

Men are victims of domestic violence too

By Rita Rizk

WITH White Ribbon Day focusing primarily on domestic violence against women, violence against men rarely gets recognised, despite research showing it's a serious problem in the Hawkesbury.

Males are generally the perpetrators of domestic violence (DV) but a 2011 statistical review in the Hawkesbury revealed there was one male reported for every five female DV victims.

Nationally males are the victims in one in three family violence incidents.

In the Hawkesbury, the most common violence is between parents and children.

A lack of policies and funding for men's health has prompted

Hawkesbury District Health Service men's health co-ordinator, Stephen Lillie, and Hawkesbury DV officer, Constable Lesley King, to develop a Yellow Card program which focuses on male DV victims.

The first and only program of its kind in the state aims to support men after DV incidents by filling out a yellow card which then gets referred back to the hospital.

Mr Lillie said the system works well.

"When police attend DV incidents, they get the victim's consent for HDHS to contact them directly," Mr Lillie said.

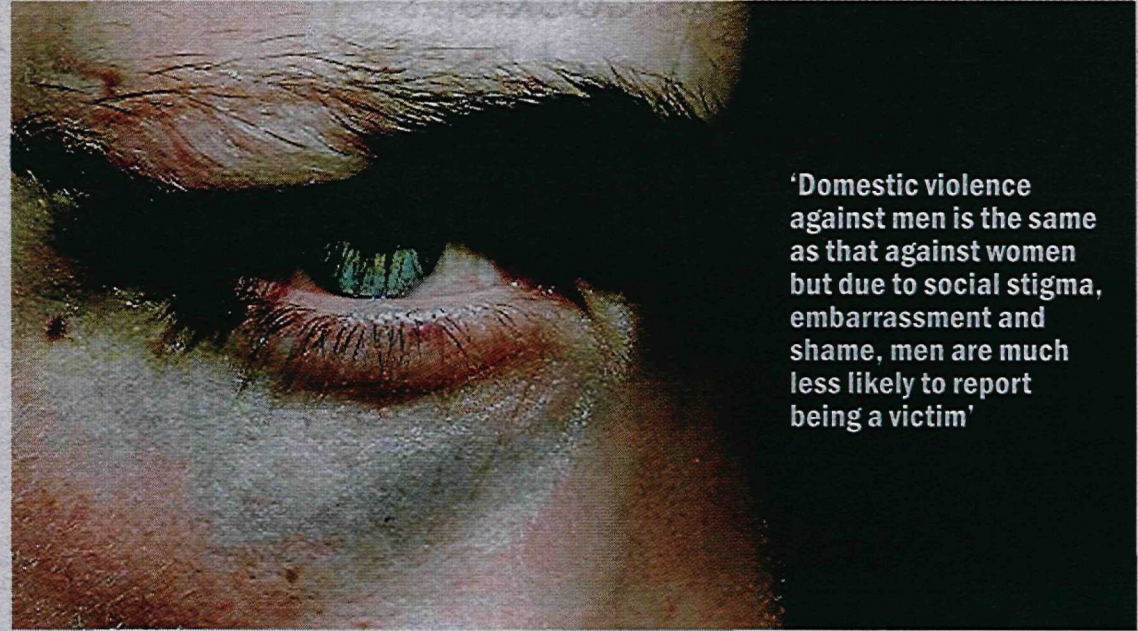
"The officers fill out a yellow card, which is then faxed to me. Once I receive the referral, I contact the victims directly to discuss support and assistance options."

Mr Lillie said the program helps men overcome embarrassment, fear, apathy and helplessness about the incident.

"Men respond well to man-to-man phone contact, and perceive it as non-confrontational and less time consuming than formal counselling sessions," Mr Lillie said.

"Phoning victims on their mobile phones is an effective method, and provides victims with an opportunity to talk in their own safe environment."

With aims to raise awareness about male DV, the program developed in 2012 has provided a service to a group which has previ-



'Domestic violence against men is the same as that against women but due to social stigma, embarrassment and shame, men are much less likely to report being a victim'

ously been largely disregarded by the health sector and community services.

"Men's health is undervalued in the health system so this program helps give them the service they need to move forward in their life both physically and mentally," Mr Lillie said.

"Generally men aren't equipped to deal with problems; they are more financial supporters and provide the discipline. They often leave

everything until it's broken." Constable King said some of the issues that men faced included separation, blended families, adult children living at home and parenting.

"The services that are needed are education, behaviour management, counselling referral and more importantly, just listening to men and validating their experiences," Constable King said.

"It's a great program, men are more likely to talk to other men

about their problems instead of the police because they fear that the police won't believe them so they are a little more guarded."

A report by NSW Health revealed that 18.4 per cent of the Hawkesbury's DV incidents occur between same sex couples compared to the rest of the state, which is five per cent. Tailored to meet men's needs, the service is flexible and non-confrontational, which has helped families deal with festering issues.

2012 Hawkesbury male victim snapshot:

- 5.5 per cent were under 18 and were the victims of their father's behaviour.
- 25 per cent were victims of their ex partner's behaviour.
- 25 per cent were victims of their son, grandson or son-in-law's behaviour.
- 30.5 per cent cited separation issues as the cause of the incident.
- 30.5 per cent cited drugs and alcohol as the cause of the incident.