



MEDIA RELEASE – WED 17TH FEB 2010 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Minister misleads Parliament on domestic violence

A leading men's health organisation today claimed that the Minister for the Status of Women, Hon Gail Gago MLC, misled Parliament by maintaining that false statistics on the Government's *Don't Cross the Line* anti-violence campaign [website](#) are accurate.

Men's Health Australia also lodged an official complaint with the Ombudsman last Thursday after five months of attempting to draw the Minister's attention to the major statistical errors on the website. The complaint alleges that the Office for Women acted unreasonably by publishing and not correcting this false and misleading information.

Men's Health Australia spokesman Greg Andresen said, "The [Facts and Stats](#) page of the website is extremely misleading to the public. It clearly inflates statistics about domestic violence against women while understating statistics about domestic violence against men."

Men's Health Australia is supportive of all efforts to reduce interpersonal violence in the community but is concerned that the regular use of incorrect or misleading 'statistics' by Governments unfairly stigmatises men and boys as violent and abusive, while simultaneously denying services to male victims of violence.

They are also concerned that the Government's approach is not in the interests of all children in families where there is abuse or violence, but selectively favours those children in families where violence is perpetrated by the father. The other one-third to half of children have to fend for themselves without support.

On 14th October Minister Gago defended the misleading statistics in [Parliament](#), claiming that "the data on the *Don't Cross the Line* website is sound."

Some of the campaign's [errors](#) alleged by Men's Health Australia include:

- Overstating the annual number of women victims of domestic violence by almost 400%
- Overstating the number of women killed in domestic violence situations by 86% while ignoring the one in three victims of domestic homicide that are male
- Incorrectly claiming that 95% of domestic violence involves a male perpetrator and a female victim, when in actual fact at least one in three victims of family violence are male
- Ignoring the fact that as many young people have witnessed physical domestic violence by their mother against their father, as have witnessed it by their father against their mother
- Ignoring the research showing that equal numbers of young males and females have experienced domestic violence or have been forced to have sex by their boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Incorrectly claiming that domestic violence is the main cause of death, disability and illness in young women (the main causes are actually anxiety and depression, migraine, type 2 diabetes, asthma and schizophrenia).

"All victims of violence deserve campaigns based upon up-to-date accurate data, and the tax-paying public doesn't deserve to be misled. Flawed data such as this can only lead to flawed policies and actions, and many children continue to be exposed to violence because of these myths," said Mr Andresen.

"Inflating statistics on domestic violence against women risks generating an unwarranted climate of fear in the community, especially amongst females. It also has terrible impacts upon the self-esteem of boys and the development of their healthy masculinity.

"Understating the prevalence of domestic violence against men makes it less likely that a man will be believed when he finally summons up the courage to disclose his partner's abuse of him. It also allows Government to continue to get away with family violence policies and campaigns that ignore male victims."

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The full complaint and statistics shown by Men's Health Australia to be inaccurate can be found at menshealthaustralia.net/files/dctl.pdf