

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

Deaths attributed to relationship violence in Australia during 2019

=

**63 women
13 men
24 children**

The first 10 weeks of 2020

=

**8 women
7 children
3 men**

Aboriginal women 34 times more likely to be hospitalised and 10 times more likely to be murdered in a violent assault

Not one of us could have been unmoved by the recent tragic death of a mother and her three children at the hands of her estranged husband. The act of extreme violence was shocking; the fact it happened in broad daylight on an ordinary street during a routine 'school run' makes it so difficult to comprehend. It has been claimed Hannah Clarke sought help, but facilities denuded by years of defunding were unable to provide support. The federal government cut funding to domestic violence programs in 2014 and have continued in budgets since then. **Help was not available when it was needed.**

All people have a right to feel and be safe at home, school, work and on our streets. All people have a right to expect respect from partners and family members. Some relationships need to end. But they should not end in violence.

All involved need support – men, women and children. People need somewhere they feel safe, somewhere to turn to for help whether they are the victim or the perpetrator of any violence. With cuts to government funding of services, much of this support is provided by charities already stretched to the limit by ongoing social justice issues, homelessness, poverty and the needs to those waiting for assistance following the unprecedented bush fire season.

Charities are doing a marvellous job, but the task is enormous. Add to the mix the uncertainties surrounding the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Will there be a spike in unemployment? More stress on families already struggling emotionally and financially has the potential to cause a spike in relationship violence.

Is this the right time for government to be defunding support services? Despite statistics showing a desperate need for more funding, not less, the government has announced funding for the National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum, the peak body representing Indigenous survivors of domestic violence, would not be renewed past June 2020. This funding is but a very small part of the response needed to address ongoing relationship violence, but restoring it would be a starting point with immediate benefit.

There are many calls on the public purse (ie taxpayers' funds) including bush fire recovery, pandemic management and sports grants, but we cannot let this issue be swept aside. If you feel government needs to provide more support for victims of relationship violence, please contact the Prime Minister online at www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm or write to Hon Scott Morrison, PO Box 6022, House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600.

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May we always see the world through the eyes of Christ, speak to those we meet with the words of Christ, and take with us on our journey the peace of Christ