



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – AWARENESS AND PREVENTION ARE THE KEYS TO CHANGE

THE WHITE RIBBON FOUNDATION POLICY STATEMENT THE 2010 FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Violence against women is a pervasive problem throughout Australia, contributing significantly to family breakdown, homelessness, and child abuse and neglect.

In addition, violence against/abuse of women is a significant monetary cost to the Australian people, being a major contributor to health care and income support costs, and to family law, policing and justice costs.

Australia's businesses also share the costs (estimated to be \$13.6 billion in 2008-09) of this major social problem through lost productivity and absenteeism.

Recognition of the problem in party policy agendas at the 2010 Federal election is supported by the White Ribbon Foundation, a national organization working to prevent violence against women.

White Ribbon Foundation Chairman, Mr. Andrew O'Keefe, welcomed the release of Federal Labor's policy on violence against women by the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP in Melbourne on August 9.

"The White Ribbon Foundation endorses the vision in this policy statement, and welcomes the Labor Party's commitment to leadership of, and investment in, a *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*.

"Ideally, violence towards and abuse of women in Australia should be a policy priority of *all* political parties, and strategies to reduce and prevent its prevalence in our society should have 'all-party' support", he said.

"We urge the Coalition and the Greens to make violence against women a major policy priority and commitment," Mr. O'Keefe said, "because with a coherent and well-funded strategy, violence against women is preventable".

One in three women in Australia will experience physical violence in their lifetime. One in five cases of violence against women includes sexual violence. But violence against women takes many forms, including physical assault, psychological and financial abuse, verbal abuse and derision.

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“A focus on community crime, or on equality for women, is important but it is not enough,” Mr. O’Keefe said.

“Like drink-driving campaigns over the past 40 years, we will reduce the personal, family and economic toll of violence and abuse towards women in Australian society only if all governments commit to continual work on awareness campaigns and prevention strategies” Mr. O’Keefe said.

For many years, governments and communities have invested in helping women who have experienced violence - through measures such as safe housing and income support. Increasingly, a range of services and legal protections are also coming into place. However, these measures do not stop or reduce violence – they only respond to it.

The White Ribbon Foundation is a national organization working to **prevent and reduce** violence against women.

More than 1000 men across Australia are White Ribbon Ambassadors in a national campaign to raise awareness of violence against and abuse of women and to encourage other men and boys to get involved.

“Many of our senior politicians are White Ribbon Ambassadors and I hope they will show their commitment to this cause by providing the policy leadership on this issue that the country needs,” Mr. O’Keefe said.

“As drink-driving research has shown, sustained investment in awareness raising is essential if we are to achieve sustained behaviour change; to prevent and reduce violence against women we have to continually support awareness of the consequences of this issue as well as ensure we have sound and effective prevention strategies and interventions” Mr. O’Keefe said.

The Foundation supports the national White Ribbon Campaign, which focuses on the annual White Ribbon Day on November 25, the United Nations declared International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

“Increasingly the campaign also supports year-round awareness raising and behaviour-change activities, in recognition that violence and abuse towards women will only be reduced when we are continuously encouraging men and boys to change their attitudes and behaviours to this issue,” Mr. O’Keefe said.

“The benefits will be immense for women and children, for men, for families and for our economy, when we are seriously investing in making women safe in their families, their homes, neighborhoods and workplaces.” Mr. O’Keefe said.