



LASTING SCARS: Injuries from strangulation and choking can be ongoing and may appear 12 months later.

Photo: Halfpoint

Choking condemned by Qld laws

IT'S been two years since the Queensland Government passed new laws to make non-fatal strangulation, suffocation and choking a separate offence.

Under the laws, a person commits a crime if they unlawfully choke, suffocate or strangle another person without their consent.

Either the person is in a domestic relationship with the other person, or the offence was associated with domestic violence.

The maximum penalty for the offence is seven years imprisonment.

According to the Training Institute of Strangulation Prevention, one in four women will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime.

Of those at risk, 68 per cent will experience near-fatal strangulation by their partner.

Loss of consciousness through strangulation can occur within five to 10 seconds and death is possible within minutes. Of women who have been strangled, 98 per cent are strangled with hands and 38 per cent report losing consciousness.

Domestic Violence Action Centre Toowoomba service manager Kath Turley said it was a good thing to bring in specific laws targeting strangulation and choking.

"Any way perpetrators are being held accountable is absolutely an important thing to be happening," she said.

"It's sending a clear message to this person that the behaviour is not acceptable and there will be consequences.

"It opens up a space where if other women are reading about this they can have a realisation that it's not just them experiencing things from their partner and there are support services around."

Ms Turley said support services were enhancing skills in inquiring specifically about strangulation, using language people can better understand.

Elyse Wurm
If you or someone you know needs help, phone the Domestic Violence Action Centre in business hours on 4642 1354, Womensline on 1800 811 811 or Mensline on 1800 600 636.

Choking, strangling laws embolden others to reach out

SERIOUS medical and emotional scars can be long-lasting after a woman has been strangled by her partner.

But domestic violence support workers say choking legislation is helping send a clear message to the community that justice will be served.

Domestic Violence Action Centre Toowoomba service manager Kath Turley said often strangulation was

pre-meditated and was the step before a person was killed.

Lasting effects can range from bruising or scratching but blocking air flow could have longer-lasting impacts.

"A number of women are starting to report early dementia and Alzheimer's and strokes," Ms Turley said. "(After a person has been choked) the next day

they think they're OK. But what we're seeing is the period where they're still at risk is 12 months because of the other effects of blood clots and the brain being deprived (of oxygen)."

Ms Turley said choking and strangulation laws were helping to send a clear message to potential perpetrators that the behaviour was unacceptable.

Warwick Safe Haven president Bette Bonney said seeing perpetrators punished for choking gave other victims the confidence to reach out.

"If victims are laying charges and the law is proactive about it, it certainly gives them confidence that if they're going to report something, something will be done," she said.

Elyse Wurm

Prison for DV attack

Woman choked, threatened with rape and had nose broken

ELYSE WURM

HE LOCKED the door so she couldn't escape and when she fumbled with the handle, her former lover threw her onto the bed and squeezed both hands around her neck.

He stopped the woman he said he loved from being able to breathe or cry for help, before striking her face and fracturing her nose.

The 22-year-old man fronted Warwick District Court yesterday, pleading guilty to one count of choking in a domestic setting as well as single charges of sexual assault and burglary and assault occasioning bodily harm.

The court heard the Warwick man let himself into the woman's home in May last year and confronted her about the man she was seeing after their own relationship ended.

"You leant on her chest and held her down," Judge David Andrews said.

"When she tried to roll on her side you backhanded her across the face, her nose started to bleed," Judge Andrews said.

The woman's phone rang and it was the new man in her life. "That's when you said to him in front of your victim, 'I've already f----- her up and she's on the floor bleeding, I'm

going to rape her if you don't answer me,'" Judge Andrews said. "I mention that because that would have terrified your victim."

The court heard that the woman screamed so loud, neighbours rang police.

The man was arrested and has spent the past year in custody.

Crown Prosecutor Julie Aylward said the woman suffered neck pain, nose fractures

and a headache after the attack.

"Young men need to be deterred in violence in any form and especially on their partners," she said.

Judge Andrews accepted the submission from the defence that two and a half years jail was sufficient punishment. He took into account the year the man spent in custody and ordered he be released on parole immediately.

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