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Eliminating violence against women

The North Coast Domestic and Family Violence Forum (NCDVF) is made up of local services supporting women experiencing violence, and has created a digital campaign to promote the 16 days of activism this year. The global movement begins today, coinciding with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on World Human Rights Day on 10 December.

The international campaign aims to raise awareness about gender-based violence, challenge discriminatory attitudes, and call for improved laws and services to end violence against women for good.

Leading provider of community services, Momentum Collective's CEO, Tracey Mackie said that sadly, domestic and family violence had escalated in communities across Australia and around the world this year in the wake of COVID-19.

According to the World Health Organization, nearly 1 in 3 women aged 15 years and older, around the world have been subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, non-partner or both, at least once in their lifetime.

"The lockdown and border restrictions saw people retreat into their homes, making it more difficult for women to seek help when needed", Dr Mackie said.

Once the restrictions eased and people were on the move again, Momentum Collective along with some of other agencies, saw a significant increase in domestic and family violence-related calls to the Domestic and Family Violence Services. "We experienced a 20% increase in domestic and family violence related calls in July to September", Dr Mackie said.

What is domestic & Family Violence?

Domestic and family violence is often a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour. Some of the behaviours that may represent domestic and family violence include:

- **Emotional or psychological abuse** such as verbal abuse, threats of violence, isolation, and undermining the victim's sense of reality
- **Physical violence** such as physical assault, non-fatal strangulation, and damage or harm to person, pets and property
- **Sexualised violence** such as sexualised assault and other abusive or coercive behaviour of a sexualised nature.
- **Reproductive coercion or abuse.** When a person is stopped from making their own choices about reproduction
- **Economic abuse** such as denying a person reasonable financial autonomy or financial support - or accruing debt in their name
- **Stalking and intimidation** such as surveillance and harassment
- **Technology facilitated abuse** whereby a perpetrator uses electronic devices and online services to monitor, control, threaten, harass or abuse a person

- **Spiritual or religious abuse** in which spiritual or religious beliefs are used to scare, hurt or control a person
- **Systems abuse** is closely related to economic abuse. It involves using services and systems to harm and control victims

According to Susanne Lohmann, a psychologist and clinical psychology PhD candidate, psychological abuse can range from mild verbal aggression to severe coercive control used by abusers to assert power and control over their partners, including monitoring and controlling their activities and decisions and imposing social and economic restrictions. The constant surveillance and threat of danger entrap the victim and make it difficult for her to leave the relationship.

“Many women have reported that they experience psychological abuse, particularly coercive control, as the most insidious and devastating form of Domestic Family Violence (DFV) but the detrimental consequences of psychological abuse have often been overlooked because past research has predominantly focused on physical and sexual abuse. New research suggests that psychological abuse can be equally or even more detrimental”, stated Mrs. Lohmann.

Mrs Lohmann’s PhD research aims to address gaps by improving the understanding of the mental health impacts and mechanisms of coercive control to inform the development of trauma-focused programs to support victims/survivors’ long-term recovery.

What will the campaign look like, and how do I get involved?

The NCDVF digital campaign will include a story for each one of the 16 days from a local service provider that supports women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence. Each story will portray a different perspective on violence experienced, contact details for support, and local programs women can get help from. To get involved head to Momentum Collective Facebook page to read the stories, access the service information, and share the stories on your own socials to build awareness.

If you or someone you know is experiencing Domestic and Family Violence and need practical support to safely leave, call Momentum Collective 24/7 on 1300 355 305. For free counselling and other supports, contact 1800 RESPECT.

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About us:

Momentum Collective is a for-purpose community services organisation creating inclusive social change. We have a proud 40-year track record operating in a suite of programs in disability, mental health, homelessness, social and affordable housing, family and domestic violence, child family and community services.

With over 40 locations in Tweed, Byron, Ballina, Lismore, Casino, Kyogle, Grafton, and Coffs Harbour, the reach extends from Mid North Coast to South East QLD. Last year, Momentum Collective has assisted over 5,500 clients and families across the organisational footprint.

Contact us:

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