



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **WHO WILL CRY OUT FOR THE VICTIMS?**

#### ***IN THE WAKE OF THE MOST HORRIFIC ACT OF DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE IN WA***

Each year, in early May all Australian states and territories hold a National Day of Remembrance Candlelight Vigil to honour all those killed in domestic homicide each year. The Western Australian Vigil was held on 3 May with the State's Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, The Hon. Simone McGurk, MLA reminding us that 13 people had been killed in this state alone in the past 12 months.

One week later six members of one family were murdered in Osmington in the Margaret River region. Over the last ten days the media has attempted to not only provide details of this tragedy but to suggest reasons why this horrific series of domestic homicides occurred.

The Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence is the state's peak body for women and children's DFV services and is deeply concerned by much of the media's coverage of the alleged perpetrator which has only focused on his character and the possibility he was depressed.

If the murder of six family members had been the result of the actions of an unknown stranger, the media coverage would have focused on the victims and the loss to the community of these six people not on the character or mental health of the perpetrator.

The continued focus by the media on the alleged perpetrator acts to conceal and mitigate his inexcusable actions has silenced the much needed conversation about domestic and family violence.

The way the media chooses to frame a story about violence against two women and four children has a huge impact on how the community understands domestic and family violence.

Due to the complete absence by the media to identify that what occurred was domestic and family violence, and the absence of requests for informed comment from DFV experts, the media has ignored its responsibility to provide an accurate and

meaningful context to a story about a man's planned and deliberate act of horrific violence.

The media has missed an opportunity to challenge community attitudes that support the findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women survey which found sizeable proportions of the community believe there are circumstances in which violence can be excused and that most people see violence against women as being primarily due to some men being unable to manage their anger.

*"There is a clear link between media reporting and community attitudes towards violence against women," said Ms Barry, CEO of Our Watch.*

*"The way news media frame a story about violence against women can have a powerful impact on the way the public understands the issue. Who or what is selected to appear in the news and how those individuals and events are portrayed matters."*

*"Blaming victims for the violence inflicted upon them, for instance, still happens in one in six articles about violence against women. Not only are people never to blame for experiencing violence, in society, these views impact how many people report violent incidents and conviction rates," she said.*

### **Expert voices**

High quality, informed and accurate news media coverage, and engaged social media interaction on preventing violence against women, can make an important contribution to prevention efforts when it:

- Conveys the full impact of violence against women on our communities;
- Provides accurate and meaningful context for stories on men's use of violence
- Challenges community attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate and/or reinforce men's violence
- Identifies available specialists and support services for people seeking assistance;
- Ensures women's experiences of violence are accurately and sensitively communicated.

Research tells us that factors such as living in a rural setting, access to weapons and the isolation of victims from social institutions such as schools, are all increased risk factors faced by victims who are living with a violent partner and/or family member; which is often compounded by the lack of available support services in rural locations.

*IN OCTOBER 2014, when Katrina Miles' youngest child hadn't even started school, the mother-of-four shared a chilling poem on Facebook about lived experienced of ongoing violence and abuse in the home. This was never reported by the media.*