

Background information



WOMEN'S HEALTH AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE STRATEGY FOR THE MIDWEST REGION

LED BY
Desert Blue Connect

DATE
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Introduction

Desert Blue Connect is developing a 3 year Women's Health and Sexual Violence Strategy for the Midwest region (July 2020 to June 2023). This strategy will guide Desert Blue Connect's approach to the health, safety and well-being of women in our region.

We will be consulting with communities of interest during late June and early July 2020. We are seeking input from women so we can develop a strategic plan that will inform Desert Blue Connect's women's health and sexual violence work for the next 3 years.

Who we are

Desert Blue Connect is a not for profit organisation based in Geraldton that provides services across the Midwest and Gascoyne region of Western Australia. These include women's health services, family violence support and counselling, crisis accommodation for women and children, sexual assault counselling, a men's intervention service, community and school based education programs and rural support services. Desert Blue Connect is a regional leader in family violence prevention and response and has a strong women's health agenda with a suite of services. We have a rural office in Morawa, along with a separate men's service and a women's refuge based in Geraldton.

Our purpose

Empowering and enriching the community.

Our focus

Is to provide an inclusive, safe and comfortable environment for the holistic health and wellbeing of our community.

Women's Health

The Women's Health Centre (WHC) was originally established in 1992 to provide a unique and holistic approach to women's health in Geraldton and the surrounding areas. We aim to change women's lives for the better by delivering accessible, affordable and confidential health and wellbeing services in the diverse communities of our service area. We work using a social model of health.

The regional women's health centre (WHC) for the Midwest is now part of Desert Blue Connect. We are open to women who are aged 12 and over. The WHC works to improve and promote the health and well-being of women in the Midwest, particularly vulnerable women at risk of poor health outcomes. We offer counselling, medical services, provision of information, advocacy and referrals to specialised services. Additionally, we provide therapeutic and/or support groups and a wide range of health promotion and community development projects, often in partnership with other services in the region. Training is also provided in the community, including skills development for other professionals.

We also provide unplanned pregnancy counselling alongside the WHC program inclusive of individual counselling, non-directive information and referral to other services, and health promotion activities and training for health professionals. The WHC at Desert Blue Connect is part of the women's health sector in WA. We are one of five regional women's health services and seven metro based centres who together provide a reach across most of the state.



Sexual Violence Support

Desert Blue Connect also provides a Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) for the Midwest region. The SASS is based at 25 Chapman Road, Geraldton and is open to both men and women who are aged 13 and over. The service provides a holistic range of services for women and men who have experienced sexual assault including face to face or telephone counselling, historic, recent and crisis sexual assault intervention, a crisis phone service (available 24/7) and health promotion and prevention activities.

The SASS is part of a sexual assault sector in WA. We are one of four regional SASS's and two metro services.

The Department of Health, Women's Health Strategy and Programs, Women and Newborn Health Service fund both services. The WHC is additionally supported by private philanthropy funding, small funding grants and fee for service for health promotion initiatives.

Women's health and sexual violence context

The 2019 WA Government's Women's Health and Well-being Policy recognises that woman's experiences of health and well-being differ to men's and that health and well-being outcomes are shaped by environmental, social, behavioural and genetic factors. We believe that to improve the overall health, safety and well-being of women, they need to be informed and part of the decision making process.

Desert Blue Connects women's health and sexual violence work uses the WA policy framework for women's health which includes:-

- The social determinants of health
- Gender equity and intersectionality
- A life course approach

We strive for continuous improvement in the health, safety and wellbeing of women and girls in the Midwest region, particularly those at greatest risk of poor health. Additionally, we customise our programs and services to the unique characteristics and demographics of the Midwest region.

Desert Blue Connects women's health and sexual assault work aligns with the National and State Women's Health Policies. Our priorities over the next 3 years will include:

Women's health

- Maternal, sexual and reproductive health
- Healthy ageing
- Chronic conditions and preventive health
- Mental health
- Health impacts of violence against women and girls
- Social determinants of health impacting women

Sexual assault

- 1) Response services and supports
- 2) Public education, awareness and prevention
- 3) Sexual harassment prevention (including in the workplace)
- 4) Positive community and stakeholder partnerships



How can you participate in the consultation?

We will have a number of options for women to contribute to our 3 year women's health and sexual violence strategy.

- 1) You can fill out our [online survey](#).
- 2) We will also be holding community forums in various Midwest locations
- 3) We will be holding two women's health events in Perenjori and Morawa shortly, and will distribute the survey there
- 4) Structured youth conversations in Geraldton and Morawa
- 5) Stakeholder workshop and/or interviews

We want to be as inclusive as we can, so if you would like us to come to your community please let us know. Contact daphnew@desertblueconnect.org.au or phone 9964 2742 or mobile 0409 642 745 for further details.



Desert Blue Connect

FURTHER READING

2019 WA Women's Report Card

Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality 2020

WA Women's Health and Wellbeing Policy

National Women's Health Strategy 2020 - 2030

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