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It is an honour to be invited to address this event today and an honour to be an Ambassador for White Ribbon. It is my view that in the matter of violence against women, leadership, especially from men, is urgently required.

The matter that I am going to address affects us all. It is about who we are - as a community, both nationally and globally.

I have seen, first hand, great violence perpetrated against women and children, almost entirely by men, around the world in the course of my long career as a soldier. I have stood beside the shattered remnants of families, crushed by the crimes committed against them, despairing that they will ever be able to live in hope again.

In Iraq, Afghanistan, Timor, the Solomon Islands, Bougainville; all so far from Australia; all so remote from the lives we lead.

But here is the rub. I have come to understand that the terrible things that happen in warzones – murder, rape, assaults, the stripping away of dignity, the absence of hope - they are just as much present in our own communities, in our own families, as they are in other more seemingly troubled countries. It's just that they happen behind closed doors, away from the lens of a war correspondent, ignored by neighbours or even family members, unspoken but just as life shattering.

If it was just the statistics the picture would be grim by any measure – one woman is murdered every week in Australia by a current or former partner. One in three women over the age of 15 has experienced physical or sexual violence at some stage of their lives.

But it is not the statistics – it's the lives. It's the hopes and aspirations that we, all of us, men and women, should have as our birthright as Australians. Aspirations and hopes that are smashed and rendered useless sometimes by those who are seemingly closest to us.

And it's not just individual lives, as terrible as this violence is. It's how, as a consequence we define ourselves – as men, as brothers, as sons, partners, and husbands, as Australians, as leaders within our communities, our institutions and our Nation.

How has it come to this and what can we do?

Let me give you an account of something that happened to me as the Chief of Army that set in stark relief the challenge that faces us all, especially men. I will tell you what I learned from it and how I have changed, even at the ripe old age of 58.

Several years ago, just after I had started my current appointment, I was asked by a woman of exceptional integrity, Ms Elizabeth Broderick, Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, to make time to hear from some of the women whose experiences she had been collating as part of her study into the treatment of women in the Australian Defence Force.

I agreed, not reluctantly, but certainly with some trepidation. Not long after I was sitting very uncomfortably, and with mounting disbelief, through lengthy face-to-face meetings with three women who had endured appalling physical and emotional abuse at the hands of their fellow soldiers; so much for our pride in looking after our mates!

These women had been let down by their leaders and their comrades. They had been robbed of that irreplaceable component of their personal identity – their dignity and self respect. This was not the Army that I loved and thought I knew.

My disbelief gave way, in turn, to shame that this had occurred in the institution to which I had devoted my entire adult life and of which I had been fiercely proud since I was young boy.

That shame is still there but it has now morphed into an implacable resolve to do something about it – in the Army and in the country I love.

And after wrestling with what to do and discussing it with men and women I trust; after taking part in further engagement with victims of violent, sexual crimes, I have concluded that our military culture, as strong as it is in certain regards, has within it deep and terrible flaws. And I have gone further. I now feel that much of what we call our Australian culture has the same faults that must be addressed.

This is a bleak view. I am no sociologist. I have no anthropological training, but I am certain of this: we live in a world where, increasingly, the squandering of women's talent, the traducing of their potential, is a global disgrace.

By every credible measure, women are denied opportunities that are accorded to men as a birthright of their sex. At home they face levels of domestic violence that imperil their very being. This is the case in so called first-world nations and in the developing world; it is a feature of secular and non-secular societies. Women face barriers, sometimes tangible, often subliminal, that constrain their lives and their contributions to the development of our world.

We need men of authority and conscience to play their part - and we most certainly need women, too long denied a strong enough voice, to be given the opportunities to lead – in all endeavors, in all parts of our polity and society. We all need to come to grips with our culture and how much it counts.

I have been at the forefront of cultural change in the Army and I think I only now understand just how important culture is.

It shapes our perspective of who we are: as Australians, as members of a particular profession, as supporters of a sporting team. It is usually intangible: a sense of identity, a shared but often unspoken alliance with others of our group. Indeed, it is so intangible at times, it defies ready definition and wilts when examined forensically. When it is made tangible it is often through totems – a badge, a slouch hat, a national flag. It is bolstered by the stories we tell each other about ourselves and herein lies culture's great strength and weakness.

Let me give you an example and it's close to the bone for me, a soldier in his 36th year of service, whose father was also a soldier. My Dad joined the Army in 1945, and our service briefly over-lapped, so together we have served the Nation for 70 unbroken years. No one loves the Army more than me, and our soldiers have done wonderful work in Australia's name for over a century. But still I can say that parts of our culture must change.

Why? Because in the hands of some, the stories that we tell each other about ourselves are exclusive, not inclusive. They reinforce a view of "us and them". In hyper masculine environments, like armies, "them" is defined by being weaker physically, not drinking 'like a man', not bragging of sexual conquest, being more introverted or intellectual, and of course being female.

I think that such distortion is a strong element in one of our great foundation narratives, not just for the Army but for Australia. I am talking about Anzac.

The Anzac legend – as admirable as it is – has become something of a double-edged sword. For the Army, the most pervasive distortion about what really happened in Turkey in 1915 is that many Australians now have an idealised image of the Australian soldier as a simple country lad – hair gold, skin white – a larrikin who fights best with a hangover and who never salutes officers, especially the Poms.

Where do women, or Indigenous soldiers fit in that narrative? They don't and so, over time, such stories become myths and then myths become legends and then they become some unalterable truth.

Further, I think that these stories are buoyed by aspects of our national culture in a way that makes it very hard for men to resist the pressures to conform to some distorted masculine image. It is a national culture that sees, in the wake of a terrible incidence of domestic violence, in which the lives of a mother and her three children are taken by the man who is the husband and father, media

reports that focus on how hard his life had become; how much he had been a loving man even in the act of murder.

It is a national culture that results in a male journalist thinking it's appropriate to make sanctimonious pronouncements about mandatory reporting to Rosie Batty, a woman who had suffered domestic violence for 11 years before her son was brutally, and publically, murdered by his father at cricket practice.

Rosie Batty is full of courage. She shouted back her response; but her experiences have left her begging the Australian public to allow victims of violence to "be heard with compassion and without judgment".

Kristy McKellar echoes these concerns of the victim being judged by our society when she reflects on her experiences. "The coronial enquiry and judicial system" she says "is often centered on the survivors as much as the perpetrators."

She would know. She suffered four years of violence at the hands of her husband before the police were called. He was convicted and sentenced to 14 months jail only to have a judge at his appeal overturn the sentence in favour of a community corrections order. She has since moved twice and still lives in fear of her life.

Lest you think I am excluding the Army from this scrutiny let me tell you what happened to one of those brave women who spoke to me at Liz Broderick's request. She had been sexually assaulted, while on a military course, by one of her instructors. She had the grit and courage to report him and he was tried in a magistrates court and found guilty. He was given a suspend sentence, and we, the "Army family" whose responsibility now was to shelter her, determined that we would continue to employ him as a soldier because of skills he possessed.

A terrible decision was made worse by then, after a period of time, promoting him in rank and posting her to the location where he now worked. She left, scarred and beaten down by a system that didn't care enough.

When I learned of this I took steps to discharge him from the Army, seven years after the event that led to his guilty finding. That was the correct thing to do, but such a decision is of little solace to this brave women.

Attitudes that tacitly condone or tolerate violence are recognised as playing a central role in shaping the way individuals and communities respond to that violence. The attitudes that attempt to justify a violent action, attribute it to external factors, trivialise its impact or shift the blame from the perpetrator to the victim, are key to why these terrible problems continue, seemingly unabated.

What can be done? The first step is recognise this great, essential issue that confronts us all. In that, White Ribbon is making a wonderful contribution in raising the matter so prominently.

Certainly the cost of being a plaintiff in our legal system for the victims is an area that needs to be addressed. The matter of violence against women in our national legislation reflects an approach that appears random and reactive, rather than reasoned and principled.

I also believe that we need to think about ways in which we can provide support to the loved ones of the victims. These are the mothers, fathers, siblings and friends who often don't find out there is a problem until it is too late. They are often left in grief, agonising over what they could have done and with little support available to help them.

During my term as the Chief of your Army I have had the distinct pleasure of working side-by-side with some of Australia's most innovative and dynamic business leaders, including many of you here today. I know from these experiences that Australian workplaces approach issues that affect them or their employees with pragmatism and common sense; acknowledging when they do, that what occurs outside the workplace can also have an impact on what happens within it. Yet, one issue that Australian workplaces have been slow to address is violence against women.

It's not that business leaders don't think violence is an important issue – it's that many of us don't always think of it as a *workplace* issue. It is often assumed that domestic and family violence, and the workplace, are mutually exclusive; that one has little or nothing to do with the other.

However, it is a fact that the vast majority of women affected by violence in this country are in some form of paid employment. This equates to around 800,000 women – enough to fill the Adelaide Oval just down the road 15 times over. Something to think about while we are watching the cricket this summer. It's a workplace issue because in the most cut and dried manner it directly impacts on the bottom line. Decreased staff performance, high turnover and absenteeism are all are direct, measureable impacts.

But of course, the work environment is not so black and white: employee health and wellbeing also subtly improves workplace culture and employee satisfaction. If we, leaders in the workplace, offer clear policies and procedures and clearly communicate to our employees that they are not alone; that disclosing their circumstances will not result in adverse consequences at work, then we are taking positive steps to address the issue.

And for us, the men of Australia? Well here is the really hard part. It is not enough to just abstain from hurting women; from treating them as sexual objects rather than as people with an innate right to lead a dignified life. It is not enough to refrain from distributing foul images or stories that attack the well-being of others.

No, the really hard part is to do all of that as well as ensuring that we are not bystanders when such things do happen. This means not shrouding ourselves in the comfortable shades of grey that comprise the passive acquiescence of

the malevolent acts of others. It requires us to recognise that the standard you walk past is the standard you accept and that you are judged not just on your actions, but on how you allow others to act.

This call to arms is daunting. It requires drawing on the most special of all human qualities – moral courage. I have failed at times in my life to apply it when it was needed and I am bitter, on reflection, that I did not. I certainly don't ask of anyone to be perfect. How could I when I am so imperfect? But I am implacable in my resolve to be better and so should all of us.
Nothing gets to the core of what I am talking about today more directly than an inspirational message from a man who was murdered while running for the Presidency of the United States. His name was Robert F. Kennedy and like his brother before him he was assassinated while doing what he believed in.

He summed up the power that one honourable man or woman can exert when they step up and declare, "I can make a difference."

He said: "It is from the numberless acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Every time someone stands up for an ideal, or speaks against an injustice, or moves to improve the lot of a fellow human being, they send a tiny ripple of hope - and crossing one another from a million different centres of energy and daring, those tiny ripples can build up to a tidal wave capable of sweeping away the mightiest walls of resistance and oppression."
This requires leadership and leadership involves giving yourself to others. It is not about being the boss. Rather the best leaders serve others. They believe in something bigger than themselves.

The world awaits our contribution. It desperately needs our idealism and our energy. Let us together make sure that Australians learn that the question they should be asking is not "Why does she stay?" but rather "Why isn't he stopped?"

Thank you.