

Mornington Peninsula

Communities that Care

Cr Antonella Celi

<http://www.communitiesthatcare.org.au/research/case-studies/mornington-peninsula-victoria>

Mornington Peninsula, Victoria

Mornington Peninsula Shire, (MPS) is a geographically large outer ring semi-metropolitan / semi-rural municipality to the south of Melbourne in Victoria. The current population is 156,000. The population is spread across 40 townships over 740 square kilometres. The municipality is a coastal peninsula with substantial vacation accommodation that experiences a seasonal population increases of up to 300,000.

In 1999, a state-wide survey identified the municipality to have one of the highest rates of youth substance use and related problems. Although there were a number of services offering assistance to youth with problems, at that time there was no systematically planned effort to increase community prevention services.

In 2002, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council received six years of state funding to pilot the Communities That Care (CTC) process across the shire, (MPS has fully funded CTC since 2008). MPS Council appointed a Section 86 Committee of Council, (CTC Board), comprising a group of local champions and an Independent Chair to implement and oversee CTC within the Shire. A senior community development officer was employed by Council to resource the CTC process and lead a team of two CTC Project Workers. In addition to the CTC Board appointed by MPS Council, a coalition of Key Leaders was formed to provide input to the process. The CTC staff, CTC Board Members and Key Leaders received training and support from visiting USA based CTC Trainers. The training gradually increased knowledge, expertise and readiness for prevention work.

The decision to divide the municipality into six, population equal, Local CTC Groups was made by the Community Board. CTC staff then recruited to, and established, coalitions for each of the six Local CTC Groups that included youth, interested residents, representatives from community organisations and non-government agencies. Training was provided by visiting US-based CTC Trainers to all members of the Local CTC Groups with the aim of increasing their readiness to commence the five year CTC cycle.

Comprehensive youth surveys were completed in 2002 as part of the first cycle of CTC, and local consultations identified priority risk factors for action. Plans to increase prevention strategies in each of six areas across the municipality were then completed. Initially, there were few evidence-based prevention programs operating in the municipality, however the

number of effective prevention strategies has increased over the years with sustained coalition efforts. Re-surveys in 2007 and 2012 have revealed reductions in the targeted youth behaviours (e.g., early age alcohol use and illicit drug use) and risk factors (e.g., favourable attitudes to alcohol and drug use, family conflict) in line with international experience and the local prevention plans (Williams et al., 2012).

Available Australian community re-survey results (Williams & Smith, 2007) are in line with the findings from the overseas evaluations in revealing population-wide improvements in youth reports of community social environments and reductions in problems such as alcohol and drug use and precocious sexual activity.

http://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Services_For_You/Young_People/Communities_That_Care

Communities That Care (CTC) Mornington Peninsula is a preventative approach to improving the health and well being of children and young people on the peninsula. Communities That Care aims to promote the healthy development of children and young people by reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors in order to see favourable change in behaviour over time.

CTC facilitates the administration of the Mornington Peninsula Shire Healthy Neighbourhoods School Survey, which measures the prevalence estimates for a series of problem behaviours such as substance use (e.g. alcohol use, marijuana use), sexual activity, depressive symptoms, antisocial behaviour, bullying and exercise and diet indicators amongst secondary school students in the Mornington Peninsula Shire every five years.

The Healthy Neighbourhoods Schools Survey is an Australian adaptation of the *Communities That Care*® Youth Survey. Adaptations were made to ensure it is culturally appropriate for young people in Australia. The data report also aims to present trends from similar surveys conducted in 2002 and 2007.

In overview the findings of the 2012 Mornington Peninsula Shire Healthy Neighbourhoods School Survey continue to show favourable trends since 2002 in areas that align with the prevention priorities and objectives originally established by Communities That Care Mornington Peninsula. This includes reduced substance use and early sexual activity; reduced risk factors and; improved protective factors. Areas that have not been the subject of prevention planning by Communities That Care Mornington Peninsula such as depressive symptoms, antisocial behaviour and physical activity and nutrition have remained stable over time and have not shown any reductions.

Key findings of this report include:

An estimated 16.5 per cent of young people in the Mornington Peninsula Shire **have had sex**. There is strong evidence to suggest that there has been a decrease, by more than one-half since 2007 and very large reductions since 2002, in the proportion of year 7 students who have ever had sex.

An estimated 25.5 per cent of young people in the Mornington Peninsula Shire have **depressive symptoms**. The prevalence of students with depressive symptoms, at each year level, appears to have remained stable over the 10-year period since 2002.

Nearly one-third of young people in the Mornington Peninsula Shire have **recently been bullied** and just over one in ten have **recently bullied someone**. These proportions are lower than when estimated in the year 2007.

At each year level: There have been large decreases in substance use since 2002. Since 2007 there is strong evidence that there has been a decrease in lifetime, recent and binge alcohol use. There has also been a downward trend in tobacco and other drug use although these differences were not significant.

For further information contact the Communities That Care team below:

Rebecca Popplewell

Email. rebekah.popplewell@mornpen.vic.gov.au

Tel. 5950 1669

David Conley

Email. david.c@mornpen.vic.gov.au

Tel. 5950 1642

CTC oversees the longitudinal MPS Healthy Schools Neighbourhood School Survey and identifies the risks faced by our young people across the Peninsula.

The CTC data over the last ten years has revealed a steady rate in the prevalence of students with depressive symptoms in the range of 25.5%, and as a result, community partnerships have come together to analyse and use the data to help strategically address this issue,

By working together to identify and provide programs, services and facilities in the community and in our schools, we can help protect and strengthen our young people on the Mornington Peninsula.

Local Action Plans have been released across the local area groups on the Peninsula with the Two Bays Local Action Plan being launched at Dromana Secondary tonight.