



Picture: DAVID GOSLING

GAME CHANGER

Netball and footy players in the outer east will team up with sport and health professionals Aaron Bailey, Josette O'Donnell and Phil Murton to tackle equality and respect on and off the field.
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Salons to help cut abuse

Laura Armitage

A GROUNDBREAKING program to be launched in Melbourne's east will see hundreds of hairdressers help fight domestic violence.

In an Australian first, hairdressers will be given early intervention training to help them talk to clients who might be experiencing violence or abuse.

The Ringwood-based Eastern Domestic Violence Service trialled

Hairdressers to be trained to assist domestic violence victims

the HaiR program in the outer east last year and will now roll it out across seven eastern municipalities from July.

EDVOS executive director Jenny Jackson said the agency dealt with 1000 cases a month in the eastern region. At least 17 per cent were reported in the Yarra Ranges.

Ms Jackson said the training helped hairdressers recognise

signs of family violence and respond in a way that showed empathy and belief.

"Women establish relationships and confide in their hairdresser," Ms Jackson said.

One outer east hairdresser, who took part in the pilot program last year, told *Leader* she often met women who opened up and shared their life stories while at the salon.

"We've had a client before in tears about her partner. It was just horrible and we haven't known what to do," she said.

"So now we can help out ... and we can tell them when to get help."

HaiR was started following a recommendation to the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence and is backed by industry groups and Yarra Ranges Council.

Psychologist Carmel O'Brien said while the program had great merit, caution should be exercised.

She said while hairdressers could be trained to listen more and connect people to the right support, they should remember they were not counsellors who offered advice.

Ms Jackson said hairdressers would not be acting as counsellors but instead would help refer women in need to professionals.

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