

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



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.



Department of Rural Health
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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.

HEALTHY LIVING Let's talk about sexual health



July 2025