

Men in the firing line

We all remember in Bugs Bunny the hen-pecked husband being hit with a rolling pin or frying pan. But that's the only contact a lot of people would have had with the concept of domestic violence against men.

With women copping most of the abuse in domestic violence, we've had our own Windsor Wolves putting their hands up as poster boys to say no to violence against women.

But how often do you hear about domestic violence against men? Whether it's perpetrated by the victim's partner or by his children, it's not something a lot of men would like to admit to.

Men are supposed to be tough and self-sufficient; able to handle themselves in any interpersonal situation.

But the natural repugnance for hitting women which most men feel can also stay their hand when it comes to defending themselves. I have seen men not defend themselves when hit by a woman, as that taboo against hitting a woman is so strong in them.

And no doubt there may be women who rely on this.

But there are also situations where women are equally strong as the man, and then it can be game on. There are couples who enjoy a good stoush, but we're not talking here about 'consensual' fighting.

It's when one party has greater power than the other, and uses that in a physical way against the other.

Some people say that most violence by women to their partner is inflicted in self-defence. But US research has indicated that when it's examined who hit first, it doesn't look like women are only lashing out in self-defence.

A men's rights website said in Australia, 3.6 times as many women as men are killed by their partners - men are simply stronger - but this doesn't take away from the fact that men are copping it too.

It would take a very strong man to stand up and say 'my wife bashes me and I need help' but it's clear there are Hawkesbury men who ARE strong enough to do that, with roughly one referral a week from Hawkesbury police to our hospital's counselling service.

But it's often the man's grown up children who can be causing the physical intimidation.

It might not necessarily be a lack of discipline, but the personality of the child that makes them violent towards their parents.

Whatever the cause, it's great when anyone, male or female, seeks professional help with such a problem. It can give you coping strategies and the knowledge you're not alone.