

20 June 2018

**National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) - *Where is the government funding for violence prevention?***

Every time a woman is murdered we are saddened and angered. We need to voice these emotions and we need to grieve.

We also want to turn these feelings into actions. We know that violence is largely preventable, so why are we not seeing the government investment?

Rightly, people from all corners of the community are frustrated, asking '*what can we do to stop this happening?*', '*how can we create cultural change?*'.

Deputy CEO of NAPCAN, Leesa Waters, said, "For those of us working in the field of violence prevention there is a particular frustration: *Why are proven (cost-effective!) programs still not being given the government funding and support that they need?*"

"NAPCAN's Love Bites/Respectful Relationships program has been running for more than a decade, introducing high school students and their communities to the very concepts that arise every time a woman is murdered."

"Love Bites is creating the long-term attitudinal and behavioural change that we need. It is tackling the problem head on by talking to young people about what is a healthy relationship, how to stand up against sexual assault and violence, and how gender norms and stereotypes limit both men and women."

"Educators and the community sector want the program, young people want the program, we all know that it works, and we know that it is extremely cost effective - especially given that violence against women and children is estimated to cost Australia more than \$20 billion annually." KPMG Report, May 2016)

"Yet governments continue to leave the bulk of this work to underfunded non-profit organisations and volunteers."

"Funding for organisations such as Our Watch is valuable in addressing the drivers of gendered violence and broadening our knowledge in these areas. However, we need to recognise that there are other existing programs that are already working; we need to build on these rather than reinventing the wheel."

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“While NAPCAN has received sporadic funding for Love Bites from state and territory governments, the lack of ongoing commitment is confounding,” said Ms Waters.

For those of us wanting to take action, let's:

- Ask your local member what they are doing to address gendered violence.
- Lobby for all young people to have access to age-appropriate material about sexual assault, violence, consent, and gender.
- Promote funding for existing violence prevention programs such as Love Bites.
- Be open about how we can come together as a community to create safer environments.

NAPCAN is adamant that unless we work with the next generation to help shift relationship norms, we will continue to see these atrocities perpetrated in our communities.

- ENDS -

For more information or to arrange interviews, contact:

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### **Love Bites Program snapshot**

NAPCAN's Love Bites is a Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) program for high school students:

- Most sought after RRE program for high school students in Australia
- Only RRE program to fully address sexual relationships, violence and assault (young people say how valuable it is to be having these conversations, as no-one else will)
- Community professionals (e.g. police, health professionals) are trained to deliver Love Bites directly to young people (2,000 professionals trained in the last 2 years)
- Scale of program: more than 10,000 Year 10 students in NSW alone receive face-to-face workshops with these professionals
- Builds the capacity of the community through the prevention knowledge learnt and shared by these professionals
- NAPCAN has adapted the program for traumatised youth, currently being piloted in the NT

While NAPCAN has successfully funded the development and dissemination of Love Bites to a large number of communities across Australia, long-term government investment is needed to.

- Ensure all young people across Australia have equal access to these programs
- Provide ongoing coordination and support to the army of volunteers now engaged in delivering our programs
- Gather ongoing evidence on the impact of respectful relationships education with young people over the course of their school years