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MEDIA RELEASE

TROLLS ATTACK INITIATIVE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!

To mark International Women's Day 2014, Women's Legal Services NSW launched **Speak Up**, a bold new website to reduce violence against women at www.speakup.org.au.

Soon after being launched last week, the website was hijacked by men's activist groups trying to derail the cause by leaving abusive comments on the 'Speak Up' page, where people are invited to finish the sentence "*we could reduce violence against women if...*"

Alex Davis, Women's Legal Services NSW solicitor, said today, "within moments of launching, troll comments started streaming in such as 'Speak Up against bitches' with links to men's rights groups on Reddit and anti-feminist Youtube videos.

"The purpose of this website isn't to divide groups, attribute blame or deny violence against men as an issue, but rather to bring our community together to start a national conversation about violence against women. We want to increase awareness and decrease the violence," Ms Davis continued.

One in three women in Australia will be victims of domestic violence, and one in five are victims of sexual violence. One woman dies each week as a result of domestic violence in Australia.

Responses are displayed on the website anonymously and collected by Women's Legal Services NSW to assist with making practical recommendations to the government on how to end violence against women.

"We want to show that community input is valued and can lead to real change. While we are now moderating comments to ensure our cause is not devalued or trivialised, the overwhelming majority of responses have been positive. We want both individuals and organisations to use this feature, it's an opportunity to have a log of ideas so they can be transformed into actions", Ms Davis said.

The Hon. Michael Kirby, Ambassador Natasha Stott Despoja and other well known Australian figures have also contributed to the cause. Their responses can be viewed on the media page of www.speakup.org.au.

Importantly, the website also features a handy searchable directory with the key services available across Australia to assist women experiencing violence, the first of its kind.

"**Speak Up** looks and feels like an App if you view it on a smartphone, but is actually a website. It's easy to navigate so women can find the help they need anytime, anywhere, and exit quickly if in danger," Ms Davis said.

The website is independent of, but designed to complement the government's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022. Written submissions for the Second Action Plan close this Friday, 14 March 2014.

For more information, please contact Alex Davis on (02) 8745 6900 or 0411 196 608 or email alex.davis@wlsnsw.org.au

