

Royal Commission Into Family Violence

By Angelos T Kenos

First, my sincere congratulations to Premier Andrews for promising and then acting on the promise to initiate this Royal Commission, and shame on the former government who refused to support it up to and including on election day last year. This issue is above politics, or should be.

That said, I would have hoped that Mr Andrews would have tried to "lure" Ms Rosemary Battie to be a Commissioner. Would have been hard for her in one sense but she would have been outstanding, I am certain.

And given how little interest Mr Abbott has shown in putting any money down in the recent federal Budget to combat such a dark shadow upon Australia, well let's ignore him and his government.

Domestic violence is shameful, and while most of it is perpetrated by men against women, sometimes it is children against parents or against grand parents, and sometimes it is about women assaulting men.

NONE of that is excusable.

That is one reason why I became a White Ribbon Ambassador, although in my case it was even more about a then fellow municipal councillor who verbally abused female staff and councillors with impunity, and as the Mayor of the day and the CEO would take no action I had to step forward.

But re domestic violence, is it only about assaults? My [REDACTED] told me many times how her then husband left her and their son with little to eat while he lavished gifts on his mother and on himself. She spoke to me [REDACTED] knowing my long history as a Justice of the Peace, but at that time did not want me to get involved as she vainly hoped it was all be sorted out.

Somehow.

Domestic violence is not always physical or even verbal assault but can be initiated in other evil and unacceptable means.

There is, of course, a very serious issue regarding certain ethnicities/ faiths where women are not regarded highly and where abuse of women is considered acceptable. And I am NOT speaking solely about some sectors of Islam but others as well.

I was concerned from the very start of my brief municipal 'life' when I attended Citizenship event after Citizenship event. To see and hear persons from other nations accept citizenship on what I regarded as specific terms, and immediately afterwards when being greeted by male and female Councillors for some to refuse to shake the hand of the opposite gender

My point here being that they need to be told, bluntly, that in Australia women have rights. That women cannot be abused. That women cannot be forced to live as effective slaves. That women in Australia have equal rights to men.

I regard this as a very serious issue and one which demands action as any person who accepts Australian citizenship and who declare - ***From this time forward I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey.***

And yet they do not act in accord with that Pledge. Indeed, I must wonder how well they know and understand what that Pledge means both morally and legally.

Commissioners, I am an honorary judicial officer, some 41 years now. Every week – for example this week so I am certain it will also happen next week – I take oaths from women who file formal complaints against husbands for assaults. Women who file for divorce citing violence and other abuses in their affidavits before me.

That horror is something that I cannot exaggerate.

I have even personally observed males attend before me verbally abusing and intimidating wives and even their mothers to get their way, although when that does happen I inform the police accordingly.

Some of it is related to excessive alcohol intakes and given other violence that I myself have seen outside pubs and hotels over the years, I will never be a supporter of licenses that continue way past midnight. There must be a limit albeit politicians of both sides will always cave in to the alcohol sales and hotel/ pub lobbies.

Anyway, your task is a difficult one but not one which is impossible. We CAN do better as a society. If we call ourselves civilised then we must prove that point in fact. If we fail to act against domestic violence then we are simply and clearly proving the exact opposite.

=====