

**DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE STRATEGY LAUNCH
ACON OFFICE
WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2015
SPEECH NOTES FOR ACON PRESIDENT MARK ORR**

- Thanks Nic.
- Thank you Auntie Millie for your Welcome to Country.
- Domestic and family violence is a serious and prevalent issue in Australia, and has, over recent times, finally achieved something close to the status of a national emergency.
- But in spite of all the attention, practically no focus is given to how domestic and family violence impacts on the hundreds of thousands of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans* and Intersex people in our community.
- However, the physical, emotional and personal costs are often the same, with the added tragedy that the experience is even more hidden.
- As a consequence, we don't know a great deal about domestic and family violence in LGBTI relationships and households – the research is scant.
- What we do know is that domestic and family violence in the LGBTI community mirrors the types and levels of domestic and family violence in the broader community, with 1 in 3 lesbian and gay people in NSW having experienced domestic and family violence in their current or in a previous relationship.
- For transgender and intersex people, there is no Australian research, but overseas statistics indicate that the impact is likely to be significantly higher.
- We also know that there are some unique aspects experienced by LGBTI people in terms of domestic and family violence.
- For a start, domestic and family violence in the LGBTI community doesn't always look the same as it does in heterosexual relationships, and so LGBTI people don't always recognise it.

- Also, the language and framework used around domestic and family violence and much of the media publicity that surrounds it relates almost exclusively to heterosexual relationships, making violence in homosexual relationships seem invisible.
- Because of this many LGBTI people suffer in isolation and don't feel comfortable to report abuse or seek help from support services.
- For many victims there is also the added fear that the abusive partner will 'out' their sexuality or gender identity, or reveal their HIV status, to family, friends, or work colleagues.
- We also know that homophobic violence within families is a major problem, with LGBTI people often at greater risk than heterosexual people from abuse, harassment and violence from family members such as parents, siblings and even children.
- And finally, in terms of getting help, LGBTI specific services and resources essentially don't exist and many LGBTI people have a fundamental distrust of using mainstream services due to a fear of homophobic and transphobic discrimination.
- So there's lots of problems – how do we fix them?
- Clearly it won't be overnight.
- What we need is a long term strategic approach that is evidence based, outcome focussed, and ensures coordination with our government and community partners.
- This is what ACON's new five year domestic and family violence strategic plan aims to achieve.
- It details how we will use our strengths in health promotion, social marketing and community development, as well as our many years of experience working with the wider social services sector, to reduce domestic and family violence in our community, increase awareness and reporting, and help ensure that LGBTI people experiencing violence in their home have access to appropriate services and support.

- I won't go into the hard detail – it's all there in the strategy.
- What I do want to point out though is that much of what we want to do comes with a price that is currently beyond our reach.
- Importantly, the strategy acknowledges this, but you don't get anywhere without thinking big.
- We'll continue to deliver the programs and services that we're currently offering, but in terms of new work, we will be seeking appropriate funding opportunities as and when they arise.
- Such as the funding announced today by Minister Goward. Thank Minister for making time in your busy schedule to be with us today.
- We're very grateful to the Minister and the NSW Government for recognising the need to increase awareness of healthy relationships among lesbians specifically and to help people in the broader LGBTI community identify the early signs of domestic and family violence.
- This kind of primary prevention work is essential to addressing the impact of domestic and family violence and we're confident this new funding will make a big difference to our work in this area.
- But we also look forward to range of other important outcomes that are detailed in our new strategy.
- For example, researching the needs of our community is vital so policymakers can include the needs of LGBTI people in policy frameworks, especially how transgender, gender diverse, and intersex people experience domestic and family violence, an area which currently has very little awareness.
- Getting mainstream services to respond more effectively to LGBTI people is also a priority and we'll look for opportunities to help service providers be more inclusive.
- In fact, our training and consulting division has been doing great things in the aged care sector and we believe other social

services, including those in the DFV sector, could also benefit from similar training programs.

- As you can see, the approach we need to take to address DFV in the LGBTI community is a complex one that involves a wide range of stakeholders, not only in the LGBTI community but in the broader community as well.
- It won't be an easy process, but with your interest and support, we look forward to improving the safety and security of LGBTI people and their families and making our community a better place for us all.
- Thank you all for coming along today.