

# Family Violence Statement of Commitment



## Statement of Commitment for the prevention of Family Violence

### Knox City Council says NO to family violence.

Knox City Council pledges its commitment to working toward a community free from violence. Family violence is a major health and welfare issue that affects people of all ages and all backgrounds. Men, women and children can be victims of family violence however the statistics show that approximately 74% of recorded victims are female.<sup>1</sup>

The drivers of family violence are complex and can include cultural, social, situational and personal factors. There is evidence that whilst knowledge about family violence and attitudes towards women is improving, this has not translated into any consistent reduction in reports of family violence. Partner violence is among the top eight risk factors contributing to burden of disease among females aged 15 to 64<sup>2</sup> and also increases victims' risk of financial hardship and homelessness.

Council recognises the wide ranging and damaging impact family violence has on the lives of those affected and on the community as a whole. Knox City Council reaffirms its commitment to preventing and responding to family violence through Council's services, programs and advocacy.

#### Our role:

Local Government is in a critical position with enormous reach, influence and access to our local communities through the various services and functions that we provide. Our aim is to be leaders in the prevention of family violence and we will work towards addressing behaviours that contribute to, or condone violence.

Knox City Council has identified the prevention of family violence as a key priority. We will strive towards an integrated, whole of Council approach to the prevention of family violence in the Knox municipality. Council is mandated to have regard for the prevention of family violence and will report on family violence measures as legislated in the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.

#### We support the following principles:

##### Every person in our community:

- Has the right to safe and respectful relationships and to live free from violence.
- Is responsible for taking action to prevent family violence and for developing a culture of respect and equality

<sup>1</sup> Crime Statistics Agency, 2019, Victorian Family Violence Data Portal.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019, Australian Burden of Disease Study: impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2015, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/burden-disease-study-illness-death-2015/contents/table-of-contents>

- Has an important role to play in preventing family violence.
- Has the right to opportunities for equal participation in public and private life.

We will prioritise the support and intervention for vulnerable and marginalized community members.

### Our commitment:

Knox City Council prides itself on providing our community with a safe and inclusive environment in which to live, work and play. Knox City Council has had a long standing commitment to preventing family violence. Many of our strategic plans oversee the provision of a city that invites all members of our community to participate and enjoy their lifestyles freely and safely. Knox Community and Council Plan (2017-2021) states that we want Knox to be 'the preferred place to live, work and play today and for generations to come'. Relevant goals that sit under this vision include:

- We are safe and secure; and
- We are healthy, happy and well.

### We will:

Develop a range of Council led initiatives and activities with a focus on:

- Advocacy, coordination and planning;
- Internal leadership and capacity building;
- Community partnership and a collective impact approach; and
- Direct service provision.

### Advocacy, coordination and planning

Council will continue to stay informed of legislative and policy directions of other community and government organisations at a State and National level. Council will continue to be informed by evidence-based planning, service system data and community and stakeholder engagement to assist in identifying issues and target groups for future planning and prevention implementation. We are committed to advocate to other levels of government for changes to legislation and preventative services to address antisocial behaviour, family violence, and child and elder abuse that includes:

- Advocate to Victoria Police for increased reporting of the prevalence and impact of family violence (for example, contributing factors such as abuse of alcohol, gambling, mental health issues);
- Advocate to the state government for increased planning controls and social impact assessment criteria for liquor outlet density;
- As part of our commitment to preventing family violence we annually coordinate information and awareness raising activities, including the development and update of the family violence information card;
- Advocate for an increase in the provision of men's behavioral change programs and a comprehensive, state-wide evaluation of these interventions;
- Advocate for a stronger more coordinated service response for people affected by family violence;
- Advocate for appropriate resources to meet community needs as they arise; and
- Council will seek opportunities for external funding to progress family violence prevention and response and advocate for gender equity approaches in planning, decision-making and service delivery.

## **Internal leadership and capacity building**

Council will focus on internal organisational development and capacity building through activities such as policy development and gender equity training. Council will:

- Continue to provide a range of sensitive support mechanisms to staff experiencing family violence;
- Provide training to support staff in a frontline information and referral response, this will be of direct benefit to community members who may be experiencing family violence; and
- Continue as a partner and pilot organisation in a consortium approach responsible for the development and implementation of gender equity accredited training, a first in Victoria.

## **Community partnership and a collective impact approach**

Council plays a valuable and critical role in addressing and preventing family violence through its ongoing local leadership, particularly through the delivery of a broad range of primary prevention activities. It is vital that Council works with community and government organisations to progress family violence prevention and gender equity initiatives. Council will:

- Adopt and implement a range of legislative requirements associated with family violence;
- Provide support and education to enable Council and the community to respond to and recover from family violence and where appropriate, fund<sup>3</sup> community-based family violence prevention initiatives; and
- Lead and partner with community groups, organisations and other levels of government to deliver initiatives that focus on family violence prevention with a focus on collective impact.

## **Direct service provision**

Specialised services exist to provide an immediate and crucial response to people impacted by family violence. Council will work in partnership with these services as well as Victoria Police to stay informed of new and emerging cohorts and dimensions of family violence in our community. One area that Council does provide direct services is through Maternal and Child Health services. Maternal and Child Health staff are often the first point of contact for women, and their children, experiencing family violence. This program engages significantly with vulnerable and at-risk families in the form of early intervention and crisis response.

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<sup>3</sup> Through an application process Council has a range of funding streams including the Community Development, Community Partnership Funds and Minor Grants.

# Working towards a community free from violence.

## Every person in our community:

- has the right to safe and respectful relationships free from violence
- is responsible for taking action to prevent family violence and develop a culture of respect and equality
- has an important role to play in preventing family violence
- has the right to opportunities for equal participation in public and private life

## Our commitment

Knox City Council recognises the wide ranging and damaging impact family violence has on the community and pledges its commitment to prioritise support and intervention for vulnerable and marginalised community members.



Reporting of family violence in Knox remains high. Of those impacted by family violence:



Partner violence is among the top eight risk factors contributing to illness among females aged 15 to 64 and increases victims' risk of financial hardship and homelessness.

Family violence is a major health and welfare issue that affects people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds