

**Submission
No 49**

**INQUIRY INTO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRENDS AND
ISSUES IN NSW**

Organisation: White Ribbon Foundation

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Australia's campaign to
stop violence against women

White Ribbon

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Submission to the:

**NSW Legislative Council's Inquiry into Domestic Violence
Trends and Issues in NSW**

White Ribbon Foundation

September 2011

Response to the NSW Legislative Council's Inquiry into Domestic Violence Trends and Issues in NSW.

Executive Summary

White Ribbon appreciates the opportunity to make the following submission to the NSW's Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into *Domestic Violence Trends and Issues in NSW*.

This submission responds to the Term of Reference No 2: Early Intervention Strategies to Prevent Domestic Violence.

The submission identifies: the definition of domestic violence that is widely accepted and as articulated by the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women; and the incidence of and reasons for men's violence against women which has led to the White Ribbon male led primary prevention strategy.

Clarification is provided on the nature of the White Ribbon Primary Prevention Campaign and the success of the Campaign as measured by community engagement and activity. The submission also highlights the need for whole of government support for this prevention strategy to optimise the capacity of the Australian community to deliver against the objectives of the *National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 -2022* (The National Action Plan).

White Ribbon has submitted a proposal to the NSW Government in which it seeks a funding partnership with the state government to enable greater alignment and leverage from the strength of the White Ribbon brand, activities and programs, at state level.

Whilst the nature of this partnership is open to discussion, White Ribbon is yet to receive a response from this proposal (attached to this submission) which seeks the following elements:

1. State-wide Coordinator of White Ribbon activities to work with the current White Ribbon Staff.
2. Establishment of the White Ribbon Schools Program *Breaking the Silence* in all NSW schools.
3. Skills training for all White Ribbon NSW Ambassadors.

It is suggested that a recommendation from this inquiry be a whole of government approach to the prevention of men's violence against women that builds on the already established White Ribbon Campaign and as identified in the attached proposal.

Introductory Information – About White Ribbon

The White Ribbon Campaign is the largest global male-led movement to stop violence against women.

The White Ribbon Campaign is the first male-led violence prevention campaign in Australia.

The White Ribbon Campaign is working to prevent the most common and pervasive form of male violence – that towards women.

As a first step, White Ribbon encourages Australian men to swear an Oath *never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women*. The White Ribbon Oath is not just a “feel good” statement, it is an active commitment which guides positive attitudes towards women and drives signatories to, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, *be the change you want to see in the world*. This change takes time, but action begins across the community, each and every day.

The White Ribbon Campaign in Australia is led by thousands of male Ambassadors who, through living the White Ribbon Oath, act as positive role models in their communities. These men have taken up the challenge to help bring about attitudinal and behavioural change that allows violence to occur and be accepted. The campaign is run by the White Ribbon Foundation which was established in 2007 to provide the campaign with a sustainable structure to take the campaign forward; and in recognition that achieving attitudinal and behavioural change towards violence requires a long term and high profile commitment to working within communities across Australia. The Foundation is a not for profit company that provides the governance structure for the national campaign and capacity to raise funds to support community awareness activities and programs.

Women also support and expand the Campaign through their communities and networks as White Ribbon Champions.

White Ribbon works to change the attitudes and behaviours which lead to violence against women through awareness raising campaigns, community events, and initiatives in schools, universities, workplaces, and sporting codes. Support for this activity comes through a mixture of community fundraising, and corporate and government funding.

White Ribbon also gives expression to prevention strategies that are critical to deliver the objectives identified under the Council of Australian Governments’ ratified *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 - 2022*.

Contact Details

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White Ribbon's Response to the Terms of Reference:

White Ribbon's submission will be in response to the second Term of Reference:

Early intervention strategies to prevent domestic violence

1. Definitions of violence

The United Nations defines violence against women as: Any act of gender based violence that results or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (United Nations 1993).

Violence perpetrated by a current or previous partner is often called 'intimate partner violence'. Violence occurring in the home may also be referred to as 'domestic violence' or 'family violence'.¹

The above definition is widely accepted within Australia and is reflected in both state, territory and Australian Government policy and research documents.

White Ribbon works as a primary prevention campaign in Australia to stop men's violence against women and is unique in the way in which the strategy engages men to lead this change.

This primary prevention strategy is based on a strong evidence base of research and best practice and works to deliver the primary objective of the National Action Plan's objectives, particularly *that communities are safe and free from violence*.²

The following identifies the evidence that establishes the need for a male led prevention campaign to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change that allows men's violence against women to be perpetrated.

Whilst the volume of research is extensive White Ribbon has chosen to illuminate the following:

¹http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/Publications/Attachments/ResearchSummary_VAW.ashx

² *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p.18.

2. Violence against women (VAW)

Incidences of violence against women by men

- Nearly two-thirds (57%) of Australian women report experiencing at least one incident of physical violence or sexual violence by a man over their lifetime, with 48% having experienced physical violence and 34% experiencing sexual violence.³
- At state level - intimate partner violence is the leading contributor of death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15 to 44.⁴

Increased incidence reporting

- In recent years there has been a substantial increase in the incidence of reporting by women of violent acts against them. In 2005: 36% of women who experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator reported it to the police, compared to 19% in 1996; 19% of women who experienced sexual assault by a male perpetrator reported it to the police compared to 15% in 1996.⁵

Cost to the economy/health burden

- The total estimated cost of intimate partner violence in Australia in 2002/3 was \$8.1 billion.⁶
- The Australian Government report: *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, 2009-2012*, established that, without appropriate action to address violence against women and their children, an estimated 750,000 Australian women will experience and report violence in 2012-22, costing the Australian economy an estimated \$15.6 billion.⁷
- Violence against women contributes 9% of the burden of disease (more than smoking or obesity combined)⁸

³ J. Mouzos, and T. Makkai, *Women's Experiences of Male Violence: Findings from the Australian Component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS)*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, Research and Public Policy Series, No. 56, 2004.

⁴ VicHealth, *The Health Costs of Violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence. A summary of findings*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), 2004.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Safety Survey Australia*, Cat. 4906.0, Canberra, 2006, p. 8.

⁶ Access Economics, *The Cost of Domestic Violence to the Australian Economy Part 1*, Australian Government's Office of the Status of Women, Canberra, 2004.

⁷ *The White Ribbon Campaign: White Ribbon Workplaces: a National Partnerships Program to prevent violence against women*, 2010, p. 4-5.

⁸ VicHealth, op. cit.

3. Reasons for men's violence against women

There are three key reasons identified for men's violence against women which guide the strategy of White Ribbon:

- **Gender roles and gender relations – constructions of masculinity**
 - Gender and gendered patterns of behaviour are socially constructed and therefore fluid and transformable.⁹ Entrenched patterns of “normalised” behaviour that allow violence to occur can be challenged and changed.
 - Men who do not hold patriarchal and hostile gender norms are less likely than other men to use violence against an intimate partner.¹⁰ Men can lead the way to change violent behaviours by speaking out on the inappropriateness of such behaviours.
 - Inequitable gender relations are normalised through everyday discourse and practices to the point where they become accepted as normal behaviours.¹¹ Men can challenge these behaviours that condone violence.
 - Gender relations are underpinned by asymmetrical relations of power – males embodying extreme version of masculinity dominate other males as well as females.¹²
 - Constructions of masculinity and gender inequality play a crucial role in shaping violence against women.¹³

- **Social norms and practices relating to violence**
 - Children (especially boys) who witness or are subjected to violence are more likely as adults to have violence-supportive attitudes and to perpetrate violence.¹⁴

- **Access to resources and systems of support**
 - Where these are at a disadvantage there is a heightened risk of violence. Rates of reported domestic violence are higher in areas of economic and social

⁹ S. Dyson, *Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women: Good practice standards*, Breaking the Silence Workshop Presentation, 2011, slide 14.

¹⁰ M. Flood and B. Pease, *The Factors Influencing Community Attitudes in Relation to Violence against Women: A Critical Review of the Literature*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, 2006.

¹¹ Dyson, op. cit., slide 14.

¹² *ibid.*, slide 14.

¹³ M. Flood, *Where Men Stand: Men's roles in ending violence against women*, A White Ribbon Prevention Research Series, No. 2., Sydney, 2010, p. 8.

¹⁴ M. Flood and Pease, B., op. cit.

disadvantage.¹⁵ Factors such as homelessness, financial stress, conflict and unemployment increase the risk of abuse.

4. Why White Ribbon's approach is a male led primary prevention strategy

Violence can be prevented

- Violence can be prevented and its impact reduced. The factors that contribute to violent responses – whether they are factors of attitude and behaviour or related to larger social, economic, political and cultural conditions – can be changed.¹⁶

Men are the main perpetrators of VAW

- While most boys and men do not perpetrate intimate partner violence, intimate partner violence is perpetrated largely by males.¹⁷
- Among all women who experienced physical assaults in the 12 months preceding the 2006 ABS report, 81% were assaulted by males, 8% by males and females.¹⁸

Men can help change social/cultural foundations of VAW – male advocates and educators are perceived as more credible.

- Men's attitudes shaped by their male peers in educational settings – male advocate and educators are perceived as more credible and persuasive by male participants.¹⁹
- In Australia men as a group have greater access to institutional power than women - this influence and privilege does mean men can be powerful advocates for prevention of violence against women in mobilising resources and institutional support.²⁰

Positive effects of inclusion – increase men's responsibility for change and increase their stake in the project

¹⁵ M. Flood and L. Fergus, *An Assault of Our Future*, White Ribbon Prevention Research Series No. 1, Sydney, 2009, p. 27-28.

¹⁶ World Health Organisation, *World Report on Violence and Health*, World Health Organisation, Geneva, 2002, p. 3.

¹⁷ M. Flood, 'Changing Men: Best practice in sexual violence education', *Women Against Violence*, 18, 2005-2006, p. 26-36.

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁹ M. Flood, L. Fergus, and M. Heenan, *Respectful Relationships Education: Violence prevention and respectful relationship education in Victorian secondary school*, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: State of Victoria, Melbourne, 2009, p. 47-49, 54.

²⁰ M. Flood, *Where Men Stand: Men's roles in ending violence against women*, A White Ribbon Prevention Research Series, No. 2., Sydney, 2010, p11.

- Male inclusion increases men’s responsibility for change and their belief that they too will gain from gender equality.²¹
- Actively involving men in the efforts to stop violence against women improves effectiveness and also men’s personal stake in the cause.²²

The White Ribbon Campaign’s primary prevention focus works towards shifting gender roles and constructions of masculinity which enable the continuation of violence against women.

We engage men as leaders in this movement toward greater gender equity and respectful relationships.

5. How WR engages in primary prevention

The White Ribbon Campaign is the first male-lead violence prevention campaign in Australia. White Ribbon believes that men and boys can play a powerful role in preventing violence against women by:

- Being positive male role models in the community, promoting respectful relationships and gender equality;
- Challenging attitudes and behaviours that support or excuse violence against women;
- Talking with other men about the issue and the positive role men can play; and
- Representing the White Ribbon Campaign at events and in the community, and speaking about the issue.

The White Ribbon Ambassador Program

- White Ribbon Ambassadors are men and boys who have pledged to never commit, excuse or be silent about violence against women. The key to this pledge is not being silent.
- White Ribbon Ambassadors take an active stand against violence against women in many unique ways across a range of activities and settings.
- White has 1400 Ambassadors from across Australia, of which 45% are from rural and regional areas. Many are very actively working to lead this campaign through their respective community and workplace. White Ribbon provides them with the strategies and tools to support their activity.

School based education programs

- Adolescence is a crucial period in terms of women’s and men’s formation of healthy, non-violent, respectful relationships later in life.²³

²¹ S. Chant, and M. Guttman, *Mainstreaming Men Into Gender and Development: Working Paper*, Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2000.

²² M. Kaufman, Building Movement of Men Working to End Violence Against Women. *Development*, 44(3), 2001.

²³ National Campaign Against Violence and Crime, *Working With Adolescents to Prevent Domestic Violence*, NCAVAC Unit, Attorney-General’s Department, Canberra, 1998, p. 23.

- There is a growing body of experience and knowledge regarding the effectiveness of violence prevention practice among young men and boys, often grounded in wider efforts to involve men in building gender equality.²⁴
- A series of US evaluations of violence prevention education programs delivered in schools and universities show positive and lasting changes in attitudes and behaviours toward violence against women.²⁵
- The most important element of effective violence prevention and respectful relationships education in schools is the adoption of a whole of school approach.²⁶
- White Ribbon's ***Breaking the Silence Schools Program*** takes a whole of school approach initiated through the leadership of the school. This has been successfully piloted, over the last three years, in the NSW Department of Education's Sydney Schools Directorate through funding by White Ribbon's Corporate Partner, Susanne Grae. White Ribbon is currently seeking funding through the Department of Education to roll this out across all of NSW Schools.

University Based Programs

Australian universities are not immune to the social and economic impacts of violence against women. All women, and indeed all students, deserve the right to feel safe and secure on university campuses and colleges; to learn freely without the threat of violence.

White Ribbon is working with the National Union of Students (NUS) to encourage the university community to take a united approach in combating violence against women. Increasingly campuses are bringing attention to the issue and organising awareness raising activities on campus.

This is an issue around which everyone, from Vice Chancellors to student representatives, are finding the opportunity to play a powerful leadership role. Universities are conduits for creativity, innovation and social change. They play a pivotal role in shaping Australia's future and White Ribbon is strategically engaging their support.

White Ribbon National Workplace Program

The aim of this program is to engage Australian businesses and industrial organisations to establish a national workplace approach to prevent and reduce violence against women.

White Ribbon is currently developing the pilot model for this program so as to create long-term sustainable change in attitudes to violence and to implement prevention strategies through the workplace. The Program:

²⁴ M. Flood, Men's Collective Struggles for Gender Justice: The Case of Anti-Violence Activism, *The Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*. Eds. Michael Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and R.W. Connell. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005, p. 458-466.

²⁵ M. Flood, 'Changing Men: Best practice in sexual violence education', *Women Against Violence*, 18, 2005-2006, p. 26-36.

²⁶ M. Flood, L Fergus, M Heenan, p. 27.

- will be designed as an awareness, early intervention and prevention program specifically for workplace settings;
- will work to increase the knowledge and skills of staff and managers to address issues of violence against women in the workplace;
- will encompass large, medium and small-scale workplaces;
- is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs for a term of three years.

Community engagement, particularly of men and the role of the Ambassador Program

- o School, university and workplace based efforts need to be complemented by community engagement and mobilisation strategies for violence prevention.²⁷
- o White Ribbon Ambassadors are the leaders and the face of male-led change in Australia on this important issue.

6. White Ribbon successfully driving the National Campaign to prevent Men’s Violence Against Women

White Ribbons, wristbands and other merchandise

Since the inception of the White Ribbon Campaign (2003), White Ribbon has distributed over one and half million ribbons, benefited from just over \$2million in pro bono media coverage and advertising nationally, including a large outdoor campaign donated by Adshel which has helped the visibility of the campaign in all capital cities and major regional centres. There has also been increased activity in rural areas. Media exposure has seen awareness of the White Ribbon as a symbol of ending violence against women increase from 45% in 2008 to 74% after White Ribbon Day in 2010.

Social Marketing

The White Ribbon social media campaign continues to gather strength and momentum. In 2010 on Twitter, White Ribbon was ranked #2 in Sydney, Melbourne, Australia and Worldwide. White Ribbon also reached the Top 10 trends on Twitter with “I Swear” and “My Oath”; @WhiteRibbonAust is placed in the 97th percentile of Twitter users globally. On White Ribbon Day, 25 November 2010, 405 tweets were sent out by generating conversation and responding to tweets.

My Oath Campaign

In 2009, the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, launched the Foundation’s My Oath Campaign to encourage all Australian Men to swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women.

Integrated across the community action

White Ribbon is focusing attention on White Ribbon being an all year round campaign and the support that is generated by community based activity is indicative that it is being increasingly viewed and actioned as a year round campaign.

The specific schools, universities and workplace programs further engage the community in the campaign.

Central to the White Ribbon Campaign is the forging of partnerships with local government, state governments, the Australian Government, community groups and organisations, business, professional and

²⁷ Family Violence Prevention Fund, *Preventing Family Violence Lessons from the Community Engagement initiative*, San Francisco, CA: FVPF, 2004.

industry bodies. The activity that is generated across these sectors on White Ribbon Day is evidence of increasing engagement in the issue and the campaign. This evidence has been well documented by White Ribbon.

7. The need for enhanced support of White Ribbon

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) has released its Discussion Paper for the current Inquiry into *Family Violence—Commonwealth Laws (DP 76)*. This second inquiry concentrates on the treatment of family violence in specific areas of Commonwealth Law – including child support and family assistance law, immigration law, employment law, social security law, superannuation law and privacy law.

ALRC President Professor Rosalind Croucher notes: “In the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children*, the Australian Government has identified a clear goal ‘to reduce all violence in our communities’, recognising that ‘whatever the form violence takes, it has serious and often devastating consequences for victims, their extended families and the community’. The overarching objective of this Inquiry therefore reflects the Government’s objective—to protect the safety of those experiencing family violence...”

White Ribbon is meeting and discussing this inquiry with the Commission. We will be using the opportunity to respond to the Commissions’ recommendations around primary prevention and will be advocating for enhanced support of the White Ribbon Primary Prevention Campaign particularly from the State and Territory Governments, all of whom have endorsed the *National Plan to reduce Violence Against Women and Children 2010 – 2022* but are yet to commit significant funding to the White Ribbon Primary Prevention Campaign.

Funding Proposal to the NSW Government. Please find attached the White Ribbon Funding Proposal to the NSW Government which was submitted in August 2011. This presents the opportunity for a whole of government response to the prevention of men’s violence against women through strategic support of the White Ribbon Campaign.

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