

June 15, 2020

Statement of support for Minister Gabrielle Williams – Words do Matter

Centre for Non-Violence today sends our support to the Victorian Minister for Women, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gabrielle Williams - and stands with her to say, 'words matter'.

The vile, violent and misogynistic language used by a colleague towards Ms Williams is an example of the appalling culture of violence against women that exists in our society.

Verbal abuse and threats are used by men to control and subdue women.

They are a tactic of control that takes away a woman's power and creates fear.

From July, 2018 until June, 2019, Centre for Non-Violence received 3825 police referrals – a 26.7 increase from the previous year.

Of those, 2221 were verbal abuse, 1547 were emotional abuse and 762 were physical.

Women in leadership positions are not immune to gender-based violence and abuse.

Deeply held misogynistic beliefs and power inequalities between women and men, exist everywhere.

While we know all politicians are exposed to criticism, the nature of abuse directed at women leaders is more often gendered, personal and more violent.

We have seen this time and again in Australian politics. Language directed at women is different.

While we have made some progress in changing this, sexist and disrespectful attitudes towards women and girls continues to be a social norm.

Gender inequality is the cause and consequence of violence against women.

Gender inequality comes from rigid gender stereotypes, attitudes and beliefs that condone violence and disrespect towards women, and men's control of decision making and limiting a woman's independence.

Just as Premier Daniel Andrews did today, we need to call out attitudes and behaviours such as those directed towards Ms Williams.

We cannot change attitudes and behaviours if we have men in leadership positions who continue to treat women with disrespect, and we thank the Premier for his leadership in saying "no Victorian should be tolerated if they hold those sorts of views about women and against women".

Gabrielle Williams is a strong ally of our sector and shows commitment to creating a fairer and more equitable world for many.

We will continue to support her in doing that.

Words do matter.

Further information: Nicole Ferrie, Head of Media and Communications 0475 963 741

Centre for Non-Violence can be contacted on 1800 884 292
The 24-hour statewide safe steps family violence crisis response line is 1800 015 188
Men's Referral Service 1300 766 491
In an emergency, call 000
For information, visit: <https://www.cnv.org.au/we-are-here-to-help>