

New national study into how media portray violence against women announced

Tuesday 14 July 2015

New national research into media representations of violence against women and their children has been commissioned by Our Watch and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

The media are a dominant force in shaping discourse on matters of public importance such as violence against women and their children, Our Watch Chair Natasha Stott Despoja said today at the VicHealth Conference 'Policy, People and Prevention: Ending violence against women in Victoria'.

"Primary prevention of violence against women and their children involves challenging the cultural and social norms that condone, tolerate or excuse violence against women," said Ms Stott Despoja.

"The media can play a crucial role in informing the community and addressing misconceptions and myths."

ANROWS Chief Executive Officer Heather Nancarrow says the project will establish a nationally relevant picture of the nature and extent of reporting on violence against women and their children.

"This research will provide a robust analysis of the way this issue is represented," said Ms Nancarrow.

"The evidence produced from this project will inform both media organisations and violence-prevention agencies about the impact of their work on public perceptions of violence against women and their children."

The new study will provide baseline data on the way media portrays violence against women, enabling the measurement of any change as a result of interventions.

In its review of current literature, the project will also look at how audiences interpret this type of news and how news production practices operate for these types of stories.

"The early stages of the research show that the media often mirror society's confusion and ambivalence about violence against women," said Ms Stott Despoja.

“However, this is changing for the better. Many journalists, editors and producers are doing an excellent job in dispelling myths about violence against women, highlighting the true nature and extent of the problem, and including links to appropriate support services,” she said.

“Recently, we established the Our Watch Awards. These are the first national awards to reward and encourage journalists and outlets for quality and excellence. Finalists will be announced in August. An Awards ceremony will take place in September.

The media representations study is being led by the University of Melbourne’s Dr Georgina Sutherland and Professor Jane Pirkis, and the University of Canberra’s Professor Patricia Eastaer and Dr Kate Holland, with assistance from Dr Cathy Vaughan (University of Melbourne).

A state of knowledge paper from this project will soon be available on ANROWS’s website.

The study is jointly funded by ANROWS and Our Watch. It is part of ANROWS’s Research Program 2014-16 (Part One) and Our Watch’s National Media Engagement Project. ANROWS and Our Watch are initiatives funded under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

- ENDS -

Media contacts:

[Hannah Grant](#), Media Relations Officer, Our Watch, 0448 844 930

[Jessica Gregory](#), Communications & Media Officer, ANROWS, 0408 800 699

*If you cover this story, or any story regarding violence against women and children, please include the following tagline:

“If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, family or domestic violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au. In an emergency, call 000”

To access guides for reporting about violence against women and their children, visit: www.ourwatch.org.au

“If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault or family violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit <http://www.1800RESPECT.org.au>. In an emergency, call 000”

MORE ABOUT ANROWS:

Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) is an independent national research organisation, jointly funded by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

A key initiative under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan), ANROWS aims to build, distribute and promote evidence to drive policy and practice aimed at reducing levels of violence against women and their children and alleviating its impacts.