campaigns fail to mention, however, government media campaigns of the graphic images used in chances are you'll picture a woman away.”

You can get over the physical damage but the emotional abuse is so difficult to get a true effect of the abuse, and service specialises in men’s health, says Dr Celi. “Male victims are then approached with negative judgments about that they are potential perpetrators and only women can be victims. “The much needed work in recent decades in raising awareness for female victims has created the unfortunate side-effect of making men out to be potential perpetrators and even to consider it with caution,” Dr Celi says.

Men who had tried to use existing services dismissed or played down. “I spoke to everybody — counsellors, psychologists, lawyers, police; everybody just went oh gee, if she’s that bad, get away from there,” one man told researchers. Yet despite the evidence of domestic violence against men, and despite the plethora of services for female victims of abuse, there is almost nowhere for a male victim to turn.

Men who had tried to use existing services such as helplines, GP’s and police, had found them unhelpful and even hostile towards men, the report found.

Mr Edwards says police laughed at him and other services had no way of helping him. “The police at the counter actually sniggered at me and gave each other knowing looks,” he said.

“All those dimished self-worth can also see them withdraw from their social circles, withdraw from their life and develop destructive behaviours like increased alcohol use,” she said.

Alan Edwards was forced to move to a different town, away from his young son, to escape the abuse. “I ended up having to move out and let go of my baby. And because I was a hands-on parent, that was like a mother giving up her child,” he says.

“I had to let go of my baby when he was three years old, and took me another three or four years before I got help. I went back on a 50-50 shared care basis.”

The report found men were reluctant to report abuse for a number of reasons — all of them familiar to Mr Edwards — including shame and embarrassment and fear of being judged as weak. Others didn’t want to report it for fear of what would happen to their children.

Many were also afraid they would not be believed, would not be helped or would be blamed for the abuse which is what happened to some victims. Others had their experiences dismissed or played down.

“The emotional impact on a man’s self-confidence and subsequent mental health problems can be grossly underestimated,” Dr Celi says. “Male victims are then approached with negative judgments about that they are potential perpetrators and even to consider it with caution,” Dr Celi says.

Men’s Advisory Network and Men’s Health Australia report found.

Men reported being repeatedly put down and humiliated, being forced to submit to sex against their will, having their financial affairs controlled and being cut off from their family and friends. The report also identified the new category of legal administrative abuse, where women use things such as violence restraining orders inappropriately to deliberately hurt their partners.

Psychologist Elizabeth Celi, who specialises in men’s health, says domestic violence against men often takes the form of emotional abuse, making it harder to detect than physical abuse.

She says people often assume that men don’t feel hurt by emotional abuse because they don’t talk about it, yet their sense of shame, failure and self-doubt can be more acute than that of female victims.

“Men’s health is intricately wrapped up in men’s identity,” she says. “Female perpetrators can attack him physically, and worse yet, attack his role as a father, a worker and a man in his own right. So the emotional impact on a man’s self-confidence and subsequent mental health problems can be grossly underestimated.”

“Just because he doesn’t verbalise it doesn’t mean he doesn’t feel it.”

Greg Anderson, a spokesman for the One in Three campaign, which aims to raise public awareness of family violence against men, says the popular belief that men are tough and can look after themselves physically was backed up by statistics that showed more women than men suffered from physical abuse in relationships.

“But often the worse damage to men comes from the emotional and psychological abuse,” he says. “Having your life controlled in such a way that you’re utterly powerless, not being allowed to see your friends and family and not having money to spend — these sorts of impacts are the same whether you’re a burly six-foot bloke or a petite woman.”

Dr Celi says men can become suicidal when the abuse is at its most severe.

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“I spoke to everybody — counsellors, psychologists, lawyers, police; everybody just went oh gee, if she’s that bad, get away from there,” one man told researchers. Yet despite the evidence of domestic violence against men, and despite the plethora of services for female victims of abuse, there is almost nowhere for a male victim to turn.

Men who had tried to use existing services such as helplines, GP’s and police, had found them unhelpful and even hostile towards men, the report found.

Mr Edwards says police laughed at him and other services had no way of helping him. “The police at the counter actually sniggered at me and gave each other knowing looks,” he said.

“There was nowhere for me to go and that was one of the biggest problems.

“Not only was I isolated on a country farm with this violent person, when I went to seek services there was very little they could do for me and, even if they wanted to, there was very little understanding of how it is for men. And it’s different for men than it is for women.”

ECU researcher Alfred Allan said there were no services specifically for men as victims of domestic violence.

“We found that when men finally did pluck up the courage to report their abuse, there was nowhere for them to turn or they felt simply not believed,” Professor Allan said.

“A lot of the service providers we interviewed felt really sorry for the man and wanted to help him but simply could not because they didn’t have the facilities or experience.”

Community Services Minister Robyn McKewney says the support services offered to domestic violence victims “are not gendered” and can therefore be accessed by anyone presenting as a victim or perpetrator of family and domestic violence.

She says women and children experience inequitable impacts for greater rates than men do and although male victims could use crisis care and helplines, “the majority of male callers present as perpetrators of violence seeking to change their behaviour”.

Similarly, government and media campaigns targeting women and children as victims of domestic violence are “not gendered” and can therefore be accessed by anyone presenting as a victim or perpetrator of family and domestic violence.

The much needed work in recent decades in raising awareness for female victims has created the unfortunate side-effect of making men out to be potential perpetrators and even to consider it with caution,” Dr Celi says.

Men who had tried to use existing services dismissed or played down. “I spoke to everybody — counsellors, psychologists, lawyers, police; everybody just went oh gee, if she’s that bad, get away from there,” one man told researchers. Yet despite the evidence of domestic violence against men, and despite the plethora of services for female victims of abuse, there is almost nowhere for a male victim to turn.

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They ended up validating me, which was at least enough for me to hold my own, and helped me see that I had to get out,” he says.

For three years he lost the hands-on parenting role he had previously enjoyed with his son, but eventually won a Family Court order giving him shared custody.

“Now I’ve got a court order she seems to understand and things have got better,” he says.