

White ribbon is a real sign of men's strength

Violence against women is the problem of every Hunter man, writes **Jon Chin**.

VIOLENCE against women has to be the greatest human rights scandal of our time. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime – with the abuser usually someone known to her. This figure comes from a study based on 50 surveys from around the world.

On a recent trip to Malaysia I read a horrific story about a 17-year-old Penang schoolgirl who was unaware that her mother was dead and who had lost her eyesight after her father poured acid on them while they were asleep. According to the Women's Centre for Change Penang, not a day goes by without some form of violence being inflicted against women by men in the country; be it incest, rape, a husband beating his wife, a female victim of a snatch thief or a manager sexually harassing his secretary.

It is terrible, I hear you say, what happens in those countries. Well, let me tell you another story about a woman called Donna Carson.

Donna was a hard-working mum and teacher. During an argument with her then partner, Donna was doused in petrol and set alight. She spent 5½ months in hospital, 15 months in rehabilitation and underwent 19 operations. Donna lived in Dubbo.

UN secretary-general Ban Ki Moon has said "violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women's lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence – yet the reality is that too often it is covered up or tacitly condoned".

He is also talking about our country and the Hunter Region.

Donna's story is not an isolated example. So let us forget about Malaysia, Pakistan, Armenia, Iran or Afghanistan for a second and put Australia under the microscope.

Here are some of the startling, and disgraceful, facts.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics national survey



PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: Burns survivor Donna Carson at East Maitland Library to launch her book last year.

(2006), more than 1 million women had been a victim of violence in the previous 12 months. More than one-third (39.9 per cent) of Australian women reported experiencing at least one incident of physical violence of sexual violence since the age of 15.

An Australian Institute of Criminology national survey (2004) revealed that one-third of women (34 per cent) who have ever had a boyfriend or husband report experiencing at least one form of violence during their lifetime from an intimate male partner.

A White Ribbon Foundation report, *Assault On Our Future*, shows that 500,000 children in this country are growing up with household violence. Sadly, for them violence will become the norm and a legitimate way of resolving disputes. Is it any wonder many Australian boys have entirely distorted attitudes about acceptable behaviour towards women?

Another recent study reveals that one in seven boys aged 12 to 20 believes it is all right to force a girl to have sex if she was flirting. One in three boys believes most violence against women occurs because the woman provoked it.

I cannot come to terms with the harsh reality that in this wonderful and wealthy country there are still "cavemen" and "barbarians" inflicting harm to and brutalising women. That is why I decided to take up the cudgels and do my bit in helping to stop violence against women in our community by joining a local committee of men to hold a breakfast event on White Ribbon Day at Wests Leagues Club.

While I was in Malaysia, the Minister for Women, Family and Community Development Dr Y.Y. Yen spoke about the tragic story in Penang.

She said "men must come to the forefront to help combat such perpetration of crime. Don't let

women fight this phenomenal problem alone".

That is my plea to my fellow Hunter men. I am a big believer in education, whether it be for drugs, gambling or obesity. I understand abusers of women think they are able to exert "power and control" over their victims but I would suggest it is a sign of their weakness.

Before we can educate, we need to make people aware of the problem. The White Ribbon Day Breakfast is a good starting point.

Donna Carson will be there. If you can't attend, show your support by wearing a white ribbon today.

More importantly, next time you see or hear of violence against women, be a man, and don't turn the other cheek.

Jon Chin is the secretary of the Hexham Bowling Club and a member of the Hunter White Ribbon Day breakfast organising committee.

A third of domestic violence victims are male

Stigma and stereotyping prevent them speaking out, writes **Greg Millan**.

ONE in three victims of domestic violence are men. That is not something most people know.

Most people tend to think of domestic violence as something that happens to women and is caused by men.

But this has never been the simple case.

We live in an increasingly violent society and both men and women are capable of violence in intimate relationships. Domestic violence against men is understudied and often hidden.

There are five commonly held misconceptions about domestic violence against men, that need debunking.

❑ Few men experience domestic violence. ABS statistics show 435,000 Australian men have experienced violence from a partner. Up to one in three victims of sexual assault and at least one in three victims of family violence is male.

❑ Abuse of men has no serious effects. Research has shown that whether the abuse was physical or not, men suffered serious, long-term effects on their mental and emotional health.

❑ Abused men don't stay with their abusers. Men are no better at leaving an abusive relationship than women, and often stay through multiple episodes, for years.

❑ Domestic violence only affects the poor. People from all walks of life, all economic and cultural backgrounds, are affected by intimate partner violence, whether they are male or female.

❑ Ignoring it will make it go away.

Of course this is not the case, but many men are ashamed to speak out about abuse because of society's expectations that men are strong and in control.

Male victims often face barriers to disclosing abuse. They are likely to be told that there must be something they did to provoke their partner's violence.

They can suffer shame, embarrassment and the social stigma of not being able to protect themselves.

Turning a blind eye to violence against men can also mean neglecting the needs of children who witness it.

A campaign for male victims of family violence was launched last week. The One in Three campaign is named for the fact that one in three such victims is male.

The campaign aims to raise public awareness of the existence and

needs of male victims of family violence; to work with government and non-government services to provide assistance to male victims; and to reduce the incidence and effects of family violence on Australian men, women and children.

The movement started in the US, and there is ground-breaking work going on in Holland and the UK.

It has the backing of people such as Dr Elizabeth Celi, Maggie Hamilton, author of *What Men Don't Talk About*, and Steve Biddulph, author of *Manhood*.

Some domestic violence services in Australia have been trying to offer services to men, but they need training, funding and support. These will come through awareness.

Greg Millan is a men's health consultant.

Topics today



Today's fact

Chaffinches living in noisy areas repeat their song several times to make sure it's heard.

Today's word

Benison: A blessing.

It happened today

From our files – 1962: A large bushfire burnt to within 100 yards of homes at Booragul on Saturday before it was beaten back.

Today in history

1884: Evaporated milk patented by John Mayenberg of St Louis, Missouri.

1910: Royal Australian Navy created with the passing by Parliament in Melbourne of the Australian Naval Defence Act.

1963: The body of US president John F. Kennedy is laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery.

1969: Beatle John Lennon returns his MBE, awarded in 1965, to the Queen to protest at Britain's policy in Biafra and its support for the US in Vietnam.

1986: The Iran-Contra affair erupts in the US as president Ronald Reagan and attorney-general Edwin Meese reveal that profits from secret arms sales to Iran had been diverted to Nicaraguan rebels.

2001: Advanced Cell Technology Inc of Massachusetts becomes the first organisation to report the successful cloning of a human embryo. The company said it did not intend to create a human being but to use the stem cells to treat disease.

Born today

Carl Benz, German car manufacturer (1844-1929); **Dr John Flynn**, pictured, founder of Australia's Royal Flying Doctor Service (1880-1951); **Joe DiMaggio**, US baseball player (1914-1999); **John Larroquette**, US actor (1947-); **Imran Khan**, Pakistani cricketer (1952-); **Graham Eadie**, Australian rugby league player (1953-); **John F Kennedy jnr** (1960-1999); **Christina Applegate**, US actress (1971-); **Barbara and Jenna Bush**, twin daughters of George W and Laura Bush (1981-).



Odd spot

An unnamed Russian billionaire has paid between E4 million (\$6.5 million) and E10 million (\$16.25 million) for a dark blue open-top 770K Mercedes used by Adolf Hitler.

Today's text

Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment. **Proverbs 12:19**