



## **Developments in local government policies and programs supportive of maternal health during PRISM – some examples**

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### **Latrobe City – Maternal Health Policy**

At Latrobe City we [Steering Committee] have developed and had passed by council a policy related to mother's health. This document takes a broad definition of health and looks at factors affecting a mother's ability to function at a normal level not just at the physical aspects of health.

Within the document, there is recognition for services already available. Some of these services include

1. Other currently available services in the community services have their primary goal as children's well being, and of increasing parenting skills and abilities.
2. Community groups provide support and contact with mothers, but again often with a parenting focus.
3. Availability of (mostly minimal) facilities for baby-care facilities – in Traralgon (1), in Midvalley (1), one recently installed in City office in Morwell CBD, 1 (and one kept locked) in Moe (access limited as general public is unaware of its location)
4. Pram parking - available Centre Plaza Traralgon, none known on-street. Need for audit.

But as we know there are also gaps in the services provided and this is what we have tried to address with in the policy.

### **Policy**

1. That the City of Latrobe recognizes the population of recent mothers as having significant health issues which are of importance, and which affect a considerable demographic group.
2. That the City of Latrobe seeks to identify and implement local strategies designed to improve the health and well-being of mothers in the City. We will develop local strategies planning for the health and wellbeing of mothers, and in particular recent mothers, in consideration of such matters as:
  - 2.1. community safety (e.g. road crossing designed for mothers with strollers),
  - 2.2. transport and access
  - 2.3. accessibility of hospital services
  - 2.4. health
  - 2.5. recreation (including playgrounds, pathways, facilities and opportunities for leisure activities for recent mothers)
  - 2.6. community information (including signage of baby-care facilities and Maternal and Child Health Centres)

3. That the Council of the City of Latrobe will take into consideration the above issues for mothers in all tenders and planning, and will include encouragement of private organizations to consider, for example, provision of recreation activities for recent mothers, provision of baby-care facilities, provision of adequate car-parking, design of stores so that parents prams and strollers can access the store and goods, play areas, breastfeeding facilities, etc.
4. The City of Latrobe will include the needs of this group in overall planning for disability services (bearing in mind that mothers may have difficulty in access to facilities similar to those in wheelchairs)

We are still working on promoting this policy to other departments for their planning processes.

However since the policy has been passed we have had some pram parking spaces installed which is a small but important step.

(Item reproduced from *PRISM Points*, May 2001)

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### **Maroondah City Council – Family and Children’s Services Plan and Municipal Public Health Plan 2000-2002**

Both these plans incorporate mention of the Council’s participation in the PRISM project and intention s to support continuation of PRISM initiatives.

From the Family and Children’s Services Plan (p24):

“To ensure the long term benefit for mothers within Maroondah a number of PRISM initiatives have been included in the Maroondah Municipal Public Health plan and the Family and Children’s Services Plan documents.”

In the Municipal Public Health Plan 2000-2002, health issues for mothers post childbirth are acknowledged (p17) and befriending opportunities for mothers are promoted as a key strategy to reduce isolation:

“Develop and publicise a range of opportunities for mothers to meet socially including:

- local coffee shops hosting mum’s mornings
- promotion of local playgroups
- walking groups
- use of volunteers to provide support, such as phone a grandmother/mother
- women’s lunchtime speaker events” (p21)

Other strategies supportive of improved maternal health that are mentioned in the Municipal Public Health Plan include: providing parenting facilities at key public toilets in the municipality (p21); collaborative work between maternal and child health and the local Division of GPs around addressing depression in mothers post

childbirth and improving referral mechanisms between nurses and GPs; and provision of a postnatal exercise group at the community health service to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of new mothers (p22).

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### **City of Bayside – Home Cleaning Program for Mothers**

The home cleaning program was established by Council in October 2000 following a report and recommendations from the PRISM Steering Committee, as a service for all recent mothers to assist with their emotional and physical recovery after childbirth.

The Mayor at the time, Cr Graeme Disney said:

“The provision of practical in-home support is a key step towards assisting families to deal with the stresses and additional pressures associated with parenting, particularly within the first twelve months after the birth of a new child.

“Council has an important role to play in supporting young families in the City of Bayside...Research has shown that many women suffer from the significant burden of ill-health, stress and loneliness in the twelve months following the birth of a child. Bayside Council is working to improve this situation and ease some of the pressure on mothers through provision of cleaning services during this time.”

The program is available for a range of household tasks to be negotiated between parents and allocated cleaners. The service may be utilised for such tasks as vacuuming, sweeping, mopping, cleaning kitchens and bathrooms, washing ironing and changing bed linen.

Bayside’s maternal and child health nurses explain the service to recent mothers during the home visit following the birth of their child. A brochure and application form is available from the nurse. The home cleaning program is subsidised by Council, with parents paying an hourly rate for the cleaning service according to an income assessment.

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### **Wellington Shire Council – ‘A Vision for Wellington’**

At the conclusion of the two-year implementation period for PRISM, one very involved Councillor from the Steering Committee prepared a vision statement that was endorsed by Council at the end of 2000. It read:

“Wellington Shire will be a place where:

The needs of parents with babies will be considered at all levels of strategic planning.

Community facilities will be baby-friendly and include gender-neutral or dual-gender baby-change facilities.

Footpaths will cause no impediments for prams.

Public transport will be available to allow parents with children to move around the shire and transport issues particularly relating to small towns and rural parents will be addressed.

Playgrounds will include fenced areas for toddlers, and parents will be able to sit nearby in shaded areas.

The needs of parents with prams will be addressed, and then considered at all times when reviewing parking.

Parents Wellington, the successor to PRISM, has an ongoing role and focus as a reference group to examine and comment on policy issues and advocate for and address the needs of young children and their parents in the Wellington Shire.”