

Women's advocate slams VicHealth findings

# Aussies turn blind eye to rape: report

A BALLARAT women's health advocate has raised serious concerns about a new report, which revealed an alarming number of Australians are prepared to justify the actions of rapists and family violence perpetrators and shift the blame onto victims.

Women's Health Grampians chief executive Patty Kinnersly said she was alarmed by the findings of a nationwide VicHealth survey of 17,500 that found one in five people believe if a woman is drunk or drug-affected, she is partly responsible for rape.

"The negative outcomes

**MELISSA CUNNINGHAM**

of this report are extremely concerning and what they tell us is the work and education in this area is far from done," she said.

The report also revealed 40 per cent of people surveyed agreed women who said they had been raped had led the man on and later had regrets.

The survey also found there was a deterioration of attitudes in numerous areas of violence towards women, including decreases in the number of people who believed that stalking, fiscal control and

forced sex were forms of violence within a relationship.

It found less than one in 10 Australians believed a woman could be raped by someone she is in a sexual relationship with.

The report also revealed four people in every 10 agreed rape was the result of men not being able to control their sexual needs.

"The rule is, if you're not sure if somebody is able to consent the answer is 'no'," Ms Kinnersly said.

"To say 'well they didn't say no' is just not good enough."

Ms Kinnersly said one of the keys to combating violence

against women was educating people that violence against women compromised of a range of behaviours, which was beyond physical assault.

"When we hear people in the community verbalise those types of beliefs we need to stand up and say that is not OK," she said.

Ms Kinnersly said the Ballarat region had much to be proud of including the City of Ballarat's Community Charter for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and the Ballarat White Ribbon campaign but there was still more work to be done.

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