

## "FAMILY VIOLENCE"

### TALK BY Anne Parton

The impacts of Family Violence are profound – they can affect all socio-economic groups.

While both men and women can be perpetrators or victims of family violence, overwhelmingly the majority of crimes are by men, and the victims are women and children.

In 2015, two women are murdered by current or former partners each week, with 35 women in Australia, so far this year, dying as a result of violence.

The causes are complex and include gender inequality and community attitudes towards women, financial pressures, alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness and social exclusion, restricted education, and perhaps the influence of violence on TV.

However, women can exacerbate the violence of a partner by not standing up against his first poor behaviour, therefore allowing him to think that it is tolerable, from where he progresses to more violent behaviour, and if she again fails to object through fear. He considers it ok too.

In February 2014, the horrific murder of 11 year old Luke Batty, at the hands of his father, brought the issue of domestic abuse to the consciousness of all Australians. Luke's mother Rosie, a quiet single mum, her only family in England, has amazed us – and I think herself – becoming a force of change in the face of this insidious violence.

I was privileged to hear Rosie speak in Geelong, last year, and was profoundly affected by her humility, her articulate and elegant speaking, and her strength in the face of such grief. She will be a force for change in our country and is certainly a worthy Australian of the Year.

So? What is needed to stop this serious epidemic across our nation?

Help in the form of more refuges for fleeing women and children or better still removal of the perpetrators from the family home. Also changes in the legal system so that with the issuing and following-up of D.V.Os' – *Domestic Violence Orders* – the scheme is more accountable.

The Magistrate's Court is a frightening place for traumatised women, needing separate entrances for victims away from their abusive partners, and more Court security.

The Good News is that in April this year, when C.O.A.G. – The Council of Australian Governments- met in Canberra. No.1 on their meeting Agenda was to agree on a National co-operative effort to reduce family violence and to fight "Ice" usage. COAG will be

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assisted by an Advisory Panel chaired by former Victoria Chief Police Commissioner, Ken Lay, and with Rosie Batty as one of the committee members. They will instigate a National Domestic Violence Order Scheme, that will be recognised in all States and Territories of Australia and give Police and Courts in different States the ability to share information and have the same standard of accountability in implementing judgement for crimes.

In Geelong, there is also some good work being done by the Western Region Division One, Family Violence Unit, of our Geelong Police, whose Officer-in-Charge, Sgt., Kevin Godfrey, speaks highly of his dedicated team.

Women's Health and Well-being, Barwon SouthWest, also has a programme, "Take a Stand", which began in the "Blokey" Work place of Linfox and aims to help businesses change any attitudinal behaviour which supports violence.

The City of Knox, in Melbourne, ran a very successful promotion with support from all men's groups, service and sporting clubs, in the area, having a day when they wore identical TShirts marked, with the catchy phrase, "REAL MEN DON'T HIT CHICKS".

**BUT what can we do??**

**We can re-act if we hear someone telling a crude joke, denigrating men or women.**

**We can offer support, if we suspect a neighbour, a friend or a family member is going through a bad time, or, we can write a submission to the Royal Commission that the Victorian Government has just authorised in to Family Violence. This Inquiry will be led by Commissioner Marcia Neave, and any organisation or individual can reply with their submission by 29<sup>th</sup> May, this year.**

**Family Violence is not a Private concern, but a Public one. It is a matter of Social Justice and the costs of which affect the Australian Society at large. It was good to hear on the ABC News that all Government parties are working together to set up a Family Violence Index.**

**Anne Parton - 17<sup>th</sup> May. 2015**



Established in 1902

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To whom it may concern -

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Re. Royal Commission into Family Violence -

I am in no way an expert on family violence. In 54 years of marriage I can only remember being hit twice by my husband. Our family of 4 children have had a good stable life; the only unhappy incident being perpetrated by a male neighbour who, while babysitting our young daughter, exposed himself to her, an episode we did not hear about until many years later. This may have affected her life as she & her partner here not had children.

I just want the Commission to know that in my community of Geelong that many groups are trying to come to grips with this vast problem. My insignificant little talk was given to my Uniting Church Sunday Service as a 5 minute Focus for our Social Justice Committee & was repeated at the Geelong Branch of the National Council of Women of Victoria, as a starting point for our Branch discussion on the topic.

NCW Victoria ran a May Forum extending the topic greatly with input into what various migrant women are affected by. It seems that Chinese women hide it "in the chest" not wanting to give their children a broken marriage to live with.

African women, having had bad experiences in their former homelands with brutal police, find it difficult to go to Police in Australia for help.

Indian & other culture "dowry" marriages exacerbate problems in marriages.

Hopefully documents on our culture, on Respect for women children (women) in our country are given to new arrivals.

Somewhere in schools this topic should be dealt with & money given by Governments to encourage schools to have chaplains or wellbeing workers on their staff.

There seems to need to be more specialist Magistrates courts & better qualified people working in this field.

One wonders what the continual display of violence & violent programs of crime on T.V. has in influencing young people & making this kind of violent action seem O.K.

Education for "officers" working in the field of helping families should be effected.

Aboriginal people need a different type of help than just throwing them into a gaol cell.

It seems sad to me that abused women & children have to flee their home with nothing & the violent perpetrator can stay on in the home.

Everyone to do with this cause; families, friends, groups they belong to, law-enforcement officers, the media & welfare groups must all pull together to fix this problem.

Group support is needed to help these families, but they have not the "where-with-all" to seek out or belong to the supportive groups, churches etc in their communities that could help them.

Just a few thoughts

Anne Parton