



## **JOINT STATEMENT: DV VIC/DVRCV AND NO TO VIOLENCE**

*15 March 2021*

The peak bodies for Victorian specialist family violence services have today issued a joint statement in support of people across Australia sharing their experiences of sexual violence and seeking stronger institutional responses across all parts of our community.

The recently-merged Domestic Violence Victoria and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria have united with No To Violence to support calls for reform.

“We must listen to and believe victim survivors,” said DV Vic/DVRCV CEO Tania Farha.

“And we need to do much more than listening and believing. We must shift the structures and systems that allow sexual violence to occur. They are the same structures and systems that so often fail victim survivors when they come forward,” Ms Farha added.

Ms Farha highlighted the multiple barriers survivors face when reporting abuse, which often result in a decision not to pursue a formal complaint.

“This story is broader than any individual, any specific workplace or any one incident. The reaction we have seen to recent survivor accounts is telling. We have seen those with power deflecting responsibility, rather than reflecting on the toxic culture that allows violence to occur and then relies on shame to keep victim survivors silent.”

“Condoning disrespect and discrediting survivors’ experiences are at once the symptoms and the causes of the epidemic of gendered, sexual and family violence in this country. All of us have a role in changing that.”

Jacqui Watt, CEO of No To Violence, pointed out the alarmingly high rates of men’s violence in Australia.

“While media and the public may be tempted to question any one victim survivor or set of allegations, there is no question whatsoever about how prevalent this abuse is. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 figures show one in three girls and women over 15 have experienced physical or sexual violence – or both. What public attention seldom highlights is how many men have used these forms of violence – this needs to change.”

Ms Watt also highlighted the need to acknowledge the culture that enables these forms of abuse, and the importance of embedding accountability across all workplaces and communities.

“Sexual violence is a manifestation of disrespect and gendered power imbalances that permeate our homes, workplaces and online spaces. We must listen to people when they call out disrespect, and we must call on everyone to challenge sexism when they see and hear it among friends and colleagues.”

DV Vic/DVRCV and No To Violence acknowledge that recent media coverage and public conversation may be harmful and distressing for people who have or are currently experiencing abuse of any kind.

“Support is available. Specialist services are here for you, and will believe you,” Ms Farha said.



Where to get help:

**Sexual Assault Crisis Line**

Support for people who have experienced past or recent sexual assault.

Call: 1800 806 292 (24 hours)

**1800 RESPECT**

Information, counselling and support for people affected by family violence or sexual assault.

Support is available all day and every day.

Call 1800 737 732

Webchat: 1800respect.org.au

**safe steps**

Support for women and children experiencing family violence.

Tel: 1800 015 188 (24 hours)

Webchat: safesteps.org.au

Email: safesteps@safesteps.org.au

**Men's Referral Service**

Confidential support for men at risk of using family violence.

Tel: 1300 766 491 (7 days, varying hours)

ntv.org.au

**Rainbow Door**

Free specialist helpline providing information, support, and referrals for LGBTIQ+ Victorians.

Call: 1800 729 367 (10am-6pm, 7 days)

Text: 0480 017 246 (10am-6pm, 7 days)

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