

## **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 shocking:

- 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>1</sup>
- ABS data<sup>2</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 have experienced their most recent incident of physical or sexual assault, by a male perpetrator, in their own home.

*Note: Figures have been rounded.*

The good news is that awareness and understanding of violence against women is high, and most adults agree it's wrong.<sup>3</sup> We also agree violence against women isn't just physical – it includes a range of 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>4</sup>
- 1 in 5 young people believe there are times when women bear some responsibility for sexual assault<sup>5</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>6</sup>
- Over 1 in 4 young men believe that girls like guys who are in charge of the relationship.<sup>7</sup>

Since young people's attitudes and behaviours are shaped by those around them, it's important to expose them to positive influences where they live, work, learn and socialise.<sup>8</sup> As adults, we need to recognise and reconcile our role as important influencers of the younger generation.

<sup>1</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>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016, *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>3</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>4</sup> Hall and Partners | Open Mind 2015, *The Line campaign – Summary of research findings*, Hall & Partners | Open Mind, Sydney.

<sup>5</sup> VicHealth 2015, *Young Australians' attitudes towards violence against women*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</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>8</sup> *ibid*

## How was the campaign developed?

It was informed by extensive qualitative and quantitative research across Australia by Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS). 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, it wasn't that bad")
- We accept aggression as just part of being a boy ("boys will be boys")
- We blame girls ("it takes two to tango")
- 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.

## What does the campaign aim to do?

It will help parents, family members, teachers, coaches, employers 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 did the campaign start?

Advertising commenced from Sunday 24 April, and includes television, print, out of home, cinema and online. It is supported by online tools and resources, community engagement and a number of other activities that will run until 2018.

### What resources are available?

A range of resources and tools 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.

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.