

Monday, 6 March 2017

MEDIA ALERT

yourtown puts spotlight on children traumatised by domestic violence

yourtown and other frontline domestic violence services will join forces to discuss much needed interventions required to support children traumatised by family violence, tomorrow, Tuesday 7 March.

On average, one woman in Australia is killed by their partner or former partner every week.¹ While there is a national concerted effort to eradicate domestic and family violence and support women affected by violence, according to **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams, a clear gap exists within family violence refuges to respond to the needs of young children traumatised by domestic violence.

“**yourtown** has called on frontline domestic violence services from across Queensland to get together at a ‘Children in Refuge’ Symposium, to discuss contemporary approaches to supporting young children traumatised by violence,” Ms Adams said.

“It’s estimated that 54% of women who have experienced violence by a current partner had children in their care, with 31% of these children seeing or hearing the violence. For women with former partners, these figures rise to 61% and 48% respectively.²

“**yourtown** has operated a Family and Domestic Violence (DFV) Refuge for women and their children for 13 years. We know that when a family arrives in a refuge with many safety issues, that the emotional needs of children may not always be a priority. We also know that if we don’t intervene early a child who witnesses domestic violence can carry the trauma of that experience well into adulthood.

“This can include difficulties in developing positive relationships, and a heightened risk of alcohol misuse, drug dependency and criminal behaviour later in life. The cost to these children and the community is immeasurable. We cannot afford not to ensure we do everything we can to prevent this happening.

“This includes **yourtown**’s own innovative Expressive Therapy program developed for children experiencing emotional and behavioural problems that may stem from trauma. A two year evaluation of this program found this therapy resulted in significant positive outcomes for children.

“The aim of the Symposium is to use what we learn to provide a more holistic response to the needs of children experiencing trauma and other difficulties arising from DFV.”

More than 40 people from the domestic and family violence sector will meet at the one day ‘Children in Refuge: Therapeutic Responses to Domestic and Trauma Symposium’ at Queensland’s Parliament House on Tuesday, 7 March.

The Honourable Yvette D’Ath MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills will open the event. She will be joined by key note speaker child trauma specialist and educator Evolve’s Melissa Branjerdporn and a panel of experts discussing the impact of trauma and the use of innovations such as expressive therapy as a way of treating the effects of trauma.

Those attending include representatives from Queensland refuges and the Queensland Department of Communities, Save the Children Australia, Griffith University, Gold Coast Domestic and Family Violence Taskforce, Ozcare, Beaucare, Act for Kids, Immigrant Women’s Support Service, and Queensland Corrective Services.

yourtown is a charity with services young people can access to find jobs, learn skills, become great parents and live safer, happier lives. For over 55 years, we've been tackling the issues impacting young people in Australia - like mental health and unemployment, and taking on issues like family and domestic violence. See www.yourtown.com.au for more about **yourtown**.

ENDS

WHERE AND WHEN?

Tuesday, 7 March 2017, 9am-4.30pm

Dandiir Room, Parliament House, Cnr George and Alice Streets, Brisbane

INTERVIEW/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES

Tracy Adams, **yourtown** CEO

Brendan Bourke, **yourtown** Head of Client Services

Ann Chandra, **yourtown** Specialist Accommodation Services Manager

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MEDIA CONTACTS

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¹Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2014). *Violence against women: key statistics*. Sourced from: <http://anrows.org.au/sites/default/files/Violence-Against-Australian-Women-Key-Statistics.pdf>

²Campo, M. (2015). *Children's exposure to domestic and family violence: Key issues and responses* (CFCA Paper No. 36). Melbourne: Child Family Community Australia information exchange, Australian Institute of Family Studies. Sourced from: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/childrens-exposure-domestic-and-family-violence>