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Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families

MEDIA RELEASE

Women's stories illustrate action against family violence vital

A report released today by Waikato University detailing women's experiences of protection orders reinforces how vital it is for government and community agencies to work together to reduce family violence.

Spokesperson Shenagh Gleisner said 'The 43 women whose experiences have been documented in this work have given us a special insight into the reality of family violence in New Zealand. So often family violence is silent, a secret within families. These women have thrown the door open so that we can all see the effect this has on their lives.'

Ms Gleisner said that turning around the culture of violence in the home could not be achieved either by government or community alone. What it requires is a sustained focus, effort, and above all else, leadership from all New Zealanders.

Recognising this, the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families was formed in July 2005 bringing together key leaders from government and community-based agencies, independent Crown entities and the judiciary. It implemented its first programme of action, working to achieve change across all of New Zealand in 2006.

Critical to this work is ensuring that women and children are safe and secure and able to live their lives unaffected by violence. At the same time those who use violence against those closest to them need to be held accountable for their actions and understand the impact that violence has on their families.

The Taskforce has been working hard to ensure that in every case, responses to family violence are effective, and that those things that are getting in the way of this, whether it be legislation, operational practice or agency coordination be addressed through its work programme.

The Ministry of Justice is conducting a review of the Domestic Violence Act 1995 and related legislation in order to ensure that the legislation is working effectively. This work is supported by the Taskforce.

'A discussion document on the Domestic Violence Act review is to be released that we are sure will attract significant feedback. Reviewing the legislation, however, is just one part of a much wider picture that is about tackling family violence on many fronts and needs to involve every one of us if we are to make a difference,' said Ms Gleisner.

Ms Gleisner said 'we will not address the appalling record for family violence in this country until all New Zealanders step up and acknowledge this as a major issue affecting our nation. This requires a call to action from all of us. At the heart of this is having individuals take responsibility for their behaviour and seeking to change.'

In the next fortnight the Taskforce will launch a four year campaign for action on family violence – aimed at increasing awareness of family violence. The campaign is about individuals, communities and organisations throughout New Zealand working together to say clearly that family violence is not okay.

The campaign will be phased sequentially to target different forms of family violence, including child abuse and partner violence. The campaign also seeks to support community-driven actions, which will be the ultimate drivers of change.

Ms Gleisner said 'we need to have a national conversation about these issues. Our wish is for individuals, families and communities to reject violence as a part of their lives. This is not simply about education – it's about belief systems.'

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