

# Guest Speaker – Sally Stephenson – Women's Health Centre

The Illawarra Health Centre is for all women in the Illawarra

It was established 30 years ago in Warilla and supports marginalised women

Domestic violence is bad and getting worse. On average 3000 women are hospitalised each year and 50 women per year are killed. Shellharbour is considered a "hot spot"

These days the definition of abuse extends to emotional abuse and financial abuse

The centre offers a range of services focusing on domestic violence including:

- GP's
- Nurses
- Social workers
- Mental Health
- Massage

They have established external partnerships and run training programs

On a regular basis women have access to Legal, financial and centrelink services to help manage day to day activities. There is a growing number of mature age women accessing these services. One of the benefits of the service is that people are given the time to discuss

The centre is funded by the state government (\$400k). There are also grants, Fund raising and providing services to others. eg Disability services

## **Root Causes of Abuse**

The main cause is intergenerational poverty and the reflection of the status of women

Easy access to pornography and associated violence is a problem. It is believed that most 15 year olds have been exposed through the internet

There is also a growing prevalence of violence in young girls

It is believed that if by the age of 8 children have not been taught the principles of respect then it is too late

The centre runs programs (mother/daughter; mother/son) to address these issues.

Sally gave an example of a woman who came to the centre, distraught and

seeking support. Within 2 years this person is now running a program for chronic smokers. A significant transformation

Thanks you Sally