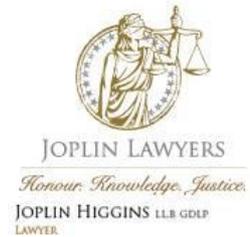


MEDIA RELEASE

JUNE 22, 2015



Confront domestic violence head on

NSW lawyer invited to US to review successful domestic violence rehabilitation programs

NSW lawyer Joplin Higgins is demanding increased government funding for services and education programs to stem the tide of domestic violence in Australia.

This year two Australian women have been killed every week as a result of domestic violence. Every three hours one woman is hospitalised.*

“As a family lawyer, I work with victims of domestic violence every day,” Joplin said.

“I hear their stories, I witness the devastation and it is heartbreaking. It makes me determined to confront domestic violence head on.”

“It is shocking the number of women who tell me that the violence first started when they became pregnant.”

Joplin has been invited to attend meetings in the US in January to review rehabilitation programs for domestic violence offenders. She hopes the trip will provide substantial evidence to actively lobby the government to introduce similar programs in Australia.

“They are having excellent results with these programs,” Joplin said. “Domestic violence will not stop if the perpetrators are not rehabilitated. I believe there should be mandatory rehabilitation programs imposed on offenders through both the Criminal and Family Law systems.”

“Domestic violence goes much further than physical abuse, it is, in fact, about gender inequality,” Joplin said.

“We know that men can be victims of domestic violence too, and that is completely unacceptable. But overwhelmingly, it is women who suffer months, years and sometimes decades of abuse at the hands of men.”

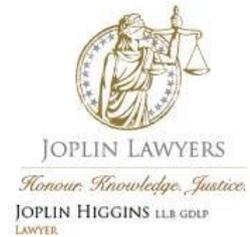
“This year the NSW Government has made progress, introducing legislation into parliament in May for the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS). This scheme would include creation of a domestic violence register and give people the right to find out if their partner has a history of domestic violence.

“But this is not enough.”

On Saturday, Australian of the year Rosie Batty launched her Never Alone campaign, on what should have been her son Luke’s 13th birthday.

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In February 2014, Luke was murdered by his own father at cricket practice.

Joplin supports the Never Alone campaign, which calls for:

- More long-term guaranteed funding for support and crisis services for women and children
- Improvements in the way the justice and judicial system treats family violence issues
- Better support for men to take responsibility

“As Rosie Batty has said, it is time to drag this issue out of the shadows and have the uncomfortable conversations about the way family violence services are funded, and the way police and the judicial system deal with the perpetrators and victims of this crime,” Joplin said.

“First point of call services for domestic violence victims, especially the police, must assist victims. It is imperative that every police officer who has contact with victims understands the enormity of stress, desperation, and vulnerability the victim is experiencing.

“It is important that police officers understand their actions are extremely important and if a victim is treated as a ‘neurotic woman’, it steps us back decades and decades.

“Just because the victim does not turn up at a police station battered and bloodied does not mean there was no domestic violence.

“Now that this issue is well and truly in the spotlight, we must stand together and demand change. We cannot wait another day.”

* Statistics source: www.neveralone.com.au – The Luke Batty Foundation

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Background

Joplin Higgins LL.B GDLP is the director of NSW law firm Joplin Lawyers.

Joplin holds a Bachelor of Laws from James Cook University Cairns and is a Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and the High Court of Australia. She is also an Independent Children’s Lawyer (ICL) with the Legal Aid Commission of New South Wales.

She has conducted Family Law matters throughout Australia.

Joplin is a passionate campaigner against domestic violence.

Media enquiries: Dayarne Smith 0409 301 838
dayarne.smith@outlook.com