

# Supporting Sexual and Reproductive Health

## SHAP(e) Action Plan

### Background

In response to a comprehensive regional needs analysis, the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU) developed the Sexual and Reproductive Health Action Plan – SHAP(e) – to support a coordinated local response to sexual and reproductive health. The plan aims to improve access to care and promote equitable sexual and reproductive health outcomes across the region.

Rising rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and blood-borne viruses (BBVs), including the re-emergence of congenital syphilis and high rates among migrant and refugee communities, highlighted the need for a targeted and collaborative regional approach.

### Objectives

1. Improve access to culturally safe, evidence-based sexual and reproductive health education and services.
2. Build local capacity to prevent STIs and BBVs through health promotion and early intervention.
3. Support improved availability to long-term contraceptives and medical abortion services.
4. Ensure regional efforts align with state-wide strategies to reduce the incidence of STIs and BBVs.

### Initiatives

The LMPHU supported Swan Hill District Health (SHDH) to host a community and stakeholder sexual and reproductive health information session, which 39 people attended. Key components of the event included:

- A presentation of local STI/BBV data and emerging trends
- Community education on STI screening, contraception and service access
- The introduction of SHDH's sexual health model of care.

With LMPHU funding support, the Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH) in partnership with Multicultural Health & Support Service (MHSS) and local regional services, delivered a five-day Northwest Sexual Health Roadshow in May 2025 across Mildura, Swan Hill and Robinvale. The project featured:

- Nine co-designed workshops (four workforce and five community) with 103 participants.
- A focus on improving cross-cultural communication and building confidence in discussing sexual and reproductive health topics

These workshops resulted in a 22% increase in participants' self-reported knowledge and confidence

### HEALTHY LIVING Let's talk about sexual health

SEXUAL health is an essential part of overall well-being, yet it's often overlooked or surrounded by stigma. Regular screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are a vital step in protecting your health and the health of others.

#### Why screening matters

MANY STIs can go unnoticed for long periods because they often present with no symptoms. Left untreated, infections like chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, or HIV can lead to serious health complications including infertility, chronic pain, and increased risk of transmission.

The good news? Most STIs are treatable – and the earlier they are diagnosed, the easier they are to manage or cure.

Regular STI screening is recommended for anyone who is sexually active, especially if you have one or multiple partners. It's a quick, confidential, and often free service that could make a huge difference to your health.

#### Free information session

A free STI information session will be held at the Swan Hill Club on 19 June 10am-12pm.

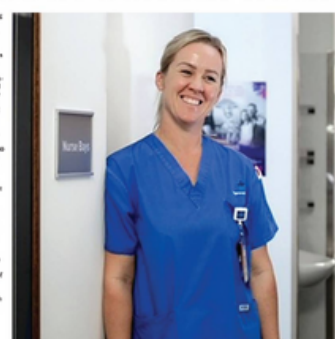
Join us and get the community talking about sexual health. The interactive session will provide practical information on STI prevention, testing, and support services. It's also a chance to hear from experts in the field and ask any questions in a respectful, inclusive setting.

Guest speaker nurse practitioner or Health Promotion from Swan Hill District Health (SHDH) will share information on how to obtain an STI screen, the importance of STI screening, and the support Community Health offers.

Other speakers include Sexual Health Victoria director Dr Sara Whitburn and a speaker from SHDH Victoria which supports health education and health promotion in the community.

Let's open up the conversation about sexual health and make informed choices a normal part of healthy living.

To register or find out more, contact LMPHU Community Health on 03 5033 9337 or [chc@lmphu.org.au](mailto:chc@lmphu.org.au)



### At a Glance

#### Challenges

- Geographic dispersion of high-need communities
- Limited availability of sexual & reproductive health service
- Cultural stigma surrounding sexual and reproductive health

#### Benefits

- Place-based approaches ensured relevance and reach
- Workshop training enhanced knowledge, confidence and cultural responsiveness
- Service mapping and comprehensive needs assessment guided targeted strategic interventions

## Anticipated Outcomes/Impacts

- Greater regional consistency in sexual and reproductive service access and messaging.
- Improved understanding of local STI and BBVs diagnosis and treatment pathways.
- Increased uptake of contraception and sexual and reproductive screening.
- Strengthened partnerships supporting future co-designed sexual and reproductive initiatives.

## Lessons learned

- **Community leadership is essential:** engaging local cultural community leaders strengthened project relevance and participation.
- **Place-based approaches:** tailoring activities to local contexts ensured interventions were timely and appropriate.
- **Partnerships enable scale and sustainability:** leveraging existing networks, such as Women's Health Loddon Mallee and CERSH's communities of practice, enhanced reach and impact.
- **Workforce training is vital:** embedding sexual and reproductive education into roles and ongoing investment in cross-cultural competency and health promotion skills is essential.

## Next steps

- Continue to support implementation of priority actions identified in the SHAP(e) Action Plan across the Loddon Mallee region.
- Strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders, including ACCOs, multicultural services, community and health services.
- Develop region-specific resources and education to improve health literacy and reduce stigma around sexual and reproductive health.
- Continue data collection and monitoring to track trends, measure impact and inform future priorities.
- Advocate for sustainable funding and workforce development to support equitable sexual and reproductive health service delivery in rural and remote areas.



### Cross-Cultural Sexual Health Promotion Training

Delivered by: the Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH) and the Multicultural Health & Support Service (MHSS), a program of the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health (CEH)

Time: 12 - 2pm  
Date: Wednesday 7 May 2025  
Venue: 128-132 Latje Rd, Robinvale VIC (RDHS)

### Swan Hill District Health Sexual & Reproductive Health Info Session



<b>Location</b> Swan Hill Club 5/17 McCallum	<b>Thursday</b> 19 June 2025 2:00 PM - 4:30 PM
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#### What is it?

Join us for a free information session focused on sexual and reproductive health. Learn about sexual and reproductive health, including local supports and services, STI screening options in Swan Hill and current STI prevalence rates in the area.

Afternoon tea and take-home resource bags are provided for attendees.

#### Presented by:

- Swan Hill District Health - Community Health
- Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit
- Sexual Health Victoria

#### Who Should Attend?

- Community organisations and support agencies
- Health and youth workers
- Interested community members

#### Booking:

To secure your place contact Swan Hill District Health - Community Health  
Phone: 5033 9337

Email: [chreception@shdh.org.au](mailto:chreception@shdh.org.au)



Department of Rural Health  
Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health



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