



Adrian Pederick MP
Member for Hammond

House of Assembly
20th November 2014

White Ribbon Day

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:04): I too rise to support the motion by the member for Stuart:

That this house recognises White Ribbon Day and encourages all men to swear an oath to never commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women.

This motion is very apt in this week leading into White Ribbon Day next week on 25 November. On that day, I will be leading the pledge at Murray Bridge. Everyone will be meeting at Diamond Park and then walking down one side of the main street (Bridge Street), crossing the street and coming up the other side to Edwards Square and having some lunch. I will then lead the pledge. For some reason, they reckon I am good enough to lead the shout-out to a record. I think that we will crack it.

We have many male supporters of White Ribbon Day in our community in Hammond. The pledge is where men participate by placing their right hand over their heart and raising their left hand to swear 'not to condone, excuse or remain silent to violence committed towards women and children'. White Ribbon is a male-led campaign to end men's violence against women. Men can play a positive role in preventing violence by challenging the attitudes and behaviours of the minority of men who condone this type of behaviour.

The vision of the White Ribbon campaign is that all women live in safety, free from all forms of men's violence. We must always remember that the victims may be someone we know—a sister, a neighbour or a friend. The campaign works through primary prevention initiatives involving awareness-raising and education, and programs with youth, through the schools, workplaces, and across the broader community.

The White Ribbon campaign started due to an horrific event in 1989 in Montreal: a man walked into the École Polytechnique and massacred 14 female students. Two years later, a group of men decided that they had a responsibility to speak out and to work towards stopping men's violence against women. In 1999, the United Nations General Assembly declared

25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, with a white ribbon as its iconic symbol. White Ribbon began in Australia in 2003, and there are six ways of being formally involved:

- as an ambassador, which I am: men representing White Ribbon in the community;
- as an advocate: men and women supporting the White Ribbon campaign;
- in the workplace: the workplace accreditation program and workplace giving;
- schools and young people, a very good place to reach the youth of today: Breaking the Silence schools program and the White Ribbon Australia Youth Forum;
- as a supporter: progressing the White Ribbon campaign through grassroots activities, which I think is extremely important, as is the schools and youth program, in making sure that we get education through to everyone. Starting at a young age gets that message through at an early stage in a person's life; and
- as a partner: getting involved in strategic activities to expand the reach and impact of the White Ribbon campaign.

The mission of the White Ribbon campaign is to make women's safety a man's issue too. White Ribbon Australia believes that most men are good, and good men abhor such violence. We cannot sit on the sidelines while women are at risk of harm. Everyone in this house can become a White Ribbon Ambassador by registering on the White Ribbon website.

The prevention of violence against women will change our society for the better. I am always dismayed and horrified when I hear news of a woman who has suffered a horrible assault or has been killed because of a man's violence against them. It is far more manly and far better for men to control themselves and to walk away; in fact, it is gutless to be involved in such activity.

White Ribbon has many interesting articles on its website, and it talks about what action can be taken, apart from other steps in offering support and taking action. Experience has shown that when people start to talk about violence they can often feel compelled to disclose their own experience.

Alternatively, you may recognise the signs of violence in a family member, a friend, a neighbour or work colleague and wonder what to do. Many women who have experienced or are experiencing domestic violence cope with it alone and stay silent. While they may develop a range of active strategies to protect themselves and limit the impact of the violence, many do not seek any outside help. They tell nobody at all. Sadly (and I will not identify the people involved) there was a murder in

the Mallee many years ago now, and from what I understood the woman involved always had another exit out of a room in most rooms in the house, but sadly the day she was murdered she got caught in the laundry, I believe, and there was only one way in and one way out; a very sad story of someone trying to deal with an abusive husband.

When women do disclose the situation to a family member or friend, the first response is often critical in determining how and whether they will proceed any further. Typically, violence against women is under reported and statistics show that a victim of violence is more likely to discuss and disclose their experience to a friend or family member than to the police or another public authority. It is important to know where to refer people and how to deal with people telling you about their experience. If someone wants to talk to you about their experience, there is some simple advice from the White Ribbon website, which includes:

- Find a safe/quiet space to talk;
- Listen—this may be the first time [the woman] has spoken about the experience;
- Have a non-judgmental attitude;
- Believe the woman's story;
- Reassure her that it is not her fault;
- Hold the perpetrator responsible for the violence and abuse;
- Provide emotional and practical support;
- Support the woman's choices;
- Don't be overly directive.

The theme in this advice in dealing with a victim of domestic violence is to listen, take everything on board and take appropriate action.

There is also some advice on the website about people using violence and how you treat them. If you talk to someone you suspect is violent to their partner or another person, it is highly likely they will tell you to mind your own business, make excuses or totally deny it. None of these responses mean that abuse is not occurring. It is common for a person who is being abusive to deny or minimise the abuse, and probably the only way you may be able to verify that a person is abusive is if their partner tells you they are or if you witness the abuse.

People who often appear to be 'respectable and normal' can be abusive in the privacy of their own home. If you do observe abuse, and you feel safe or able, talk about the behaviour you have observed. For example, 'You are my friend, but I think the way you criticise and intimidate her is wrong.' I can understand that many people would find that action intimidating in itself, but it needs to be taken, especially if it is a close friend involved in such behaviour, because it must not happen at all, and it must be stopped.

Also if you only know about the abuse because the victim has talked to you about it, be careful to check with her first before saying anything to her partner. Her partner could become more abusive to her if he or she thinks she has told someone. Research also shows that men who use violence generally seek relationship counselling rather than domestic violence counselling, often in response to ultimatums delivered by their partners. White Ribbon Day is something we can all easily be involved in and should be involved in, and we must totally stamp out any form of violence against women and children.