

Meagher: Take a stand against sex trafficking



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The husband of an Irish woman murdered in Australia two years ago said a new all-Ireland campaign on prostitution and sex trafficking could be a “turning point” in how the sex trade is addressed.



Tom Meagher, whose wife Jill Meagher was raped and killed in Melbourne in September 2012, is an advocate for the White Ribbon campaign, the world’s largest male-led movement to end violence against women.

The all-Ireland campaign from the EU-funded Reach Project ‘Prostitution — We don’t Buy it’, is asking men and boys to make a stand against prostitution and sex trafficking.

A survey published to mark the launch showed almost one in 10 (8%) of men admitted they paid for sex, but not regularly.

“I really think this campaign can be a turning point in how we address this issue. I am struck by the lies we tell ourselves about sexual entitlement and consent.”

He was glad the campaign was organised around the principle that most men did not buy sex and it was those men that needed to speak out about prostitution.

“A universal human right not to be coerced into sex can be ignored as long as it takes the form of a market transaction,” Mr Meagher said.

He strongly believed there was a need to expose the lie that prostitution was about sexual freedom or liberation. "It is not liberation, it is exploitation," he stressed.

Mr Meagher said the choice men made absolutely mattered and impacted on society. "We need to be on the side of liberation, truth and human dignity," he said.

His wife was murdered on her way home from a night out in Melbourne in September 2012. Adrian Bayley was later found guilty of her rape and murder and sentenced to life in prison with a non-parole period of 35 years.

Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald who launched the campaign said the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill that would criminalise the purchase of sex in the context of prostitution and trafficking would be introduced in the Dáil during the current term.

Similar legislation is being introduced in Northern Ireland on June 1.

Ms Fitzgerald said there were 79 investigations into trafficking in Ireland last year and, while the reported figures were low, the patterns of exploitation in the country were no different to what is happening throughout the world.

Sex trade survivor Rachel Moran, who also spoke at the launch, said it was important that men speak out against prostitution. "I can tell you from my time on the streets and in the brothels I never came across a woman who had walked out of a well-paid job and into a brothel. It just does not happen," she said.

Ms Moran said she was concerned there were a lot of well-intentioned people who did not see the link between human trafficking and prostitution. "I know women who have been sex trafficked, women who have been kidnapped and slung into the back of vans, taken to brothels and sold there," she said.

"I was led into prostitution through destitution and homelessness, not by the hair on my head as some women were. But we all shared the same experiences in the brothels."