

NEW NATIONAL PLAN IGNORES ONE THIRD OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

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Monday saw the official launch of the next ten-year National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (2022 to 2032).

The One in Three Campaign is Australia's national campaign to raise awareness of the existence and needs of male victims of family violence. Their Senior Researcher, Greg Andresen said, "We are extremely disappointed that the new Labor government has decided to ignore the one third of victims of domestic and family violence, and the half of victims of emotional abuse / coercive control who are unlucky enough to have been born male. Male victims are completely ignored by the new Plan".

The decision ignores the bipartisan report of the 2021 Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence which recommended that:

- "...the next National Plan be inclusive of the diversity of victim-survivors. In particular, the next plan should recognise the rights and needs of women; children in their own right; men; older Australians; LGBTQI people; and people living with a disability." [Recommendation 3]
- "...the next National Plan be named the National Plan to reduce family, domestic and sexual violence" [Recommendation 5]
- "...the Australian Government commission research into the prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence against men, and its impact on male victim-survivors...." [Recommendation 54]
- "...the Department of Social Services review the adequacy of advice and referral services for men as victim-survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence." [Recommendation 54].

Mr Andresen said, "The Albanese government continues to pursue the gendered violence strategy that has comprehensively failed to reduce violence over the past decade. It has failed because it claims, without evidence, that family, domestic and sexual violence is caused primarily by gender inequality. It ignores the established risk factors such as low income/unemployment, childhood-of-origin exposure to abuse and domestic violence, conduct disorder/anti-social personality disorder, depression, drug and alcohol use, separation, and high-conflict/low satisfaction relationships."

A survivor of domestic violence, Mr Craig Bennett was hospitalised for two months for viral encephalitis. He had to re-learn how to walk, talk, eat, use cutlery and shower, and had to use a wheelchair. His wife threatened to stab him if he didn't go back to work. She slapped and punched him, and told him his family wanted nothing to do with him. When he called the NSW Domestic Violence hotline, he was told that he was not really being abused because "only men abuse women". He was left homeless and forced to live in his car. The National Plan perpetuates the system that leaves men like Craig without any support at the lowest time of their lives.

ABS statistics show that the biggest risk factor for sexual assault is not female gender but childhood. Boys aged zero to 17 incur almost double the risk of sexual assault compared to adult women. Yet the National Plan contains nothing for these boys.

The recently published ANROWS study, Adolescent family violence in Australia: A national study of prevalence, history of childhood victimisation and impacts, found that

- a larger proportion of adolescent females than males reported perpetrating violence in the home (23% vs 14%)
- adolescent females were more likely to report they had perpetrated both physical/sexual violence and non-physical forms of abuse against their family members compared to males (38% vs. 29%)
- female young people were statistically more likely to perpetrate violence against multiple family members than males (46% vs. 38%).

The National Plan contains nothing for these adolescent girls, nor their victims.

One in Three will be meeting with the new Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner once he/she is appointed to raise their concerns about what they call a form of "gender apartheid".

For further information or comment, please contact Greg Andresen, Senior Researcher, One in Three Campaign, 0403 813 925 or info@oneinthree.com.au.