

*Victorian Councils: Supporting Communities Around End of Life* *Project*

**Demonstration Projects funded in three Councils**

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) is pleased to announce funding to Mansfield Shire Council, South Gippsland Shire Council and Whittlesea City Council to undertake a demonstration project as part of the *Victorian Councils: Supporting Communities Around End of Life Project.*

*The Victorian Councils: Supporting Communities Around End of Life Project* is a partnership project between the MAV and La Trobe University Palliative Care Unit (LTPCU), funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for three years (2017-2019).

The Project aims to explore how local government can be involved in building the capacity and capability of their communities to actively participate in caring and supporting people at the end of their lives at home and in the community as we work towards creating more compassionate communities

The Demonstration Projects aim to explore, inform and develop the potential role of local government in building community capacity around end of life. Each demonstration project is focusing on issues and opportunities specific to their local area, which will collectively contribute learnings for local government in this new area of work.

The Demonstration Projects will commence in late 2017 and operate for 12-18 months. The Demonstration Projects will be evaluated (as part of overall project evaluation being undertaken by LTUPCU) to identify what happened, how it happened and what the outcomes were for Council, for community organisations/stakeholders and for residents.

The three projects are outlined below.

**‘The Good Life Project’ Mansfield Shire Council**

Mansfield Shire is located in the North East of Victoria with a resident population of 8,067. Mansfield is the major service centre of the Shire and serves many of the Shire’s small towns and villages. People over 65+ years make up 24% of the population with many people choosing Mansfield as a place to retire. The 65+ population is predicted to grow to grow from 18% in 2011 to 27% by 2031.

The ‘Good Life Project’ aims to empower the community around dying and death, where by community members are well informed in order to plan and respond to their own dying. The project hopes to build community resilience around dying and death where death is recognised as a natural stage of life and where the community are more confident in supporting people through the end stages of their lives.

The project will engage extensively with residents across the Mansfield Shire a well as service providers and community leaders. The engagement will promote an understanding of healthier approaches to death, dying and bereavement and increase resident’s knowledge, skills and involvement around the social dimensions of dying, death and bereavement.

The project will be guided by a Steering committee and will involve community meetings, guest speakers and end of life community conversations. Through sharing of personal experiences around death and dying in the Mansfield community, Council will gain a deeper understanding of existing support and identify community needs, initiatives, opportunities and strengths around end of life caring.

Council will use the information gathered through the project to inform the development of their Age-friendly Plan and the next Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and identify any potential role of Council and the community to support individuals and families who are dying, in particular people who wish to die at home.

Learnings from the project will be used to inform future directions and potential opportunities for local government in this new area of work as well as contribute a social and community perspective around palliative care at the end of life.

**Whittlesea ‘Way to Go’ Project – Whittlesea City Council**

The City of Whittlesea is located in the outer northern suburbs of Melbourne and is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. Whittlesea is a mix of rural and suburban areas and its diversity includes a multicultural population with over 40% of residents speaking a language other than English at home. As a growth area, many younger people and families are moving into the area, however Whittlesea has 12 % of the population who are 65+ years and a predicted growth in the ageing population.

Whittlesea’s ‘Way to Go’ project will focus on diversity and gaining a deeper understanding of dying, death and bereavement as it is experienced in different cultural groups. Exploring community perceptions of dying, death and bereavement, experiences of dying at home, successful communication strategies for engaging people from different backgrounds with be explored with the Greek and Macedonian communities.

The project will utilise Council’s connections with the Greek and Macedonian communities to identify needs in information, support and services that would improve how individuals, family and community experience end of life. All residents will also have opportunity to participate in the project through promoting dying, death and bereavement conversations at community events.

Strategies to be implemented in the project include building the understanding around end of life across council staff and identifying opportunities where end of life may be included in Council policies, procedures, planning and strategies.

Project learnings will inform the potential role of local government around this new area and strategies for engaging with diverse communities and building community support around dying, death and bereavement.

**Foster ‘End of Life’ pilot project- South Gippsland Shire**

South Gippsland Shire is located in south eastern Victoria and has a number of towns in rural and coastal areas. Foster is a small town of 1,677 people in the centre of the municipality and is a hub township for many of the outlying smaller towns. Foster has a range of services from schools, hospitals, community health centre, GP’s, library, aged care facilities and community centres. People 65+ years make up 23% of the population, which is predicted to grow to from 19.5% in 2011 to 28.2% in 2031.

Foster ‘End of Life Pilot Project’ will create processes and documentation to promote general understanding that death is a natural part of life.

Through community meetings and engagement with residents, services and networks, the project will identify ways in which community, individuals and organisations (including Council) may support families and the individual nearing end of life, including the celebration of life prior to the end.

The project will work closely with community to develop resources, support and activities as identified by residents, services and networks to build community resilience and strengths around end of life. The project approach aims to facilitate the capacity of community groups to run their own programs which support end of life.

Project learnings will identify processes and strategies that contributed to successful outcomes for residents and inform the implementation of community strengthening around end of life in other communities.

**For further information contact**

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