

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **National campaign to reduce violence against women and their children**

#### **Why do we need this campaign?**

The prevalence of violence against women in our community is high. We know that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than other Australian women and girls.<sup>1</sup>
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in remote and regional areas experience rates of family violence up to 45 times higher than other women.<sup>2</sup>

In Australia:

- In 2012, a report by the Australian Institute of Criminology found that, on average, one woman is killed by their current or former partner each week.<sup>3</sup>
- ABS data<sup>4</sup> shows that since the age of 15:
  - 1 in 3 women had experienced physical violence
  - 1 in 4 women had experienced emotional abuse from a current or former partner
  - 1 in 5 women had experienced sexual violence
  - 1 in 6 women had experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner
  - Women were most likely to experience physical and sexual violence in their home, at the hands of a current or former partner.

The good news is that awareness and understanding of violence against women is high, and most adults agree it's wrong.<sup>5</sup> We also agree violence against women isn't just physical – it includes behaviours designed to intimidate or control.

However, what we often **don't** realise is that the cycle of violence can start with the beliefs and attitudes boys and girls develop from a young age.

From early on boys and girls begin to believe there are reasons which make disrespectful or aggressive behaviour acceptable. Girls question whether it's their fault, and boys tell each other it was a bit of joke. This can lead to attitudes like:

- 1 in 4 young people don't think it's serious when guys insult or verbally harass girls in the street<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> KPMG 2009, *The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children*, Safety Taskforce, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australian Government.

<sup>2</sup> Lievore, D 2003, *Non-reporting and hidden recording of sexual assault: an international literature review*, Australian Institute of Criminology for the Commonwealth Office on the Status of Women, Canberra.

<sup>3</sup> Bryant, W & Cussen, T 2015, *Homicide in Australia: 2010-11 to 2011-12 National Homicide Monitoring Programme Report*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012, *Personal Safety*, cat. no. 4906.0, [www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0/](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0/)

<sup>5</sup> VicHealth 2014, *Australians' attitudes towards violence against women. Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>6</sup> Hall and Partners | Open Mind 2015, *The Line campaign – Summary of research findings*, Hall & Partners | Open Mind, Sydney.



- 1 in 5 young people believe there are times when women bear some responsibility for sexual assault<sup>7</sup>
- 1 in 4 young people don't think it's serious if a guy, who's normally gentle, sometimes slaps his girlfriend when he's drunk and they're arguing<sup>8</sup>
- Over 1 in 4 young men believe that girls like guys who are in charge of the relationship.<sup>9</sup>

Since young people's attitudes and behaviours are shaped by those around them, it's important to positively influence them where they live, work, learn and socialise.<sup>10</sup> As adults, we need to recognise and reconcile our role as important influencers of young people.

### **How was the campaign developed?**

It was informed by extensive research across Australia by Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS). There is a section in the TNS report which includes research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences. The research report is available on the [DSS website](#).

Parenting experts and child and behavioural psychologists helped develop the range of resources and tools for parents and family members.

### **What were the main research findings?**

There's a clear link between violence towards women, and attitudes of disrespect and gender inequality. But when thinking about our own reactions, we might be surprised to recognise some of the most common ways we excuse disrespectful and aggressive behaviour. There are some automatic assumptions and responses we make, often without realising:

- We play down disrespectful or aggressive behaviour ("don't worry, he's just having a bad day")
- We accept aggression as just part of being a boy ("boys will be boys")
- We blame girls ("it takes two to cause trouble")
- We raise girls to accept disrespect ("it's okay, he probably did it because he likes you").

We have allowed disrespectful behaviour to somehow become a normal part of growing up.

The research also found that many parents and other adults are worried about whether they should get involved. They're concerned about embarrassing their child, or being in conflict with other parents.

Another important finding was that young people want consistent messages – to hear many voices across the community advocating for cultural change.

---

<sup>7</sup> VicHealth 2015, *Young Australians' attitudes towards violence against women*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> Youth Action NSW & White Ribbon Australia, *Young people's attitudes towards domestic and dating violence*, Youth Action NSW & White Ribbon Australia, North Sydney.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

## **What were the main research findings relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?**

Although violence against women is a sensitive topic regardless of the audience, when discussing the topic of disrespectful and aggressive behaviour, and violence against women with Indigenous community influencers, the extent to which the topic is explicitly considered hidden was clear.

Indigenous females echoed this strong desire to conceal the experience of any disrespectful or aggressive act at much higher levels than mainstream audiences.

There was a higher level of disclosure of experiencing or witnessing gender inequality and violent behaviour towards women among Indigenous participants in the research when compared to mainstream participants. This is consistent with national statistics which indicate higher rates of prevalence of domestic violence in Indigenous communities.

## **What does the campaign aim to do?**

It will help parents, family members, teachers, coaches, employers, Elders and other role models to look at their own attitudes, and start a conversation about respect with the young people in their lives. This is about long-term cultural change within the community.

## **Who's involved?**

This is a \$30 million Council of Australian Governments initiative, and is jointly funded by the Australian, state and territory governments. It will build on efforts already underway by states and territories, as well as non-government organisations like Our Watch and White Ribbon.

The Department of Social Services is the lead agency responsible for implementing the campaign.

## **When does the campaign start?**

Campaign advertisements began on television, in cinemas, outdoor locations, in newspapers and across social media on 24 April 2016. The advertising is supported with online tools and resources to help influencers of young people to reflect on their own attitudes, and talk about respect with the young people in their life.

## **What resources are available?**

A range of resources and tools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are available on the [campaign website](#). They include:

- a conversation guide, to help parents and family members talk with young people about the importance of respectful relationships from an early age
- the respect checklist, for adults to become more aware of what boys and girls might be thinking in disrespectful or aggressive situations
- the excuse interpreter, to discover the hidden meanings of common expressions that can excuse disrespectful behaviour towards girls
- an animation and infographic to provide facts on the issue.



Australian Government

A joint Australian, state and territory government initiative.

---

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**  
**LET'S STOP IT**  
**AT THE START**

Products are available for Indigenous Australians, those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and parents and family members who have children with disability. **Where can I get further information?**

- Visit [www.respect.gov.au](http://www.respect.gov.au) for a sample of the advertising materials, other background and resources.
- Read more about:
  - [research behind the campaign](#)
  - key findings from the [2013 National Community Attitudes Survey](#) and [youth survey](#)
  - research on [young people's views about relationships and gender equality](#), commissioned by Our Watch.