



Recent past president of Port Moresby Rotary club John Vellacott (L) giving an account of his term while successor Adam Hughes looks on.

BY CLEMENT KAUPA

THE 'Say No to Family Violence' campaign has gained a new and passionate partner in the Port Moresby Rotary club, thanks to its newly installed president Adam Hughes.

Hughes announced it at a formal dinner on Wednesday night at the Lamana Gold club in Port Moresby straight after taking over the presidency from John Vellacott, who remains on the club's new committee.

"I (have) opened up wide but that is certainly where my dream is and I'm passionate about it," Hughes said, after delivering his inaugural speech and launching the project with the distribution of a bumper sticker bearing the slogan. Mr Hughes is the head of the credit branch at FinCorp

and has been in the country for less than a year before being conveyed the presidency this week. And if Hughes has his way, his brand new 'Say No to Family Violence' campaign will be the next biggest project undertaken by the club since its Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) and School Desk Program days.

Hughes outlined to the *Post-Courier* in an interview that it will involve an extensive advertising campaign covering Port Moresby initially but with hopes to go nationwide.

Though admitting to it being an ambitious project in terms of cost and scope, he said his strategy is to establish effective partnerships with existing stakeholders such as the police (RPNGC), women, youth and community department, the courts, correctional services (CS)

and the churches, among others.

"We know we are not alone, and we thank the Port Moresby Rotary club for taking this initiative," coordinator of RPNGC's family sexual violence unit, Chief Inspector Delilah Sandakan, who was a guest speaker at the dinner, responded.

According to her account of the RPNGC's effort to contain the rampant scourge of sexual and physical violence in the family, significantly more needs to be done. Initially with one desk at the Boroko station, the RPNGC now operates seven family sexual violence desks in NCD and 18 nationwide for victims to report cases, but it is still grossly disproportionate to the rate of incidence.

"We get about 15-25 cases daily at the unit at Boroko, but those that go unreported are far more higher," In-

spector Sandakan said. She added that there is a very high prevalence in Port Moresby's settlements, but they are hindered by logistics and manpower to go out and make arrests."

"It is very serious matter because more and more children are losing their identity and sense of belonging from the abuse they get at home, but we cannot do anything until the matter is reported to us."

"In many cases of spouse abuse, the victims, mostly wives, report the matter to us, and when we issue them the interim protection order (IPO) to serve on their husbands, they go and never return, so we don't know whether their husbands have consented to the order or breach it," said the Inspector. According to her, a breach of the IPO order is a crimi-

nal offence, and the offender—usually the husband, but in some cases, wives—among other penalties, are liable to be imprisoned for up to two years.

"This is under the new Family Protection Act, which many Papua New Guineans are not aware of and when we educate the female victims, and sometimes males, who came to us about it, they go away and do not return."

"For women victims, mostly wives, we think it is because they are afraid that if their perpetrator husbands go to jail, they will lose their income source and suffer with their children," Inspector Sandakan said.

She added: "Very few victims have come back to report their husbands for breaching the IPO and we made arrests."

Book launched to help educate child victims

THE scourge of domestic abuse has become a national talking point, but including some of the youngest victims in that conversation is difficult.

Two early childhood educators from Tasmania, Judi Rhodes and Tanya McQueen, were struck by the lack of resources to help. So they made one themselves.

Queenie's Little Book of Comfort follows Queenie the quoll who, when faced with family violence, seeks help from her neighbour, Eric the echidna.

"These little children have no skills or tools to help them survive." Ms Rhodes and Ms McQueen spent two

months working on the book and several more getting it published.

"We've already trialled reading the story to different age groups of young children and instantly you'll hear comments like, 'My Mummy and Daddy never argue,' which is lovely, or, 'Daddy makes Mummy cry all the time,' Ms Rhodes said.

Ms McQueen hoped the book would allow teachers and carers to help those children.

"The right support can happen for them; they can have the conversation," Ms McQueen said.

"If they disclose something major we can refer into the right services to get assistance for these children

and also for the family as well."

The book provides steps to help children calm themselves and seek shelter.

"Hopefully, we can give children skills to cope and survive. That's our biggest thing, because quite often these children are still in the situation all the time," Ms Rhodes said.

The authors recently read the book to children at their local childcare, the Cygnet Community Children's Centre.

Centre director Angela Conley said it could be read to groups of children or used one-on-one with children who may be having trouble at home.

"A book that gives you tools or strategies about how to deal with it is really important to have in this environment."

The Women's Legal Service Queensland, which works with women who are victims of domestic violence, has the book in its waiting room for children to read.

"I really like how the book validates children's feelings of feeling scared because children, you can imagine, feel quite confused in a house where there is domestic violence, where the one that loves them they are also fearful of," chief executive Angela Lynch said.

"So this book validates those feel-

ings and gives some really simple steps for children to do in response to that fear."

Speaking out can be dangerous for children, and Ms Lynch said it is important teachers and carers are properly trained.

"The way we protect children is to believe and validate their feelings when they come to somebody and say what is happening in their house, and to actually make the referral," she said.

"If you're not an expert yourself in relation to domestic violence, make the referral over straightaway to a domestic violence service."