



Senator the Hon Marise Payne

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister for Women

Senator the Hon Anne Ruston

Minister for Families and Social Services

Minister for Women's Safety

The Hon Paul Fletcher MP

Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts

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TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT TO KEEP WOMEN SAFE

The Morrison Government is investing a further \$150 million into a range of measures to deliver on our commitment to ending family, domestic and sexual violence.

The funding includes a \$104 million technology-focused package to keep women and children safe and prevent devices being used to perpetrate or facilitate family, domestic and sexual violence, including:

- establishing a \$20 million fund for states and territories to trial electronic monitoring of high-risk and persistent family and domestic violence offenders based on Tasmania's award-winning Project Vigilance
- \$54.6 million to support up to 30,000 victim-survivors to stay safe in their own homes through security assessments and upgrades including cameras, bug sweeps and safe phones
- \$26.6 million for online safety initiatives including supporting the eSafety Commission to set up a team of experts who will provide victim-survivors practical and personalised support to address technology-facilitated abuse through referrals from counselling services.

The new investment comes as the Government today launches the \$19 million fourth phase of the Stop it at the Start campaign, Bring Up Respect, which encourages adults to discuss respect with children from an early age and throughout their childhood. It will screen across television, cinema and social media from 27 March 2022 and will be featured on bus stops and other prominent locations.

The Government is also committing an additional \$46 million to roll out two further phases of the Stop it at the Start campaign to drive change in people's attitudes towards violence and raise awareness of new and emerging issues such as tech-facilitated abuse.

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, said the package would help victim-survivors to ensure that their personal devices are safe to use and that technology is part of the solution to living free from violence.

“Technology is a great enabler and we want it to empower victim-survivors but, distressingly, it has become a weapon of choice for perpetrators of family, domestic and sexual violence,” Minister Payne said.

“Our commitment to continue the Stop it at the Start campaign will help to ensure that future phases of the campaign raise awareness of this emerging issue at a community level.

“The Morrison Government is committed to improving the safety of Australian women in all settings, including online.

“We have already taken significant steps to improve the online safety of Australians by introducing world-first anti-bullying schemes for adults and children. We have also reduced the takedown time for service providers to remove image-based abuse.”

Minister for Women’s Safety, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, said the \$54.6 million expansion of the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes program would provide thousands more victim-survivors with access to technology safety specialists to secure their homes and devices.

“We want to support women and children to remain in their home or a home of their choice, where it is safe and appropriate to do so, through safety planning and the provision of personal safety alarms, security cameras, dash cameras and other technology solutions,” Minister Ruston said.

“Through increased investment we will progressively establish a national provider to ensure women across the country have access to the same standard of support.”

In 2017, the Commonwealth committed \$1.4 million to support the Tasmanian Government trial of bilateral electronic monitoring that not only monitors offenders but also enhances victim-survivor protection by creating exclusion and buffer zones based on the live location of the victim-survivor, which is monitored in real time using GPS tracking devices.

The evaluation of the trial demonstrated a 76 per cent decrease of high-risk incidents, 81 per cent reduction of threats, 100 per cent decrease in reports of stalking and that 80 per cent of offenders did not re-offend in six months following the removal of the electronic monitoring device.

“We hear all too often that perpetrators flagrantly ignore the conditions of family violence orders and continue to be violent, harass and stalk their victims,” Minister Ruston said.

“This program has a proven track record of keeping Tasmanian women safer, making perpetrators more accountable and improving police response times through real time tracking.

“Through a \$20 million fund we are providing other states and territories with the resources to trial similar electronic monitoring projects within their jurisdictions.

“Electronic monitoring is not the panacea to keep women safe but it is another tool in the tool kit as we seek to address the full life cycle of violence across prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.”

Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said \$26.6 million would support the eSafety Commissioner to continue and expand its vital work supporting Australians who have been the target of online abuse.

“The report tabled this week by the House Select Committee Inquiry into Social Media and Online Safety has confirmed that women are disproportionately the targets of online abuse in all its forms, such as trolling, cyberstalking, image-based abuse, impersonation and fake accounts, doxing, defamation and cyber abuse,” Minister Fletcher said.

“\$16.6 million of new funding will allow the eSafety Commissioner to establish a team of experts to support victim-survivors of tech-facilitated abuse who have been referred through counselling services, drawing on the latest evidence base, strategies and techniques.

“We will also increase our investment in the successful Online Safety Community Grants program with a further \$10 million to support online safety education and projects for community groups, sporting groups and faith communities.”

This investment will form part of the Commonwealth’s commitment to the First Action Plan 2022-2027, under the next *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*, which is currently being finalised with states and territories.

These measures respond to significant stakeholder feedback during the 18-month consultation for the next National Plan to increase the provision of expert safety support to address and prevent tech-facilitated abuse and strengthen the application of intervention orders.

It follows the Morrison Government’s \$189 million commitment to new prevention and early intervention measures announced earlier this month which comes on top of the record \$1.1 billion investment in women’s safety in the 2021-22 Budget.

A wide variety of tools and resources can be found at www.respect.gov.au to support adults in building positive attitudes and behaviours around respect. Broadcast-quality television commercials and high-resolution versions of other advertisements are available at www.respect.gov.au/the-campaign/media/

The evaluation of Tasmania’s Project Vigilance is available at www.police.tas.gov.au

If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence, call [1800RESPECT](tel:1800RESPECT) on [1800 737 732](tel:1800737732) or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au.

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