



I Swear: Blue Mountains Mayor Daniel Myles (centre) and Cllr Chris Van der Kley (far left) with Peter Doyle, manager of Blue Mountains Hardware and staff from the hardware and Blue Mountains City Council swear to help stop violence against women and children.

Community takes a stand against domestic violence

Blue Mountains Mayor Daniel Myles will host the annual White Ribbon Day Mayoral Breakfast on November 25, with a focus on the impact of domestic violence on children.

The Australian Bureau of Statistic's Personal Safety Survey found that more than 1 million Australian children were affected by domestic violence.

"This makes domestic violence a significant issue impacting on the well-being and positive development of our community's children," Cllr Myles said.

"The White Ribbon Day breakfast keeps our community aware of domestic violence by learning from people's experiences, including children, so that we become better at providing effective support and preventing domestic violence."

Women with children experi-

encing domestic violence require services that support them in their parenting role.

Katoomba Women's Health Centre manager Suzanne Van Opdorp said mothers faced the dual challenges of establishing safety for themselves and also for their children, particularly if Family Court orders required on-going contact with the other parent.

"A big challenge for parents experiencing domestic violence is helping their children overcome the symptoms associated with witnessing the domestic violence while still experiencing the effects of trauma themselves," she said.

Children witnessing violence in their homes can display a range of symptoms including anxiety, increased aggression, low social competence, temperament problems, peer conflict and school difficulties.

"The tragedy for many chil-

dren and their mothers is that often children's symptoms are not understood in their community, schools and social networks," said Ms Van Opdorp.

"This can result in children being overly disciplined or socially isolated."

Children benefit from community members building their resilience by showing them kindness, listening and taking their experiences seriously and acting as the child's confidante.

Wimlah's Hand in Hand program is one example of practical help and support for children that experience or witness domestic violence.

To report domestic violence and violence against women and children contact Domestic Violence Services on 1800 656 463 or the Blue Mountains Women's Health Centre on 4782-5133.