

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN BACKGROUND

Why do we need this campaign?

Violence against women and their children is a serious issue in Australia:

- ABS data¹ shows that:
 - One in six women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner since the age of 15. This figure increases to nearly one in four women when violence by boyfriends, girlfriends and dates is included.
 - one in six women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner.
 - one in four Australian women has experienced emotional abuse from a current or former partner.

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 wrong². 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 a joke. This can lead to attitudes like:

- one in four young people don't think it's serious when guys insult or verbally harass girls in the street.³
- one in five young people believe there are times when women bear some responsibility for sexual assault.⁴
- one in four 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.⁵
- over one in three young men believe that women prefer a man to be in charge of a relationship.⁶

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016, *Personal Safety*, cat. no. 4906.0, www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0/

² 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.

³ Hall and Partners | Open Mind 2015, *The Line campaign – Summary of research findings*, Hall & Partners | Open Mind, Sydney.

⁴ VicHealth 2015, *Young Australians' attitudes towards violence against women*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Youth Action NSW & White Ribbon Australia, *Young people's attitudes towards domestic and dating violence*, Youth Action NSW & White Ribbon, Australia, North Sydney.

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.⁷ As adults, we need to recognise and reconcile our role as important influencers of the younger generation.

How is the campaign funded?

To date, the campaign has been funded by the Australian, state and territory governments under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

The Department of Social Services is the lead agency responsible for implementing the campaign. It builds on efforts already underway by states and territories, as well as non-government organisations like Our Watch.

How was it developed?

The campaign approach was informed by extensive qualitative and quantitative research across Australia by Kantar Public. 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 other influencers.

What were the main research findings?

There's a 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 ("what was she wearing?").
- We raise girls to accept disrespect ("it's okay, he probably did it because he likes you").

When we make these excuses, we're allowing disrespectful behaviour to 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 a cultural change.

What does the campaign aim to do?

It helps 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.

We know that children are keen observers of what adults say and do and are greatly influenced by them. When it comes to teaching respect, we all influence a child's idea of what is right and wrong.

Young people pick up simple things like our gestures, reactions and the words we choose. They might take our words at face value and interpret them in ways we didn't intend, or see it as an excuse or permission to behave in a certain way. Over time, these everyday interactions shape what children believe about how others should be treated.

⁷ ibid

Stop it at the Start highlights the role we all play in raising a generation of respectful young people, the potential for a positive change if we come together as a community.

If we make small changes – if we stop ourselves before we say something, if we question what seems like an off-the-cuff joke or a throwaway line, if we start a conversation about respect, or intervene where we see disrespectful behaviour – we can make a change for the better.

What has been the campaign response so far?

Evaluation research was conducted following Phases one and two of the campaign. It found:

- 70 per cent of all people recalled an element of the campaign activity, with 60 per cent of those people taking action as a result, such as:
 - trying to be more respectful to others
 - thinking about how to show respect to others
 - trying to be more respectful to help show young people how to behave
 - having conversations with young people about how to treat the opposite sex with respect
 - seeking out information and resources to better understand how to talk to young people about respect.
- At a population level, this means that 42 per cent of all influencers took an action as a result of the campaign.

Where will I see advertising?

Advertising will run from Monday 18 November 2019 until 22 December 2019. It will run nationally on channels including online video, digital, social media and out-of-home, such as bus shelters and bus and train interiors.

What's different about Phase two?

It aims to move the conversation forward, with different advertising and supporting activities. It helps us ask ourselves – could we be teaching our children disrespect?

It shows how small moments and small steps will move us closer to a culture free from disrespect and violence.

What resources are available?

A range of resources and tools are available on the [campaign website](#). They include:

- [The Conversation Guide](#) to help parents and family members talk about respect with young people about the importance of respectful relationships from an early age.
- [The Respect Checklist](#) for adults to become more aware of what young people might be thinking in disrespectful or aggressive situations.
- [The Excuse Interpreter](#) to discover the hidden meanings of common expressions that can excuse disrespectful behaviour.
- An animation that shows how as a community, we can change what young people accept as normal behaviour.



- Videos of Australians from different walks of life reacting to common phrases that can excuse disrespect, and sharing the advice they'd give their 15 year old selves about respect.
- [The Community Toolkit](#) provides resources to help influencers bring the campaign to life in their local areas. It includes a series of resources to help promote respectful attitudes, such as posters, fact sheets, a social media kit and more.

Products are available for Indigenous Australians, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and parents and family members who have children with disability.

Where can I get more information?

- The issue: <https://www.respect.gov.au/the-campaign/the-issue/>
- Advertising materials: <https://www.respect.gov.au/the-campaign/campaign/>
- Tools and resources: <https://www.respect.gov.au/resources/>
- Community Toolkit: <https://www.respect.gov.au/community/>
- Policy background: <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/>