

MONASH

Urgent reform call on violence

Community leaders add support to calls for justice system changes to ensure women can keep their children safe

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THERE'S not a day that goes by without news of another domestic violence tragedy.

The devastating effects were echoed at a community meeting in Wheelers Hill organised by Bruce federal Labor MP Julian Hill last month.

One woman, who spoke during public question time, broke down while she revealed her story. She told the audience how she harnessed the grief of abuse for so long and needed to leave the man she once loved or she would lose her life.

This woman was one of the lucky ones who has lived to tell the horrific tale of domestic violence.

Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS) executive director Jenny Jackson said the justice system needed urgent reforms to protect women and their families.

"There are instances where an intervention order including children will be issued by a magistrates' court but if there's a family court order this will override the intervention orders," Ms Jackson said.

She said the centre speaks to several women about these concerns weekly. "Women have serious concerns about the safety of their children which leaves them feeling vulnerable and extremely concerned," she said.



Jenny Jackson is the executive director of EDVOS in Ringwood. Picture: DAVID CROSLING

Ms Jackson said men who were violent continued to use the family court system as a way to control and manipulating women.

"A family violence court is needed and should be run by specialists with training in dealing with family violence matters," she said.

Ms Jackson said the centre had witnessed the horrors of family violence.

"Women have ended up in hospital or with acquired brain injuries," she said.

Ms Jackson said there were disturbing reports of threats to animals, where perpetrators threaten to

harm pets as way of gaining control of women and children.

She said the centre had made recommendations to the Royal Commission Inquiry into Family Violence.

"The State Government has honoured all our recommendations in the

Royal Commission, so they are heading down the right track," she said.

Mr Hill said domestic and family violence matters were not private issues.

"These are community matters that we need to take a ... community approach to tackling," Mr Hill said.

He said the State Government had led the way on family violence in Australia.

"All recommendations of the Royal Commission have been accepted by the Government and will change lives for generations to come," he said.

Opposition spokeswoman for education Tanya Plibersek, who spoke at the community meeting, said she heard concerns about domestic violence at almost every community meeting.

"It's shocking because it's such a common issue for people to be dealing with and on the other hand it's unsurprising when we know the statistics that one-in-three women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime," Ms Plibersek said.

Monash Mayor Rebecca Paterson said the council aimed to prevent violence against women before it occurred by building communities, cultures and organisations that were gender equitable.

"In late 2016, the council took part in 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, a global campaign to raise awareness about the prevalence of violence against women," Cr Paterson said.

The Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS) can be reached on 9259 4200. Call 000 if you or others are at immediate risk.