

Local leaders develop a regional plan to end violence against women

Senior staff from fourteen major organisations across the Grampians region met today to commence planning a strategic and coordinated approach to end violence against women and their children.

By any measure or standard, violence against women is unacceptably prevalent, and the Grampians is no exception. Research shows that women living in rural areas are at an increased risk due to their geographical and social isolation and other factors such as increased gun ownership. There are also more barriers to reporting where lack of anonymity and fear of stigma and shame can inhibit women seeking help or leaving abusive relationships.

Building on the evidence documented in the new National Framework for the prevention of violence against women (Change the Story), the Grampians Regional Strategy will lay the foundation for integrated work in the primary prevention of violence against women by improving gender equity across the region.

"This is a watershed moment for this region" said Women's Health Grampians' Chief Executive Marianne Hendron. "If we are going to build communities of equality and respect, where women and children are safe, we need to start challenging the status quo - the stereotypes and norms we have around gender, the structural barriers inhibiting women's independence, and to do this - we need to have leadership, we need to be strategic, and we need to work together."

"Addressing family violence is an important issue for Wimmera Uniting Care" said its Chief Executive Wendy Sturgess "We want to see a safer and fairer community for women and children in our region."

"Enough is enough and we just can't stand by" added Ray Campling, Chief Executive from Yarriambiack Shire Council. "Local government has a key role to play as a major employer, as a community leader and as a key service provider. It's important we are clear that we do not tolerate or condone violence against women but we also have a role to play in ensuring the impact of gender is incorporated into planning, policy and program development. We are uniquely positioned to address gender inequality and ensure both women and men have equal access to all opportunities we provide."

"All local councils from across the region have been invited to be part of this strategy and we are encouraged with the response so far" said Marianne Hendron "but we hope more organisations that share the vision for building communities of equality and respect to prevent violence against women and their children will join the Regional Strategy, and further strengthen our local capacity, over the next two months, as the plan is developed".

For more information on the Regional Strategy please contact Marianne Hendron, CEO Women's Health Grampians on 5322 4100.



From left back row – Ray Campling, Yarriambiack Shire Council; Libby Jewson, WRISC Family Violence Support; Graham Hoad, Child and Family Services; Andrew Howard, Grampians Pyrenees Primary Care Partnership; Joe Cahir, Central Highlands Family Violence Committee; David McGinniss, Foresight Lane; Neville Ivey, City Of Ballarat; Corrina Graham, Grampians Community Health; Rosie Thomas, Department of Health and Human Services; Colleen White, Ararat Rural City Council; Greg Anders, Golden Plains Shire Council; Marianne Hendron, Women’s Health Grampians; Darlene Henning-Marshall, Women’s Health Grampians

Seated – Wendy Sturgess, Wimmera Uniting Care; Katherine Gillespie, Central Highlands Primary Care Partnership; Gerardine Christou, Western District Integrated Family Violence Committee.

For media enquiries and interviews

Please contact Marianne Hendron, CEO Women’s Health Grampians on 5322 4100