

Margins 2 Mainstream Submission Template

MARIBYRNONG CITY COUNCIL: GENDER LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Georgie Hill, Maribyrnong City Council

ABSTRACT

Local government has a unique role to play in mental health promotion through the primary prevention of violence perpetrated by men against women due to its close proximity to local communities and community service providers and its history of place-based universalist services. Whilst traditionally, this has not been part of ‘core’ Council business, increasingly, local governments in Australia and internationally, in responding to changing community expectations, are now exploring the coordinating, facilitating and planning role they have in violence prevention (Hayes, 2006). Although in its formative stages, Maribyrnong Council has established a solid corporate base for building the capacity and commitment across Council to strengthen programs, policies and practices that prevent violence against women and the necessary credibility for facilitating support and program development across diverse sectors in the community.

INTRODUCTION

Maribyrnong Council is one of four local governments in Victoria participating in a three year University of Melbourne research project, Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention, which aims to develop local government policy that takes an integrated approach to violence prevention. Council received funding from VicHealth in 2007 to develop and implement a comprehensive multi-sectorial action plan based on the VicHealth ‘Framework to guide primary prevention of violence against women’ (2007).

A COORDINATED APPROACH

The *Maribyrnong Preventing Violence Against Women Action Plan 2007-2008* aims to build the capacity of Council staff and community stakeholders to address the determinants of violence. The action plan, details strategies which aim to integrate violence prevention into the core business of local government by building the capacity of the organisation to review policies, programs and practices. A range of complementary strategies focused on direct participation and community strengthening aim to raise awareness of the issues and to strengthen protective factors by working collaboratively across settings within the local community (for example with schools, community organisations and culturally and linguistically diverse community groups). This approach is unique in that it builds upon the current capacity of local government to work across sectors whilst creating and supporting a community that takes action to address violence at the local level.

CONCLUSIONS

The primary prevention of violence against women requires a coordinated multi-sectorial approach. Maribyrnong Council has developed a replicable and sustainable whole of community approach which aims to build the local capacity to create a community in which women are able to live free from violence and fear of violence.

RECOMMENDATION

That the unique role of local governments in mental health promotion be acknowledged, valued, promoted and supported.

REFERENCES

Hayes, T., (2006) *Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention: Learning from International Good Practice to develop a Victorian Model*, Making the links: Gender Local Governance and Violence Prevention Project, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, University of Melbourne.

VicHealth (2007) *Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Carlton.