

SUNBURY

# Action on domestic violence

Barry Kennedy

## LOCAL HEALTH SERVICES HEARTENED BY RECOMMENDATIONS

TWO community health providers believe a focus on early intervention can allow for inroads to be made in stamping out family violence.

Agencies working in the sphere of community health were processing the release of the Royal Commission into Family Violence last Wednesday, which saw the State Government adopt all 227 of its recommendations.

Cobaw Community Health chief executive Margaret McDonald said the breadth of the recommen-

dations were heartening. "Hearing about the establishment of hubs seems to be a great way in which agencies can co-ordinate, moving past the siloing of funding, while there was also some good language about the priorities in funding regional and rural strategies," she said.

Ms McDonald said family violence was at the root, or a major contributor to many of their clients who accessed Cobaw programs.

"We work with an extra-

ordinary amount of children who, once impacted by family violence, need therapeutic support," she said.

"What pleases us most is the focus on prevention in trying to effect male behaviour changes."

Sunbury Community Health chief executive Phillip Ripper said his organisation believed with enough political will, the prevalence of family violence could be significantly reduced.

"We welcome the challenge to the health sys-

tem provided by the commission's report," Mr Ripper said.

"They identify that generalist health services can play a key role in identifying and responding to family violence, by providing a safe place for women and children to safely disclose violence that they are experiencing at home, with confidence they can receive appropriate supports."

He said Sunbury Community Health, as a long-term provider of a

successful men's behaviour change program, was pleased to see the emphasis on developing the "breadth and diversity of perpetrator interventions in Victoria".

"As a community, we need to do all we can to prevent family violence occurring, and this certainly includes assisting perpetrators to change," he said.

State Premier Daniel Andrews said the report made clear the family violence system was broken.

"I refuse to look back in 10

years' time and admit that we could have done more to save innocent lives," Mr Andrews said.

"We will get this right.

"We will punish the perpetrators, listen to the survivors and change the culture that allows family violence to happen in the first place. There can be no more excuses.

"Our work begins today to overhaul our broken family violence system from the bottom up."

The report can be viewed at [vic.gov.au/familyviolenceresponse](http://vic.gov.au/familyviolenceresponse)