

MEDIA RELEASE

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Local Specialist Family Violence Services Announce Partnership to Develop a Support and Safety Hub

Bethany Community Support Inc. and Barwon CASA / Minerva today announced the formation of a partnership between the two organisations to collaborate on the design and development of the Barwon Support and Safety Hub.

In November 2016, the Premier Daniel Andrews announced that the Barwon Area was selected as one of five launch sites for the Family Violence Support and Safety Hubs. The Hubs are a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The Support and Safety Hubs will provide a safe, non-stigmatising access point to women and children who are impacted by family violence and sexual assault to access information, support and assistance to leave or recover from family violence. They will also provide assessment and programs for men who use violence.

The broad principles for the design and development of the Support and Safety Hubs are documented in the Victorian Government's *Ending Family Violence - Victoria's Plan for Change*. The Government is leading a collaborative design process to ensure the Support and Safety Hubs meet local needs.

Mr. Grant Boyd, Chief Executive Officer of Bethany, said "Bethany and Barwon CASA / Minerva are the Barwon Area's two primary providers of specialist family violence support services."

"Working together we are very well placed to make a leading contribution to the design and development of a Support and Safety Hub that will meet the needs of our local community," Mr Boyd said.

Together, Barwon CASA / Minerva and Bethany provide an extensive range of intake, support and trauma informed counselling services to people impacted by family violence and sexual assault, in addition to an exemplar response to men who use violence. Both organisations are actively involved in the provision of response to increasing demand for specialist family violence and sexual assault services in the area and have been at the forefront in educating the broader community about this issue.

Helen Bolton, Chief Executive Officer Barwon CASA / Minerva CEO, said "We are excited about the potential of bringing together our combined expertise to provide improved and expanded services to our community."

"Together we can shape and influence the Support and Safety Hub design to ensure that people receiving support via the Hub receive a holistic and timely specialist response," Ms Bolton said.

"We look forward to working with the Government and our local partner agencies including members of the Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee in contributing our considerable combined expertise," Ms Bolton said.

The partnership will bring together the recognised expertise of both organisations in supporting women and children who are victims of family violence as well as programs to hold perpetrators to account.

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