

WORKING WITH
MEN TO END
MEN'S VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN:
OPERATING AT THE
INTERSECTION OF
THEORY, IDEOLOGY
AND ACTIVISM

Libby
Dives

- 1 Department of Social Services, 'National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2010–2022' (2011) 10.
- 2 Our Watch, 'Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women and Their Children in Australia' (November 2015).
- 3 Tracy Castelino, 'A Feminist Critique of Men's Violence against Women Efforts' [2014] (Autumn) *Ending Men's Violence Against Women and Children: The No to Violence Journal* 7, 11, 24; Michael Flood, 'Work with Men to End Violence against Women: A Critical Stocktake' (2015) 17(s2) *Culture, Health and Sexuality* S159, S163; Bob Pease, 'Men as Allies in Preventing Men's Violence against Women: Principles and Practices for Promoting Accountability' (White Ribbon Research Series, March 2017) 6, 11.

Men's violence against women has gained the public scrutiny it deserves and is at the forefront of research and policy. It is being informed by more accurate and comprehensive data including what Australians think about men's violence against women and their experiences of violence. There are national, state and territory policies in place to end men's violence against women¹ and a national framework to guide violence prevention work.² While there will always be data gaps and ongoing policy developments, as our understanding of men's violence against women improves and more women share their experiences, we must turn research and policy into action. When dealing with a population level problem that requires generational attitudinal and behavioural change, this sometimes requires an approach that pushes the boundaries of theory, ideology and activism.

White Ribbon Australia engages men to prevent men's violence against women. We do this on the understanding that men and women need to work together for Australian women to live in safety, free from all forms of men's violence and abuse. The involvement of men in this movement is highly contested, with concerns that the increasing presence of men in initiatives, such as the White Ribbon social movement, has the potential to reproduce the inequalities at the heart of men's violence against women, shift the focus of the social movement from gender equality to new masculinities and devalue women's expertise.³ This article will acknowledge these tensions and outline the rationale for, and challenges of, engaging men in our work. It will also look at some outcomes of male engagement in White Ribbon.

I RESEARCH AND POLICY ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Decades of Australian academic scholarship on men's violence against women and its associated areas of study, including masculinities, gender equality, social work, health, education,

law and policy, have made invaluable contributions to domestic and international scholarship. In many emerging areas of enquiry, Australian academics and research are recognised as world-leading.⁴

Australia also has strong data on the prevalence and impact of violence against women including the *Personal Safety Survey* administered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics,⁵ supported accommodation data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, health impact data from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health and crime data from each state and territory.

From these and other sources, we know that in Australia:

- One in three women has experienced sexual and/or physical violence from someone they know.⁶
- On average, one woman a week is killed by a current or former partner.⁷
- Domestic and family violence is the principal cause of homelessness for women and their children.⁸
- Women who have experienced intimate partner violence have worse health outcomes, including poorer mental and physical health and higher levels of bodily pain than women who have never experienced intimate partner violence.⁹
- One in four children are exposed to domestic violence.¹⁰

Understanding more about the extent and nature of men's violence against women through research and analysis underpins the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children ('National Plan'),¹¹ which is the key policy document guiding national efforts to prevent and deal with the consequences of men's violence against women.

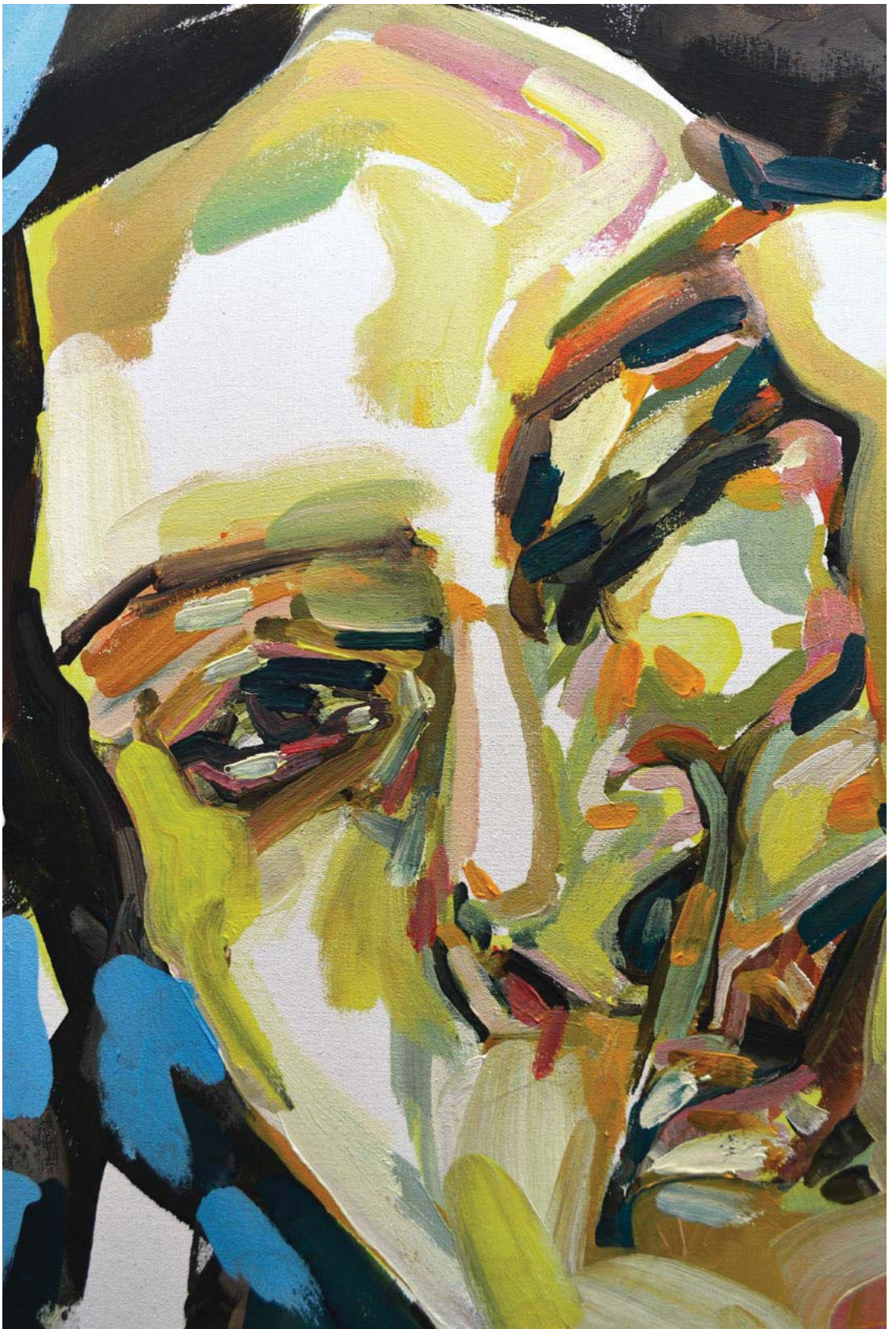
The National Plan led to the establishment of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety ('ANROWS') in 2014, which focuses on commissioning research into violence against women and their children to inform policy and practice. Thanks to the National Research Agenda developed by ANROWS together with the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, we will soon have better insights into previously little-understood areas such as the effectiveness of interventions aimed at men who perpetrate violence and a framework to guide violence prevention efforts.¹²

ANROWS now also leads the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey ('NCAS'), an ongoing research project that measures Australians' awareness of, and attitudes towards, men's violence against women, support for gender equality and bystander behaviour. The 2013 NCAS contained some concerning findings. For example, 43 per cent of respondents agreed that 'rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex'.¹³ Equally concerning was the number of survey respondents supporting male dominance in relationships, whereby 28 per cent of respondents agreed that 'women prefer a man to be in charge of the relationship'.¹⁴

II TURNING RESEARCH AND DATA INTO PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

This data and research is invaluable to organisations such as White Ribbon Australia. It clearly shows that violence against women is a significant social problem, and that addressing community attitudes is vital to creating change.

- 4 See, eg, Walter S DeKeseredy and Martin D Schwartz, 'Thinking Sociologically about Image-Based Sexual Abuse: The Contribution of Male Peer Support Theory' [2016] (October–December) *Sexualization, Media, and Society* 1, 1.
- 5 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *4906.0 - Personal Safety, Australia, 2012* (11 December 2013) Perpetrators of Violence <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4545E1A0AF026AD5CA257C3D000D820D?opendocument>>.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 See Andy Chan and Jason Payne, 'Homicide in Australia: 2008–09 to 2009–10: National Homicide Monitoring Program Annual Report' (Monitoring Report No 21, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2013) 18 <<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/mr/21-40/mr21.html>>.
- 8 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Specialist Homelessness Services: 2015–16: Clients Who Have Experienced Domestic and Family Violence* (2016) National Library of Australia <<http://webarchive.nla.gov.au/gov/20170421060551/http://www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/specialist-homelessness-services-2015-16/domestic-violence/>>.
- 9 Deborah Loxton et al, 'Intimate Partner Violence Adversely Impacts Health over 16 Years and Across Generations: A Longitudinal Cohort Study' (2017) 12(6) *PLOS ONE* 1 <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28582406>>.
- 10 Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse and the University of New South Wales, *The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children: A Literature Review* (Report, The Benevolent Society, 1 August 2011) 3–4 <<http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/documents/ImpactofDVonChildren.pdf>>.
- 11 Department of Social Services, above n 1.
- 12 ANROWS has funded 11 projects under its perpetrator interventions research program exploring system effectiveness, effectiveness of interventions, models to address diversity of perpetrators and interventions developed by, with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, 'ANROWS Perpetrator Interventions Research Priorities 2017–19: Summary December 2016' (Research Program, 20 December 2016) 2.
- 13 VicHealth, 'Australians' Attitudes to Violence against Women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)' (Report, September 2014) 12 <<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/2013-national-community-attitudes-towards-violence-against-women-survey>>.



This information guides our organisational strategy and program design, implementation and evaluation. It also informs the White Ribbon social impact measurement framework; we monitor this data to measure changes over time at the population level and use relevant measures from the NCAS to track the performance of our programs and activities.

There is no point at which this research can stop; the more we understand about men's violence against women through research and policy and the more women share their stories, the more gaps we can identify and address in our knowledge and practice. Regardless of these gaps, there is an ethical imperative to act using available information to develop and implement appropriate and effective interventions. While this pragmatism is easy to criticise, we cannot wait until we know everything about men's violence against women before we try to prevent it from happening in the first place.

III WHITE RIBBON AUSTRALIA: ENGAGING MEN TO PREVENT MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

White Ribbon Australia engages men to prevent men's violence against women. Through campaigns and programs,¹⁵ we highlight the role men can play alongside women in this social movement. Our rationale in doing this is that men speaking to other men about violence and abuse against women can be a powerful catalyst for change.¹⁶

As mentioned above, engaging men in the prevention of men's violence against women has been contested. Feminist women pioneered efforts to prevent men's violence against women and the increased presence of men in initiatives such as White Ribbon is seen by some as potentially reproducing the inequalities at the heart of men's violence against women, further marginalising and silencing women.¹⁷

Research suggests that for men to be effective allies in the prevention of men's violence against women, they need to understand the structural causes of men's violence against women, their role in reproducing gender inequality, and the effects of them being part of the dominant privileged, masculinity.¹⁸ Developing an understanding of this for the general male population and operationalising effective mechanisms to drive change has been a key challenge for White Ribbon Australia.

The White Ribbon male engagement framework, seen in Figure 1, is evidence based¹⁹ and supported by ongoing research and evaluation. In addition to the research outlined previously, we commission annual market research to give us updated and more immediate insights into what Australian men think about men's violence against women and how they conceptualise their role in its prevention.

For example, in 2016, we ran a series of focus groups with men. The focus groups explored their definition of violence and abuse and how they conceptualised the role they could play in ending men's violence against women. The research reiterated findings of previous surveys and focus groups we have run: most men understand what constitutes violence and abuse, but are still unsure about the scale and significance of the issues. Importantly, most men do not identify with perpetrators, have good intentions and respond to positive and direct social marketing approaches that show them how to take action against violence. Community-driven domestic violence campaigns that appeal to 'real men' or 'good men' are a manifestation of this fact. However, they are widely considered problematic and counter to the goals of violence prevention

14 VicHealth, 'Australians' Attitudes to Violence Against Women – Full Technical Report' (September 2014) 62 <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/NCAS/NCAS-TechnicalReport_2014.pdf>.

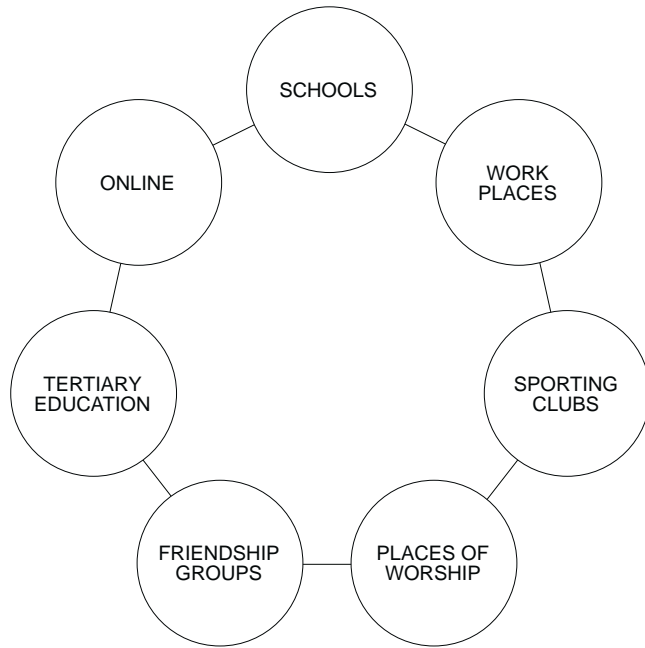
15 In addition to the White Ribbon campaign, which culminates in White Ribbon Day, White Ribbon Australia runs primary prevention programs in schools and workplaces, offers training workshops, forums and eLearning, and engages men and women through the Ambassador and Advocate programs.

16 Michael Flood, 'Where Men Stand: Men's Roles in Ending Violence Against Women' (Research Series No 2, White Ribbon Australia, 2010) 10.

17 Ann Carrington, 'Accountability: Whose Responsibility Is It? A Commentary on 'Men as Allies in Preventing Men's Violence against Women: Principles and Practices for Promoting Accountability'' in Bob Pease, 'Men as Allies in Preventing Men's Violence against Women: Principles and Practices for Promoting Accountability' (White Ribbon Research Series, March 2017) 28.

18 Pease, above n 3, 6–7, 21–3.

19 Moira Carmody, Michael Salter and Geir H Presterudstuen, 'Less to Lose and More to Gain?: Men and Boys Violence Prevention Research Project Final Report' (Research Report, University of Western Sydney, July 2014) <https://www.women.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0019/300619/PDF_2_Final_Report_Men_and_Boys.pdf>; Flood, above n 16; Michael Salter, *The Role of Men and Boys in Preventing Violence against Women and Children* (26 April 2016) YouTube <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCAUqXDgidU>>.



What	How	Why
<p>Changing attitudes and behaviours through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassadors • Workplace Accreditation Program • Schools – Breaking the Silence • Community events • Community partnerships • Corporate partnerships • Diversity Reference Groups • Advisory groups • eLearning • Advocates program • Safe active bystander training • Social Marketing • White Ribbon Committees • White Ribbon Day • White Ribbon Night • White Ribbon social media/website 	<p>By recognising diverse masculinities <i>There are many ways of ‘being a man’ – let’s explore them and understand their implications</i></p> <p>By appealing to existing aspirations <i>What kind of father, partner, employer, community member do you want to be?</i></p> <p>By leveraging peer networks and supporting/researching message delivery <i>This is what you can do when a friend makes a sexist comment.</i></p> <p>By recognising disadvantage <i>Male privilege may be the last form of ‘power’ you have. It can be hard to let that go.</i></p>	<p>Address structural gender inequality</p> <p>Change norms and attitudes</p>

**FIGURE 1:
WHITE RIBBON AUSTRALIA FRAMEWORK
FOR ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS.**

informed by feminist frameworks and research that identify gender inequality as the root cause of gender violence.²⁰

The challenge is to balance the reality of the everyday man with these frameworks and research. White Ribbon campaigns and programs are designed to meet men at their stage of the culture change journey, and can be articulated as simply as ‘real men don’t hit women’. By referring simply to physical violence, which assists with ‘getting men in the door’, we are able to educate men on the nature and extent of men’s violence and abuse against women and equip them with the knowledge and tools they need to become agents of social change. Most importantly, we get to a point where we can challenge the simplistic ‘good man vs. perpetrator’ dichotomy and encourage men who do not use violence to reflect on how male privilege manifests in their lives and is a driver of gender inequality.

IV ENGAGING MEN: AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH?

In his review of work with men to end violence against women, Flood notes the limited information available on the effectiveness of interventions that work with men to end violence against women.²¹ This reflects a general challenge for organisations in the not-for-profit sector, which struggle to undertake ‘gold-standard’ evaluation work for a variety of reasons, including limited resources and lack of personnel with evaluation expertise.²²

While White Ribbon Australia faces the same personnel and resource restrictions, we have a strong commitment to building social impact measurement and are embedding data collection across our activities and programs in an effort to contribute to the evidence base on effective male engagement.

Data from a recent survey of White Ribbon supporters²³ found high levels of awareness about men’s violence against women and evidence of pro-social attitudes and behaviours. For example:

- 80 per cent of Ambassadors strongly agree that stopping men’s violence against women starts with men changing their behaviour, versus 69 per cent of non-Ambassadors.
- Ambassadors had a greater awareness of the extent of men’s violence against women than non-Ambassadors.
- Ambassadors are more likely to assist a person experiencing violence than non-Ambassadors.
- Ambassadors have a lower tolerance for sexually explicit jokes, sexist jokes and sexist language than non-Ambassadors.

To enhance the robustness and reliability of program and campaign data, White Ribbon is developing a social impact measurement framework. We will collect data against key performance indicators at the commencement of an intervention, its conclusion and post-intervention. Along with the findings of independent evaluations of our programs, this data will be used to improve our work and will be shared with stakeholders. This is a demonstration of the pragmatic approach to learning and practice that characterises many organisations working to achieve social justice.

V CONCLUSION

Considerable investment in research, policy and feminist theory deepens our understanding of men’s violence against women and informs our prevention strategy and practice. While more

20 Castelino, above n 3, 23–4; Flood, above n 3, S169–S170; Michael Salter ‘Real Men Do Hit Women: The Violence at the Heart of Masculinity’ (2016) 75(1) *Meanjin* 97.

21 Flood, above n 3, S160–S161.

22 See, eg, Jane Gibbon and Colin Dey, ‘Developments in Social Impact Measurement in the Third Sector: Scaling Up or Dumbing Down?’ (2011) 31 *Social and Environmental Accountability Journal* 63; Belinda Luke, ‘Statement of Social Performance: Opportunities and Barriers to Adoption’ (2017) 37 *Social and Environmental Accountability Journal* 118.>.

23 In December 2016 to January 2017, White Ribbon supporters, including Ambassadors, Advocates, donors and event organisers were surveyed on a range of issues, including their knowledge and attitudes to men’s violence against women. A total of 1,533 surveys were completed, including 529 responses from Ambassadors.

information on the nature and extent of this violence helps fill in the blanks, it also shines a light onto issues we are yet to understand. To take action with imperfect information is challenging, but essential if we are to make inroads into this population-level issue of men's violence against women. This pragmatism is also problematic for some groups reluctant to engage with and fully understand a social movement that they see as possibly at odds with feminist social change theory. For organisations like White Ribbon, this requires a learning approach to program development and implementation that sometimes sits uncomfortably alongside analysis of the social problem.