

City News 28/1/16

# A need for better support for victims of violence

I WOULD like to pass on thanks to John Griffiths for his column "When love gets violent" (CN, January 14).

In August 2014, I went to the ACT Magistrates Court and obtained a Domestic Violence Order against my husband. The events of a long-standing physical and emotionally violent relationship were obvious; there were pictures and eyewitnesses. There was also a diagnosed mental illness. I later applied for and received a second DVO. I have not gone back to my marriage since.

What I was not prepared for was the attitude of well-meaning mutual friends. For example, one friend, a Catholic with a long-standing stable marriage, asked me when I told him of the court order whether the children and I would have been better off remaining in the marriage. He later agreed to act as a character witness for my ex in court if required, and still mentors him in a community services club. He told me that he felt my ex needed a male role model, a friend, to help him through the separation and make sure he didn't go off the rails. He is an extremely nice person and so his actions hurt me more than he would ever realise.

It is one thing to say that violence is wrong. Everyone agrees with that statement. The question is: what do we as a society actually do about it when we know it is occurring? How do we best support the victims, whether or not they identify themselves as such or not? What do we say to alleged perpetrators? Do we, as in the example of my friend above, lend an open ear and be there for support to perpetrators? Are we prepared to say that we believe that violence is wrong? What messages are we saying to victims? Are we consciously or unconsciously judging them for leaving a marriage?

My own experience has been that there is very little support for women leaving violent marriages. I have a good public service job so I am not eligible for welfare or legal aid support. The first six months were extremely

difficult. My children were clingy and needy. I felt overwhelmed by full-time work and forms and paperwork. I was lonely and my sense of worth and self-esteem were fragile. Some days my ability to cope was touch and go.

In contrast, I found that my ex got a lot more support, at least initially. He stayed in the same church, he stayed in the same service club and, not being encumbered by kids, was able to socialise.

The support he received was positive in that it meant he did not self-harm, turn to substance abuse or treat our children badly. But around eight months after separation he alleged in the Family Court that, contrary to his earlier statement on oath, the violence never happened. Did the role of mutual friends lead to this? I don't know. All I do know is that there needs to be much more work done on victim support and research into appropriate messaging for alleged perpetrators.

Serina Huang, via email

## Parking fee shock

I WAS appalled to be charged \$8 for 1 hour 25 minutes by Wilson Parking at the New Acton carpark. I think it's outrageous and abusive of Canberra on their part. I just fail to see how the ACT government gave the green light to this unscrupulous operator.

Attorney General, Mr Corbell, should move in and fast.

Phil Munro, Bruce

## Signs of frustration

COLUMNIST Robert Macklin's welcoming of the "terrific" idea of Federal Tourism Minister Richard Colbeck (Seven Days, CN, December 17) to add signs in Chinese around city streets and major institutions should not be news to the ACT Government.

In late 2014, the Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia (ALMA) wrote to Kathy Leigh, of the Chief Minister's directorate, floating the idea of Canberra becoming a China-friendly city.

Kathy expressed interest and asked one of her deputies to meet us.

Our proposal was significantly wider than attracting more Chinese tourists, though that was a key element. We proposed a long-term strategy designed to attract to the ACT more Chinese secondary and tertiary students and more Chinese business links.

Chinese signage was proposed as an effective, though fairly cheap component. ALMA pointed out that having to compete with Australia's major capital cities gives it a massive challenge, with numbers of Chinese tourists visiting the ACT reported to be dropping.

We proposed a consortium of interested bodies to collaborate to make a visit by Chinese tourists happen memorably. Street signage, signage in the major shopping malls and major buildings in Chinese, large interactive tourist maps in Chinese (and other languages) placed around the city, phones at the information desks in shopping malls connected to Mandarin speakers (using volunteers drawn from the large pool of Chinese students in Canberra).

We met Ms Leigh's nominee, who listened with polite lack of interest and the idea presumably died. It's been frustrating since then to learn of other cities with greater vision, more dynamic government vigorously chasing the Chinese market.

Canberra has the physical environment and educated population to be the most dynamic city in Australia. Andrew Barr is open to ideas, but his team need invigoration.

Len Waugh, Association for Learning Mandarin in Aus.

**Griffiths nails the argument**

I WISH to congratulate John Griffiths on his easy-to-read, plain English eloquent article "Mullah Abbott wags a dangerous finger" (CN, December 17).

I have no doubt John's view is shared by the overwhelming majority i.e. millions of Australians. It is a shame that ever so many people around Australia will not get the pleasure of reading John's article.

Name and address withheld on request

## Reader wags a finger

ISLAM allows for a man to say to his wife, "I divorce you," then the woman is divorced. Of course, it is a very different story for a woman wanting a divorce. She has to jump through hoops.

The situation in Europe discloses how "progressive" Islam is in relation to male-female relationships.

Islam requires that Islam should triumph over other religions (Koran 48:28) and that Muslims must be in a position to enforce Islam's teaching on what is right and wrong (Koran 3:110).

When the Muslims take over in Australia and impose sharia law, which is their aim, we can look forward to much "progress": polygamy, floggings, chopping of hands and heads, just like we observe in "progressive" Islamic Saudi Arabia.

I recommend columnist John Griffiths ("Mullah Abbott wags a dangerous finger", CN, December 17) reads "Heretic: Why Islam needs a reformation now", by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, before he puts pen to paper again in relation to Islam.

John Farrands, via email

ALMA LETTER