

# Passion proves a safe bet

## PROTECTING CHILDREN IS AIM

**Declan Byrne**

NINE years ago, Armadale resident Holly-ann Martin quit her teacher's assistant job to pursue her dream of creating a safer world for children.

Last Tuesday, on International Women's Day, Ms Martin was inducted into the WA Women's Hall of Fame, acknowledging her groundbreaking child sexual abuse prevention education program Safe4Kids.

"It was a huge honour to be in the front row with all those amazing women, it was humbling but to have the work that I've been doing over the past 30 years recognised. It's really important because it's a topic nobody wants to talk about – child sexual abuse," she said.

It was in 2007 when Ms Martin used her long service leave to travel to Kalumburu and Halls Creek to teach abuse prevention. It was on that visit she decided to take the risk of a lifetime.

"From there it just snowballed, I took a \$150,000 loan out on my home to produce the resources and quit my job at the Education Department and have been doing it full-time since," she said.

"People would say 'it's such a huge gamble' but if you believe in something, then it's not a gamble at all."



**Holly-ann Martin receives her WA Women's Hall of Fame Certificate from Deputy Premier Liza Harvey.**

Since then, Ms Martin said she had educated 4000 children, 1000 teachers and 1000 parents a year through Safe4Kids.

She has travelled to every state and territory in Australia teaching Safe4Kids, as well as Cambodia and has had offers from the UK.

Despite Safe4Kids going well, Ms Martin said more needed to be done to prevent the sexual abuse of children.

"The problem is, parents think it won't happen to their child but when it's up to a third of Australia's children that will suffer some form of sexual abuse before their

18th birthday, one in three isn't great odds," she said.

"Schools pay for us out of their school budgets to go and teach them, but I don't think they should have to, but they do it because they know that it works and they want to do the best for their children.

"There should be other funding to fund this really important work."

Ms Martin said the City of Armadale had supported the program every step of the way.

"The City of Armadale are huge supporters. Basically they believe there is nothing better that they can spend the

rates on than supporting schools in the area to keep our kids safe.

"If they get 20 parents to the workshop, that's a good night, but why isn't every jolly parent there?" she said.

When asked if she had any words of wisdom for other women looking to make a positive mark on the world, Ms Martin had one simple piece of advice.

"Follow your passions. I've got a passion for keeping children safe and people said I was taking a huge gamble but if you follow your passion and you believe in something – you just have to go for it."