



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

MELBOURNE – 21 December 2016

In response to Corrine Barraclough's article 'Don't Blame Men for Domestic Violence. Blame Booze'. Published in The Herald Sun, 21 December 2017.

If alcohol caused family violence, most men and women would commit violence - they don't. If a lack of income caused violence, families on higher incomes wouldn't be affected – but they are.

Blaming alcohol and people on low incomes is a familiar argument, so it is not surprising that non-experts in the field of preventing violence against women default to this as an explanation.

Women's Health Victoria supports Our Watch's stance that such arguments maintain a culture which regularly excuses, trivialises and condones violence against women.

To be clear, we know that factors like alcohol and access to economic resources do make a difference in domestic violence. Alcohol use can increase the severity of violence, increasing the risk that victims, mostly women, will require medical care. Women without financial resources will have fewer options in terms of housing, child care and other supports, making it harder to escape violent partners. While it is clear that alcohol and socio economic factors play a role, it's even clearer from the evidence that they are not the primary cause of family violence.

Family violence is serious, prevalent and preventable. The approach that says alcohol and low income communities are to blame is hopelessly out of date. Reliance on these explanations is why we have made so little headway on this issue until recently. It's time to engage with the evidence, listen to experts, and be part of the solution.

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