

**Media release  
White Ribbon Day  
Friday November 25 2011**

**For issue: Tuesday November 22 2011**

## **Relationships Australia Supports Swearing to Make a Difference**

Relationships Australia is supporting men across the country in swearing a common oath this week: to stop violence against women. The White Ribbon Day campaign encourages men to pledge the following: "I swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. This is my oath." This not only needs to be said, but followed through in actions.

White Ribbon Day, November 25, is an annual event of the White Ribbon Foundation. It invites men to engage in the campaign to end violence against women, and specifically, to challenge attitudes that condone and support violence.

Lyn Fletcher, Director of Operations for Relationships Australia said: "One in three women will experience physical violence in their lifetime, and one in five will experience sexual violence. Even more rife is emotional, psychological, spiritual and financial abuse, which are all a violation of a woman's rights. All these violations continue because we live in a world that accepts these behaviours."

It is well understood that women are at the greatest risk of violence from people they know, and often within intimate relationships. People often turn a blind eye to "domestic violence" where they would not tolerate an "assault" by a stranger.

"A domestic assault and an assault in the street are the same thing. It is both clear and tragic that the attitude of turning a blind eye remains widespread in our society," Ms Fletcher said.

While there is probably no single cause of violence against women, we know that the dynamics of power and control are central. Other factors include what we have learned from others (particularly our role models of being a partner and parent) around the treatment of women, substance abuse and problems with controlling emotions, particularly anger. There is never any excuse for threatening, abusive or violent behaviour, no matter how angry or frustrated someone is.

"In a healthy relationship, power is shared and there is no attempt to make one partner subject to the will of the other. Ideally, non-violent communication is used to resolve conflict and when people need support to work through relationship difficulties, they get it. Let's make anything less unacceptable," Ms Fletcher said.

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Relationships Australia provides a unique program for men who have been violent against their female partners, as part of our Family Safety Program. The Family Safety Program includes counselling and courses for men and women who have used or experienced violence in their relationships. The program also offers help for children who have lived in a violent household. For more information on the Relationships Australia Family Safety Program call 1300 364 277. Services are available nationally.

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**NSW Domestic Violence Line: 1800 656 463**

**About the White Ribbon Foundation:**

The White Ribbon Foundation of Australia aims to prevent violence against women by changing community attitudes and behaviour. For more information visit: <http://www.whiteribbonday.org.au>

**About Relationships Australia NSW**

Relationships Australia services include counselling for individuals couples and families (face-to-face, telephone and online); parenting and relationship education; support for families going through separation; specialist services for people who have been in care, refugee families and Aboriginal communities; workplace counselling and training; employee assistance programs and consultancy for companies; and training for family support professionals. Relationships Australia NSW is part of a national network of over 200 centres.

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