Unknown future for Act@Work

BY MICHAEL POLLOCK

FURTHER funding for critical anti-discrimination program Act@Work remains in limbo and hinges on the recommendations of a Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Funding for the Women's Health Grampians initiative will cease in December and Shadow Minister for Community Safety Edward O'Donohue and Member for Ripon Louise Staley are calling for the state government to reinstate the program beyond 2015.

Act@Work is aimed at helping organisations challenge sexism, discrimination and violence against women, with the Ballarat Courier and Ballarat Community Health both embracing the program since its announcement in 2012.

Mr O'Donohue said the program should be continued regardless of the Royal Commission's findings, due to be released in February, 2016.

"Family violence is a scourge in our community and it needs a broad range of responses," he said

"We can't just wait for the Royal Commission as an excuse to de-fund a proven project that could be continued with some resourcing."

Act@Work has been successfully implemented in 12 workplaces across the Ballarat and Grampians regions.

"Women's Health Grampians spent enormous resources personalising it for the Ballarat and Grampians regions," Ms Staley said.

"It's a great shame that all of that work can't now be lev-

eraged into further projects."

Ballarat Community Health chief executive Robyn Reeve said it is crucial Act@ Work or similar programs continue to function.

"I think we've seen in the media this year how much information there has been in the public domain about violence against women and children," she said.

"The reassuring thing is that there is a Royal Commission into Family Violence and there is quite a lot of new money that is being put into the area."

The Federal government's $100 million safety package promises new technology – such as CCTV and GPS trackers – as well as training for health and legal workers, despite little to no investment into primary prevention of violence.