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Appointment of feminist group to aid male family violence victims “a curious choice”

Campaigners working to raise the profile of male victims of family violence have described the New South Wales government’s appointment of a feminist organisation to assist male victims “a curious choice.”

Yesterday, the Men’s Referral Service was [appointed](#) by the NSW government to run a pilot service to connect male victims of family violence with specialist, local support worth \$13M over 4 years. Mr Greg Andresen, a spokesman for the One in Three Campaign, which advocates for male family violence victims, said the appointment raised a lot of questions which needed answers.

“Males make up roughly one third of victims of family violence, and they need services that are going to understand their unique needs and give them appropriate assistance. Appointing a feminist organisation as the frontline provider without an open tender process, is a curious choice that needs explanation,” Mr Andresen said.

Mr Andresen pointed out that the Men’s Referral Service, an arm of No To Violence, was established to work with male *perpetrators* of family violence, not male *victims*. An examination of the group’s website ([mrs.org.au](#)) shows their lack of experience in dealing appropriately with male victims.

For example, their website says:

The Men’s Referral Service (MRS) provides free, anonymous, and confidential telephone counselling, information, and referrals to men to assist them to take action to stop using violent and controlling behaviour. No To Violence (NTV) is the Victorian state-wide peak body of organisations and individuals working with men to end their violence and abuse against family members.

Mr Andresen pointed out the information the MRS provides “for men” is predicated on men being perpetrators of domestic violence. NTV is [on the public record](#) as stating “the need to be cautious in automatically assuming that a man assessed by police or another referring agent as a victim of domestic violence truly is the victim”.

Mr Andresen said this was at odds with the 2012 NSW Legislative Council [Inquiry](#) that found there was a need for the provision of appropriate services to male family violence victims, which led to the contract in the first place.

“The Inquiry found there was a lack of support for male victims, but we are puzzled how appointing a feminist organisation with no track record of providing appropriate support would be better than appointing one of the male health organisations with considerable expertise in the area.

“A male victim seeking support who reads on a website that he needs to take responsibility for his ‘violent and controlling behaviour’ is probably not going to have a lot of confidence in ringing that service and asking for help. And if he does call and is assumed responsible for the violence, he may not reach out for help again,” Mr Andresen said.

Mr Andresen said he was worried about the epidemic of male suicide in Australia, which was partly a consequence of men being placed in untenable family situations, with little or no support.

“With so many men taking their own lives, the government has an obligation to find them the help they need, especially when family violence is concerned.

“Minister Goward’s heart seems to be in the right place, but maybe the government’s dollars are not,” Mr Andresen said.

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