

WHITE
RIBBON

Making violence against women
a thing of the past



MEDIA RELEASE

White Ribbon Releases New Research and Calls on Aussie Dads to Speak Out to Prevent Violence

Top tips for how this Father's Day

Sydney, Australia – September 5, 2008 - More than half of Australians surveyed by the White Ribbon Foundation said that their father had rarely or never spoken to them about avoiding violence in their personal relationships when they were growing up¹. This Father's Day the White Ribbon Foundation is calling on dads to speak up.

“This research shows that fathers need to take the lead and start speaking to their children about the importance of not inflicting or accepting violence in relationships,” says Andrew O’Keefe, White Ribbon Foundation Chairman.

Although in total nearly **40%** said that they had never had a conversation with their father about this important issue, the younger people in the survey were more likely to have spoken about it and more often. White Ribbon says this improvement is positive, and is asking dads to take that step and start the conversation.

One in three Australian women will experience physical or sexual violence in her lifetime². This is one of the most widespread and serious human rights abuses in Australia, but the good news is that fathers can make a difference.

“Boys watch how you relate to women and work out their own behaviour in adult life. By making respect a permanent way of dealing with all people you can teach your children early in life that there is no place for violence in a relationship,” says Andrew O’Keefe.

The White Ribbon Foundation says children learn about respect in relationships by how their parents treat others, so demonstrating warm, non-aggressive, caring and respectful relationships with others is a particularly important role that parents can play. Witnessing parental domestic violence is the strongest predictor of acts of violence in young people's own intimate relationships³.

“Boys receive all kinds of messages about what it means ‘to be a man’. Many of these are conflicting and potentially harmful to their development, particularly the expectation to ‘be tough’ and ‘in control’. These concepts of strength can be confused with violence,” says child and adolescent Psychologist, Michael Carr-Greg.

White Ribbon Ambassadors are joining the call urging fathers to speak up. Adam Spencer, ABC Radio Host and White Ribbon Ambassador says “As a father to two beautiful girls, anything I can do to make the world they grow

¹ Research conducted by Review Partners on behalf of the White Ribbon Campaign from 2 – 4 Sept 2008.

² ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2006) Personal Safety Survey Australia (Cat. 4906.0).

³ Indermaur, D. 2001, AIC report No 195 – Young Australians & Domestic Violence

up in a safer place is my obligation and my honour. I became a White Ribbon Ambassador for this very reason, and as my girls grow up, my wife and I will certainly be setting an example to them about giving and expecting respect in their relationships.”

“As a father, you are playing a vital role in helping your son to become a man, and helping your children establish happy healthy relationship skills that they will have for life. It really isn’t difficult, there are simple ways that you can help to steer them in the right direction,” added Mark Beretta, sports commentator on the Sunrise Program and White Ribbon Ambassador.

The White Ribbon Foundation has some simple tips for fathers to incorporate into their parenting:

- If you see things that depict violence this is an opportunity to speak about the issue. Never hesitate to let your child know that violent behaviour is unacceptable, whether in jokes, song lyrics, video games, or even the behaviour of celebrities and sports people.
- Talk to your children about how to deal with anger and frustration. Offer them alternative ways of expressing these feelings, such as participating in sports and community activities, knowing when to take time out, walk it off or reading a book.
- Bring it up! Your children are not likely to approach you to ask about negotiating consent or how to treat a girl or woman, and yet this can be one of the most important conversations you can have with your child. So be the one to bring it up. Talk candidly about how to expect, to give, and to receive respect in relationships.
- Listen to what your son has to say about girls, and ask if he has seen abusive behaviour by his friends – don’t allow disrespectful attitudes to go unchallenged and help him find ways to challenge bad behaviour safely.
- Always treat your child’s mother with respect and care, modelling non-violence in your own relationship.

For more information about the White Ribbon Campaign, or where to get help visit www.whiteribbonday.org.au

The White Ribbon Campaign is working to end violence against women in Australia by engaging men and boys to actively oppose violence against women. Over the next four years, thanks to the support of the Commonwealth Government, White Ribbon will be developing education activities, particularly in rural and regional communities, to promote a culture of non-violence.

As part of the White Ribbon Campaign, **White Ribbon Day 25 November**, the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, is a day where men can make a personal statement, by wearing a white ribbon, that they will not commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women.

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Details of research: Research was conducted by Review Partners on behalf of the White Ribbon Campaign. This quantitative research study involved 1,165 Australian residents aged 18+. Interviews were conducted from 2 - 4 September 2008. The sample was constructed to be representative of the population according to ABS statistics for age, gender and location. The survey was conducted online using a managed panel of respondents who receive a small incentive for their participation. Studies show that online research produces research which is at least as accurate (& sometimes more accurate) than telephone research. The indicative margin of error for a sample size of 1,000 is +/- 3.1 per cent at the 95% confidence interval. This means that if the true value in the population is 50% and a survey was repeated 20 times then on 19 of those occasions the survey would return a result between 53.1% and 46.9%.

Media Contacts:

Katrina Brooks
Marketing Manager,
White Ribbon Campaign
Ph: 02 9453 1811 / 0414 988 384
Email: katrina@whiteribbonday.org.au

Lukas Picton / Karen Wells
Text 100 Public Relations for White Ribbon
Ph: 02 9956 5733
Email: karen.wells@text100.com.au
Email: lukas.picton@text100.com.au