

It's time men started to take responsibility for their fellow men

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As we're all too sickeningly aware, yet another young woman, Courtney Herron, 25, has died at the hands of a man.

This bashing was, police felt compelled to point out, "particularly horrendous – that's the only way to describe it."

She joins Eurydice Dixon, Aii Maasarwe, and Natalina Angok, as the fourth woman to suffer this fate, as she walked alone in Melbourne, in less than a year. One count, according to *SBS*, puts Herron as the 20th woman to be murdered this year.

This time, the horror of yet another murder sparked a fresh attitude in the commentary.

The buck stops here

Victoria's Premier, Daniel Andrews, and Assistant Police Commissioner Luke Cornelius, both pointed the finger directly at men. "This is not about the way women behave ... this is most likely about the behaviour of men," said Andrews.

It is attitudes towards women that needs to change. "What is it in our community that allows some men to think that it's still okay to attack women or take from women what they want?" said Cornelius.

"Violence against women is absolutely about men's behaviour."

Responsibility is with us

When Eurydice Dixon was raped and murdered the advice from Victorian police was to take precautions in parks and laid the blame at the victims' feet by urging women to "take responsibility for your own safety".

But it is undeniably men who are behind these attacks. The responsibility is ours.

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But what can be done?

How do we change the deeply broken attitudes that lead to more than one woman a week killed by a partner or former partner?

A generation of healing

It's got to start with young men, to counter the whispered wisdom of powerful influences in their lives that say women are things, not equals on the planet.

There has to be a model for a better masculinity put in front of young men and boys, with intelligence and compassion, so they have a choice about what kind of man to be.

Tony George, headmaster of The King's School in Sydney says it's clear the genocide and oppression of the last century was all "men behaving badly". But as globalisation forces us to look over the fence "we're starting to realise misogyny has no place in society."

The future men

Early next month, The King's School is hosting the bi-annual National Boys' Education Conference, attracting hundreds of leading educators from the asia-pacific region.

Themed "Soft Hearts, Sharp Minds, Strong Men," the conference explores what it means to be a strong man, "to punch through bullying, racism, exclusion and misogyny to extravagant kindness and outrageous goodness," says Tony George.

I am delighted to disclose I have an interest here. I'm speaking at the conference. It's wonderful to be right at the heart of meaningful discussions on what it means to be a good man, with young men.

And the time to talk, as writer Tim Winton put it, is before they "pull on the uniform of misogyny and join the shithead army."

Outside of the schoolyard

Sure, environments with the will, resources and eager audience, like The King's School, are rare. So, there's a responsibility on all men, who care about how men are in the future, to open the dialogue on what it means to be a better man.

Scientifically, to be an alpha male is to be a leader, a consoler-in-chief, with a soft strength who makes everything better. Not a bully. Whether a man has influence over thousands of young hearts and minds, or a grumpy nephew who might need a gentle chat, we all have a role to play.

Women, exhausted by the battle for equality, have been demanding men step up and join the fight. We're reluctant. Like every powerful group in any society, we don't want to give it up.

The recent National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey shows one in seven young Australians still think a man can force a woman to have sex if she initiated it, then changed her mind. To be clear, this means one in seven young Australians are yet to correctly understand the notion of consent.

The road ahead

So ... there's a long way to go.

We don't know the ripple effect of conversations we have. But challenging young men to see women as their equals, and why it's good for us all, will eventually create change.

Speaking up now, can stop someone getting killed in the future.

That's a pretty good reason. That's what can be done.

Because a world where men are extraordinarily kind and outrageously good, would be a nice place to be.

Phil Barker is the author of [The Revolution of Man](#), Allen & Unwin.