



Women's Services Network (WESNET Inc)

MEDIA RELEASE

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WESNET Raises its Collective Eyebrows about Recent Political Comments

In recent times we have seen a range of - unhelpful at best and down right dangerous at worst - comments from the members of the ruling political party. The comments "boys will be boys" from the Prime Minister and "sleep deprivation is not torture" from the Attorney-General, although in relation to different issues, both rate a collective intake of breath from members of WESNET, the peak body for domestic and family violence organisations.

Workers who spend their time sheltering and supporting women who are victims of domestic and family violence, hear plenty of examples of "boys being boys" when it comes to abuse and violence against women and children. The women themselves speak about suffering sleep deprivation from the deliberate behaviour of their husbands and partners, as part of a systematic pattern of intimidation and harassment.

"He keeps me from sleeping for days" one victim of domestic violence told Shirley Slann, WESNET Indigenous representative and Rural & Remote worker for North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service, "he does it to make me so tired I can't stand up to him and he can get his own way". **"Let Mr Ruddock tell these women that sleep deprivation is not torture, said Ms Slann, to them it certainly feels like it!"**

"New people coming to Australia are told that they must reflect Australian values, said Pauline Woodbridge, National Chairperson of WESNET, **I certainly hope those values include non-violence and respect for others, but it is hard to see the peaceful messages, when there are so many about excusing violence. When our leaders dismiss or condone abusive behaviours without acknowledging that it is going on in our homes, it makes it so much harder for victims to seek and get help".**

"We are working to stop violence against the women and children citizens of this country", said Julie Oberin, Victorian representative for WESNET. **"Any one hearing these remarks by the politicians would think that abuse is to be tolerated because it is only 'boys being boys'. This government simply pays lip service to caring about violence against women and children. In reality the Federal Government is a mean uncaring administration where comments like these by politicians serve to perpetuate unhelpful community attitudes towards domestic and family violence".**

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