

Place to remember victims of domestic violence

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STOP THE VIOLENCE: Tamworth High School White Ribbon Group representatives, from left, Daniel McCulloch, Samantha Constable, Ethan George and Shenae Andrews at the unveiling.

Photo: Geoff O'Neill 040516GOF03

VICTIMS of domestic violence and the broader community will now have a place to reflect in Tamworth, after a special remembrance plaque was unveiled in Bicentennial Park on Wednesday night.

A candle-lighting ceremony and vigil were held to remember those who have died and the ones left behind due to domestic or family violence.

“It was an incredibly moving experience to see so many people out in support, from all different ages and backgrounds, taking a stand against domestic violence,” Tamworth Family Support Services general manager Belinda Kotris said.

About 100 people turned up for the plaque unveiling, which was the result of 12 months' work, in conjunction with local community groups, including the council, which provided the rock for the plaque and a small gardenbed around the memorial.

A special contingent of students from Tamworth High School also dedicated their time, as part of the school's White Ribbon Group against domestic violence.

The unveiling coincided with the introduction of new legislation in Parliament this week that will mean domestic violence victims will be better protected.

One in three women in NSW will fall victim to domestic violence.

Under changes to the NSW Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) Scheme, any criminal offence where a person intends to coerce, control or cause the victim to fear for their safety will be regarded as a domestic violence offence.

Courts will also get more power to impose an ADVO, under the changes introduced by Attorney-General Gabrielle Upton, who said the state government's law "holds perpetrators accountable for trying to control their victims through fear and violence".

The legislation is part of an overall domestic violence justice strategy, which is being rolled out across the state, to give police greater powers in cases of domestic violence.

"We know victims are often reluctant to come forward because they are afraid of their partner, so the government is making it easier for them to get an ADVO without having to prove a fear of violence in court," member for Northern Tablelands Adam Marshall said.

"The law will also ensure ADVOs are written in plain English and spell out examples of the consequences of breaches, to improve information for perpetrators and victims."