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## **COVID-19 IMPACTS ON MENS BEHAVIOUR CHANGE WAITING LISTS**

CENTRAL Victoria's specialist family and domestic violence response service, Centre for Non-Violence, says increased government funding will be needed to address growing waiting lists for Men's Behaviour Change programs, as a result of COVID-19.

Men's Behaviour Change programs support men to address family violence and help them understand the impacts of their use of violence and abuse on their partners, children and relationships.

Prior to restrictions stemming from the global coronavirus pandemic, Centre for Non-Violence had two groups ready to commence Men's Behaviour Change programs in March, and one group with only four weeks left of the program. A third group was ready to participate in the Making aMENds program for fathers. Up to 12 men participate in each group.

CNV now has a wait list of 53 men, and many more are being assessed each week.

The organisation cannot return to face-to-face group work until government advice and restrictions allow us to do so, and timelines because of the fluid coronavirus environment are unknown.

We are maintaining telephone support for men on our waiting list, with women's and children's safety at the centre of our work.

Centre for Non-Violence client services general manager Yvette Jaczina says growing waiting lists are concerning for the sector.

"This is a statewide issue as a result of COVID-19," she said.

"We do have some concerns about the increasing number of men on our waiting list, and we are constantly looking at our response to that.

"We are actively engaged with the men on our waiting list through telephone support, but we are now in a position where we are struggling with resources."

Centre for Non-Violence has allocated extra resources to ensure we remain actively engaged with men on the waiting list, and will look to operate more group sessions when restrictions lift.

“Resourcing needs to be considered by government for when we resume business as usual, to ensure we can respond to the men on our waiting list when we’re in a position to do so,” Ms Jaczina said.

“Increased funding is necessary to ensure we can adequately address the significant problem of men’s violence against women and children, and work with men to help them understand and change their behaviour.”

Men’s Behaviour Change programs help men understand and unpack beliefs, attitudes and expectations that underpin their use of violence and control within their relationships. They are encouraged to learn new ways of thinking and to behave differently in situations where they had previously used violence and abuse. The focus in the groups is on developing a more positive set of behaviours. Men are challenged to take responsibility for their behaviour, but the program also models an attitude of respect rather than punishment or shame.

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