

Media Release

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Domestic violence model challenges men to accept responsibility

Men who subject their partners to domestic violence disregard the impact their actions have on their children, as do many social support practitioners, according to the proponents of a new domestic violence model being introduced by a coalition of industry agencies across Australia.

The model, known in the social welfare sector as *Safe and Together*, focuses on challenging fathers to accept responsibility for the impact that their domestic violence has on their children.

Rollout of the model is being championed by the Safe and Together Australian Alliance (STAA), chaired by Junction Australia, whose work in this area aims to change community attitudes and behaviours. Junction Australia is an independent not-for-profit organisation with a long term commitment to addressing domestic violence and providing support for South Australian women, and their children, who have experienced violence at the hands of their partner.

Junction Australia is very concerned that more than one woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner in Australia." said Graham Brown CEO of Junction Australia. "In 95 per cent of cases, men are the perpetrators of violence against their partner. Good men across our nation really need to be speaking up and saying that this is not acceptable" he said.

"Men are rarely called to account for the impact their domestic violence has on their children," said Junction Australia's General Manager Community Services Sue Phillips.

"They are seen as perpetrating this violence towards a partner and that is how the system – social welfare workers, police, the courts – and the wider community view it as well.

"In our society, welfare of children is still almost exclusively associated with mothers but STAA believes perpetrators should be held to the same standard of parenting."

The Safe and Together model, developed by American domestic violence expert David Mandel and used in the US and UK, is being introduced across Australia.



In April, a four-day training session will be held in Adelaide and enable 50 representatives from non-Government and Government organisations to become accredited practitioners in the Safe and Together model. The training will teach participants how to raise the awareness of perpetrators' about how their violence damages the way their children view them as fathers. International evidence indicates that greater understanding the impact of violence by fathers on their children can really 'hit home' with men. This perspective can also be used to great effect across the broader child welfare and courts systems.

A national forum on the topic will also be held in South Australia during 2016, to further develop national links between those organisations that are using the Safe and Together model.

"Taking this approach helps the perpetrators see their actions in a different light and also allows support workers to create more accurate case notes with the important aim of keeping the children and their mother safe and together," Ms Phillips said.

"It is expected that those who receive the training will then go on and teach it to their teams with the aim of it becoming a widespread way of operating."

Ms Phillips chairs the Safe and Together Australian Alliance (STAA) which is a steering group of non-government agencies and government representatives working to promote adoption of the Safe and Together model throughout Australia. She recently returned from the 3rd World Women's Shelters Conference in The Hague and visited Edinburgh where she witnessed first-hand how a leading organisation in Scotland is using the model and sought to foster international collaboration aimed at advancing this unique approach.

"Most Australian States have begun working with the model in some way, but here in Adelaide, we're really leading the way. What we'd really like to see is State and Federal Government funding to train even more social welfare workers and other professionals in this model," Ms Phillips said.

Junction Australia has recently appointed a STAA Project Officer to work with the Alliance to coordinate the upcoming Safe and Together training and conference. Their role was made possible by a grant of \$50,000 from Community Benefit SA.

Junction Australia is committed to addressing domestic violence and provides support for South Australian women. This includes overseeing the Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island Domestic Violence Services which provide counselling, development of safety plans and support finding alternative accommodation for women subjected to domestic violence. Junction Australia is also a trusted provider of quality, affordable housing and integrated community services that currently manages 1,700 properties across South Australia.

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