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PASIFIKA WOMEN ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

Pasifika and Polynesian women participating in Women's Health West's Our Community, Our Rights program are working together to advocate for change for their community.

Pictured:
Pasifika and
Polynesian
community
expo

Sally Camilleri Team Leader – Mental Health and Wellbeing
Kelly Ventress Manager – Communications

In the last edition of this newsletter, we covered the first phase of Women's Health West's Our Community, Our Rights program, where the women involved had taken part in a series of workshops, with topics determined by extensive consultation with the community. The second phase of the program has now come to a very successful close, with Pasifika women undertaking their own advocacy projects.

This was the fifth iteration of the Our Community, Our Rights program, which is implemented with a different culturally-specific group of women each time.

During the workshop phase of the

program, participants learnt about human rights, equal opportunities and advocacy. A law firm was also invited to deliver a session on immigration law and the Special Category Visa for New Zealand passport holders. A majority of Pasifika and Polynesian communities living in Australia are under this visa, and they wanted to understand it better. The group also explored ways they could redress some of the common challenges facing their community. Drawing from what they learned and explored in the workshops, the group planned three of their own advocacy projects, which are outlined in this issue.

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A WORD FROM THE CEO



Mental health and wellbeing: A fundamental human right

Dr Robyn Gregory CEO, Women's Health West

This issue of the Women's Health West newsletter focuses on mental health and wellbeing, which is one of three primary prevention health promotion priority areas, along with the prevention of men's violence against women, and sexual and reproductive health.

One of our very successful mental health and wellbeing programs is 'Our Community, Our Rights', which guides and supports women to undertake their own advocacy projects.

One of the advocacy projects outlined in this edition (see page 6) highlights the negative racial stereotypes that impact on young people from the Pasifika and Polynesian community in Melbourne's west. Freedom from race-based and religious discrimination is a key determinant of mental health and wellbeing; those experiencing hate crimes and racism are much more likely to have poorer health outcomes.

The programs we run to enhance

women's mental health and wellbeing are all designed to have a real impact on bringing about positive change for our community. These programs support women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to build skills and knowledge, understand their rights, and advocate for positive social change. We run various programs to enhance the mental health and wellbeing of women and girls in our community throughout the year, including leadership and financial literacy programs. Check our website for details of upcoming programs.

Many of our projects rely on additional funding to build and sustain our work, and so we are delighted to announce that we have recently secured funding from the state government's Community Partnerships for Primary Prevention program. Women's Health West, as the lead agency for the Preventing Violence

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Women's Health West acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, the people of the Kulin Nation, and we pay our respects to Elders and community members past and present. We express solidarity with the ongoing struggle for land rights, self-determination, sovereignty and the recognition of past injustices. We express our hope for reconciliation and justice.

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About Women's Health West

Women's Health West is one of Victoria's only organisations that provides services and programs that encompass every level of response to family violence – from primary prevention, to intervention and response.

Since 1988, our work has actively contributed to improving the health, safety and wellbeing of women and their children in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne. Our work covers the local government areas of Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Melton, Moonee Valley and Wyndham. Our work covers:

Intervention

- 24 hour crisis response
- Risk assessments
- Housing and refuge

Response

- Case management
- Safety and security support
- Children's counselling

Prevention

- Prevention of violence and discrimination
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Sexual and reproductive health





Pictured: Attendees at the first WHW community information session



Gert Geyer

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY IN THE LOOP

Women's Health West are keen to ensure that our local community understands what we do and how to access our services. To support this, we're running two series of information sessions – one to support women with parenting after family violence has occurred, and another on all aspects of our family violence service.

Kelly Ventress Manager – Communications

Family violence community information sessions

We receive regular queries from people in the community about our family violence services, and how to access services or refer clients. In response, we're running a series of information sessions for service providers and community members in Melbourne's western region.

The sessions are scheduled to take place every other month throughout the latter half of 2017, at our offices in Footscray. The sessions are free and run from 2pm to 3:30pm.

The sessions enable attendees to find out more about:

- How clients can access Women's Health West's integrated family violence services
- How the intake process works
- How to refer a client to Women's Health West
- How the L17 police referral process works
- Information on Risk Assessment Management Panels (RAMPs)

- Information about our children's counselling service and how to refer to it
- Information about flexible support packages, and how clients can access these.

'It was great, even just to be able to talk about it.'

Attendee at 'parenting after family violence workshop'

We have already run two sessions in May and July, and there are two remaining dates for the year – 26 September and 28 November. We've experienced an unexpectedly high level of demand, and places are filling fast. If you'd like to attend, it's free to do so – but you need to RSVP. Please phone **9689 9588**, and keep an eye on

our website at www.whwest.org.au for future dates.

Feedback from our first two sessions has been incredibly positive. We'd like to thank everyone who came along, asked questions, and found out about the work we do.

Parenting information sessions

Throughout late May and June this year we also ran a series of parenting information sessions for the first time.

The sessions were run for women who are caring for children following the occurrence of family violence, and designed to support them in their parenting role after violence has occurred. The sessions covered parenting across different ages from infants to teenagers, and women could choose to attend every session, or just the sessions most appropriate to them. Alongside sessions tailored to parenting children of different ages, there was also a session focused on how mothers and carers can strengthen bonds with children after the occurrence of family violence.

Provided there is sufficient demand, we'll be looking at running the sessions again in the future, and will also take into account feedback received from the first series. If you'd like to express an interest in attending a future session, please call Bree, Women's Health West's counselling team leader, on **9689 9588** or email bree@whwest.org.au ■

BEHIND THE SCENES

MEET THE STAFF

Anne

Team Leader – Crisis Response

I'm originally from Kenya. I came to Australia in 2008 as an international student. I have a master's degree in public health and an undergraduate degree in social work. I have worked in a variety of roles in the health sector in Kenya and Australia. I was working as a clinical mental health case manager prior to joining Women's Health West. I'm really excited to learn more, and be able to contribute to the growth of the organisation. My passion includes striving for gender equity, and promoting good health and wellbeing. In my spare time, I enjoy brushing up on my cooking skills, hanging out with friends, watching Netflix, reading, and chatting online with my family.

Joan

Aboriginal Family Violence Case Manager

Nga nharai Joan yandang yanal Wadi Wadi and Wemba Wemba thangi (Hello my name is Joan I come from the Wadi Wadi and Wemba Wemba country way).

I'm a proud descendant of the Wadi Wadi and Wemba Wemba people located in the north west of Victoria. On the Murray River is Swan Hill, a very special place I call home and hold a very strong connection to. I have lived in Melbourne - mainly in the west - for the past five years and have worked in various roles over that time, ranging from training and employment to Aboriginal

justice and education. My passion is to work for Aboriginal communities, and I love being out in the community and having the ability to provide options to Aboriginal women and their children so they can live a life that is free from family violence. For me this is the most amazing opportunity I have had in my career as a social worker over the past 10 years.

In my spare time, I love to spend time on my country with my mob. I'm a proud aunty to seven, and I enjoy spoiling them and spending lots of time together.

Jess T

Intake Worker

While studying my Bachelor of Social Work, I worked part-time in a variety of organisations supporting people with disabilities. Upon graduating in 2011 I began working as an intensive caseworker for UnitingCare in country NSW, supporting families identified by the Department of Human Services as being at imminent risk of having their children removed from their care. This was a challenging yet rewarding role, where I met so many resilient and inspiring families, children and young people. I left that role to spend time travelling through Europe and the USA, before landing here in Melbourne. I am looking forward to working at such a wonderful organisation and learning from so many skilled women.



Maria Pizzi

Director – Business Operations

I'm very happy to have joined Women's Health West, and to work with the skilled and committed group of women here. I'm looking forward to learning a lot and contributing as much as I can to achieving our vision of equity and justice for women in the west. I've worked in a range of sectors including universities, government and not for profit organisations, so I hope to contribute through sharing experiences and ideas from many different perspectives. When I'm not working, I spend a lot of time with family and friends and wondering if I'll ever see the Richmond Football Club make it past the first week of the final series.

Ashani

Outreach Case Manager

I was born in Sri Lanka and raised in Melbourne's west. Prior to joining Women's Health West I had worked in a number of roles with families and children. After completing my Masters of Social Work, I moved to the Northern Territory and worked for nearly four years in Alice Springs, where I had the honour of meeting and working alongside incredible and inspirational individuals who assisted greatly in my personal and professional

growth. I have a strong interest in working with culturally diverse families and admire the strength it takes to navigate unfamiliar systems and the significant richness they bring to society. Outside of work I love anything to do with food and the opportunity to cook for people. I also love to travel, read and attempting to teach my dog tricks.

Alexia

Intensive Case Manager

I have always been passionate about issues of social justice and the rights of women and children. I loved exploring these areas in my studies and completed a Masters of Social Work and Bachelor of Arts (Global). Prior to commencing at Women's Health West I supported children living in kinship care due to parental illicit drug use across a number of varied therapeutic and recreation programs. It is wonderful to be working alongside so many amazing feminists and to encounter such inspiring women every day. I also enjoy practicing yoga, going to the beach and the bush, dancing and spending time with my friends and family.

Inae

Flexible support package administrator

Ten years ago I moved to Australia from Brazil to improve my English skills and travel. The plan was to stay one year but I am still here! I have worked in many different positions and industries, have a degree in marketing and

lots of experience in admin and events. Dance is a big passion, which led me to study Dance Movement Therapy two years ago. I love being outdoors, some extreme activities (volcano hikes are on the top of my list), yoga, art and lying on my hammock sunbaking or staring at the stars.

Joanne
Outreach Case Manager

I worked in community mental health before coming to Women's Health West. I met so many wonderful people, and learned a lot about humanity and the importance of hope. I am passionate about working with women with an intersectional feminist lens. I have a background in social work and I'm currently studying my Masters of Community and International Development. I am focusing on working in women's development in Australia and the Pacific region. I am a twin and a proud cat mum who loves true crime documentaries, spending time outdoors, and learning about people and their cultures.

Danielle
Crisis Accommodation Case Manager

I have just recently moved to Melbourne from Perth to explore the east coast. I was previously working in a single women's refuge with women who had experienced family violence and homelessness. I am learning lots whilst working at Women's Health West and seeing a big difference in law and funding from state to state. I have a degree in criminology and justice and love dogs, travel, playing netball and spending time with family and friends.

Elouise
Outreach Case Manager

I completed my studies in Arts and Social Work in 2014 and have experience working in the mental health, alcohol and other drugs, LGBTI and sexual health sectors. I joined Women's Health West at the end of March this year and have been learning lots. I am from Tasmania but have been living in Melbourne for about 10 years. In my spare time I enjoy snacking, dancing and singing around the house, getting out of the city, bushwalking, riding and yoga.

Sarah
Administrative Support Worker

I have been a local in Melbourne's west my entire life and have always been aware of the struggles faced by residents. From a young age I decided to focus my energies towards helping the local community achieve justice. I completed a Bachelor of Social Science and was with the Department of Justice for nine years, when I decided to shift my focus to the survivors of family violence rather than the perpetrators. This brought me to my current role with Women's Health West. In my spare time I enjoy exploring remote beaches, visiting the outback and photography.



Sara Elzahbi
Health Promotion Coordinator

I studied public health and international development and have worked across a number of sectors, most notably in non-communicable disease prevention in the Pacific, and also coordinating community capacity building programs for newly arrived refugees. I am passionate about human rights and social justice and committed to working with and for women. In my spare time I enjoy yoga, going on spontaneous adventures and live music.



Jenn McConnell
Senior Receptionist

I'm very excited to have joined the team as senior receptionist. Before I went on maternity leave I was operations manager at Western Chances and have also worked for Western Health and in mental health. I love the collaboration of community organisations in the west, working to achieve better outcomes for its residents. I'm passionate about working for an organisation that assists clients. When I'm not running around after my toddler, I enjoy hiking, galleries, craft markets and exploring the cafes of the west.

Rocio
Crisis Accommodation Service Case Manager

I arrived from Colombia almost 30 years ago. I finished my degree in social anthropology back in Colombia, which allowed me to find work in Australia as a research assistant in the sociology department at La Trobe University. After 13 years participating in different research projects, I decided to change my career path and work with homeless young women, which made me realise that working with women is a personal passion. I continued working within the homeless sector for 15 years. When I return home I always get the warmest welcome from my two beautiful rescue cats, Philbert and Apache.

Michelle
Outreach Case Manager

I've arrived at Women's Health West as a new graduate, and am excited to be working for an organisation that operates explicitly within a feminist framework and applies feminist values and principles to its work. Previous occupational pursuits include academia and TESOL teaching. Prior to undertaking my last degree, I spent a lot of free time volunteering for community groups and organisations, which largely informed my change of vocation. In my leisure time, I enjoy keeping abreast of current affairs; watching films and online programs; grocery shopping; fermenting foods; cooking up a cruelty-free storm; and traipsing around the gorgeous inner north.

We'd also like to welcome our new staff members who aren't represented here.

OUR COMMUNITY, OUR RIGHTS

PASIFIKA WOMEN ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

Continued from page 1

Exploring the impact of the Special Category Visa on Pasifika and Polynesian communities' experiences in Australia

This project highlighted the changes over recent years to the Special Category (Subclass 444) Visa, and resulting ongoing difficulties for Pasifika and Polynesian communities. Some of these include:

- Restrictions around access to services such as Centrelink, Medicare or HECS/HELP;
- Pathways to permanent residency requiring evidence of earnings at or above \$53,900 consecutively over five years; and
- Mandatory deportation for non-Australian citizens with a criminal conviction serving 12 months or more in prison. Pasifika and Polynesian community members are often unaware of immigration law implications when coming into contact with the criminal justice system. They often receive notice of deportation while they are in prison, and are unable to successfully advocate for themselves.

The group hosted a forum to start a conversation about the above challenges, and advocate for change. The forum was attended by representatives from federal and local government, service providers (such as education and social security institutions), lawyers and police, and members of the Pasifika and Polynesian community.

This project also included a PhotoVoice exhibition for the community, policy makers and service



Sally Camilleri

providers. PhotoVoice is a process where community members record their own stories as a way of advocating for social action and change.

The PhotoVoice exhibition was a key aspect of the forum: it highlighted the difficulties faced by the community, and proposed ideas about how they can work together to bring about change.

'Being outraged about inequality doesn't do you any good, unless you know about the processes and can change things.'

Our Community, Our Rights participant, 2017

Building connections between service providers and policymakers and the Pasifika and Polynesian community

Program participants identified a number of common barriers that contribute to making it more difficult for Pasifika and Polynesian community members to access services in Australia.

Some of these barriers included:

- Isolation: because of housing affordability, many members of the community live in Melbourne's outer suburbs, where services are more difficult to locate and access.

- Migration patterns: many Pasifika and Polynesian people who migrate to Australia are connected to and supported by their families. Often the families they're staying with aren't able to provide information or connect new arrivals to services, either because services have changed since they arrived themselves, or because they're unaware of what's available.
- Immigration law: in particular, the changes to the Special Category Visa outlined in the previous project.
- Family commitments: Pasifika and Polynesian families tend to be large – work and caring commitments can often mean community members do not have the time to travel to access services.

Participants decided to host an expo to respond to some of these barriers, and build better connections between the Pasifika and Polynesian community, policy makers, and service providers.

The expo provided a platform for service providers and policy makers to share information about the services they offer. And, in turn, the service providers had the opportunity to learn more about the needs of this community, and how they could improve services for Pasifika and Polynesian community members.

Sharing experiences of racial profiling in the education system, and in wider Australian society

A theme that emerged during the workshop phase of the program was that Pasifika and Polynesian young



Pictured: Attendees and performers at the forum, expo and CD launch events



Sally Camilleri

people felt stigmatised – by the media, by the public and by authority figures such as police and teachers.

While there is a lot of evidence showing that racial profiling exists when young people interact with the police, the extent of racial profiling in education institutions remains largely anecdotal. The group created a CD and audio digital download called 'I Am Not My Skin', in which Pasifika and Polynesian youth discuss and share their experiences and impacts of racial profiling and discrimination in the education system and wider community.

Education institutions, youth services and Victoria Police have been

invited to learn from this resource. You can download 'I Am Not My Skin' via <http://bit.ly/i-am-not-my-skin>.

A recent evaluation of this iteration of Our Community, Our Rights revealed that 100 per cent of the participants said they had increased their understanding of legal and human rights in Australia. Half of the women involved in the program have since gone into employment, study, volunteering or community organising as a result of the program.

The Our Community, Our Rights projects took place throughout June – keep an eye on the Women's Health West website (www.whwest.org.au) for updates about future programs. ■

100 per cent of participants in the Our Community, Our Rights program said they had increased their understanding of legal and human rights in Australia.

ALL ABOUT COURT SUPPORT

Women's Health West provides support to women who need to attend court for family violence intervention orders. Here we explain how this support service works, and how women can be referred to it.

Hang Pham

Manager – Access

Kelly Ventress

Manager – Communications

Supporting the journey to recovery

Women's Health West is the primary access point for women and children in Melbourne's west who require family violence support. Our intake and crisis teams receive referrals from two primary sources – Victoria Police, and self-referrals from women within our community. In 2016–17, we received nearly 10,000 police referrals.

Intervention orders

An intervention order is a special court order designed to provide protection from family violence; they are made by magistrates at a magistrates' court. An intervention order sets out rules for perpetrators of violence (for example, in some cases they are not allowed to have any contact with the victim). If an



Isis and Pluto

intervention order is made, the violent person will not receive a criminal record – however, if they breach the order, the police can charge them with a crime.

Women who are experiencing family violence can apply for an intervention order at their local Magistrates' Court – or the police can apply for one on their behalf. When we receive a family violence referral from the police, and it indicates that the police will be applying for an intervention order on a woman's behalf, we offer support to help them navigate the process of attending court.

How we support women attending court for an intervention order

Attending court is often frightening and overwhelming for many women who have experienced family violence. Women's Health West provides important support to women at court by walking alongside and assisting them to be informed about legal processes.

We have skilled and trained court support workers who are based at magistrates' courts in Sunshine, Melbourne and Werribee. Women's Health West prioritise court support assistance for women who are not already receiving any other support, as well as prioritising the woman's level of risk and need. Women's Health West's crisis team will initially attempt to call women upon receiving a police referral, and will talk through the intervention order and court processes.

Our court support workers are then provided with a list of the women who have been prioritised as needing support. They meet with women at the court, and will follow up by phone to

check in if they don't make contact at the court. Our workers help women to understand their legal rights, and make sure that they are able to effectively navigate the court process, to ensure their ongoing safety.

Court support workers also work to assess the immediate safety needs of women and their children, by developing safety plans that respond to the level of family violence risk for the immediate period following court proceedings. They can also refer women to Women's Health West's intake service to access ongoing case management support, or refer them to counselling and other services.

Our court support staff also work to build partnerships with court staff, legal services, other support services and Victoria Police – working closely with these agencies ensures we are able to provide the best service possible to women attending court.

How many women do we support, and where?

In 2016-17, we provided support to 1,203 women. Our court support workers are available on different days of the week based on demand – we also have two workers available on days that are busier. Our workers are at Sunshine Magistrates' Court twice a week, and are available one day per week at Melbourne and Werribee Magistrates' Courts.

How can women access court support?

Contact our intake team on **(03) 9689 9588** to find out more about this service, or to make a referral. ■





CARING FOR CLIENTS AND STAFF THROUGH THE SANCTUARY MODEL

At Women's Health West we are about to embark on a new journey. We are implementing the Sanctuary Model. The Sanctuary Model is a trauma-informed model of care. It recognises that trauma is a pervasive human experience, not only for the people we call our 'clients' but also for the people we call our 'staff'.

Emma O'Loghlen Senior Practice Lead

The Sanctuary Model grew out of the experience of a team of clinical staff in an inpatient psychiatric unit in Philadelphia in the 1980s. Dr Sandra Bloom is the psychiatrist who led the team, and continues to champion the evolution of the Sanctuary Model through the Sanctuary Institute in Yonkers, New York. Dr Sandra Bloom and her team realised that most of the people admitted to their inpatient facility had experienced trauma and adversity, usually in early childhood. This recognition led the team to change the primary question they were asking from 'what's wrong with you?' to 'what happened to you?' This change in orientation signified a shift from pathologising and victim-blaming narratives to those that acknowledged the person within the context of their lived experiences.

The Sanctuary Model also recognises that systems that relate with each other over a long period

of time can start to have similar emotions, cognitions and behaviour. It acknowledges that just as individuals suffer from the adverse effects of trauma, organisations can too, and that this can lead to organisations becoming 'trauma-organised'. This may manifest in organisations becoming more rigid and authoritarian or more isolationist. When this happens, 'sanctuary trauma' can occur, whereby a person who has experienced trauma and seeks help from an organisation expecting to find safety actually finds more trauma.

Cognisant of the pervasive nature of maladaptive trauma responses in individuals and organisations, the Sanctuary Model is both clinical and organisational. It focuses not only on improving support and treatment for clients but also on creating safer, better functioning organisations.

The Sanctuary Model has three primary components:

1. An approach to structuring safety through the practice of seven values known as the Sanctuary Commitments.
2. A trauma-informed framework for solving complex problems known as SELF: safety, emotions, loss and future.
3. A set of practical tools known as the Sanctuary Toolkit.

Further information on these primary components is available at www.sanctuaryweb.com.

Women's Health West will be implementing the Sanctuary Model over a period of three years with the guidance and support of MacKillop Family Services, who are the official training provider of the Sanctuary Model in Australia.

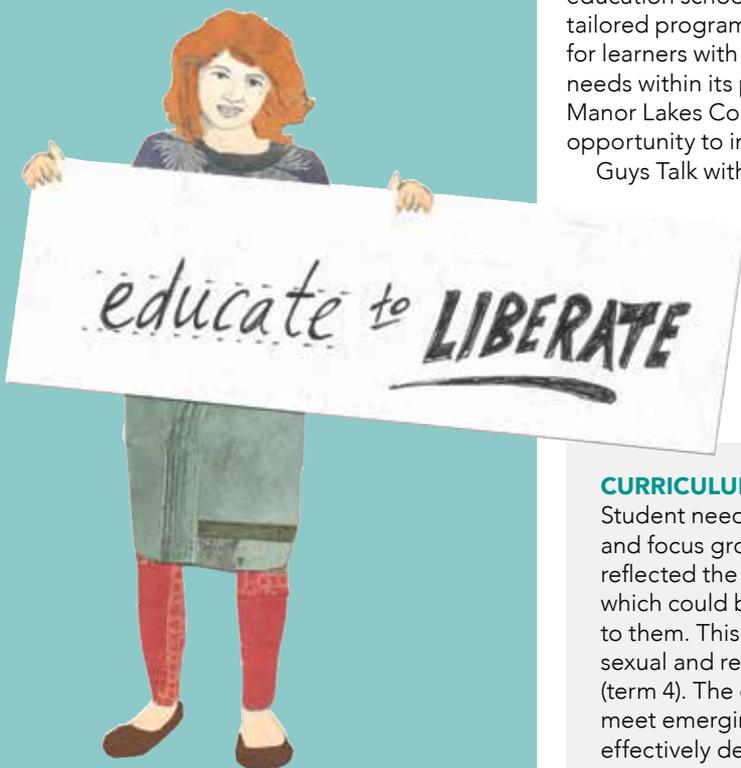
The three aforementioned components will be embedded in the policies and practices at Women's Health West over the course of the three years, with a view to us becoming accredited as a Sanctuary organisation.

In committing to implement Sanctuary, Women's Health West is expecting that, gradually, we will see improved communication, greater emotional intelligence, better understanding of trauma and its effects, greater understanding of group dynamics and collaborative interpersonal relationships, and increased knowledge about how living systems change. We envision that greater knowledge and competence in all of these areas will lead to improved staff retention and satisfaction, improved outcomes for clients, and increased safety for clients and staff alike. ■

GIRLS TALK GUYS TALK

Girls Talk Guys Talk is a whole-of-school approach to sexual and reproductive health education that is designed to improve literacy and respectful relationships knowledge and skills of young people in Melbourne's west.

Charlotte Pickering
Health Promoting Schools
Coordinator



Women's Health West's Girls Talk Guys Talk program has been running for ten years in a number of educational settings. The program framework was recently adapted for use with young people with a disability.

Working with young people with a disability

Young people with a disability have limited access to sexuality education, and as a result experience poorer sexual and reproductive health outcomes compared to young people who do not have a disability. Manor Lakes P-12 College is an inclusive education school that strives to provide tailored programs and opportunities for learners with a range of educational needs within its purpose-built facilities. Manor Lakes College offered a unique opportunity to implement Girls Talk Guys Talk within an inclusive school, with a focus on meeting the needs and wants of students with a disability.

Year 9 students within the Specialist Unit were involved in the school's existing respectful relationships curriculum. However, supported learning staff identified that students with a disability needed additional support to increase their understanding of sexual and reproductive health and respectful relationships.

The whole-of-school approach to sexual and reproductive health education

The health promoting schools concept is a framework that helps us to plan for health promotion action with young people in a school setting. This framework has been developed from global evidence of what works in schools as a setting to promote health. It can be visualised as three overlapping fields: curriculum, community and culture. The 'three Cs' prompt us to think of Manor Lakes College and other schools as more than classrooms and lessons, but as a holistic setting to build a supportive environment for health.

CURRICULUM

Student need was assessed through needs assessments and focus groups. A curriculum was developed that reflected the topics that mattered most to students, and which could be delivered in ways that were meaningful to them. This focussed on respectful relationships and sexual and reproductive health (term 3) and mental health (term 4). The curriculum is dynamic and adaptable, so it can meet emerging needs. Teaching staff were resourced to effectively deliver the curriculum.

'It's permission. You're asking them. You need to have a conversation first. You need to ask before you do... It's a very big thing. You might be doing something that they don't like. You need to ask people. You need to communicate.'

— Students talking about consent

'There are lots of different types of relationships. Not just boyfriend and girlfriend. You don't just have a respectful relationship with someone you're dating, you have them with everyone you know.'

— Students talking about respectful relationships





COMMUNITY

The Girls Talk Guys Talk program was communicated and promoted throughout the Manor Lakes College community (meetings, in newsletters, and through Compass, the online parent portal).

Parents of students were asked what they talked about at home, and what they wanted their children to learn. A local youth worker facilitated the student working group, and connected students to local services. The student working group presented at a parents evening, where they shared their experience of the program. Parent night also connected families to Women’s Health West, Wyndham Youth Service, and sexuality experts.

‘Just by being more visible within the school we’ve come up with mentoring clients this year and a number of counselling opportunities - and just the general relationship that comes out of being at a place all the time. You get to know faces, and people can put faces to names.’

— Youth Services Worker talking about connecting students with services

‘It’s not all about sex, it’s a relationship, and there are so many other things.’

— Students talking about respectful relationships

CULTURE

A leadership group was established between Women’s Health West, Manor Lakes College and Wyndham Youth Service. The group met regularly to ensure the program was on track.

A student working group was also established as the program’s driving force. Students guided curriculum content, and fed back their peers’ thoughts and opinions. Students’ views informed updates and development of policies, and professional learning for teachers was established to develop their skills in delivering the curriculum.

‘All of the stuff around consent, even though they [the students] had a whole term of that in Respectful Relationships, there were still some misconceptions. So they’d had all of those classes, and it would seem like maybe they got it. But when we got in to the nitty gritty and delved deeper in Girls Talk Guys Talk, there were a lot of misunderstandings and misconceptions. At the end of the year, the students knew what consent was, and how to navigate respectful relationships. For that group, that might not have happened anywhere else had they not done Girls Talk Guys Talk...That is a massive difference.’

— Key contact at Manor Lakes College talking about the changes in student understanding



Where to now?

The partnership with Manor Lakes College is currently in its evaluation phase, and the Girls Talk Guys Talk in specialist schools pilot will be finalised by the end of 2017. Women’s Health West is reflecting on Girls Talk Guys Talk’s successes and opportunities for growth, and its role in supporting the roll out of the Department of Education and Training’s new Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships curriculum. This pilot evaluation will be critical in advocating for the needs and wants of young people with a disability.

Supporting respectful relationships and sexuality education

Women’s Health West are developing a website called the Resource Hub, which will be a comprehensive hub of our tools and resources on respectful relationships and sexual and reproductive health education programs.

The hub will be a space for us to share our knowledge and expertise in this area. It will be free to access, and will house resources and information related to our You, Me and Us, Girls Talk Guys Talk, Human Relations and Caught Between Two Cultures programs.

The Victorian government is in the process of rolling out a state-wide respectful relationships program for students, (the Rights, Resilience and Respectful Relationships curriculum) from prep to Year 12. The hub will support the roll out of the government’s new program, and the ongoing and important work of respectful relationships and sexuality education nationwide.

Keep an eye on Women’s Health West’s website (www.whwest.org.au), where we’ll post links to the Hub when it’s live. ■



Isis and Pluto

YARNING ABOUT GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Two of our programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women recently came to a successful conclusion, having produced tangible, positive outcomes for the women involved. Here we provide an overview of the Koori Health Days program for women in prison, and the Sacred Sistas workshops for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Alyce Vella

Team Leader – Action for Equity

Ngahina Waretini

Health Promotion Project Coordinator

Delivering culturally safe health programs to Aboriginal women in prison

Koori Health Days is an established cultural health promotion and wellbeing program. It is conducted annually for Aboriginal women at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (a women's prison), and has been running over the past seven years. Women's Health West have been involved in the delivery of these programs since 2016.

In 2016, a twelve-week program was organised and hosted by Aunty Lynne Killeen, Aboriginal Liaison Officer at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. Women's Health West co-facilitated and provided sexual health information alongside Sandra Gregson from Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS), and Aboriginal health professionals who contributed as guest speakers. A total of 34 Aboriginal women attended the twelve-week program.

The next iteration of Koori Health Days began in February 2017 as a thirteen-week program. This program was attended by approximately 40 women each week, and again featured sexual and reproductive health education sessions. The program continued to enable safe conversations and affirmed connection with culture and identity.

One of the key outcomes from the 2017 program was the production of tote bag kits for the participants. During the program women had the opportunity to create their own artwork, which reflected culture, family and other important aspects of their lives. These personalised designs were printed on tote bags to be gifted to the women upon their exit from the centre. The bags were filled with sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing referral information, and safe sex materials to support the transition out of prison.

The development of Koori Health Clinics

During the 2016 Koori Health Days program, participants identified a lack of access to culturally appropriate cervical screening services. Barriers listed by women included the availability of only male doctors and their desire to be able to request a female doctor or nurse to perform the screen. Aunty Lynne Killeen was able to advocate for and secure a partnership with VAHS, who provided a registered female nurse for a series of Koori Health 'clinics'. The pilot of the Koori Health clinics took place for one day per week for four weeks.

Koori Health Days is being measured as an innovative example that might be introduced to other prisons across Victoria. The program has continued to enable connections among Aboriginal women and provides a space to discuss cultural perspectives, raise questions, and share viewpoints and health education information.

Thirty women were successfully screened for Pap tests under the Koori Health Clinics program in 2016, most of whom had never been previously screened. Feedback indicated that the women considered the clinic to be culturally safe and accessible.

Thank you to Aunty Lynne Killeen and the team at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre for their dedication to this work, and to Sandra Gregson and VAHS for their work in the implementation of the programs, and the donation of the tote bags. This work was supported by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. ■

2017 KOORI HEALTH DAYS: KEY STATS

Koori Health Days 2017 provided a safe space to encourage connectedness and learning

Topics included Pap screening, breast screening, STIs and sexual health testing, and menopause

40 participants took part in the 13 week program

The Koori Health Days program affirmed culture and fostered creativity

'The Koori Health programs are a great aspect of our life behind bars'

— Participant Age 40–44yrs (2016 program)

'This long lasting partnership continues to achieve amazing outcomes whilst generating awareness of health/medical priorities amongst the women'

— Celia Whelan, Manager – Dame Phyllis Frost Centre



Christine Crosby

Aboriginal Elder Aunty Nellie Flagg, pictured at the Sacred Sistas workshops

Exploring the Tree of Life in the Sacred Sistas workshops

The Sacred Sistas workshops in the west provided the opportunity for young Aboriginal women to come together and increase their awareness and knowledge about their sexual and reproductive health in a safe, culturally-appropriate and fun environment.

Aunty Nellie Flagg is a respected member of the Aboriginal community, who is a cultural advisor and cultural mentor. Auntie Nellie worked with Women's Health West over the past couple of years, supporting us to deliver the Sacred Sistas workshops.

Aunty Nellie developed a methodology called the Tree of Life, which was presented to the women in our Sacred Sistas program in 2016. The Tree of Life allowed the participants to discuss the challenges that were affecting them, and helped them to strengthen

their relationships with their history, culture, and with significant people in their lives.

Aunty Nellie said 'it's a sensitive issue to talk about their stories, so providing a culturally safe environment allows them to open up. But even if they don't open up, they can listen to other peoples' stories and gain a better understanding. There is the opportunity for them to take away information to share with others'.

Aunty Nellie said Sacred Sistas was great for 'reinforcing the connection between community' and for 'the strengths that the women gained from coming together and sharing, and caring for each other'.

To find out more about our programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, contact us on **(03) 9689 9588** or visit **www.whwest.org.au**. ■

SUPPORTING WHOLE FAMILIES TO RECOVER FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE

Women's Health West has secured funding to deliver a new, innovative program to support whole families experiencing family violence.

Patrizia Favorito Director – Integrated Family Violence Services

Women's Health West are pleased to announce that we have secured funding to provide a new intensive support service for women, children and their families. The funding will be used to deliver a joint program in partnership with Lifeworks called Keeping Safe Together.

Women's Health West and Lifeworks will co-lead the program in partnership with other local agencies. This funding will enable us to respond to a gap in service in the community, given there are currently no programs available that provide intensive support to families who have experienced family violence, and are seeking to recover and rebuild their lives. It is important that women are able to access support for themselves and their family members, given we know statistically that women and their children often return multiple times to their violent or abusive partners, leading to cumulative trauma and harm.

Keeping Safe Together is a unique

program in this respect; it is an innovative, evidence-informed approach that will focus on the specific individual support needs of each member of the family, including men who use violence. Keeping Safe Together will deliver services on a flexible basis, including outside business hours; a vital way of increasing access to the service, and engaging with a diverse range of families.

Keeping Safe Together will be designed to specifically meet the diverse needs of our community in Melbourne's western region. Importantly, it will also be implemented through collaboration and partnerships with a range of organisations including cohealth, Good Shepherd, Catholic Care and Mackillop Family Services. The Bouverie Centre will provide clinical supervision and help document practice learnings. Traditionally, organisations delivering family violence support services have struggled to do so in a joined-up way. The collaborative approach that Keeping

Safe Together will take provides us with an important opportunity to support families across the spectrum of service responses, from early intervention all the way to recovery.

Keeping Safe Together is a pilot program at this stage, which will enable Women's Health West and Lifeworks to trial this innovative approach over the period of a year. The aim is to build evidence and practice knowledge around the most effective ways to intervene in a holistic way with families, in order to break the cycle of violence and its impact on children and to share this information more broadly.

The program will initially be piloted in two high growth areas in Melbourne's west (Melton and Wyndham). It will see the appointment of a number of specified family roles, who will work together collaboratively to provide trauma-informed case management support to a diverse range of families that are experiencing family violence. We are delighted that this innovative approach to working with families will enable us to ensure that more women and their children are able to live safe, healthy lives in Melbourne's west. Further information about this exciting new initiative, including eligibility and referrals, will be available shortly. ■

A WORD FROM THE CEO

Mental health and wellbeing: A fundamental human right

Continued from page 1

Together partnership, will manage this grant with our partners to increase our regional efforts to prevent men's violence against women.

We are also delighted to announce a successful grant from the Department of Health and Human Services for a pilot program called 'Keeping Safe Together'. The program will be co-led with Lifeworks to provide whole-of-family support for women and children who experience family violence, as well as men who

perpetrate family violence.

Women's Health West applaud the Andrews State Government for their 3 May budget announcement of an unprecedented \$1.9 billion of funding to end family violence. This shows great leadership in ensuring implementation of the recommendations arising from the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence. We encourage the government to continue this leadership by further increasing investment in long-term primary prevention work, which received around 2 per cent of this funding. It takes enormous

courage by governments to invest in programs that are unlikely to see results within an election cycle.

The precise impact of the budget on Women's Health West's programs and services remains unclear at the time of writing. However, we look forward to continued opportunities to inform, shape, and contribute to work that will improve the health, safety and wellbeing of our clients and communities. For an update on one aspect of this work, see the support and safety hub write-up on the next page. ■



Attendees at the support and safety hub forum



Gert Geyer

COMING TOGETHER TO UNDERSTAND AND INFORM THE SUPPORT AND SAFETY HUBS

Over 80 attendees came together recently to help shape the future of support and safety hubs in our region.

Kelly Ventress Manager – Communications

The development of support and safety hubs was a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The government's vision for the Hubs was that they would simplify access to services, and improve responsiveness to the needs of women and children who experience family violence.

In recent months, it was clear that there was a great deal of uncertainty about what might happen next with regard to the development of the hubs in our region, and who would have a say in how the hubs might look.

As a result, a group of organisations, including Women's Health West, came together to host a joint forum. The forum was designed to kick start conversations and begin to establish a set of co-design principles for the development of support and safety hubs in the Brimbank/Melton and Western Melbourne areas.

The forum took place on 16 May at Brimbank City Council's Sunshine office, and was facilitated by MosaicLab, an independent consultancy. It was jointly hosted by Women's Health West, Brimbank City Council, Child FIRST Brimbank Melton and Child FIRST Western Melbourne, with support and input from the

Western Integrated Family Violence Committee.

The 80 attendees came from a wide range of health and community organisations in the west, as well as from government departments and other agencies.

Attendees were welcomed, and spent time connecting with other participants in the room. They then heard from the hosts who overviewed the current context in which we are working, and set the discussions for the forum.

What do we know about the support and safety hubs?

The first session focused on this theme, and was delivered by Rachael Green from the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Participants were able to ask questions, and Kate Wait from the Department of Health and Human Services was also on hand to help answer them. Questions that could not be answered were taken on notice, awaiting the release of the government's concept model.

Developing Collaboration Principles

For this session, participants were asked what they thought good collaboration looked like, and what

principles could guide the work for us in Melbourne's west.

The discussion was wide-ranging and touched on the need to have a shared vision and objectives, a culture based on trust and respect, and a commitment to the shared values and vision. Other conversations involved the need to build positive relationships, for communication to be clear and transparent, and a recognition of self-determination and the importance of acknowledging that solutions are often found within an affected population.

Mapping who needs to be involved and to what extent

In the third and final session, attendees were asked to identify their own level of interest in the hubs and rate how their organisation might be impacted. They were also asked which organisations should be central in the process of developing hubs and why.

What's next?

MosaicLab wrote up a report of the forum that was distributed to participants. Evaluation showed that the forum served as a truly collaborative way to begin conversations about the hubs in our region. The concept model for the hubs was released in July, and is available at www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/support-and-safety-hubs.html. We look forward to continuing to work alongside our partners and communities of interest to inform the process as it develops. ■

women's health west

Join us!

Women's Health West membership is open to all women over the age of 18 who live, work or study in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne. We also offer organisational membership and associate membership.

It's free to join, and by doing so you'll be helping to strengthen the voice of Women's Health West, as we work to bring about equity and justice for women in the west.

Members also receive newsletters, e-newsletters, and invitations to free events like our AGM and International Women's Day.

Join online at
www.whwest.org.au/join



SAVE THE DATE!

Before we know it, it will be time for our annual general meeting, and we want to make sure it's in your diaries.

Wednesday, 29 November 2017
4.30 – 6.30pm

Venue: Footscray Community Arts Centre

Follow us at www.facebook.com/womenshealthwest for updates.



Pictured:

Participants from the Chin community, who took part in Women's Health West's financial literacy program in 2017.

Donate to Women's Health West

We rely on the generosity of donors to help fund and implement our many health promotion and family violence programs.

The donations we receive directly support the women and children in our community who need it most.

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

To donate online, visit www.whwest.org.au/about-us/donations.

You can select how much you'd like to donate – even small donations contribute to us being able to make a big difference to the lives of women and their children in the west.