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For immediate release

Melbourne's East unites to end violence against women

As was reported in the Maroondah Leader this week, the "[latest police figures on domestic violence in Maroondah show a huge rise in the number of reports](#)", with the situation even being described as "an epidemic".

"This data confirms what we have known for a long time," says WHE CEO Kristine Olaris. "With 1 in 3 Australian women experiencing physical violence and 1 in 5 women experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime, we know that violence against women is a major crisis facing Australia – and the East is no exception."

"However, the news isn't all bad," says Ms Olaris.

"The rise in the number of reports in Maroondah indicates that more women are coming forward, seeking help and receiving the support of police. This is a really positive sign that we are changing the culture of silence and stigma that has surrounded family violence for too long."

"This confirms what we have seen at WHE – a determination from services across Melbourne's East to not only strengthen support for women reporting violence but also to work towards preventing the epidemic of violence against women in our community."

In 2013, 7 local governments, 8 community health services and women's services across the eastern region united to work together for 4 years under the banner of *Together for Equality & Respect: A Strategy to Prevent Violence against Women in Melbourne's East 2013-2017*.

And since then, they haven't been resting. Projects under this banner are seeing councils address gender equality in the work place, high school students receiving education on equal and respectful relationships and women who've experienced violence being supported to speak out about violence, challenging a culture that has kept women silent and suffering without support for too long.

Jennifer, a survivor of family violence, confirms this, "I dream of a world where all are free to live out their hopes and aspirations for life. This means that women, unhindered by abuse and violence, can reach their full potential in their workplaces, homes, relationships, and social settings. It means that women can take their rightful place alongside men and not be overpowered or oppressed by them."

"This is a milestone for the Eastern region," says Dr Sue Rosenhain Project Manager for *Together for Equality & Respect*. This Strategy brings Melbourne's East together for the first time to address violence against women as a whole community. Amidst rapidly increasing reports to Victoria Police of violence against women, this work is more important than ever."

- Ends -

Media enquiries: Kate Ravenscroft, Health Promotion and Communications Officer, 9851 3700 or kater@whe.org.au

Links and further information:

- *Together for Equality & Respect: A Strategy to Prevent Violence against Women in Melbourne's East 2013-2017* can be downloaded from <http://www.whe.org.au/newsite/index.html>
- Maroondah City Council and EACH Social and Community Health (community health service in Maroondah and Knox) are among the organisations participating in *Together for Equality & Respect*.
- If you or someone you know is experiencing violence, help is available - contact the Eastern Domestic Violence Services (EDVOS) on (03) 9259 4200.

About Women's Health East

Women's Health East is a regional women's health promotion agency working across the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne towards a vision of equality, empowerment, health and wellbeing for all women. A not-for-profit agency funded primarily by the Victorian Department of Health, we advocate for gender equity and work to improve the health and wellbeing of girls and women. Our health promotion priorities include:

- Preventing Violence Against Women
- Sexual & Reproductive Health
- Gender Equity for Health Outcomes

03 9851 3700 health@whe.org.au www.whe.org.au

Women's Health East acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government