



Embargoed until 23:59 EST Sunday 16 November 2008

MEDIA RELEASE

The violent secret in teenagers' lives

More than half a million teenagers are living with violence in the home a new White Ribbon Foundation report shows.

The report *An Assault on Our Future: The impact of violence on young people and their relationships* released today by White Ribbon shows that the violence is having a major impact on the long term health and wellbeing of Australia's children.

White Ribbon Chairman Andrew O'Keefe says that the report highlights clear evidence that many boys hold violence-supportive attitudes:

- Nearly one in seven (14%) of boys believe that 'it's OK to make a girl have sex with you if she was flirting';
- Close to one in three (31%) boys believe 'it's not a big deal to hit a girl';
- nearly one in three (32%) boys believe 'most physical violence occurs because a partner provoked it'.

Boys aged between 12-14 show higher support for these sorts of attitudes.

"White Ribbon aims to prevent violence against women. If we are going to succeed we must start by challenging these attitudes while kids are still young, because we know that adults who hold these attitudes are more likely to use violence," says Mr O'Keefe.

"Our report shows that there is an urgent need for comprehensive action by parents, teachers and other role models to tackle these attitudes and behaviours. If we value our kids and want the best for them as adults, we must actively teach them that sexual coercion, sexist and demeaning attitudes, and violence in any form are wrong, and can never be tolerated. And teach them, of course, that relationships which are free of these things are always much better," says Mr O'Keefe.

Report Co-Author and Research Leader at the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Dr Michael Flood says violence against children is all too common. "Nationally up to half of all young people have seen or heard verbal, emotional or psychological violence used against their mothers. One in four has witnessed physical violence."

"This report confirms that the impacts of violence against women are extremely serious with lasting implications for the health and wellbeing of Australia's young people. We need urgent national, state and local programs focused on preventing violence to minimise the huge impact this is having on the health of millions of Australian women and children," Dr Flood says.

The White Ribbon Campaign is calling on federal and state governments to introduce violence prevention programs in all universities and schools as a priority and to make sure that these effectively engage boys and young men as well as girls and young women.

The new report is a comprehensive review of Australian data and recommends substantial budget allocations from both Commonwealth and State governments. Mr O’Keefe says, “Violence prevention is a sound investment in our future as the total cost of child abuse and neglect, including long-term human and social costs as well as intervention is \$4.9 billion.”

The report also shows that more than 350,000 (one in seven) girls (aged 12-20) have experienced sexual assault or rape. Almost a third of girls in year 10 who have had sex, have experienced unwanted sex.

Nina Funnell, who was indecently sexually assaulted in an attempted rape in 2007 when 23 years old, confirms the need to engage and educate boys and young men in the campaign to prevent violence. “Often we run programs for girls on how to avoid assault – yet that is not where the problem lies. Men and boys have a real positive role to play in preventing violence,” says Ms Funnell.

White Ribbon Youth Ambassador Asher Preston, 21, says, “These attitudes are definitely out there, but nobody likes to talk about it. That’s why I became a White Ribbon Youth Ambassador, so that I could help break the silence.”

White Ribbon Day, November 25th is the United Nations Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. For more information on the White Ribbon Campaign including events in each state and how to buy ribbons and wristbands go to www.whiteribbonday.org.au.

ENDS

For more information about White Ribbon visit: www.whiteribbonday.org.au or to arrange interviews or a copy of the report contact:

<p>Katrina Brooks Marketing Manager White Ribbon Campaign Ph: 02 9453 1811 / 0414 988 384 Email: katrina@whiteribbonday.org.au</p>	<p>Lukas Picton / Karen Wells Text 100 Public Relations Ph: 02 9956 5733 Email: karen.wells@text100.com.au Email: lukas.picton@text100.com.au</p>	<p>For interviews with Dr Michael Flood please call Antony Balmain Media Coordinator Victorian Health Promotion Foundation Ph: 0413 627 336 Email: abalmain@vichealth.vic.gov.au</p>
---	--	---