

## Condoning of violence against women

Violence against women is preventable. To stop this violence before it starts, we need to address the social conditions that drive it – the four gendered drivers. **Condoning violence against women** is one of these drivers, where violence is excused, downplayed, justified or denied; or where blame is placed on the victim rather than responsibility resting with the perpetrator.

What condoning violence can sound like

Media highlighting the victim's behaviour more than the perpetrator's violence

Saying the violence 'wasn't that bad' or should be kept quiet

Believing men can't control their need for sex

Blaming alcohol, mental illness or stress: 'he just snapped'

People who condone violence against women may not realise they are doing it. But their beliefs and behaviours influence others. Left unchallenged, they create a culture where it's OK to look away, deny the problem or make excuses for the bad behaviour.

### What are the gendered drivers?

The evidence base tells us that gender inequality creates the social conditions for violence against women to occur. There are four key expressions of gender inequality that have been found to predict or drive this violence. To prevent violence against women, we must focus our efforts on addressing these drivers.<sup>1</sup>

- 1. Condoning of violence against women**
2. Men's control of decision making and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships
3. Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
4. Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

# What condoning violence looks like in daily life

## Addressing different levels and contexts in prevention

Rates of family violence and violence against women are higher when it is condoned by societies, institutions, communities or individuals. Looking at how this driver manifests within different settings where people live, learn, work, socialise and play can help you to plan your approach to addressing it. The more areas across society where violence-supportive attitudes, behaviours and structures are challenged and rejected, the more influence and positive change we will create.



## Societal level

Mistrusting women's reports of violence – 42% of Australians think it's common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men – even though false allegations are rare.<sup>2</sup>

Public portrayals of men who use violence against women as passionate, protective, mentally ill, an alcoholic or drug addict, minimising or excusing their choice to use violence.

## Institutional / systemic level

Restrictive family violence provisions in the migration act mean some migrant or refugee women on temporary visas risk losing their right to stay in Australia if they leave a violent relationship.

Magistrates insinuating in their judgements that the victim's behaviour was a factor in her experience.

## Organisational / community level

Sexual harassment policies that focus only on reporting, without onus on organisational duty of care, or on bystanders to take action. This trivialises the impact of violence and places responsibility on the victim to manage the situation.

Sporting clubs allowing perpetrators of violence to continue playing with little consequence – putting the organisation's reputation/sporting success first rather than support for the victim or holding the perpetrator to account.

Believing women find it flattering to be persistently pursued, even if they're not interested.

## Individual / relationship level

Excusing boys and mens mean or aggressive behaviour as 'boys will be boys' or ignoring phrases like 'treat 'em mean, keep 'em keen'.

# How can we change this?

To prevent violence against women we must take action to address the gendered drivers.

## Actions that will prevent violence against women:

### 1. CHALLENGE

condoning of violence against women

### 2. PROMOTE

women's independence and decision-making

### 3. CHALLENGE

gender stereotypes and roles

### 4. STRENGTHEN

positive, equal and respectful relationships

Challenging the condoning of violence against women means addressing attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, systems and practices that justify, excuse, or downplay violence against women.<sup>3</sup>

For example:

- implementing workplace policies and practices that show sexual harassment is taken seriously
- raising awareness about the prevalence and impact of different forms of violence (e.g. financial abuse, coercive control, stalking or technological abuse).

- ensuring that media stories highlight perpetrators' responsibility rather than victims' clothing or behaviour



<sup>1</sup> Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, (2015). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>2</sup> ANROWS, (2018). *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)*, Sydney, NSW.

<sup>3</sup> Our Watch, (2017). *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story*, Melbourne, Australia.