



Anti-violence lesson served with coffee

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WHISE's Dosedra Hetherington hopes the coffee cups will spark conversations about gender violence in the community. 160622 Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS

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By Aneeka Simonis

FANCY a lesson in victim-blaming with your takeaway coffee?

From Friday 25 November, coffee shops in Cardinia Shire, Casey and Greater Dandenong will be serving up everything from lattes to cappuccinos, chai tea to hot chocolates in coffee cups themed with strong anti-family violence messages.

Questions around victim-blaming and the dangers of casualised gender discrimination and violence will be posed on the cups in a way that puts the onus back onto the perpetrator.

One of the cups reads, 'Why doesn't she leave?', which is crossed out to reveal the take-home message, 'Why doesn't he stop? Family Violence. No Excuses.'

It's the second year for the hugely successful awareness campaign jointly launched by Women's Health in the South East (WHISE) and Southern Melbourne Integrated Family Violence Partnership.

It's hoped the cups will shift cultural perceptions on issues including victim-blaming, particularly among those who may not otherwise engage in discussion around the impacts of family violence.

"People always ask that question – why doesn't she just leave? People think women in a family violence situations can easily just get up and walk away, but women are vulnerable to murder and being hurt," Ms Lennon said.

"Our message shifts the focus away from women, and puts the onus onto the man."

Cafes will also be brimming with information about service providers in the area to help connect possible victims. On several occasions last year, women who were experiencing violence had confided in cafe staff, WHISE Health Promotion manager Rachel Lennon said.

"We know some people disclosed their own experiences with cafe staff last year, so there will be cards with proper referral services handed out this year," she said.

Up to 10,000 cups will be circulated through cafes including Shingle Inn at Westfield Fountain Gate, Ginger Jones in Dandenong and Theobroma Chocolate Lounge in Cranbourne throughout the campaign tied with The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

Last year, Young Uncles cafe in Dandenong ran out of cups within three days.

It is due to receive 4000 this year.

Close to two women are killed per week by a current or ex-partner in Australia.

Cardinia Shire, Casey and Dandenong experience some of the highest rates of family violence state-wide.

The campaign starts of Friday 25 November on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and runs until Saturday 10 December on International Human Rights Day.