

We The People
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We the People 362 Shatter the Silence



Good Day to you. Writing and broadcasting each week puts me in touch with many people and organisations. I speak to the best and the worst of society and mood swing from depressed and saddened to uplifted and blessed in what I see and hear. I am constantly amazed at the wonderful unsung heroes out there who for various reasons try hard to make a positive difference even in the face of unparalleled evil and corruption or financial hardship. Recently I met with a local woman who gave up a \$90,000 dollar a year job as a specialist nurse to try and do something for the victims of domestic violence. This is the story of the remarkable Michelle Beattie of the Gold Coast.

Michelle has directly experienced the physical and mental bruising of domestic violence and her injury pictures are disturbing. She has been punched in the face, strangled, knocked unconscious and when you see a woman's face battered and bruised it's surreal and troubling. The image draws on our basic instinct to vigorously reject such behaviour and to protect others and I felt anger at seeing her battered image. In a very short time Michelle brought me up to speed on the stats and they are an embarrassment to Australian society but especially the Gold Coast. This so called 'vibrant city' is in fact the nation's capital for domestic violence according to the ABS, so all that glitters is not gold. Now when I hear of domestic violence I think of beaten women but the reality is quite different. For every 100 cases of DV against women there are 50 against men and Michelle knows this and wants to *"shatter the silence"* and help men as well. I was amazed to hear she is currently helping a male perpetrator and when I questioned that, she simply levelled this rhetorical question.....*"if we don't understand what happens then how can we help and fix it"*. I found Michelle's pragmatism and charity unique and humbling.

Remarkably, Michelle Beattie has a solid concrete plan to help combat and deal with domestic violence through her newly created charity called *Hearts of Purple*. Chaired by GC solicitor Jim Wilson and a board of specialist people, this charity is different and effective and has attracted the attention of government. They provide services such as high risk removal, high risk assessment, emergency clothing, security device sweeping, emergency accommodation and extraction. It sounds like a high level SWAT team's terms of engagement and in many ways it is, as rapid action and protection for the victims and children is essential. Their electronic support is also broad and amazing including a special GPS watch which simply requires the wearer to push one of three coloured priority buttons and effective help is immediate. **Each year in Australia more people die from domestic violence related suicide than homicide** and that's a very disturbing picture. I am pleased that Hearts of Purple focuses equally on helping men because it's one area where men need liberating through understanding in my view, especially when they are the victim.

I am sure domestic violence is not new but to confront this tragic phenomenon is and about time. The truth is governments can't do much except provide money because governments are usually incapable of organising anything quickly. It is we the people who must do the heavy lifting in society and find ways to deal with mankind's failings. My new friend Michelle Beattie said about *Hearts of Purple* and I quote... *"We love the immediate impact we have on the lives of victims of domestic violence enabling them to move on and find renewed confidence, safety and happiness free from violence. We truly believe that there needs to be real change in the way we communicate the issue in society and educate our youth to be better partners, parents and grandparents for the future"*. I have a feeling we are going to hear a lot more about Michelle Beattie and Hearts of Purple and for more information go to their web site www.heartsofpurple.org and be amazed.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley