM sought endorsement of the following commitment from partner agencies:

*We acknowledge that violence against women is prevalent and serious in the Loddon Mallee Region. We recognise that while any person can be a victim or perpetrator of violence, violence is predominantly perpetrated by men, and in family violence situations, women are predominantly the victim. We understand that the underlying drivers of violence against women are gender inequality, rigid gender*

*stereotypes and cultures that accept or excuse men’s violence. We commit to working in our own organisations and in partnership with others to end violence against women. We will do this by creating communities, organisations and cultures that are non-violent, gender-equitable, non-discriminatory and that promote respectful relationships. In this way we will address the underlying drivers of violence against women and create a safer community.*

The Vision outlined in the Loddon Mallee Action Plan is:

*We in the Loddon Mallee are non-violent, gender equitable, non-discriminatory and have respectful relationships. Women and children are free from violence.*

The five strategies identified in the plan are:

1. Strengthening and mobilise community leadership and groups to drive change to prevent violence against women
2. Workplace Change – Embed gender equity and non-violent norms into organisational structures and cultures
3. Building skills and understanding through direct participation programs that provide understanding and skills to targeted and self-initiating individuals and groups
4. Leading and advocating on prevention of violence against women and gender equity
5. Develop campaigns and communications to raise public awareness of the prevalence, seriousness and underlying drivers of violence against women and the need for change.

The following Action Plan utilises the framework from the Loddon Mallee Plan to describe the initiatives that Council will undertake over the next twelve months to progress its commitment to the prevention of violence against women and children.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Strengthening and mobilising community	Develop and distribute information on locally available services to members of the community experiencing or supporting someone experiencing family violence.	Shire Wide	Community Engagement Team Leader	March 2016
	Incorporate approaches to prevent violence against women in Councils approach to Emergency Management	Emergency Management	Manager Liveable Communities	June 2016

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Leading and advocating	Develop and seek Council endorsement of a Prevention of Violence Against Women Policy for Mount Alexander Shire.	Governance	Director Sustainable Communities	June 2016
	Participate in the Stewardship Group for the Loddon Mallee Action Plan for the primary prevention of violence against women	Governance	Director Sustainable Communities	Ongoing
	Participate on the Mount Alexander Family Violence Network	Governance	Director Sustainable Communities	Ongoing
Workplace change	Undertake an organisational attitudes survey to build understanding of knowledge and understanding regarding violence against women and its determinants.	Workplace	Director Sustainable Communities / Manager Organisational Development	June 2016
	Incorporate a clause within the 2016 Enterprise Agreement that indicates the organisations support for staff experiencing family violence and its commitment to undertaking work to prevent violence against women.	Workplace	Manager Organisational Development	Dec 2016
Building understanding and skills	Incorporate gender equity and bystander training into the Council Learning and Development Calendar.	Workplace	Manager Organisational Development	June 2016
	Undertake a Gender Equity Audit of Council recreation infrastructure and incorporate findings into Council's planning processes.	Recreation	Manager Liveable Communities	June 2016
	Undertake a Gender Equity Audit of current Section 86 Committees and incorporate findings into future Council planning.	Community Development	Community Engagement Team Leader	June 2016
	Work in partnership with local service providers to develop and deliver programs and information for women that support equity.	Community Development	Community Engagement Team Leader	June 2016
Campaigns and communications	Deliver a community based event for International Women's Day Event	Shire Wide	Director Sustainable Communities	March 2016