

# WIMMERA COUNCILS ACT@WORK

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Kevin O'Brien, Horsham Rural City Council

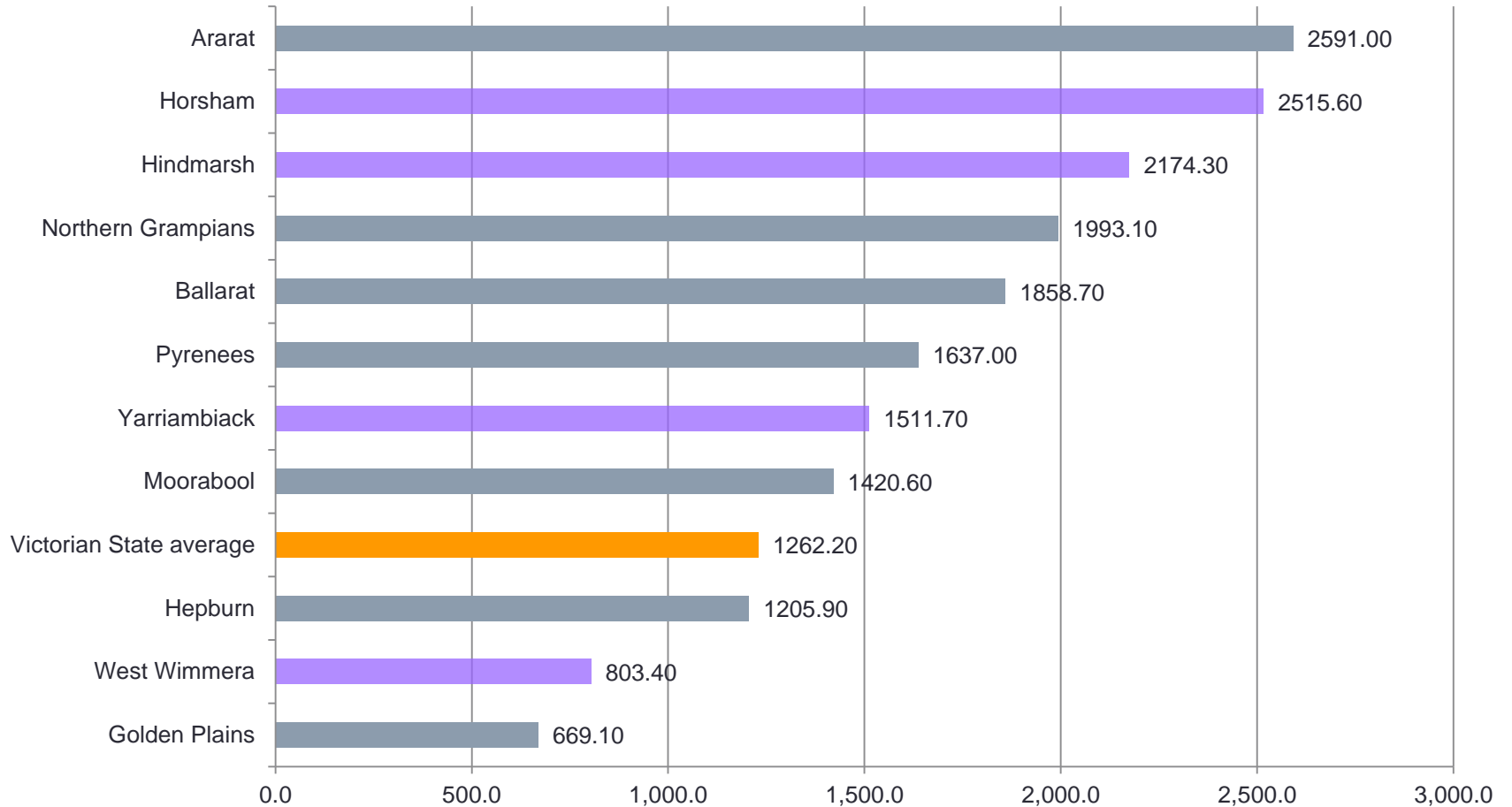
Melissa Morris, Women's Health Grampians

# Regional Context

- Wimmera area has increasing family violence incident rates and in the case of Horsham rates have been twice the state average for many years and Horsham always in top ten of LGA's for FV rates
- Rural area – Geographical isolation (lack of visibility), fear of stigma, effects on children of going public, lack of services (visibility), cultural factors

# Grampians Region Family Violence Incident Rate per 100,000 Population

## 1 Apr 2016 – 31 March 2017



Source: Victorian Crime Statistics Agency

# CoRE Plan & Alliance



- Communities of Equality and Respect (CoRE) Plan and Alliance – preventing violence against women and children in the Grampians
- Launched 30 May, 2016.
- 62 members across Grampians Region.

## The Plan:

- ✓ Reflects and supports a **collective impact** approach
- ✓ **Promotes a shared understanding** of the underlying causes of violence against women and children
- ✓ Facilitates the adoption of **evidence based strategies** and actions to address it

# Act@Work

Act@Work program is a workplace culture change program to increase knowledge sexism, discrimination and violence against women by taking action at the organisational level and by developing skills of individuals to take action to intervene safely and effectively.

## Key Steps:

1. Internal Act@Work Action Group
2. Organisation Needs Assessment
3. Baseline Survey
4. Bystander Training – all staff (2hrs) and a more intensive session (6hrs)
5. Development of an organisation wide Action Plan
6. Post training Survey
7. Resources to support organisation

Flexible approach within organisation

Now's the time to

# Act@Work

Challenging sexism, discrimination and violence against women

# Regional Plan & Council Plan alignment

- All Councils members of the CoRE Alliance and have endorsed the MAV Leadership Statement
- There is now recognition of PVAW in all Council Plans, this wasn't the case with the last plans. Council Plans reference CoRE and / or Act@Work.
- **Yarriambiack Shire** includes PVAW and gender equity in both the Corporate Good Governance Goal and the Health and Wellbeing Goal of the Council Plan
- **West Wimmera Shire** contains actions re domestic violence in the health priority area of the Council Plan
- **Horsham Rural City** refers to prevention of violence and gender equity in its Community and Cultural Development Goal as well as its internally focussed Governance and Business Excellence Goal
- **Hindmarsh Shire** contains actions in both their internally focussed Our people Our Processes goal and the Community Liveability goals

# Council Plan Commitments

- Advocate against violence particularly in regard to women and children as per White Ribbon and Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) recommendations and strategies
- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our staff with a Family Violence - Management Policy & Procedure
- Collaborate with other local community welfare and health service organisations to support regional initiatives that aim to reduce gender inequity and domestic violence
- Develop a communication strategy that promotes respectful relationships both in the workplace and in domestic settings
- Progressively review workplace policies to ensure that gender equality and respectful relationships remains a key determinant to a safe, healthy and enjoyable working environment

# Council Plan Statements

*The instances of domestic violence in society in general are too high and West Wimmera is not immune to the problem.*

*Leadership in preventing domestic violence and specifically violence against women will drive community cultural change. To enable the leadership to occur, West Wimmera Shire Council is a signatory to the Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) Alliance. Through this alliance, Council staff will participate in the Act@Work program that will empower staff to call-out poor behaviour, observe their own behaviour and develop a work place culture based on respect and equality.*



# Actions from the Action Plans

- Foyer displays – leadership statement and also review materials in foyers
- Safety of offices – e.g. lighting, carparks
- Baby change facilities in male toilets
- Review of contracts
- Bumper stickers for fleet vehicles
- Policy statements
- Council report templates
- Codes of conduct for staff and Councillors
- Induction processes and training program
- Gender balance of committees (T.O.R)
- Future policy changes
- Participation in community events
- Gender Analysis case studies
- Empowering staff as per decision making delegations
- Workplace Family Violence Policy and procedure



# Pre and post training survey findings

- Overall positive shifts in knowledge, skills, attitudes and willingness to be an active bystander from pre-program results
- Reinforces trends seen in initial Act@Work pilot program and evaluation

	Pre Program	Post Program	Shift
% who thought telling of sexist jokes was never OK in social setting	24%	36%	↑ 12%
% who thought telling of sexist jokes was never OK in work setting	45%	48%	↑ 3%
% who believed they would do or say something to show they didn't approve if told a sexist joke in a social setting	30%	37%	↑ 7%
% who believed they would not be bothered if told a sexist joke in a social setting	25%	17%	↓ 8%
% who believed they would not be bothered if told a sexist joke in a work setting	18%	11%	↓ 7%
% aware of policies and procedures regarding acceptable behaviour towards women	56%	66%	↑ 10%
% willing to take action if a woman came to them about being treated unfairly in the workplace	65%	77%	↑ 12%

# Challenges and Issues

- Gender specific focus - challenging for some staff – sometimes considered discriminatory
- Some backlash – e.g. removal of posters
- The step to gender equity actions - equity to equality journey is a challenge
- Jokes are the area where there is the greatest diversity of opinion – still uncertainty in some staff with this issue in terms of significance
- Long term change – we are too old, deal with the kids
- Policy awareness within organisations
- Organisations with leadership commitment and action are more effective
- Project timing - a lot happening - new Councils, development of Council Plan and H&WB Plans

*“Initially there was scepticism about the Act@Work program and that there were any issues within the Shire in relation to violence against women. The response to initial surveys indicated this, but statistics presented during the training program provided evidence that there are issues and staff members now clearly have a better understanding.*

*Some male staff members had concerns about how to talk to and approach females after the training as they were confused by some aspects of the training, but those concerns now appear resolved after they spoke to other people”.*

# Achievements and Successes

- Greater awareness of prevalence of violence against women and also of gender stereotypes
- Overall positive shifts in knowledge, skills, attitudes and willingness to be an active bystander from pre-program results
- Organisations that haven't taken action in the past have now made a start and have a framework for this and a good base level of understanding
- For those that have been undertaking actions there is now broader engagement within the organisation from what previously may have occurred in the community services department
- Over 450 staff received training – opportunity to spread to other organisations / clubs in the community

*Violence against women costs the community greatly but requires a cultural change to solve*

*I need to be more aware of what I say*

*That the opinions we thought were OK are just “not on”*

*To stand up to offensive behaviour and comments and not to be afraid to do so*

*Role we have in setting the culture to prevent violence against women*

# Contact Details

Kevin O'Brien, Director Community Services  
Horsham Rural City Council

[kevin.obrien@hrcc.vic.gov.au](mailto:kevin.obrien@hrcc.vic.gov.au)

5382 9743

Melissa Morris, Women's Health Grampians

[melissa@whg.org.au](mailto:melissa@whg.org.au)

0419 185 777

Further details of Act@Work – [www.whg.org.au](http://www.whg.org.au)