

Media Release

Victorians asked to look out for each other and 'call out' family violence during coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

"The Andrews Government is proud to launch Respect Victoria's new family violence prevention campaign, which sends a clear message that family violence is never acceptable, even during the testing circumstances of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It also promotes avenues for help for those who need it," said Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Gabrielle Williams.

The Respect Each Other: 'Call It Out' campaign calls on families, friends, neighbours and communities to work together to prevent family violence during this unprecedented and challenging time.

Respect Victoria's Chair, Melanie Eagle said: "The world is experiencing unprecedented challenges directly related to COVID-19. It is most distressing that these challenges combined with physical distancing and isolation can lead to an increase in family violence and violence against women.

"How we manage our own behaviour in this time matters. The way we support our family, friends, neighbours and community during this time matters. Together, while we're flattening the curve, we can educate ourselves about the warning signs of violence and call it out when we see it."

"We are aware that for some women and children in this situation, finding an opportunity to safely call for support is harder than ever due to self-isolation measures," said safe steps CEO Rita Butera.

"That's why we're heartened by the increased number of calls we are receiving from concerned friends, neighbours and family members. It just goes to show that everyone in our community has a role to play in responding to and preventing family violence."

Speaking today, Respect Victoria's CEO, Tracey Gaudry said, "Family violence can take many forms. It can be psychological, emotional, financial, physical, sexual or a combination. We ask the community to join us in rejecting the idea that there's ever an excuse for family violence, and we want Victorians to know that there is support out there – whether they are at risk of, or experiencing violence, or witness it as a bystander.

"Through the campaign, Respect Victoria encourages all members of the community to be 'active bystanders', by raising awareness around the early warning signs of family violence and to equip people with the skills and autonomy to safely intervene. With Victorians staying at home more often, family, friends and neighbours are uniquely placed to play an active bystander role," Ms Gaudry said.

"During this pandemic, we have seen an increase in call volumes from across the country to our Men's Referral Service, including spikes in usage around major announcements," said No to Violence CEO Jacqui Watt.

"Whilst this is alarming, it also means more men are reaching out for support. If you are worried someone you know is being violent, our expert counsellors can help you. We want to make sure that men get help earlier if they are willing to ask for it and that home is a safer place for women and children."

The campaign will launch across metropolitan, regional and rural television, radio and Spotify, as well as major digital and social media channels in the coming week. The campaign will also run in Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian, and Vietnamese in some of these key channels.

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For support:

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 000.

If you are experiencing or at risk of experiencing violence, help is available.

- safe steps is available 24/7 on 1800 015 188 or via email at safesteps@safesteps.org.au
- If you are worried your behaviour might be harming your family members now or may in the future, call the Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491. Specialist counsellors are available every day
- To access a wider range of family violence crisis response information and for further information on the campaign for victims, perpetrators and bystanders of family violence, visit www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au