



MEASURING THE TOLL: THE FAMILY VIOLENCE INDEX

FROM THE MINISTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE



For generations, family violence has undermined the very heart of our most important institutions and the place where we are supposed to be at our safest.

In February 2014, the tragic death of Luke Batty and the courageous response by his mother Rosie gained the attention of our nation.

In May, Daniel Andrews announced that a Labor Government would create a Royal Commission into Family Violence.

In the course of my work, since December, as the country's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, one striking fact has emerged: we know there is a problem, but we don't know just how big the problem is.

In almost every other sphere of civic life and human wellbeing, there are firm measures that tell us where we are at and where we are headed.

Measuring death and injury on our roads has helped us improve safety, reduce road trauma and save lives on our roads. Measuring the Consumer Price Index helps us understand the cost of living.

A Family Violence Index will tell us so much more about the size and scope of our national emergency. Most importantly, it will help us save lives.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fiona Richardson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Fiona Richardson MP
Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence



BACKGROUND

- **Family violence is the leading contributor to death, injury and disability in Victorian women under 45.**
- **In Australia, one woman is killed by her current or former partner every week.**
- **In 2014, there were more than 68,000 incidents of family violence reported to Victoria Police – an increase of 70 per cent since 2010.**
- **Three quarters of all reported assaults against women happen at home.**
- **Women and children are most likely to have crimes committed against them in their own homes.**

Building on the courageous work of advocates and survivors, such as Rosie Batty, our Australian of the Year, together with the dedicated efforts of the community sector and Victoria Police, the Andrews Labor Government has given family violence the political prominence it deserves.

Changing the statistics – and changing attitudes – will be hard. It will take time. Nonetheless, the cost to society, to government and most importantly to women and children is now under the spotlight like never before.

OUR EFFORTS TO REDUCE FAMILY VIOLENCE

“The system is broken. It’s failing. We won’t fix it until we admit it”

With these words, Daniel Andrews announced that a Labor Government would take action on the number one law and order issue in our state. Unless we change the way that we respond to family violence we will keep getting the same outcome. We will continue to see people dying. We will continue to allow fear.

Just over 100 days into the Government, work has already begun. We have appointed the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and established Australia’s first Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The Royal Commission is an opportunity to take a root and branch look at the way we do things. As an independent inquiry it also captures the attention of the policy makers and the community alike. The Commissioners are tasked with finding practical solutions to deliver better outcomes.

Its findings will help us find a better way to support victims, deal with perpetrators and stop violence from occurring in the first place. It will save lives.

THE PROBLEM

While it is generally acknowledged that our state, indeed our nation, is facing a crisis in family violence, the true scale of the problem is as yet unknown.

In Victoria, Acting Chief Police Commissioner, Tim Cartwright, says incidences of family violence are significantly under reported. A comparison with family violence rates in New Zealand indicates that up to one in three incidents could be going unreported in Victoria.

Credible, high-quality data is collected by police, but it is a limited measure.

Police data does not tell us how our courts, prisons, hospitals, community services, schools and workplaces are effected by family violence.

Perversely, as rates rise, and the Police welcome the increase in reporting, the community at large may instead conclude that we are actually seeing an escalation of violence. While the truth may lie somewhere between the two, it is not possible to confidently conclude either way.

Relevant data is collected by other agencies but these data sets can be disparate and seen in isolation. Community attitudes, gender stereotypes and other measures of inequality are also measured but their links to family violence are often difficult to understand or are poorly communicated.

Even though we know that family violence is widespread crisis and a whole-of-society issue, we do not know the size and scale of the problem or how to measure it. This makes it harder for governments and society as a whole to understand how to make things better.

YOU CAN'T MANAGE WHAT YOU DON'T MEASURE...

Twentieth century management guru, Peter Drucker, whose writings contributed to the philosophical and practical foundations of the modern business corporation famously said *"You can't manage what you don't measure"*.

In the critical area of family violence, we need to improve outcomes over time and across generations and the first step in achieving this important goal is putting in place a comprehensive measure of family violence.

Victoria led the way in reducing the road toll and introducing innovative measures to improve safety. A Family Violence Index will provide the foundation for our state to lead the way once again. We owe it to the victims of family violence to do nothing less.

THE CONCEPT OF A FAMILY VIOLENCE INDEX

There's nothing new about using an index to measure our progress as a society, but it is a new approach to addressing family violence.

A family violence index would bring together data from across the fields of crime, justice, health, education and our community to create a single indicator of family violence.

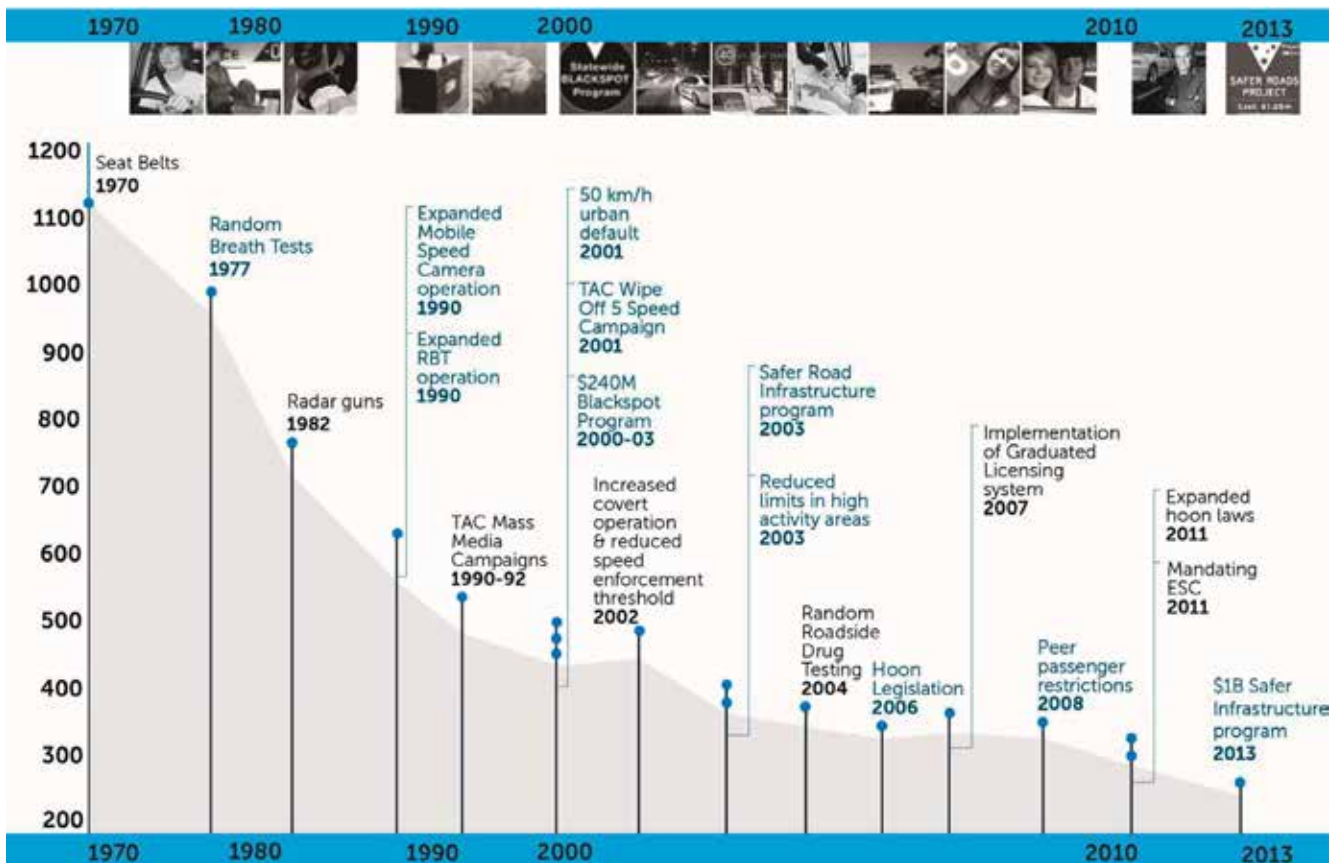
Relevant measures, statistics and data for the Index may include things such as:

- the reporting rates of instances of crime,
- the number of police referrals to family violence services,
- the number of perpetrators convicted,

- the number of working days lost by employees affected,
- the rate of homelessness caused by family violence,
- the number of presentations to the justice system,
- the variation of community attitudes towards acts of violence,
- the number of affected women and children presenting to hospital.

In the same way that the road toll informs us of how we are performing when it comes to road safety, we need a measure of family violence to ascertain where we are now and where we will be in the future.

Victorian Road Toll and Road Safety Enforcement Initiatives





EXAMPLES OF CURRENT INDEXES

Gender Inequality Index (GII) – The United Nations Development Program’s 2010 Human Development Report featured, for the first time, the Gender Inequality Index (GII). The index captures the loss of achievement within a country due to gender inequality. It uses three dimensions to do so: reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation.¹

The GII is an example of how the countries can be measured against each other in order to rank their performance, however, there are other useful examples of indexes that can help to explain the concept of the Family Violence Index.

Consumer Price Index – The Consumer Price index (CPI) is commonly used as a measure of the cost of living. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the CPI is like a basket of goods and services ‘purchased’ each quarter. As prices change from one quarter to the next, so too does the price of the basket.

Housing Affordability Index – The Housing Affordability index is used to inform government on how funding of specific programs or initiatives may affect the affordability of housing. It may, for example, lead Government to alter planning laws or adjust taxation in order to stimulate development

The Family Violence Index has the same potential to better inform Government, policy makers and society as a whole, now and into the future.

1. http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Complete_reprint.pdf



HOW WILL THE CREATION OF A FAMILY VIOLENCE INDEX SIT ALONGSIDE THE ROYAL COMMISSION?

The Victorian Government has commissioned Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), to undertake the research required to define what measures, statistics and data should be included in the Victorian Family Violence Index.

ANROWS is an independent, not-for-profit, established as an initiative under Australia's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan). It is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments of Australia

Headed by Emeritus Professor Anne R Edwards AO ANROWS has the ability to assemble the best of academia research to drill down on what should be included within the index, backed by a network of researchers with expertise in family violence.

The government has briefed the Royal Commission and welcomes any recommendations the Commission makes in this area. Commencing this work now will enable the Index to be in place when the Royal Commission releases its final report in February 2016.

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone the department on 9651 5111 or email dp&c@dpc.vic.gov.au.

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