

## **Domestic violence: a virus in Queensland**

**By Rowan Schindler, Monday 16 June**

Queensland is suffering from a domestic violence epidemic with statistics showing offending is still shockingly high.

Figures obtained from the Queensland Police Service (QPS) showed a total of 102,836 Breaches of Domestic Violence Order (DVOs) offenses over the past decade.

In Queensland, it equates to an average of over 10,000 a year.

The QPS recorded almost 13,000 in 2013.

A total of 6,498 DVOs were recorded this year, figures which are set to smash the Queensland average.

On the Sunshine Coast, there is an average of 156 breach of DVOs per year, with a total of 1562 over 10 years.

Earlier this year, *The [Courier-Mail](#)* revealed one woman was killed every week in a domestic violence situation.

The South-East corner of Queensland ranks the worst, with a 45 per cent increase in the past five years.

Sunshine Coast social worker Keziah Holmquest questioned why the subject is not a higher priority in the media and society.

“Four young men tragically die installing insulation and a royal commission is held, one woman is killed every week in Australia by a former or current partner and it’s just ‘life’.”

Ms Holmquest said domestic violence was a pattern of domination and control.

“A domestically violent relationship is one characterised by patterned domination of one partner over another, occurring in an abusive way,” she said.

“One partner systematically abuses their power in a patterned, forceful, coercive, manipulative and controlling way.

“It does not always involve physical violence.

“It can, and often does involve emotional abuse and/or financial abuse.”

Data from the Australia Bureau of Statistics show women are two and half times more likely than men to have experienced violence by a partner in the past year.

In 2010, Canadian co-founder of the global White Ribbon campaign, Dr Michael Kaufman, [likened domestic violence](#) in Queensland to an increasingly widespread virus.

Ms Holmquest said domestic violence could range from physical violence, to controlling what a partner spends, belittling or alienating them from friends and family.

She said the media does not cover the topic often enough because crimes were normalised by society’s standards.

“I don’t think it gets the attention in the media it deserves because it is seen as ‘normal’,” she said.

“It is generally accepted, when a woman is killed, the perpetrator is most likely a man and no-one bats an eyelid or questions why this is so.

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She said there were arguments for and against further criminalising domestic violence.

“Like when anything is criminalised, we treat the symptoms whilst neglecting the source of the problem,” Ms Holmquest said.

“I think there is a gap in recognising offenders.

“Offenders are not a distinct group of people who exist in the margins of society.

“They walk among us, in our communities, few would admit they are domestically violent.”

Ms Holmquest said acknowledging gender inequality was an important step.

“Acknowledging there is a massive problem involves acknowledging, despite what we’re taught to believe, women are still socially and economically disadvantaged,” she said.

“It would mean society would have to turn the mirror on itself and recognise there is a massive problem with masculinity and the way we teach boys to be men.”

Ms Holmquest echoed former Queensland premier Anna Bligh, who earlier this year [urged men](#) to tackle the issue.

“Domestic violence is a men’s problem and until we come to terms with this idea, the situation is not likely going to change,” she said.

“I went to a domestic violence awareness rally where a police officer was asked to speak.

“He reminded the audience of how important it was for women and their families to know the early warning signs of a violent relationship, and the importance of women keeping themselves safe from violence.

“Not once did he acknowledge the importance of men being responsible for their actions and the importance of not being an abusive partner.”

Queensland Police declined to comment when contacted.

Ms Holmquest said victims often denied they were in a domestic violence situation.

“There can be a lot of denial and reluctance to seek support, especially if the relationship is not physically violent,” she said.

“It’s not as simple as ‘just leaving’, there is so much power and control involved it makes it hard for people to realise they’re in a violent relationship to start with.

“So much of a domestically violent relationship is about power, so it’s important the victim is empowered to make their own decisions in the process.”

If you or someone you know is in a domestic violence situation and could be in danger, call police.

Agencies who can assist:

- [www.dvrcv.org.au](http://www.dvrcv.org.au)
- [www.wire.org.au](http://www.wire.org.au)
- [www.domesticviolence.com.au](http://www.domesticviolence.com.au)
- <http://www.scopedv.org/> - Sunshine Coast

**Words:** 756

## **References list**

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Keziah Holmquest

0413 746 129

*Note: Two other sources were contacted, but could not get back to me until after print date.*

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