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■ Domestic violence finally comes home...

Light switched on

By CAM LUCADOU-WELLS

Until the light globe comes on, a lot of men and women don't understand what family violence really is, says Hallam-based counsellor David Nugent.

There's a common myth that family violence is just about being a "wife basher" or "smashing up the house".

But it's also non-physical abuse and manipulation which is often tolerated inside a family home, Mr Nugent said.

"There's a lot of men who know things aren't right at home and are not sure what to do.

"The wife and children are walking on eggshells around the man.

"She makes the excuses for his anger that he's stressed, tired or the kids are annoying. But it just gets worse and worse."

The cycle builds. The son moves back home in his 20s and starts abusing his mother.

Or as Mr Nugent puts it: "Little Johnny is just like his father."

Mr Nugent and his Heavy METAL (Men's Education Towards Anger and Life) group wants "mums and dads" to pack Hallam Senior College theatre next month for a full-feature version of a documentary Call Me Dad.

The doco is a rare look inside Mr Nugent's men's behaviour change groups and women support groups.

It shows more than a few light bulb moments when the men "finally get it".

Sometimes it's when the man catches themselves during a domestic argument, such as a fight over buying new curtains.

Then the man listens to his partner and they discuss the situation.

She points out it's OK for him to go to Bunnings and buy tools. Buying curtains to make the house a bit nicer is what gives her joy.

Casey has the most reported family violence in the state, according to police statistics.

Mr Nugent hopes the documentary will inspire many men and women to seek help and change.

"This is a community problem, and it needs to be solved in the community."

When the doco's shorter version aired on ABC last year, men from around Australia called Mr Nugent to tell them they could relate to it.

These were men who weren't necessarily phys-



David Nugent and his documentary put the mirror up to family violence. 157088

Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS

ically violent but who broke down in tears when they realised what they're doing to their partners and children.

They couldn't believe they were such manipulative "arseholes".

Mr Nugent describes himself as once a "violent and angry" person, and still "working on it".

When he saw the light back in 1984, he founded Heavy METAL.

His weekly men's and women's groups "soldier on" without government funding.

Attendees come from as far as the western suburbs, one even flew in weekly from Sydney.

There are men's groups in Adelaide and Perth

that are run through Skype.

Women are also helped to build self-esteem, draw boundaries, and learn about the impact of emotional abuse.

Mr Nugent, who also works with students at Hallam Senior College, has marshalled year 11s to raise funds for female victims of family violence.

He wants to help educate teenage boys to express themselves better when they get angry or are not getting their way.

He addresses those boys who call girls their "bitches" or request girls to send nude pictures of themselves before they go out with them - and then treat them like rubbish.

He said boys think they only have an anger problem when they explode at their girlfriend for talking to other boys.

They think their girlfriends are their property and this attitude is a seed for something worse when they are adults.

"It's best to get to them early," Mr Nugent said.

The screening is at Hallam Senior College on 26 August, 7-10pm followed by a question and answer community panel.

Tickets are at eventbrite.com/e/call-me-dad-tickets-25834649131

For more details contact David Nugent on 0401 766 876 or email hvymetal@bigpond.net.au.

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