

Curbing domestic thuggery

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By Karen Hodge

HUNDREDS of women in abusive relationships will finally have help available locally, with a domestic violence program to begin in Manningham.

Doncare has successfully obtained funding from the R. E. Ross Trust to run the 12-month pilot – the first domestic violence program for the municipality.

It means up to 600 domestic violence victims seen by police each year will no longer be forced to travel to other areas for help.

A campaign to get the program up and running has been under way for 18 months as police attend between 30 and 40 domestic violence related incidents each month.

Doncare chief executive Doreen Stoves said the Victorian perpetual charitable trust had agreed to provide funding for the "holistic" program's pilot year.

"We have some hope to bring about some change (in behaviour) . . . it is critical," Ms Stoves said.

Ms Stoves said after the trial they would need at least \$60,000 in recurrent funding from the State Government. .

Domestic violence worker Jeanette Scott will be employed to run the program from July, with Doncare providing some staffing and administration support.

The program will target women experiencing or escaping domestic violence and also assess the extent of the problem.

Ms Stoves said the police statistics were alarming and Doncare also saw a lot of women in violent situations.

"There are probably lots of people living in family violence situations who don't know how to access help or are frightened to get help," Ms Stoves said.

"It is women who are living in total fear situations every day, they don't know what's going to happen when the violent perpetrator comes home."

Ms Stoves said domestic violence was about power and control with insecurity and inadequacy often at the root of the problem.

Jeanette Scott, who runs the Mitcham Family Violence Program, said it was great news to be able to run the long-overdue program.

Ms Scott saw many victims from Manningham and said family violence crossed "all boundaries" and was often a "hidden phenomenon."

"If you can educate the community and women then you can facilitate a change in behaviour," Ms Scott said.

Manningham district police Inspector Ken Gibbs said the police had previously referred victims on to a number of providers for help, mainly out of the municipality.

Welcoming the program, he said education was the answer as violence was often a learned behaviour.



Victims of violence in the home are no longer alone.

Picture: SHANE BELL. N1&WP304

Group will share the problems

FAMILY violence victims will have a supportive ear to turn to as part of the new domestic violence program.

An ongoing support group for women experiencing past or present violence begins on Tuesday, July 13, as part of the 12-month domestic violence program trial.

Doncare chief executive Doreen Stoves said the weekly group was for women suffering everything from emotional, physical, verbal and financial to sexual abuse.

Other program initiatives include a 10-week program called My Life My Choice, aimed at educating and supporting women.

It will look at family abuse and stress, cycles of abuse, isolation, grief and impact of abuse on children.

A six-week program called What You Say Matters will tackle communication, self-esteem and assertiveness.

There will also be a Women Establishing program on Tuesday mornings to help women re-establish themselves after suffering abuse.

Humour will be used to help women learn to stand up for themselves during a six-week program called Feeling Good Being Me.

A two-month Spring Clean Your Self-Esteem program is also part of the 12-month trial program, which Ms Stoves said explored women's experiences.

Another course, called Women Understanding Anger, is designed for women to explore anger and how to deal with it.

A program targeting anger management among men will be run by the Manningham Community Health Service as part of the project.

Ms Stoves said they expected to get referrals to the domestic violence program from the family violence sector and police.

Doncaster police Senior Constable Kerry Siphthorpe said the police would be involved in a men's and women's discussion group on July 12-13, also providing information about the court system, such as intervention orders.

For more information phone 9848 4433.

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