



Coffee with...



Coffee With... Anita Thomas : Baby Makes 3, Program Manager, Carrington Health.

Anita, you've just taken on the role of Program Manager with Baby Makes 3. Can you describe your work?

I am really excited to be working on the ongoing development of the Baby Makes 3 Program at Carrington Health. It is fantastic to be a part of a program that has been so comprehensively planned, implemented and evaluated, one that has grown and has been delivered in over twenty local governments in Victoria and is contributing to building equal and respectful relationships between men and women and ultimately contributing to the prevention of violence against women.

I started in the role in July this year and have been involved in a variety of tasks from supporting a rural local government implementing Baby Makes 3, meeting with politicians and senior state government officers to advocate for ongoing investment, participation in the consultation to develop the state's Gender Equality Strategy (that has been released this week), working in partnership with local aboriginal organisations to tailor BM3 to be culturally safe and appropriate, delivering training to new BM3 facilitators, writing abstracts and developing presentations for delivery at both national and state conferences. Yes the role is varied!

What sort of experience have you had prior to starting with Baby Makes 3?

I have worked in health promotion for over 20 years now. I have worked with the Cancer Council of Victoria as part of both the SunSmart and PapScreen Victoria teams, have taught at Deakin University in Burwood and Geelong, was the Regional Health Promotion Officer here in the Eastern Region over a decade ago and most recently I have worked as a consultant across a wide variety of organisations including VicHealth.

What opportunities do you see for Baby Makes 3 in the future?

This is certainly an exciting time for Baby Makes 3 as we plan for the potential scale up across Victoria. Our vision for Baby Makes 3 to be an integrated component in the universal services delivered through Child and Maternal Health Services across the state. We are also keen to explore other opportunities the program has to influence first time parents – we are currently working in partnership with Frankston Council and Peninsula Health to pilot the delivery of a BM3 module into the existing ante natal programs. We are also working with local aboriginal organisations in Healesville to tailor the BM3 model and content to be culturally safe and appropriate for local families.

What strengths do you see in the new parents you are working with?

What an exciting, exhausting, beautiful, stressful, challenging time for first time parents. It certainly is a time that represents a lot of change for parents. One of the things we know for sure is that although our community is diverse all parents want the absolute best for their children. We know that after participation in the BM3 program parents are more aware of the differences experienced by mums and dads in this transition to



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becoming first time parents, and are more likely to talk to each other about these differences.

What's the first thing you do when you sit down at your desk in the morning?

My day starts with me checking my emails and creating a list of things that need to be done in my work day...this is quickly followed by a cup of tea ...and then on with my list!

If you could change one thing about the world right now, what would it be?

I would have Hilary Clinton as the President of the USA

If you weren't working with Baby Makes 3 right now, what would you be doing?

I would continue working in health promotion, most likely in the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women as I am really committed to addressing inequities in health and wellbeing.