

LEADERS IN THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

WHEN REPORTING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

FAQS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

DO ALCOHOL AND DRUGS CAUSE MEN TO BE VIOLENT?

While alcohol, drugs and poverty are risk factors in the perpetration of family violence or sexual assault, research shows that, at an individual level, the strongest and most consistent predictors of violence among men is their agreement with sexist, patriarchal, and/or sexually hostile attitudes.

At the societal level, the most significant factor in the perpetration of violence against women is the unequal power relations between men and women.

Drugs and alcohol can exacerbate existing patterns of violence against women and children but most men who drink do not perpetrate violence and many men who don't drink are violent towards their partners.

IF YOU WERE ABUSED AS A CHILD OR WITNESSED FAMILY VIOLENCE, WILL YOU GO ON TO PERPETRATE VIOLENCE?

Not necessarily. Research shows that 'intergenerational transmission' is not inevitable. However, exposure to family violence increases children's risk of mental health, behavioural and learning difficulties in the short term, as well as the risk of developing mental health problems later in life.

WHY DON'T WOMEN JUST LEAVE?

There are a number of barriers to women leaving a violent situation - she might fear for her and/or her children's safety, she may have nowhere to go, she might feel financially dependent on her partner or fear reprisals or rejection from her family, friends, community and/or church. A victim may also still love her partner and hope he will change, think the abuse is her fault, feel pressured to stay 'for the sake of the children' or be determined not to break up the marriage/relationship.

Many women do try to leave - with studies showing women leave and return to their abusive partner, on average, six to seven times.

Crucially, the most dangerous time for a woman experiencing domestic violence is when she attempts to leave/leaves/after leaving. Between 50-75% of domestic violence homicides happen at the point of separation.

Nationally, only 19 per cent of all women who are the victims of sexual assault and 36 per cent of all women who are victims of physical violence by a male perpetrator reported to police in 2005.

However, about 75 per cent of women who experienced intimate partner violence did tell someone - usually friends and family. This is why it is important for family and friends to help women to seek specialist assistance.

Victoria Police must respond and take action on any family violence incident reported to them and take immediate action to protect and support affected family members.

This may involve applying for an intervention order on behalf of the woman, including issuing a Family Violence Safety Notice, and removing a perpetrator from the family home.

DO WOMEN MAKE UP FAMILY VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT INCIDENTS?

Most accusations of domestic violence and sexual assault, including those made in the context of family law proceedings, have been made in good faith and with evidence for their substantiation.

According to a 2006 study of reported rapes in Australia, only 2.1 per cent of reports were designated by police as false.

ARE WOMEN JUST AS VIOLENT AS MEN?

While most men are not violent and do not accept violence against women, most violence of all forms is committed by males.

In Australia's largest survey on personal safety, 82 per cent of people who had been physically assaulted, and 99 per cent of people who had been sexually assaulted, were assaulted by a male perpetrator.

While men are usually assaulted by male strangers, violence against women is largely committed by males known to them, including family members and intimate partners.

Overall 31 per cent of women who experienced physical violence in the past 12 months were assaulted by a current or previous partner, compared to 4.4 per cent of men.

IS FAMILY VIOLENCE A SERIOUS PROBLEM?

Violence against women and children, including family violence and sexual assault, is a national health crisis. It's also illegal.

The Family Violence Protection Act (Vic) 2008 defines family violence as including physical harm, sexual assault and emotional and economic abuse. This law aims to protect adult and child victims from further family violence.

In Victoria, the number of family violence incidents reported to police has risen by 152.3% over the past five years to March 2016, according to the Crime Statistics Agency; Warrnambool by 90.2% over the same period, and Geelong by 79.6%.

A woman is killed in Australia every week by a partner or ex-partner.

CAN YOU PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

Violence against women is preventable. Just as we have changed attitudes about issues such as drink driving, skin cancer and smoking, so too can we prevent violence against women.

Education programs, community initiatives and social marketing campaigns have all been found effective in transforming attitudes and behaviours around violence against women. The media has a powerful role to play in prevention. Good reporting can not only illustrate the impact of violence against women and their families, but also challenge the myths and stereotypes that perpetrate it.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- In emergency situations or immediate danger call Police on **000**.
- For confidential help and referral in Australia call the National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line on **1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)**.
- Children/young people needing help should call Kids Helpline on **1800 55 1800**.
- Women needing help or referral for domestic violence can call the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service on **1800 015 188**.
- Men concerned about their behaviour at home can call the Men's Referral Service on **1800 065 973**.
- People who have experienced sexual assault can call the Sexual Assault Crisis Line on **1800 806 292**.