

# Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service

# NEW DOMESTIC & FAMILY Violence Legislation

**New domestic & family violence legislation was introduced in Queensland on 17th September. The Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012, aims to:**

- Maximise the safety, protection and wellbeing of people who fear or experience domestic violence;
- Prevent or reduce domestic violence and the exposure of children to domestic violence;
- Ensure that people who commit domestic violence are held accountable for their actions.

CRDVS is running a series of legislation workshops to assist with community awareness. The first workshop is on 12th November 2012.

See page 2 of this newsletter for details.

## Inside this issue:

New Domestic & Family Violence Legislation	1
16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence & Fundraiser for CRDVS	1
What's On	2
Breaking free from a controlling relationship	3-5
"..and he put his hands around my throat.." The dangers associated with strangulation	6
16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence & Fundraiser for CRDVS continued...	7
How can workplaces help make a difference?	7
Contact Information	8

## 16 days of Activism against Gender Violence & Fundraiser for Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service



White Ribbon Ambassador and JCU Associate Professor, Darren Lee-Ross, and Manager of our service, Amanda Lee-Ross, will be taking part in the Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon 2012 during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence.

Their aim is to raise awareness about this annual international campaign which starts on 25th November and concludes on 10th December, and raise funds for Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service too.

As a White Ribbon Ambassador, Darren pledged to help end violence against women.

"It is important for me to speak up about violence against women and not just on one day a year – the 25th November or White Ribbon Day as most people call it now. Running to fundraise for the Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service's clients allows me to show my commitment, but doing it this year in an event held during the 16 Days of Activism campaign is even more significant." he said.

(Continued Page 7)



# What's On?



## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service Inc. and the Womens Centre Cairns

Notice is hereby given that the Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service Inc and the Womens Centre Cairns will combine to hold their respective annual general meetings in The Sudbury Room, Rydges Plaza Cairns, Cnr Spence and Grafton Streets, from 5.30pm on Wednesday 21st November 2012. All members and friends welcome. RSVP for catering purposes Ph: 07 4033 6100 or office@dvcairns.org

# Recognising & Responding to Domestic & Family Violence

## includes information about the new Queensland Domestic & Family Violence Protection Act 2012

- ▶ Learn to recognise the signs, patterns and effects of domestic and family violence.
- ▶ Practical tips on how to support individuals who have experienced domestic and family violence.
- ▶ Information about the new domestic and family violence protection legislation which came into effect in Queensland on 17th September 2012.

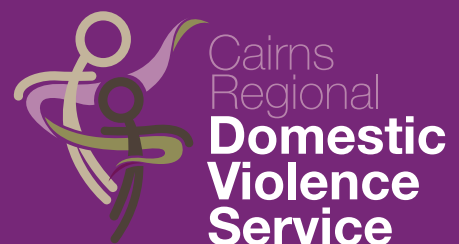
**Where:** CRDVS Training Room 14  
Calanna Pharmacy & Medical Centre Complex  
600 Bruce Highway  
Woree, Cairns

**When:** Monday November 12th 2012  
9.30 – 4.00 (Registration at 9.15am)

**Cost:** \$25 (morning tea and lunch provided)

**To book:** Phone 07 4033 6100 | Email office@dvcairns.org

**Training provided by:**



# Breaking free from a CONTROLLING RELATIONSHIP

**Sarah is a woman who has managed to successfully break free from an abusive relationship after surviving many years of domestic violence from her husband.**

I met with Sarah to discuss her experience of living in fear of her husband, and find out how she was able to break free from this controlling relationship, and enjoy life after domestic violence.

## **Q1. Welcome Sarah. Please would you introduce yourself to our readers.**

A. My name is Sarah Davidson. I grew up in Ireland and moved to Australia in my early twenties.

## **Q2. Domestic violence is a wide-ranging and complex issue. Would you mind telling a little about your personal experience of domestic violence?**

A. I married a man who was attentive at first and spoiled me. We got married and I had two children with him. Over ten years of marriage this man regularly abused me, with the violence getting worse and worse as the years went by.

## **Q3. Can you describe some of the behaviours your husband used to exercise power and control over you?**

A. I think it's important to understand that domestic violence is not only when you are beaten and bleeding, it is about control. For years I put up with a range of behaviours from my abusive husband. For example:

- He checked my phone messages & my call contacts;
- He took away my phone and screened my calls;
- He checked my spending on credit card statements, going through them over and over again;
- He refused to let me stay in touch with any old male friends or my ex-partner of 12 years;
- He refused to let me do the shopping alone;
- At night he would put chairs in front of doors in case I tried to leave at night when he slept;
- He pulled hairs from his head and taped them to the window so he'd know if I'd tried to open the window;
- If I went to the bathroom during the night he would end up standing beside me;
- He told me not to show my teeth when I smiled as he said it made me look ugly. He told my how to smile;

- He bought me sunglasses and wanted me to wear them at a wedding with a dress he had chosen;
- He told me how to stand and hold a certain posture.

## **Q4. Where did the abuse occur?**

A. For the first nine years he abused me in private but during the last year he abused me in public too. In that last year I had a party for my daughter and invited her school friends who came with their parents. My husband humiliated me in front of them, putting me down and calling me a slut. He showed them my bedroom and claimed, "This is where the whore sleeps with her men when I go out... she might seem like a nice lady at school but she is a stupid slut and a cheat."

A couple of years before I ended our relationship I wanted a dishwasher. My husband followed me to the store and tried to intimidate me, telling the sales lady that I was wasting her time. Despite this pressure I bought the machine. I knew I would be punished by him later, but part of me had decided that I was no longer going to put up with his behaviour. I think that was the beginning of the end.

## **Q5. Did you ever feel like an equal partner in your relationship?**

A. Yes, at the beginning I did. He spoiled me and made me feel special. I got to make decisions about where we lived and I did all the banking and made choices about shopping.

## **Q6. Do you think your husband recognised his behaviour as wrong?**

A. No. He told me that women always complain and make a big deal out of nothing. After he was abusive he usually said sorry, but then he would immediately blame my behaviour for his anger. I was always blamed.

(Continued Page 4 ►)

# Breaking free from a CONTROLLING RELATIONSHIP

## **Q7. Women have to be very resourceful when surviving domestic violence. What personal strengths and resources did you draw on during the relationship?**

A. I had good friends who helped me out and supported me. Even though they had witnessed me staying with him and putting up with the abuse, they were still there to support me. I am good at budgeting and was able to save some money and get myself organised. I spoke to Centrelink and found out what assistance I could get and made plans to leave him. In the meantime I tried to keep the peace in the house and keep him happy. After I'd separated from him, I was fine. I'm a good organiser and found ways to make ends meet.

## **Q8. Who did you tell or turn to for help, and how did they respond?**

A. My girlfriend was amazing. I remember feeling like a complete mess with no confidence, beaten down mentally and physically. She was a rock and took me to see Legal Aid, where she held my hand and supported me. My husband used to go round to friends' houses telling them that I was ruining his life. Whilst one friend warned him not to speak about me that way, other friends decided to end our friendship saying they didn't need the hassle.

Some community services who I contacted did not ring me back for days and it was nerve racking waiting for their response. However one health service supported me to take action telling me to ring the domestic violence helpline. This made a huge difference. The domestic violence court workers also made a big difference. Their support was enormous. They believed me, they believed my story and kept me safe in a room until the court session was in progress.

## **Q9. Could you tell me a little more about your experience of seeking protection through the police and court systems?**

A. I really think the police need to be better educated about how to deal with victims of domestic violence. Some of them seem to have little or no empathy. Maybe

they've seen too much violence and lose respect for victims? I don't know. For example, when I went to court, I found the male police officer there to be abrupt and his response made me feel guilty and victimised all over again.

At domestic violence court I was also amazed at the amount of women there that had changed their minds about seeking legal protection, and told the magistrate not to worry. Some of these women had their men with them and you could see the fear on their faces as they said it. It's heartbreaking.

## **Q10. Some people believe that leaving a controlling partner is easy. They ask, "If the victim doesn't like the abuse, why doesn't she leave?" What are your thoughts on this view?**

A. This statement blows my mind. I have been asked it so many times. And I have also been asked by friends that have known me for years, "Why didn't you beat your partner up?" As I am usually strong and opinionated, people are surprised that I was a victim.

It seems so easy - Why not just leave and you will be free? But it is not as easy as that. I think most victims spend their time trying to keep their abuser happy and calm. They have been warned that if they leave they will be punished. A lot of times victims have children that attend school and have routines. How do you break their routine? Other things I had to think about included: Where will I go? What if he finds me? What if he beats me in front of the children when he finds me? How do I protect the children? If he kills me, what will happen to the children? How will I survive financially? Sometimes I tried to rationalise the situation by thinking he loves me really, he is just stressed, it will be okay. My abuser had this knack of apologising and buying me flowers, saying sorry and making up excuses for the abuse, often turning the blame on me; telling me that I made him stressed. This led to my feelings of guilt.

Most of the time I would just try to hold it together despite his moods and actions, and try to have a happy family. The thought of leaving can be more terrifying than staying, though this does not mean women agree to, or deserve the abuse.

# Breaking free from a CONTROLLING RELATIONSHIP

## **Q11. Can you tell me about the emotional and practical resources you needed, which enabled you to separate permanently from your controlling husband?**

A. The day my four year-old daughter soiled her pants four times was the day I decided I had to leave. She had seen her father hold me up against the wall and strangle me until I could barely breath and then let me go again, all the time he was screaming at me. My daughter was begging him to stop and trying to pull him off by dragging his legs.

### **I had to make a plan to leave and I had no family in Australia:**

- I called Centrelink to see what payments I could get and realised I could manage financially;
- I opened a bank account that had a passbook so no cards or mail came to my house, and I began saving;
- I discussed my plans with my friend;
- I actually went out with a friend without asking him. When he found out he was furious. I saw him driving up and down the street whilst I was hiding at a bus stop;
- I got stronger, I decided not to let him upset me;
- I did not let his moods control me;
- His violent behaviours intensified, but I actually felt in control for the first time in a very long time;
- I sent a letter to the school principal and explained my situation;
- I rang helplines when he wasn't at home.

He could not cope with my new attitude and confidence. Even though I was terrified on the outside, one part of me felt brave. However, his abuse increased the more confident I became. In the end he took time off work and one day he followed me along a road and begged me to stay with him. He took my mobile phone which led on to a severely physically violent episode and he was arrested by the police. He was forced to leave the house, which made it easier for me to stay at home with the children in peace. For the first time in years I had a good night's sleep. I will never forget the relief I felt. I was finally safe.

## **Q12. Did the abuse stop after your final separation?**

A. Yes, in my case, the direct abuse stopped. I had a protective order and he was terrified of the police and courts. However he stopped paying the mortgage and bills we had together and he disconnected the home phone. He used my credit card to increase my debt and he visited friends' houses and made their lives uncomfortable. He also visited my estranged mum in Ireland to discuss me and tried to find out information about me.

## **Q13. How were your children affected by the domestic violence?**

Both my children were affected. My daughter tried to protect me when she saw me being hit, strangled and spat on. She begged my husband to stop. For many years she saw me trying to make my husband happy to keep him calm whilst he continued to abuse me. I worry that, having seen this, she may make the same choices later in her own life. However, I must remember that she has also seen my determination and resilience as I progressively reclaimed my rights.

Many times I thought that my son was busy playing and drawing and not paying attention to the abuse, however as soon as we separated from my husband, my son who was aged 8 at the time, started bossing me around and hitting me. I took him to see a specialist domestic violence child counsellor, and that helped a lot. Years later my son told me that he felt bad as he'd seen his father hit me in every room of the house and had done nothing to stop him or protect me. The guilt was consuming him. My son now has strong views against violence and abuse in any form.

## **Q14. Have you healed? Can you tell me what has helped?**

A. You know, I really feel that I have healed. At present I am single by choice. I have set high standards for my next relationship, and I hope some man will measure up to these.

### **The things that have helped me heal include:**

- Support from the domestic violence helpline;
- A book by Robin Norwood called *Women Who Love Too Much*;
- Great girlfriends
- Support from Parentline - I get tips on how to deal with a whole range of parenting matters
- Knowing that I made the right choice to leave.

## **Q15. Thank you Sarah. Would you like to make any other comments for our readers?**

A. The biggest lesson I've learned from all of this is to be good to yourself and prioritise your own well-being. Whether you are a man or a woman, you deserve the very best treatment and don't accept anything less. I would like everyone to understand that one abuse is too much. There are no excuses... none.

*“and he put his hands around my throat...”*

## THE DANGERS ASSOCIATED WITH STRANGULATION

**In our interview with Sarah, she described strangulation as one of the methods selected by her ex-husband to gain power and control over her.**

Strangulation is extremely serious. It is one of the most lethal forms of violence used by men against their female intimate partners.<sup>1</sup> Death review panels have found that many women murdered by an intimate partner had reported being strangled by the perpetrator during the year before their death.<sup>2</sup>

Strangulation is entirely intentional. It is the use of hands, arms, knees etc, or an object or ligature to cause pressure around the throat. This pressure obstructs normal breathing, cutting off oxygen supply to the brain, which can lead to unconsciousness or death.

Despite the high fatality risk, sometimes victims who are repeatedly exposed to strangulation, no longer recognise it as a problem or misidentify the behaviour as something less serious.<sup>3</sup> As a result, victims can suffer these dangerous assaults in silence and isolation.

If an individual experiences strangulation, it is very important that they seek medical advice as soon as possible. Often there are no visible injuries, however underlying internal injuries have been known to result in death days after strangulation occurs.<sup>4,5</sup> Intervention should include evaluation and treatment of injuries, as well as thorough documentation of the injuries and how these occurred.

Strangulation is a serious crime and if reported to the police can be formally investigated.

***“Strangulation is often one of the last abusive acts committed by a violent domestic partner before murder.”***

*(Hennepin County Fatality Review Team 2004, cited by Taylor 2008 p20)<sup>6</sup>*

**Don't ignore the risk – it's just too dangerous.**

In an emergency call the police/ambulance 000.

In a non-emergency situation, seek medical attention as soon as possible.

### References and sources of further information:

<sup>1</sup>Ortner Center on Family Violence, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup>Glass et al (2008), *Non-Fatal Strangulation is an Important Risk Factor for Homicide of Women*, Journal of Emergency Medicine, Vol 35 Issue 3.

<sup>3</sup>Turkel (2008), *“And then he choked me”*: Understanding and investigating strangulation, National Centre for Prosecution of Child Abuse.

<sup>4</sup>Strack & McLane (1998) *How to Improve your Investigation and Prosecution of Strangulation Cases*.

[www.ncdsv.org/images/strangulation\\_article.pdf](http://www.ncdsv.org/images/strangulation_article.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>Strack & Gwinn (2011), *On the Edge of Homicide: Strangulation as a prelude*, Criminal Justice, Vol 26.

<sup>6</sup>Taylor (2008), *Dying to be Heard*, Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group.

# THANK YOU

**CRDVS says a huge thank you to Sarah Davidson for sharing her courageous, informative and inspiring personal story with readers of our newsletter (pp 3-5). We wish Sarah and her children all the best in the future.**

If you, or someone you know, needs support because of domestic violence, we are here to help.

**Call CRDVS 4033 6100** (see page 8 of this newsletter for details of services).

# 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

## against Gender Violence & Fundraiser for Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service

(► Continued from Page 1)

**It is Amanda's fifth 42 kilometre race but her first time in the Singapore event. Last year Amanda raised just over \$1,500 for the service when she took part in the Gold Coast Marathon. After being inspired by Amanda, Darren has also taken up the marathon challenge this year.**

Amanda and Darren began training for this event back in early August. Currently, they run four times a week beginning each one at the crack of dawn. "When it's dark and you're still tired from the training the day before, it really helps to have a supportive running partner, and that's what we do for each other" Amanda said. Darren confesses that had Amanda not competed in previous marathons, he would never have contemplated running a marathon himself. He comments, "We have the same interests and hobbies so why not join forces for a great cause through our equal partnership?"

The 25th of November has been marked by activists against violence against women since 1981, initially to commemorate the three Mirabal sisters, Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa, who were political activists from the Dominican Republic assassinated on 25th November 1960 by the henchmen of dictator, Trujillo. In late 1999, the United Nations' General Assembly designated the 25th of November as the International Day against Violence against Women, and urged member states to organise

activities on that day to raise awareness of, and oppose, violence against women. In 1993, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

The 16 days of activism includes the 6th December, the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, when a lone male, Marc Lepine, shot dead 14 women engineering students, because they were feminists studying in a traditional male area. In 1991, on the second anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, a group of Canadian men initiated the White Ribbon Campaign as a strategy specific to men uniting against violence against women by wearing white ribbons on the 25th of November. The 16 days of activism ends on the 10th of December, International Human Rights Day.



**Your donation can make a huge difference to our clients and it is tax deductible!**

Use your credit card and pay securely online at [www.givenow.com.au/dvcairns](http://www.givenow.com.au/dvcairns) or visit our website [www.dvcairns.org](http://www.dvcairns.org) for a donation form.

## How can workplaces help make a difference?



**Djarragun Enterprises Limited is a non for profit business that provides an industry-based employment pathway for young indigenous people from around Far North Queensland.**

We operate as a 'social enterprise' and the indigenous crew members who work in our enterprises all earn award wages with profits re-invested to both help grow the business and provide support for future skilled workers. We currently operate three enterprises: **Construction, Building Services and Landscaping & Yard Maintenance.**

As part of Djarragun Enterprises Social Support program we are undertaking an 8 week **workplace domestic violence awareness and safe response program** in collaboration with CRDVS & Victim Assist Queensland in the lead up to White Ribbon Day. In addition to this Djarragun Enterprises is in the process of becoming an accredited White Ribbon Workplace as part of the pilot program.



# Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service

## Services We Provide:

Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service provides confidential and free services for family members suffering from domestic violence.

### There are many issues that you can discuss with our staff members such as:

- Information about your rights and the rights of your children.
- Steps that may help you to protect yourself from further domestic violence.
- Information and assistance in making an application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order.
- Support services that are available through our organisation, including Court support.
- Counselling for you or your children to overcome the effects of domestic violence.

Our Domestic Violence Workers can also refer you to other support services for financial assistance, crisis accommodation, relationship counselling, legal advice on matters of family law, parenting education and many other issues.

One member of our team is a Child Counsellor, who can provide face to face counselling for children and young people aged 4 to 16 years who are affected by domestic violence.

We can also provide information about programs for perpetrators of domestic violence.

Our service regularly conducts and participates in workshops, seminars, conferences, lectures and training sessions in Cairns and surrounding areas. If you are not sure that we can help with your needs, then please telephone on (07) 4033 6100 and ask us.

**We're open Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 9am-5pm & Wed 12pm-5pm**



Phone: (07) 4033 6100



Email: office@dvcairns.org



Fax: (07) 4033 5863



CRDVS, PO Box 12103, Cairns 4870



Room 19  
600 Bruce  
Highway  
Woree 4868  
(Behind Calanna  
Pharmacy)



## Useful Contacts

### Telephone Contact Numbers

If you're in immediate danger  
call the POLICE

**000**

If you want to access safe accommodation (refuge for women and children who are in danger), or you need help and support dealing with a violent relationship you can call **dvconnect**, the Queensland 24hr domestic and family violence telephone service on:

**1800 811 811**

**Cairns Police**  
4030 7000

**Lifeline Telephone Counselling**  
13 11 14

**Go Forward For Men**  
A service for men to "stop family violence and build better families."  
1300 364 277

**dvconnect Men's Information Line**  
1800 600 636

## We're on the web

[www.dvcairns.org](http://www.dvcairns.org)

Would you like to subscribe to receive forthcoming issues of the CRDVS newsletter?

Have you an interesting article about domestic or family violence you'd like to contribute to the next issue of this newsletter?

Please let us know by contacting Gill at CRDVS  
Tel: (07) 4033 6100

### Websites with information about domestic & family violence

[www.lovegoodbadugly.com](http://www.lovegoodbadugly.com)

[www.noviolence.com.au](http://www.noviolence.com.au)

[www.burstingthebubble.com](http://www.burstingthebubble.com)

[www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au](http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au)

[www.dvirc.org.au](http://www.dvirc.org.au)

[www.whiteribbon.org.au](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au)

[www.ntv.org.au](http://www.ntv.org.au)

[www.theline.gov.au](http://www.theline.gov.au)

Look out for the  
next issue in  
**April 2013**