Domestic violence: more than a split lip

DOMESTIC Violence is an abhorrent feature in too many Australian homes today. The number of times we hear about families that have been ripped apart by shocking acts of violence in the home are startling and ought be the subject of discussion in every household, school, workplace and mainstream/social media forum in order to generate positive change in societal attitudes that violence in the home is unacceptable and not to be tolerated in any circumstances. The more we openly confront the issue, the closer we may come to finding a solution.

Domestic Violence can occur in any intimate or family relationship irrespective of gender, age, religion, culture, socio-economic status, education or sexual orientation.

In March 2015, The Honourable Quentin Bryce AD CVO presented the results of an inquiry of a special taskforce commissioned by the state government of Queensland into Domestic Violence in this state. The report presented by the taskforce, headed by Dame Quentin Bryce was entitled "NOT NOW, NOT EVER - Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland" and can be read in full online. Interestingly, of the participants in the survey conducted by the taskforce, when asked “Who, in your opinion, commits acts of domestic and family violence?” 69pc believed that both men and women, but mainly men commit acts of Domestic Violence and 24pc considered that mainly men are perpetrators. Similarly, when asked the question “Who, in your opinion, is most likely to experience domestic and family violence?” 58pc of participants believed that both men and women, but mainly women are victims of Domestic Violence, while only 34pc believed that only women are victims of Domestic Violence.

Often when people think about Domestic Violence they think of a black eye or split lip and tragically, there are so many victims of Domestic Violence who do suffer such physical abuse that leaves readily identifiable signs such as bruising, cuts, broken bones and worse. However, Domestic Violence can sometimes be far more difficult to identify, especially when there are no visual indicators of physical violence.

In 2012, the Queensland Government amended the legislation governing Domestic Violence by passing the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act (“the Act”), which had the effect of widening and clarifying the meaning of Domestic Violence, summarised as being behaviour by one person towards another in an intimate or family relationship that is: physically or sexually abusive; emotionally or psychologically abusive; economically abusive; threatening; coercive; or in any other way controls or dominates the second person and causes the second person to fear for their safety or wellbeing or that of someone else.

Domestic Violence in any form is abhorrent and should not be tolerated. It is the responsibility of our society to collaboratively work together to address this issue.

Proactively addressing this issue at a grassroots level through early and ongoing education, providing greater support services for victims and higher prosecution rates for breaches of Protection Orders should be an objective of our government.

However, in my view every adult member of our society has an obligation to assist in a way that we all can – do not turn a blind eye. I hope we can work towards a country where everyone feels safe in their own home.

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