Addressing Local COVID-19 Impacts across SW Victoria

As result of the COVID-19 pandemic, SWPCP adapted its service provision to support local health and social agencies to respond by providing partnership coordination activities which included:

1. Online Suicide Prevention Training to Key Target Groups during COVID 19

SWPCP teamed up with South West Sport, Western Region AFL and Lifeline Direct to deliver an online mental health and suicide prevention forum which reached over 1000 participants, engaging sporting clubs across the Great South Coast (GSC) region. Kimberly Ransfield Team Manager at South West Sport stated, *South West Primary Care Partnership was instrumental in connecting our organisation with a range of local health organisations, which enabled us to facilitate a mental health discussion with a panel of key experts for sports clubs across the South West.*
South West Sport had identified mental health as a priority area particularly during the current restrictions in place due to COVID-19.

For such a small resource allocation, SWPCP has a trusted relationship with South West Sport and the external relationships they have developed and continue to build across many different sectors is invaluable to organisations such as ours."

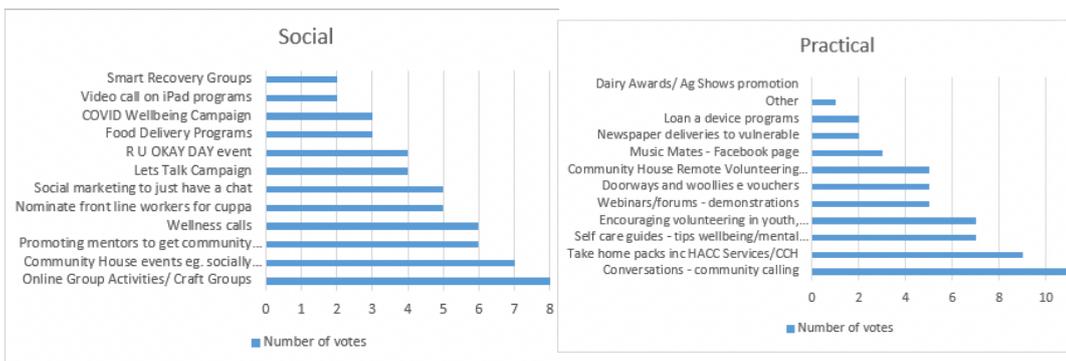### 2. Suicide Prevention Training to Great South Coast Leaders

SWPCP coordinated and delivered an online Suicide Prevention Training in partnership with Deakin Rural Health, in providing leaders from across the GSC region with the skills to support those at risk during COVID-19.

3. Online Social Connection Program Support

SWPCP in partnership with Community South West and Neighbourhood Houses across the GSC engaged 60 health and community service agencies across the GSC region to apply for funding to adapt existing social connection strategies together online using MS Teams.

4. Creating Innovative ways for vulnerable people to remain socially connected during COVID-19

Every local government across the GSC region received funding from DHHS to deliver Community Activation and Social Isolation Initiatives (CASI). SWPCP has supported each local government in the catchment to develop and implement their CASI strategies. For example, Corangamite Shire brainstormed new social connection programs with SWPCP's support to identify new ways to work in partnership and increase social connection opportunities for vulnerable groups. This included:

a. Online community gratitude - "Cuppas for Corangamite"

"Cuppas for Corangamite" was an opportunity for community to thank fellow members for their efforts during the pandemic. SWPCP posted social and emotional wellbeing and physical health support / opportunities available across Corangamite Shire on their Facebook page.

b. Mentoring Isolated people to video call family and friends

SWPCP supported a strategy to mentor people who live alone, and or vulnerable of being socially isolated to learn how to video call to enhance social connection. In Corangamite, there is a high risk of vulnerable people becoming socially disconnected because of; the lack of access to public transport, the large distance between neighbouring towns, low internet usage by the population, higher than state average percentage of older adults living alone, low rates of technology utilisation, and mobile coverage black spots.

5. *Support to transition to COVID safe environments.*

SWPCP surveyed partner agencies about the barriers they were facing in transitioning their service delivery and staff to COVID safe environments. This led to a partnership with Community South West in the delivery of a series of online forums which allowed partner agencies to discuss common barriers in transitioning to COVID safe environments, sharing innovative ways to maintain service delivery of essential services and reducing anxiety amongst leaders by providing the most up to date information to inform decision making

6. *Local Government and Regional Emergency/COVID Response Support*

SWPCP participated in the three-local government and the Barwon South West COVID-19 Emergency Management Response (CEMR) meetings across SW Victoria. These meetings allowed service providers to define key risks and community issues which SWPCP coordinated support to:

1. Create a shared understanding about COVID-19 conditions for testing and changing regulations
2. Re-establishing cloth washing & shower service for homeless people
3. Supporting Back Packers sleeping rough to access service support
4. Understanding Homeless Service Demand and Funding
5. Understanding the increased risk of women suffering domestic violence during lock down
6. Service listings of key services to support CASI Referral
7. Mental Health Service & Suicide Prevention Supports

7. *PCP Service and Care Coordination Support*

There were large changes in how partner agencies were providing essential services to consumers. These changes needed to be documented and shared. SWPCP created an online Wiki page on MS Teams which provided a local one stop shop of information.

SWPCP's Wiki page on COVID-19 provided information on.

1. COVID-19 updates defining changing COVID-19 regulations,

2. Local government area infection rates,

3. DHHS, Federal Government and other peak body COVID-19 resources which covered a wide range of topics from home schooling tips, to how to access fresh food, toilet paper, and sanitizer which have been in short supply.

4. COVID-19 policies and procedures, noting changing work practices and documenting these changes was adding significant workloads to managers who were already overloaded, so why not share them?

5. Where and how to access PPE, which was initially in short supply.

6. Minutes of LGA and Regional COVID-19 emergency management meetings highlighting the key issues and actions agreed by members.

7. SWPCP updated pathways of care and service listings in terms of how COVID-19 had changed the way consumers accessed services. Sharing service access changes amongst partners improved service integration and reduced duplication through a period of high-level change.

8. SWPCP updated its emergency response service listing which focused on how to support community members in crisis, which we had developed post the 2018 St Patrick Day

9. SWPCP shared; funding and training opportunities and innovative practice on priority health issues during COVID-19, posting this information regularly on Facebook, LinkedIn and our local newsletter