

CWA of NSW Awareness Week 5-12 September 2015



MEDIA RELEASE

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CWA OF NSW PUTS A SPOTLIGHT ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE BUSH

One of the state's most influential women's organisations, the CWA of NSW, is shining a light on domestic violence in the bush, as part of its 2015 Awareness Week campaign - held from Saturday 5 to 12 September 2015.

Regional towns are recording higher levels of violence than their urban counterparts with nineteen of the top 20 Local Government Areas for domestic assault in NSW being in regional or rural locations¹.

Domestic violence is also the leading cause of hospitalisation for women between the ages of 25 and 45, other than disease².

According to CWA of NSW President Tanya Cameron, domestic violence is a significant issue and one that affects every community.

"A recent survey found one in four children between the ages of 12-20 were aware of domestic violence against their mothers or step mothers, by their fathers or step fathers³," said Tanya.

"We want to use our platform, as an organisation dedicated to improving the lives of women and children in the bush, to say there's help available, irrespective of where you live.

"We understand that isolation, access to independent support services and difficulty maintaining confidentiality are all barriers for those seeking help in regional communities," said Tanya.

As such, CWA of NSW is partnering with Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia to raise money for the national 1800RESPECT number, a free service available to every woman in Australia.

¹ NSW Bureau of Statistics: Trends and Patterns in Domestic Violence Assaults, 11 August 2011
http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_media_releases/2011/bocsar_mr_bb61.aspx

² Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia

³ A White Ribbon Foundation Report: An Assault on our Future pg. 2

http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/Research_series/An_assault_on_our_future_FULL_Flood__Fergus_2010.pdf

CWA will also fund a series of professional development courses in regional and rural centres, to better equip health professionals and community workers with the knowledge and tools to support those who are or have experienced domestic violence. The locations of these courses will be prioritised based on current needs.

According to Karen Willis, CEO of Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia domestic violence doesn't just affect the mother, we are seeing the tangible effects domestic violence is having on children that grow up in a violent household.

"This is a whole of community issue and one that is very complex. We need to ensure the people on the ground, in regional and rural towns, have the knowledge and tools to manage such a serious problem."

Unlike other services that often can only provide support to someone after they have left the violent relationship, Rape & Domestic Violence Australia's 1800RESPECT regularly supports people who are still in violent situations. They also offer support and counselling to family members, who may be coming to terms with the fact that someone they know has experienced violence.

"We fielded some 55,000 calls in the last year from individuals experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault, however a further 18,000 went unanswered due to a lack of funding and support," said Karen.

"We are very pleased to have the support of the CWA of NSW. Their reach into the heartland of our state, via their 400 branches, provides a vital opportunity to raise awareness, improve services and change attitudes," said Karen.

In addition to raising awareness, each of the CWA of NSW's 400 branches will be helping to raise money for 1800RESPECT or a similar service in their community.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence please call 1800RESPECT.

Ends

Photo Caption: Tanya Cameron, President CWA of NSW

HIGH RES IMAGE: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_az-mXGPar3VkJmJXdG1PX0E/view?usp=sharing

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