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MEDIA RELEASE

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Domestic Violence a major cause of Homelessness

“Reports both nationally and on the Central Coast have shown that the number of homeless women and women with accompanying children has continued to increase” Laurie Maher, Executive Officer of Coast Shelter said.

The major contributing factor leading to homelessness with women and children is domestic violence.

For many in our community it is a complete surprise to learn that the most prevalent cause of homelessness in Australia today is domestic violence.

“It is a terrible indictment on our society that domestic violence is an increasing problem in our communities” Maher said, “and the most common remedy is that women and children are forced to leave their family home, adding further to their trauma which has included physical, emotional, psychological or economic abuse”.

“These days most of us have at least a broad understanding of what constitutes domestic violence” Maher said, “however what most don’t fully accept is the criminality of the perpetrator’s behaviour”.

“Most people tend to rationalise their behaviour and try to establish some causal link to explain it” Maher said, “However, no matter what the cause of a perpetrator’s state of mind there can never be an excuse of the criminality of domestic violence”.

Although refuges and shelters funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program provided the most common relief to the victims, because of the level of domestic violence they now turn away almost 50% of those who approach them for assistance.

This to a great extent is based on society’s failure to fully accept and deal with the criminality of the perpetrator’s behaviour, leading to a response which involves women and children, though victims, having to vacate the family home and neighbourhood networks.

In moving forward it is the responsibility of Government to ensure that the abuser is removed from the shared home to allow the victims to maintain or return to their present homes.

Workers in refuges for the homeless understand that domestic violence to a great extent is the invisible element in mainstream homelessness.

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