

This article was written after the February Lateline (ABC TV 17/02/04) program covered and supported the efforts of Labour politicians and women's groups to resurrect the shelved domestic violence project – No Respect, No Relationship.

MRA had vigorously opposed the campaign which had been based on information contained in the widely publicised Teen Violence study. Information which had become completely distorted when the responses from boys were ignored.

In late 2003, MRA's Government contacts advised the campaign would not be proceeding as they realised it was biased and based on incorrect information.

Disappointingly, after pressure was applied by the women's groups and pro-feminist politicians, the Government has caved into pressure to run a campaign based on the premise that females are the only victims of violence and males, the only perpetrators.

If the Government has committed to this program purely to boost their flagging chances of retaining the women's vote, which we believe polling has shown to be falling, then this Government will be regarded as morally bankrupt and have little chance of survival. **Many more mothers, sisters will be horrified at this targeted vilification of their sons, brothers, husbands, boyfriends.**

The suicide rate amongst young men is one of the highest in the world. Vilifying young men in this way just contributes to the wide spread anti-male bashing that already flourishes in the media and predominates in social policies.

Neither does the campaign send a good message to young women. Are they to be regarded as helpless victims or encouraged to ensure they make sensible decisions that will protect them? The commercials clearly tell young women that it's okay to lead a young man on, but when she says no it means no! Sounds a little like the "30 second rapist" sexual assault prosecution that took place in the WA courts when a man was accused of continuing for 30 seconds after a woman withdrew her consent during intercourse. Two women Christine Elizabeth Wardle and Katrina Ann Carter were later convicted of conspiring to pervert the course of justice after Watson confessed the incident was a set-up to get the man out of the house he was sharing with Carter. They were sentenced to seven months. The man had been sentenced to four years and was eventually acquitted in 1991.

Young men will soon realise they face a dangerous situation every time they date a young woman. Even now many are reluctant to take the risk, and who can blame them?

The Government has failed now on two counts. In December 2003 the political inquiry headed by MP Kay Hull failed to endorse the principal of joint custody 50/50 and thus left fathers being regarded as the 'second' parent and relatively unimportant apart from the money they can provide.

The Labour Party offers no alternatives to resurrect the relationship between men and women. Much of the 'gender' war taking place is as a result of previous Labour policies to elevate women's issues above and beyond the requirements needed for equality.

Our previous commentary on the Lateline program

Recently Lateline (ABC TV 17/02/2004) produced a programme "**Controversy over shelved domestic violence strategy**" discussing the postponement of a domestic violence campaign featuring only abuse against females by males.

The whole program was in our opinion, biased in the extreme. The interviewer and producer failed to question the content of the campaign or to consult with men or men's groups.

Insider information had previously advised that the Federal Government had postponed/shelved and or abandoned the campaign because the TV commercials all focused only on male against female violence.

Anchorman KERRY O'BRIEN: introduced the program as follows:

"Back in 1997, the Federal Government committed tens of millions of dollars to tackle domestic violence. But now the Government stands accused of failing to follow through on a vital aspect of that commitment.

Just before Christmas, a public campaign to educate young people about physical and emotional abuse in relationships was shelved at the last moment.

The Government has no explanation for its decision or how much taxpayers' money was spent on a campaign which may never see the light of day.

But with research showing that one in four teenagers have experienced some form of abuse in a relationship, international experts have praised the preventative campaign and say it should be out there now."

Tracy Bowden set the scene by presenting short clips from two commercials with one man saying: VOICE-OVER: *Well, she was flirting with a couple of mates and I got angry and gave her a slap. But she knows. I mean, she deserved it.*

The other MALE VOICE-OVER said: *One young man in six says it's OK to pressure a girl to have sex.*

Catherine Gander, SW Women's Refuge Resource Centre said *"I don't understand why they would have been canned"* and then claimed *"it's obviously based on research"*.

At this point it can be identified that the campaign has obviously been designed with the prevailing, but incorrect idea that only women suffer from domestic violence.

The campaign supposedly targets teenagers, but David Indermaur's research into the attitudes and experiences of 5000 young people 12 -20 years in 1999 found more boys experienced abuse than girls in the majority of categories:

70% of young people said they had been in a boyfriend /girlfriend relationship, of those, 37% of boys said they had experienced abuse in the relationship as against 36% of girls.

The study also asked about witnessing DV between their parents/carers or parent (carer) and partner finding that the most common pattern was two-way couple violence. 8% of young people were currently witnessing couple violence, 6% were witnessing male to female violence and 2% were witnessing female to male violence.

The young people who reported witnessing domestic violence were more likely to be female, older teens, or lower socio economic status, **living in households other than with both parents** or indigenous.

During a conversation with David Indermaur to clarify the apparent shift in focus contained in his AIC paper No 195 Young Australians and Domestic Violence, he explained the study also looked at the differences as to how males and females view or are affected by the violence. He acknowledged though that he had little information about men who are victims of domestic violence.

Marianne James from AIC (Australian Institute of Criminology) admitted her organisation had conducted no studies into men as victims of domestic violence and in a subsequent telephone call agreed this omission need to be rectified.

**From the Teen Violence Study:
Table 2 Young people's experience of violence by gender:**

Category	Total Sample %	Males %	Females%
Bitching - I've experienced this	61	42	80
Physical fights between brothers/sisters - I've experienced this	59	59	59
Bullying - I've experienced this	51	56	46
Punch-ups between people at school/college - I've experienced this	35	51	18
Drunken fights in pubs/clubs - I've experienced this	16	22	10
Domestic violence - I've experienced this	15	15	16
Racial Violence - I've experienced this	14	17	10
Rape/sexual Assault - I've experienced this	9	3	14

(This table also shows percentage answers to 2 other questions ie "Someone I know has experienced this" and "No, not experienced") For the sake of brevity I have not included those two questions.

Note under the domestic violence category 15% of males experienced DV and 16% of females - confirms our arguments that domestic violence is committed equally by men and women (boys and girls).

Thankfully the government realised their error. Hopefully the recent pressure from the program and women's domestic violence groups does not cause a change of heart.

Lateline failed to investigate the reasons why the campaign may have been shelved. They didn't even ask for the other side of the story!

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