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Maribyrnong City Council

Proposed Annual Budget 2018/19 and Strategic Resource Plan 2018-2022

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Executive summary

Women's Health West (WHW) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on City of Maribyrnong's proposed annual budget 2018/2019 and Strategic Resource Plan 2018-2022. We commend council on having developed a budget plan that continues to invest in a vision for a vibrant, diverse and progressive city with a sustainable future as outlined in your Council Plan 2017-21. We offer the following recommendations to strengthen council's commitment to promoting gender equity and supporting diverse groups of women in the municipality.

Local government is the tier of government closest to our community and as such plays an integral role in community health, safety and wellbeing through sustainable and appropriate public health planning, development and delivery. We are a proud partner of council and support the important work City of Maribyrnong plans to undertake in collaboration with WHW and other partners.

WHW's recommendations for the proposed annual budget 2018-2019:

1. Council include gender responsive budgeting as a key budget principle to guide financial and non-financial resource allocation as part of council's budget process for achieving its vision and wellbeing commitment to social justice and equity for all.
2. Council recognises a gender equity approach in achieving its vision and wellbeing commitment to social justice and equity for all.
3. Council articulates its gender equity work and funding allocation in the 2018/2019 budget.
4. Council include sex-disaggregated data as a critical component to providing a snapshot of the municipality as this is crucial to measuring the level of changes and progress towards social justice and equity for all, as articulated in council's wellbeing commitment.

About Women's Health West

WHW has actively contributed to the health, safety and wellbeing of women in the western region of Melbourne since 1988. We do this through a combination of direct service delivery, research, health promotion, community development, capacity building, group work and advocacy. Our strategy, advocacy and community engagement stream offers a range of programs and projects targeted to prevention and early intervention strategies to improve outcomes for women's health, safety and wellbeing. We are leaders in the development of regional strategies to further our work, seeing partnership within and outside the health sector as crucial for bringing about effective and sustainable outcomes for women and children.

In 1994 we expanded our organisation to encompass delivery of family violence services for women and children. Our services include crisis outreach and court support, housing establishment and crisis accommodation options, and counselling and group work programs for women, children and young people. WHW has been an active and strong supporter of family violence reform at a regional and state-wide level, integrating and coordinating family violence services in our region, and ensuring the integration of those services with a range of sectors.

Redressing the gendered and structural inequalities that limit the lives of women and girls is at the core of our business as a feminist organisation. WHW's work is underpinned by a social model of health, which recognises the important influence of, and aims to improve, the social, economic and political factors that determine the health, safety and wellbeing of women and girls in our region. By incorporating a gendered approach to our health promotion practice with women and girls, WHW's interventions have demonstrated effective and sustainable outcomes.

WHW's work is informed by our vision of equity and justice for women in the west, guided by the following five strategic goals:

- Deliver and advocate for accessible, culturally appropriate services for women and children in the west who experience family violence
- Undertake health promotion and primary prevention actions to redress gender inequity and improve the health, safety and wellbeing of women, young people and children
- Collaborate with others to achieve our goals
- Promote good health, safety and wellbeing in our workplace
- Enhance the long term sustainability of our work.

Feedback on Proposed Annual Budget and Strategic Resource Plan 2018/2019

Gender responsive budgeting as a key budget principle

WHW strongly recommend that council include gender responsive budgeting as a key budget principle to guide financial and non-financial resource allocation as part of council's budget process. Gender responsive budgeting is an essential mechanism to achieve council's commitment to social justice and equity for all, as articulated in your wellbeing commitment. Gender responsive budgeting refers to the integration of a gender equality and equity perspective into all budgetary processes, decisions and outcomes. It supports budgetary decisions and processes that are responsive to the different needs and interests of women and men, and ensures that women and men benefit equitably from the allocation and use of resources, facilities and services (Quinn 2009). Gender responsive budgeting has three broad, overarching goals or purposes, which are to:

- Raise awareness and understanding of gender concerns and the impact of budgets and policies on women and men respectively
- Make governments accountable for their gender budgetary and policy commitments
- Change and refine government budgets and policies to promote gender equity (Sharp, 2003).

Good practice in government budget revenues, expenditure and decision-making requires a series of principles to be embedded within resource allocation and the strategic resource plan to ensure equitable outcomes for all members of our community. WHW strongly recommends City of Maribyrnong embed and action gender responsive principles in budget revenue processes that include:

- How are women and men affected differently by the kind of revenues raised?
- How are women and men impacted differently by ‘user-fees’ for facilities and services?
This is important as women earn less than men, have less superannuation for retirement, are the majority of single parents, and are more likely to have caring responsibilities for elderly relatives and people with a disability.
- Gender responsive budgeting considerations for budget expenditures include:
 - How are women and men benefiting from the current expenditure on the public services provided?
 - In what ways are the budgets and associated resource allocations likely to reduce or increase gender inequalities?
 - How do budget and resource allocations reflect women’s and men’s different needs and priorities?
 - How do women and men benefit from the expenditure invested into council infrastructure and facilities?
 - Does council provide information on the actions to reduce gender inequality in its annual budgeting and fiscal reporting processes?
 - How do women and men as employees benefit from expenditure on staff-focused initiatives, i.e. professional development budgets, child care provision, development and upkeep of office grounds and facilities.

Recommendation 1: Council include gender responsive budgeting as a key budget principle to guide financial and non-financial resource allocation as part of council’s budget process for achieving its vision and wellbeing commitment to social justice and equity for all.

Commitment to gender equity

WHW congratulates City of Maribyrnong’s commitment to social justice and equity for all. WHW recommends that City of Maribyrnong recognises a gender equity approach in achieving this vision. Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men with the aim of achieving equal outcomes for all. To ensure fairness, measures are needed to compensate for historical and social disadvantage that have prevented women from operating on a level playing field with men. Public health planning and program and service delivery that take a gender equity approach recognise that women and girls experience different and often heightened risk factors for poor health compared to men and boys. This is the result of structural and social factors that continue to marginalise women and girls, such as the unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men, and rigid gender stereotypes and norms that assign women and men to certain areas of responsibility in society (Our Watch, VicHealth & ANROWS, 2015). These factors intersect with the social determinants of health, such as power, income, employment, education and housing, which compound the disadvantage experienced by women and girls.

WHW congratulates the City of Maribyrnong’s longstanding commitment to two western regional partnerships to achieve gender equity: Action for Equity and Preventing Violence Together. To recognise these commitments and ensure the City of Maribyrnong delivers on State government requirements as part of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, *Safe and Strong: Victoria’s Gender Equality Strategy*, and the *Free from violence: Victoria’s strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*, WHW

recommends that council articulates its gender equity work and funding allocation in the 2018/2019 budget.

Recommendation 2: Council recognises a gender equity approach in achieving its vision and wellbeing commitment to social justice and equity for all.

Recommendation 3: Council articulates its gender equity work and funding allocation in the 2018/2019 budget.

Collecting data to measure gender equity

We note that sex-desegregated data is absent from your snapshot of the Maribyrnong population in section 6.2.1. Research shows that women and girls experience are 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

Recommendation 4: Council include sex-disaggregated data as a critical component to providing a snapshot of the municipality as this is crucial to measuring the level of changes and progress towards social justice and equity for all, as articulated in your wellbeing commitment.

In conclusion, WHW again congratulates Maribyrnong this Proposed Annual Budget 2018/19 and Strategic Resource Plan 2018-2022. WHW is a proud partner of City of Maribyrnong. We wish council every success implementing this budget and plan and look forward to strengthening our partnership into the future.

Please contact Louise Sadler (Acting Director - Strategy, Advocacy and Community Engagement) at Louise@whwest.org.au should you require further information about this submission.

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 the City of Maribyrnong: https://whwest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Maribyrnong_EMAIL.pdf

References

Australian Institute of Criminology, 2015, National Homicide Monitoring Program Report, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

Our Watch, VicHealth & ANROWS, 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Australia.