

## **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 data<sup>1</sup> 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 wrong<sup>2</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 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.<sup>3</sup>
- one in five young people believe there are times when women bear some responsibility for sexual assault.<sup>4</sup>
- 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.<sup>5</sup>
- over one in three young men believe that women prefer a man to be in charge of a relationship.<sup>6</sup>

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

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

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 [Department of Social Services 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?**

The campaign aims to help break the cycle of violence by encouraging adults to reflect on their own attitudes, and start a conversation about respect with the young people in their lives. All adults, including parents, grandparents, other family members, teachers, coaches, employers and role models, have a role to play in influencing how young people understand respectful relationships.

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.

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<sup>7</sup> ibid

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.

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

We can make small changes by having conversations about respect and gender equality with young people aged 10-17 years in our everyday lives. By taking small, simple steps – such as questioning seemingly harmless comments or jokes, role modelling positive behaviours and unmuting ourselves when we see disrespect – we set the standard for what is and isn't acceptable.

These steps all help move us closer to a future for our children that is free from disrespect and violence against women.

### **What has been the campaign response so far?**

Evaluation research was conducted following Phase two of the campaign, which was launched in 2018. It found:

- 72 per cent of people who saw the campaign understood and accepted their role in showing young people how to act respectfully
- 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
- Around 60 per cent of adults felt the campaign led them to a different perspective on violence against women, were more conscious of how they behave in front of children and felt encouraged to find out more information.
- Those who had seen the campaign were more likely to have recently discussed violence against women with friends or family, and had spoken to young people about respectful relationships

### **Where will I see advertising?**

Advertising will run from Sunday 14 March 2021 until Saturday 31 July 2021. It will run nationally on channels including television, cinema, digital, social media, online video and out-of-home, such as bus shelters and retail and street signage.

### **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 Excuse Interpreter](#) to discover the hidden meanings of common expressions that can excuse disrespectful behaviour.
- [The Respect Checklist](#) for adults to become more aware of what young people might be thinking about disrespect.
- [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.

The following resources will also be added to the website during the campaign:

- A video series featuring well-known Australians sharing their experiences of talking about respectful relationships and gender equality with their children.
- An animated content series that demonstrates how to have conversations about respect and respond to disrespectful behaviour in everyday scenarios.

Resources are available for Indigenous Australians, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and parents and family members who have children with disability. Please visit the [Department of Social Services website](#) to access these resource materials.

### 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/>