

# Christchurch Women's Refuge

11 February 2010

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Domestic Violence Survivors Speak Out

Today's release of the discussion paper '**Protecting victims, rebuilding lives, sending the right message**' reinforces that domestic violence - and the official mechanisms to confront it - are still very much issues which need addressing says Christchurch Women's Refuge.

The discussion paper, written and released by survivors' group 'It's Still Not Ok', notes the frustrations which domestic violence survivors face when dealing with government agencies, laws and policies. "The thousands of women and children who experience domestic violence find that even once they make the leap to improve their lives, the practical support they need from government is often not there for them" says Christchurch Women's Refuge CEO Annette Gillespie. "This paper - which is an insightful and much needed account of reality from survivors themselves - highlights the frustrations of women who have to stand up not only to an abuser, but to bureaucracy. A large part to our work at Refuge is spent advocating on women's behalf just to get them the practical assistance they need to live and be safe."

Gillespie notes that the "It's Not OK" campaign has been successful in increasing awareness, and has coincided with an increase in demand for Christchurch Women's Refuge's services. "What domestic violence survivors themselves say in this paper, and what we in Refuge know all too well, is that the resources to reinforce that campaign are not easily available, despite one in three New Zealand women experiencing sexual or physical assault from a partner. This paper offers a real opportunity for government to rise to the challenge of making practical changes to policy and that will underscore the It's Not Ok campaign with real support and resources."

Despite the difficulties they can experience Gillespie emphasises that it is vital that women who have experienced domestic violence in any of its forms (financial, physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional), do come forward and seek help. "This discussion paper notes frustrations with the system, but it is also testament to how hard these women have worked to improve their lives and those of their families – I hope it encourages other women to do the same."

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# Christchurch Women's Refuge

**For further information contact:**

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

## **Statistics About Domestic Violence in New Zealand**

([www.roundtablevaw.org.nz](http://www.roundtablevaw.org.nz))

- An average of 14 women are killed in a domestic violence incident every year
- 33-39% of women are physically or sexually assaulted by their partner in their life time
- 19-23% of women have experienced severe physical violence from their partner in their lifetime
- 24-28% of women report that they experienced sexual abuse as a child, with half of those women experiencing abuse on multiple occasions
- 70% of those experiencing elder abuse are women.

## **Facts About Christchurch Women's Refuge**

Christchurch Women's Refuge was 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 430,000 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. It is also a Child, Youth and Family approved provider.

## **Key Statistics About Christchurch Women's Refuge**

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.
- 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.