

Christchurch Women's Refuge

01 April 2010

MEDIA RELEASE

Domestic Crime Rate Shows Dark Side of New Zealand Communities

National and regional crime figures released today by police reinforce Christchurch Women's Refuge's message that as a society we have still not come to terms with the size of the domestic violence problem in our communities.

Latest police statistics show that reported domestic violence is up over 18% nationally and 14 percent in Canterbury. They note that the surge in reported domestic violence is the main contributor to an overall increased violent crime rate of 6% in Canterbury. "This increase is no secret to us" says Christchurch Women's Refuge CEO Annette Gillespie, "but many people don't want to acknowledge the size of the problem. Domestic violence isn't going away by ignoring it and if we want to change these violent crime statistics, we have to start within the family."

The police report also made the link between violent crime and the use of alcohol and drugs. "We see that frequently – these issues don't happen in isolation. There is no doubt that the prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse fuels domestic violence" Gillespie says.

In the last three months there have been 1184 calls to Christchurch Women's Refuge, compared with 657 for the same period in 2009, and its Safe House has been consistently full since October.

Police report the increase in domestic violence incidents as an indication of a greater willingness to come forward. "That may be true, and we know that the recession has definitely had an impact, but what we also know from our clients is that the level and frequency of violence is also escalating" says Gillespie. "I think we have become so desensitised to violence that we accept it as part of our society - through TV, film or sport; we still tolerate violence.

"If you think you aren't affected by domestic violence, you're wrong – the family is where a lot of the antisocial behaviour that makes up these crime statistics is learned. We need to acknowledge that violence in our communities starts in the home and finally put some real resource into getting these figures and the lives behind them changed."

If you or anyone you know is affected by domestic violence, please call 0800 1 REFUGE or visit www.womensrefuge.co.nz

--ENDS--

For further information contact:

Annette Gillespie
Chief Executive Officer
Christchurch Women's Refuge
T: (03) 353 7401
M: 027 245 0255

Christchurch Women's Refuge

Facts About Christchurch Women's Refuge

Christchurch Women's Refuge is the first Refuge established in New Zealand (1973) and the first established outside the United Kingdom.

Christchurch Women's Refuge offers its services from south of Kaikoura through to Ashburton - a total population of over approximately 400,000 people. It has a rural office in Rangiora.

Our services include:

- 24-hour crisis line
- Emergency safe house accommodation
- Separate group programmes for women and children
- Individual counseling sessions
- Advocacy services
- Community education

Many women contact Christchurch Women's Refuge directly. However, Christchurch Women's Refuge also proactively contacts many more named on Police Reports of Family Violence.

Christchurch Women's Refuge is provided approved Ministry of Justice education and safety programmes, and is also a Child, Youth and Family approved provider.

Key Statistics

In the year 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 Christchurch Women's Refuge:

- responded to over 3040 calls on our Crisis and Support line
- assisted 71 women and 85 children with safe accommodation in our Residential Safe House for a total of 2712 bednights.
- worked with 319 women and 529 children through our community-based services (group and individual)
- proactively contacted more than 1,600 women named in Police Reports of Family Violence to ensure their safety and that of their children.