

Other Council Initiatives

Mental Health - Many people who experience homelessness also experience mental health issues. Council has undertaken a range of key initiatives on mental health. Mental Health First Aid training has been offered to the community over the last four years. Each year there has been approximately 25 participants from community based groups/organisations, many who are volunteers, who undertake the two day training which has provided them with skills to recognise the early warning signs and appropriate interventions across a range of mental health issues. In 2019 the training was also offered to Council staff.

In October 2019, *StressLess and look after your mental wellbeing*, Council's mental health awareness event for the Maroondah community, was held in partnership with EACH, Eastern Regional Libraries and mental health service Neami National. The evening featured a presentation by author, illustrator and public speaker Matthew Johnstone who spoke about mental health, prevention strategies and the benefits of mindfulness. There were over 250 attendees.

MABELS Project (Mothers and Babies Engaging and Living Safely) - The MABELS Project is a health justice partnership in the eastern metropolitan region of Melbourne. Project partners include local government, legal and community organisations. Mables enables women to receive advice and assistance at a much earlier point in their experience of family violence than they may have otherwise. Typically, women's first contact with family violence services, police, lawyers and courts occurs at a point of significant crisis. Mabels is able provide help to women before that crisis point is reached.

Enhanced Maternal Child Health Service encompasses a partnership with CHYMS (Child and Youth Mental Health Services). The enhanced MCH nurse and the CHYMS clinician attend appointments with families who have experienced severe mental health issues/episodes and the trauma that has impacted significantly on the mental health of the infant/child including family violence.

Prevention of Violence Against Women - Family violence is the single biggest cause of homelessness in Victoria. Maroondah City Council is committed to preventing violence against women and preventing violence before it occurs, by focusing on gender equality. Council is committed to working towards a community where everyone is valued and enjoys equity of opportunity and outcomes. Council is involved in many initiatives. Some of these include:

- Partnering with Women's Health East, other Councils and community based organisations in the development and implementation of the regional Together For Equality and Respect Regional Strategy;
- Gender equity training for employees and early childhood educators,
- One Million Stars to End Violence project where more than 5000 community members and 50 community groups and schools were engaged in weaving stars that culminated in a display of one million stars at the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games
- Our Codes Our Clubs promoting gender equality in sporting clubs to help change the story of violence against women;
- Development of Council's Gender Equity Policy 2018

Recommendations

1. **The Victorian Government more actively promote the range of initiatives and key roles that local government authorities can play in responding to the needs of people experiencing homelessness.**
2. **The Victorian Government should provide resources and guidance to assist Councils in effectively responding to municipal homelessness issues.**
3. **The Victorian Government promotes the development of a Protocol Sleeping Rough in Public Places to local government authorities, including a better practice guide.**