

Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children - Leadership Statement

Hepburn Shire Council has zero tolerance for violence against women and children, condemning this behaviour as inexcusable, preventable and simply unacceptable. Council has committed to be a leader and an advocate to address social issues that impact the health and wellbeing within our community. Action against violence towards any person regardless of their gender, age or background is embedded in our daily operations, and reflected in key Council documents, plans and strategies.

Violence against women and children is a serious social justice issue. Hepburn Council condemns not only abuse itself but also societal attitudes that normalise it, tolerate it or create an atmosphere to perpetuate it. This is supported by research which identifies women and children are at greater risk of experiencing violence due to individual and societal attitudes, beliefs and norms that condone violence. Gender inequality, discrimination and oppression in other forms have also been demonstrated to simultaneously contribute to Domestic Violence against women and children. This vulnerability extends to groups within the council's borders including; rural and remote communities, LGBTIQ, older woman, people with disabilities, migrants and indigenous people. Hepburn Council therefore pledges to work with community groups and minority representatives to address this crucial issue.

Hepburn Shire Council works in partnership with key stakeholders/organisations to prevent violence against women and children, and to create a safe and equitable community for all regardless of their gender, age or background. This is supported by the 'Victorian Local Government Act' that highlights the role of Local Government Authorities to provide governance that will benefit the wellbeing of the current and future municipal community members. Taking responsibility to address health inequality is also supported by the 'Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities', which highlights the importance of organisations to adopt measures to assist disadvantaged population groups.

Council will do this by:

- Continuing to advocate, show leadership and commitment to staff and the community regarding gender inequality and the drivers of violence against women and children
- Promoting and building respectful relationships, bystander action and gender equality through internal and external policies and practices
- Ensuring that gender equality is considered in key Council communications, and in the planning, delivery and evaluation of programs and services
- Adopting design principles which enhance safety for all infrastructure developments and upgrades
- Inform and educate all population groups within the community regarding the differing forms of violence that exist, including sexual, emotional, social, technological, financial, spiritual/cultural, and physical
- Supporting, promoting or collaborating with community and partner organisations to raise awareness of gender equity and family violence through initiatives, promotions, and awareness raising events
- Work in partnership with key stakeholders to 'break the cycle' through education of children and youth regarding the prevention of violence and the drivers of violence against women and children
- Providing the community with information to key national, state and local family violence referral agencies
- Making family violence educational resources and promotion materials readily available to the community
- Continuing to be an active member of Women's Health Grampians Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) Alliance and implement our organisation action plan
- Supporting the provision of inclusive infrastructure that promotes public safety
- Networking, partnering with and supporting specialist family violence agencies that work within our community
- Continuing to be an active member of the Hepburn Shire Family Violence Action Group and the Hepburn Shire White Ribbon Committee
- Supporting and promoting community drug and alcohol-free events

Join Council to take a stand against violence against women and children. For more information about how you can join the CoRE Alliance contact Women's Health Grampians on 5322 4100.