

Questions for Candidates for Shoalhaven City Council Elections re Violence Against Women Election to be held on 4 December 2021

Name: Joanne Warren

1. What is your understanding of what constitutes violence against women:
 - a. In the community?

Violence takes all forms and may be physical, social, financial, sexual or psychological. The complexity of the lockdown during Covid has meant that many women have been unable to seek support and find safety during 2020/21. The lack of housing options with the current rental and affordable housing crisis in the Shoalhaven and beyond exacerbates this and leaves women in unsafe environments. Our nation-wide statistic of one woman dying each week at the hands of a partner or former partner is appalling.

In workplaces such as local government?

When the women in local council walk out in response to ongoing gender-based abuse there is a huge problem in local government as reported after an episode in March 2021. See below.

"Misogynistic bullying is alive and thriving unchecked at the Shoalhaven City Council."

That statement from Country Labor Councillor Annette Alldrick comes after four female councillors walked out of the council chambers over "derogatory" comments directed towards councillors and Mayor Amanda Findley during the ordinary meeting on March 2.

This illustrates the embedded problem within local government which should be seen as the exemplar for our community. There is no place for derogatory comments and use of force that has been excused under the guise of healthy debate. Raised voices, intimidating body language and personal comments are toxic and are inexcusable in the work environment or the community.

2. If you are elected as a Councillor on 4 September, what would you perceive to be your role in mitigating the incidence of violence against women:
 - a. In the community?

I believe we all have a role to raise awareness of the impact of violence on women within our community. Since 2017 I have coordinated the Sahssi30 Walk to raise awareness and funds for the Nowra Women's Refuge and will continue to do so into the future.

As a council we need to ensure that our community can provide the support services required by women and families and I would strongly advocate to all levels of government

for this. Supporting organisations such as the Homeless Hub through subsidised rental or the provision of a council owned building in response to loss of the long-term rental property.

b. In workplaces such as local government?

In the work place I will participate in healthy and respectful discussions and be a part of a review of practices that changes the toxic culture within the chamber. The current code of conduct does not adequately address the behaviour of some councillors, and everyone must be held accountable.

3. Are there instances in your life or career where you have become aware of, and taken action to mitigate the incidence of violence against women? If so, could you please describe these instances?

I have been an active member of Amnesty International for over 10 years and coordinate the Bay and Basin group. One of our key focus areas is gender-based violence and we have held many local events to bring about a change locally, nationally and globally.

I have coordinated the Sahssi30 walk raising over \$50,000 for the Nowra Women's refuge since 2017 and in collaboration with Jervis Bay CWA, Heartcentre and Amnesty will again hold a Community Cares Picnic at Huskisson on the 25th November marking the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women.

As the Wellbeing Coordinator at Vincentia High School we are embedding programs into the curriculum that promote healthy and positive relationships.

4. How could the Shoalhaven City Council Strategic Plan better address the issue of violence against women in the Shoalhaven local government area?

Shoalhaven City Council could continue to plan for more affordable housing options for women leaving violence. With the increase in women over fifty-five needing safe and affordable housing this must be a priority.

Reviewing available properties that may be suitable for services that provide support to women and families and creating a safe space within the council that a woman may go to if they are in an unsafe situation.

Within the structure of the council itself the Code of Conduct must be reviewed and enforced whilst developing a much healthier and more productive way of interacting as councillors.