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## **White Ribbon Day vital to achieving public health goals**

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has highlighted the devastating impact of violence against women on public health outcomes to coincide with White Ribbon Day. PHAA points out that violence against women impacts not only on women's health but also on the health of children, families and communities.

"The impact of violence represents a real threat to our capacity to achieve key long term preventive health goals in a range of areas. In Australia, one in three women will be assaulted or abused in her lifetime. The physical and mental health impacts of violence against women consequently have far-reaching and direct consequences for the majority of the Australian population," explained Professor Helen Keleher, PHAA President.

"Violence against women is not only a major public health problem but a violation of human rights. Disturbingly, the most common form of violence against women is intimate partner violence – this means that women are most often assaulted by loved ones, rather than strangers. A wide range of physical, mental, sexual and reproductive, and maternal health problems can result from violence against women, but despite its painful consequences, many women still do not seek help or report violence when they experience it," said Professor Keleher.

"The White Ribbon Campaign is the only national violence prevention campaign, and it is unique in that it aims to raise awareness among Australian men and boys about the roles they can play to prevent violence against women. The campaign calls for men across Australia to speak out and take an oath - swearing never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. The campaign culminates on White Ribbon Day today, when men and women across Australia are asked to wear a white ribbon or wristband as a symbol of their commitment and oath," said Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the PHAA.

"In taking the oath and wearing a white ribbon today, men and boys can act as positive role models and advocates for change by challenging behaviours and attitudes that have allowed violence against women to occur. It is vital that boys and men speak out in this way if we are to address the widespread violence against women that still occurs in Australia today.

"Violence against women harms the entire community and eliminating it is a vital step in addressing both the social and economic burden and cost of preventable illness in Australia," said Mr Moore.

**For further information/comment:**

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