

Figures tell a sad story

By Ewen McRae

Brimbank has seen a steep rise in the number of family violence incidents reported to police.

According to the latest figures from the Victorian Crime Statistics Agency, 2724 incidents were reported to Brimbank police in 2015-16 compared to 1850 in 2011-12, a 47 per cent increase.

However Brimbank Acting Senior Sergeant Steve Phillips said Victoria Police as a whole had been working toward an increase in the number of people reporting family violence.

“I really think it’s a good thing these numbers have gone up” - Steve Phillips

“Our target has been to have an increase in reporting, so I really think it is a good thing these numbers have gone up,” he said.

“We’ve done a lot of work, and so have other organisations, and I think the community is very aware of family violence and the need to report it.”

He said while the numbers had steadily increased over the past five years, the work of Brimbank police in targeting repeat offenders in the past 12 months was having an impact and would likely be reflected when the next official figures are released.

“The total number of reports in Brimbank and Melton has been dropping over the past few months, by about 30 reports a month,” he said. “While it’s against the trend strategically, it’s a positive in terms of recidivism.”

“We’ve had a focus on recidivists, so say if you have one family calling 15 to 20 times



a year and you’re able to put a stop to that the numbers will naturally go down. There’s a massive amount of trauma associated with victims of repeat offenders, so it is about putting in place preventative measures to prevent future violence and also holding repeat offenders to account.”

December 2015 had the highest number of

family violence incidents reported to Brimbank police, with 269 incidents.

“We do see a spike in the holiday periods, and also ... more calls on Thursday to Sunday nights,” Senior Sergeant Phillips said.

“Drugs and alcohol are key drivers of that at those times. That’s a whole of society trend and something we always have to be aware of.”

Funds offer hope out west

Women’s Health West is one of 34 organisations to share in a \$1.2 million funding boost to help prevent family violence.

The grant will focus on prevention measures. WHW chief executive Dr Robyn Gregory said it was a timely grant to receive.

“Women’s Health West received 10,545 family violence police referrals in 2015-16 – this was a 29 per cent increase on the previous year,” Dr Gregory said.

“Investing in programs to prevent violence is vitally important, and yet it receives a disproportionately small amount of funding compared to family violence response services. So the investment the state government have made in prevention is important.”

Women’s Health West is the lead partner in the Preventing Violence Together partnership, which includes local councils and community groups in the western suburbs.

Dr Gregory said the grant would help the partnership expand on the work they are already doing.

“We have a solid track record of delivering training and resources for workplaces, to help people understand and redress the drivers of violence against women. This grant will enable us to take this work into the community, and strengthen partnerships between community, local government and non-government organisations,” she said.

Ewen McRae

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