

**Hobsons Bay City Council
Draft Hobsons Bay 2030**



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Women's Health West welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft *Hobsons Bay 2030 Community Vision*. We believe that Hobsons Bay City Council – as the tier of government closest to our community – plays an integral role in community health, safety and wellbeing through sustainable and appropriate public health planning, development and delivery.

We congratulate Hobsons Bay City Council on the following points and offer some recommendations to strengthen the vision.

Women's Health West welcomes the strong commitment in Hobsons Bay's vision to redressing the social determinants of health and health inequities. The narrative has a strong emphasis on the social, cultural and economic structures that influence and determine health and wellbeing at the population, community and individual level. Women's Health West deems the focus on accessible transport, education, employment, housing, environmental sustainability, community safety, early childhood, food security, gender equity, access to services and social inclusion, as a significant strength to Hobsons Bay City Council's vision.

Women's Health West would like to commend Hobsons Bay City Council for identifying gender equity as a social determinant of health. This demonstrates council's strong commitment to redressing the unequal status of women in our community, which cause many women to experience significant disadvantage and impacts on their physical, mental and social health, safety and wellbeing. This focus on gender equity also aligns Hobsons Bay's vision with the new *Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* released in December 2016 and the ongoing commitment to redress gender inequality across the state.

To further council's commitment to gender equity, Women's Health West advises council to sex-disaggregate all data collected. Research shows that women and girls experience different and often heightened risk factors for poor health compared to men and boys. Public health planning and program and service delivery that incorporate a gender equity approach and disaggregate data by sex are more likely to recognise these differences in experience, assist in evidence-base planning and programmatic design, and as a result council is better

equipped to combat such inequities.¹ Sex disaggregated data is also critical to measuring the level and changes in health outcomes between genders across the municipality.

Recommendation: Women's Health West recommends that all indicators to measure whether council is meeting its goals be sex-disaggregated.

Women's Health West commends Hobsons Bay for recognising that the impacts of gender inequity are compounded for women who experience other inequities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with a disability or a mental illness, women with a migrant or refugee background, older women and those from low socio-economic backgrounds. Acknowledging that health inequities are further compounded by gender inequity is critical to ensure that public services and programs are accessible to everyone.

Women's Health West also commends Hobsons Bay Council for identifying mental health, family violence and sexual and reproductive health as key priority areas in order to achieve health and wellbeing across the municipality. This aligns the vision with the priority areas outlined in the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan* and shows a commitment to redressing health priorities that are known to disproportionately affect women and girls.

Research indicates that one in three women in Victoria experience physical violence and one in five experience sexual violence in their lifetime.² Women's Health West advises council to identify women as the primary cohort that experience violence, as this highlights the gendered nature of violence and supports actions that seek to redress current inequalities that exist between women and men. This will align council's vision with recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Family Violence and specifically that family violence is a gendered problem, perpetrated mostly by men against women and their children.

Recommendation: Women's Health West recommends that the prevention of men's violence against women be named as a specific health priority area, as well as family violence.

Women's Health West asserts that approaches to redress family violence, and specifically violence against women, must not only focus on interventions and response efforts. Primary prevention approaches to redress key known drivers of violence such as unequal power and resources between women and men, and rigid gender roles and stereotypes are also paramount in order to achieve long-term change and gender equality.

Recommendation: Women's Health West recommends that the primary drivers of violence against women be articulated on page 39 of the vision.

¹ For more detail about how to take a gender equity approach, we encourage council to refer to Women's Health West's Gender Analysis Factsheet for Hobson's Bay City Council: http://whwest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/HobsonsBay_EMAIL.pdf.

² Cox, P. 2015, *Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012*, Horizons Research Report, Issue 1, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), Sydney; and Woodlock, D., Healey, L., Howe, K., McGuire, M., Geddes, V. and Granek, S. 2014, *Voices against violence paper one: Summary report and recommendations*, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Office of the Public Advocate and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.

Women's Health West encourages Hobsons Bay Council to continue its commitment to the Action for Equity partnership, of which Hobsons Bay is a valued partner. Action for Equity is a four year sexual and reproductive health promotion plan and partnership for Melbourne's west, led by Women's Health West, which incorporates primary prevention initiatives that work to redress the social determinants of sexual and reproductive health in order to achieve health equity. Action to improve the sexual and reproductive health of young people in Hobsons Bay must be a priority for council given recent health data that highlights that only 38.5 per cent of sexually active adolescents in Hobsons Bay practiced safe sex with a condom in 2012. This is lower than the Victorian average of 58.1 per cent.³ This will also align Hobsons Bay Council with the State Government's commitment to develop a state-wide reproductive health strategy and the recent \$6.6 million commitment to improve women's access to reproductive health services.

Women's Health West also commends Hobsons Bay Council for identifying the importance of collaboration and working with key partners to achieve your goals in this vision. We would like to take this opportunity to thank council for their valued partnership in *Preventing Violence Together* - an award winning partnership led by Women's Health West that works to collaboratively prevent men's violence against women in Melbourne's west. We look forward to continuing to work together in the future to further create a safe, equitable and inclusive community for all.

Women's Health West welcomes council's vision and its strong focus on human rights and civic responsibility. Compliance with the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* requires councils to uphold human rights, including the rights of women, as an essential component of a democratic, equitable and inclusive society. In particular, we commend council's explicit mention to uphold the 'right to protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment' and its commitment to the prevention of violence against women and other forms of violence, discrimination and oppression.

Overall Women's Health West would like to commend Hobsons Bay Council on an inclusive and equitable *Hobsons Bay 2030 Community Vision*. Women's Health West is a proud partner of Hobsons Bay Council and we look forward to further strengthening our partnership and supporting optimal health, safety and wellbeing outcomes for the communities that reside in the Hobsons Bay municipality.

³ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2012, *Adolescent Community Profile Series*, Victorian State Government, Melbourne.