



■ RECLAIM NIGHT: A small but enthusiastic band of women's rights supporters took to the streets of Emerald last Friday.

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# Reclaim the Night march

By DI STANLEY

A SMALL but vocal group of women took to the streets of Emerald last Friday to reclaim the night and make a stand against sexual and domestic violence in the Central Highlands.

Centacare's Central Highlands Sexual Assault co-ordinator Kelly McKenna said the walk was to raise awareness about women's rights in the community, particularly after two well-publicised rapes and so many others unreported this year alone.

"There has been significant sexual violence in the Emerald community, unfortunately," Ms McKenna said.

"Emerald is not isolated from sexual abuse or sexual violence, it does happen here.

"This was about working together to raise community awareness about violence against women and children, and to promote women's strengths and survival.

"It represents a claim for a woman's basic human right to live in freedom from discrimination and fear of violence.

"It's also about the mental curfew that's imposed upon women where there's a limit to where we can go out at night."

gland in 1977. Today, it is a globally coordinated event staged on October 31.

Sadly, one in four girls and one in seven boys will be sexually assaulted before the age of 18.

Current statistics show that of the 96.2 per cent of female victims, 61.8 per cent are assaulted before the age of 20, and 10 per cent of women will be raped in their lifetime. Of the offenders, 97 per cent are male.

"Just recently there have been three or four sexual assaults and they're usually young people," said Ms McKenna.

"There have been more than two girls raped here. I guess this is about knowing there is support for those people and making the community aware there is support."

Ms McKenna said another emergent factor in sexual violence locally was the fly-in, fly-out workforce.

"There is ongoing sexual violence, particularly when you have people flying in and flying out," she added.

"They're not local to the community, they don't have the same connection to the community and it is an issue.

"Sexual violence is about power and control. It's not about anger, it's not about sex, it's about somebody