



**Banyule
Community
Health**

Always here for you

RECLAIM THE NIGHT

BANYULE

Women say no to violence

WALK SHINES LIGHT ON ABUSE

Laura Armitage

BANYULE women are bravely stepping out in a Reclaim the Night walk against domestic violence.

This is the second year the event is being held in Heidelberg.

It was inspired by Melbourne's Reclaim the Night movement which started 44 years ago to protest against harassment, sexual assault and violence against women.

Two Banyule women, who want to remain anonymous, spoke out about why they are taking part.

One said she sought help from Banyule Community Health at the end of a terrifying three-year relationship with a man 12 years younger than her.

"He was all right sober but when he was drunk, he was a complete maniac," she said. "I hadn't always had a good relationship with the police and didn't feel confident in contacting them."

She said her former partner was jailed three times for violating the Apprehended Violence Order before he realised their relationship was over.

"I was absolutely terrified. It was horrible. One time he smashed my face in with a brick," she said.

She said help from a Banyule Community Health domestic violence support worker gave her the courage to ring the police.

Another woman, a mother of three, experienced both physical and mental abuse

by her partner of 20 years. "I suppose was the shame and double life I was leading that stopped me from asking for help," she said.

"It was violent. He controlled me, any money, my friends."

She said she left a few times but would always go back because of the lack of support available. "You don't realise your children see these things and think it's normal," she said.

Banyule Community Health Quality and Community Program executive manager Michael Geary said there was a need for community response to domestic violence.

Mr Geary said the group made a submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence which was empowering for the women, some still raw, and "incredibly brave", in recounting their experiences.

He said in the submission one woman referred to her years of abuse from her partner and said: "It would have been nice for a neighbour to knock on my door to see if me and the kids were okay. They would have heard what was going on. It never happened... not once."

Mr Geary said 69 women had been violently killed in Australia this year alone.

The Reclaim the Night walk will leave from outside Banyule Community Health at 6pm on Saturday 22nd October 2022.

Details: 9450 2610 or 9450 2000.

Reclaim the night is an international event that aims to empower all participants while protesting against violence against women. The Reclaim the Night Community Event resumes after two years of the pandemic on 22nd October 2022.

It has its origins in the women's movement of the 1970's, and first began in Australia in 1978. The first march started in the context of a push for social change around abortion and contraception rights.

In the years following, Reclaim the Night has since focused on protesting against patriarchy and entrenched attitudes towards women and children that tolerate or normalise violence and sexual violence.

The Reclaim The Night movement today is focused on empowering women to come together, and change community attitudes.

There are hundreds of marches and vigils held around the world each year.

The women of West Heidelberg have personified the event and taken it to the streets of their neighbourhood with an annual walk which first began in 2014.



PREVIOUS YEARS FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

"It was great. Better organised than last year"

"Fantastic. Better attendance due to invitations being sent out to community groups"

"Enjoyed the music. Thanks to Luke and Rebecca"

"Inspirational"

"Lovely to see more of the community get involved this year"

"How do we make the change happen?"

"One step at a time"

"Looking forward to next year's walk"