

From: "Tinkler, Chris" <christopher.tinkler@news.com.au>
Date: Tuesday, 6 September 2016 at 8:55 PM
To: loli pop <loni.cooper@unimelb.edu.au>
Cc: Chris Tinkler <christopher.tinkler@news.com.au>
Subject: Response to query regarding coverage of family violence

Hi Loni,

Thanks for your enquiry.

The Herald Sun is proud of launching "Take A Stand", and remains fully committed to it.

We believe our ongoing campaign has brought about substantial awareness and change in community attitudes to family violence and its prevention in Victoria since its launch in July 2013, and we will continue to take a leadership role.

Prominent coverage of the issue in 2016 has included the Sunday Herald Sun splash, inside spread and feature special (seven pages in total)

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27
detailing Jimmy Bartel's heart-wrenching personal story of family violence and supporting the launch of his public campaign to fight the scourge

We are currently working on a significant investigation regarding a family violence issue, which we anticipate will be a major splash and spread and will again prompt much debate and potential institutional review.

And we will continue to run many hard news leads, as well as strident opinion pieces and editorials highlighting the importance of and challenges in tackling violence against women.

As you're aware, Damon Johnston is on leave and unavailable for comment. From my observation, he is passionately involved in and committed to bringing the issues to greater awareness.

In Damon's absence, please find below answers to your specific questions

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As I've been unable to reach Damon, please note these answers are attributable to me, and reflect my views, not his.

What factors would you attribute to the decline in the number of articles on this topic?

As with all issues, the intensity of coverage ebbs and flows.

In your opinion, has the direction of the Victorian media's coverage of violence against women/domestic violence changed significantly in the past year? How?

The story is evolving. The Royal Commission has delivered 227 recommendations, and media focus has shifted toward exploring and monitoring the success, or otherwise, of the reforms and their delivery.

Do you think violence against women/domestic violence requires the same amount of media exposure as it did a year ago?

We are committed to continuing to devote prominent exposure to the issue.

Has the Herald Sun's editorial direction around this issue changed in the past year?

The focus this year has, as you'd expect, shifted toward exploring and scrutinising the institutional responses in the wake of the Royal Commission. We continue to be sensitive to victims and their families, and tough on all those who fail victims.

Do you have a 'round' for this topic?

Our social issues reporter Ashley Argoon has a sharp focus on family violence. Our entire newsroom mindset has also shifted in recent years as a result of our campaign. We now prioritise family violence cases in our court and crime reporting, for example, and our state and federal political reporters have the issue top of mind.

Is the Herald Sun's 'Take A Stand' campaign still in effect? When was the last time you published content as part of this campaign?

The campaign is absolutely in effect. While not every article carries the campaign "dinkus", every story we run in this space builds on the work of our ground-breaking campaign. Ellen Whinnett's recent column

(below)

is a strong example of our sustained commitment and coverage

18/08/2016

Work goes on, but our women are still dying

ELLEN WHINNETT

THIS week, Victoria's Supreme Court dealt with two men who reacted to the news that their partners wanted to leave by stabbing them to death. One of those murders, that of 33-year-old Fiona Warzywoda, is well known because her ex-partner, Craig McDermott, stabbed her to death outside her lawyer's office in Sunshine, hours after he was issued with an intervention order to keep him away from her.

Since the murder in April 2014, he claimed Fiona had attacked him, put his children through a harrowing legal process and still does not accept responsibility.

The second murder is less well-known: Abuk Akek, 20, was beaten and stabbed by her former partner, Makeny Banek, in her Melton home. Abuk, who called herself Jackie Deng after coming here from South Sudan, had suffered years of abuse at Banek's hands.

Fiona and Jackie were very different, but at the end of their lives they had much in common. Both had children with the men who killed them. Both had suffered violence at the hands of those men. Both had been previously choked or grabbed around the throat, an indicator of escalating violence. Both were trying to escape the violent relationships and had taken appropriate legal steps.

Banek had previously bashed Jackie and bitten her face, leaving a 10cm gash that required stitches.

McDermott had been issued with a final intervention order the morning he killed Fiona. He'd had a suspended sentence several years earlier, too, for attacking her, choking her and threatening to burn down the house.

These cases are being finalised after a nation-leading royal commission in Victoria into family violence handed down 227 recommendations.

Victoria appointed the nation's first family violence minister and, last year, the Australian of the Year was a family violence survivor, Rosie Batty, whose son was killed by his father. We have new, more proactive laws for police to intervene and remove the perpetrators from family homes and specialised family violence police units and courts.

We have better training for police, doctors and those who deal with victims. We have male community leaders campaigning for change. We have \$100 million from the Federal Government.

Increasingly, men are taking leadership and advocacy roles, proving the vast majority of blokes are good people who want their partners, daughters, sisters, mothers and female friends to be safe and who are prepared to speak out to make it happen.

But still we have women dying at the hands of their partners — about one a week. It is an epidemic and it is continuing, unabated, despite our politicians, law enforcers, academics, community leaders and wider community making sincere and unprecedented efforts to tackle the problem.

McDermott and Banek will spend decades in jail — and good riddance. At least Banek pleaded guilty, a small act of decency that is apparently beyond McDermott.

Fiona was a loving and caring mother of three daughters and a son who had dedicated her life to raising her children and providing them with a good home. She had just returned to part-time work.

Jackie was a woman who had a son at 17 and raised her child while studying an advanced diploma in legal studies. She survived as a refugee only to die a painful death in her home at Melton on March 13.

Intervention orders are the best option to provide a framework for the courts and police to intervene on a victim's behalf. The use of such orders should be encouraged.

But Fiona's death has shown us again that intervention orders are not always enough. And both cases demonstrate that current measures are inadequate. The cases were dealt with in two days in the Supreme Court. That is a standard week and it is a disgrace.

So let's use these deaths to renew our motivation to tackle the scandal that is family violence; be it more money for behavioural change programs, even more intervention powers for police, greater workplace support for women in violent relationships, challenging gender stereotypes, looking at the role of drug and alcohol abuse in family violence and calling out the sense of anger and entitlement some men have.

We must educate our kids about relationships and ask how we can help a friend who's a victim, or confront one who is a perpetrator.

The best way we can honour Fiona and Jackie is to help the thousands of women trying to escape a violent relationship.

If you are in immediate danger, call police on 000. For help with sexual assault and family violence call 1800Respect, or

visit
1800respect.org.au

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