

Women's Health Grampians has say to Royal Commission into family violence

By ERIN McFADDEN June 19, 2015, 1 a.m.

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Women's Health Grampians has highlighted issues such as a lack of funding, data, structural incentives and regulation to support social change to a Royal Commission into family violence. Picture: iSTOCK

WOMEN'S Health Grampians chief executive Marianne Hendron hopes a Royal Commission into family violence will lead to more prevention programs in the region.

The organisation made a submission to the commission, which highlighted issues such as a lack of funding, data, structural incentives and regulation to support social change.

Ms Hendron said the Royal Commission was a fantastic opportunity for the organisation to influence family violence policy in the future.

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“We want the government to direct more resources into prevention,” she said.

“There is a spotlight being shone on family violence at the moment, which signals the potential for big change to take place.”

Ms Hendron said women and children in the Grampians were more likely to experience family violence compared with other parts of the state.

“Women are more isolated and the options for them to get away from family violence are much more limited in rural areas,” she said.

“Local services are not always the most appropriate place for women to go because of a lack of confidentiality.”

Ms Hendron said in Horsham, the number of family violence incidents reported to police was almost double the state average.

Ms Hendron said children were twice as likely to witness domestic violence in Ararat and Horsham than other areas of the state.

She said while state and national leadership was crucial, more leadership and community effort in the region was required to drive social change.

“This violence happens in our communities. Our attitudes and behaviours need to change,” she said.

Women’s Health Grampians run a number of programs targeted at domestic violence prevention.

Programs include community roundtables, opportunities to swear an oath against violence, bystander training and community responsibility workshops.

“Our work focuses on addressing the underlying causes of domestic violence, in order to completely eradicate it from our society,” Ms Hendron said.

“Events such as our Leading Change breakfast were sold out, with more than 300 Wimmera leaders coming together to hear how they can take action in the community. Likewise our Act@Work program is unable to keep up with the demand from workplaces wanting to do the program.

“Community momentum is growing – what we need now is long-term adequate funding to

optimise our response.”

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Ms Hendron said there had been more than 1000 submissions to the Royal Commission.

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