



**YOUR  
VOICE  
AGAINST  
VIOLENCE**

Australian Human Rights Commission  
Consultation on Technology and Human Rights  
GPO Box 5218  
Sydney NSW 2001

4 October 2018

Dear Human Rights Commissioner,

**Re: Letter of Support for Australian Women Against Violence Alliance's (AWAVA) Submission on Human Rights and Technology to the Australian Human Rights Commission**

Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic) is an autonomous, non-government peak body organisation whose membership consists of over 80 state-wide and regional specialist family violence agencies across Victoria. DV Vic is the key stakeholder organising, advocating for, and acting on behalf of the specialist family violence sector. In this role, DV Vic holds a central position in the Victorian coordinated family violence system and its governance structures. DV Vic provides policy advice and advocacy to the Victorian Government about family violence response and systems reform and drives best practice in family violence through our role in the development and support of the state-wide specialist programs, including the development of the Code of Practice for Specialist Family Violence Services.

DV Vic is pleased to support AWAVA's submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission as part of the Commission's consultation on Technology and Human Rights.

Technology is increasingly part of all our lives but not always as a welcome intrusion. For those living with Family Violence, emails, Facebook and mobile phones can often be utilised by perpetrators as weapons of abuse and control, while tracking devices allow the abuser to know the movements of women and their children from remote locations.

Technology-based violence and abuse is driven by the same social dynamics of gender inequality that drives violence against women generally and other intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination. This abuse is not created by the technology; rather the misuse of the technology is a new channel for perpetrators to exert power and control.

In the same way that technology can be misused to perpetrate violence, when developed well, technology can also be used to support women to improve their safety. It is therefore important for technology developers to not only consider how new and emerging technologies might be able to be misused, but also what potential of these technologies have to deconstruct power imbalances between perpetrators and victims/survivors and promote increased safety for victims/survivors.

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**Domestic Violence Victoria**

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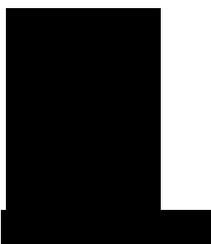
Technology used in the new Personal Safety Initiative (PSI) in Victoria is a prime example of how thoughtful technology development can lead to innovative applications that help women and children stay safe. As part of PSI, personal safety technologies such as CCTV, emergency duress alarms and home modification responses are implemented at a woman's home as part of a safety and security audit which is completed by a suitably qualified security provider. This safety and security audit is led by the woman in conjunction with her specialist family violence case manager with the aim of supporting the women to identify what she feels she needs to safely remain in her home.

A key aspect of the Personal Safety Initiative's success will be staff of contracted security provider agencies having a good understanding of the many challenges faced by women and their children when experiencing violence, as well as the gendered nature of power and control exerted in a family violence situation. With this gendered lens, agencies will be able to offer the technical advice needed to allow women to make informed decisions about their safety. In addition to supporting victim/survivors to increase their own safety, the technologies used can also help deter breaches of intervention orders. In this way, these technologies also help to correct the power imbalance between the perpetrator and victim/survivor by holding perpetrators to account.

Technology developers can mitigate technology-based violence by considering not only the risks of misuse, but also how new technologies could be applied protect victims/survivors. DV Vic agrees with AWAVA when they say that supporting marginalised groups to positively engagement with technology is preferable to limiting exposure in an attempt to protect against harm. The social world is increasingly digital, so digital exclusion amounts to social exclusion. Users need to be empowered to engage with technology safely and in ways that maximises their safety.

We congratulate the Human Rights Commission on their work thus far regarding this consultation and thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Please contact DV Vic for further clarification on the points raised above and/or if you have any further questions.



CEO