

Staying safe in the current environment

A [State of Emergency](#) has been declared in Victoria commencing midday Monday 16 March in response to the World Health Organization declared [COVID-19 pandemic](#). This step has been taken to slow transmission rates and give our health system the best chance of managing [COVID-19](#).

State of emergency is by its very nature, an alarming phrase and set of circumstances. The whole world is adjusting to a 'new normal' as we work together to reduce transmission.

It's important to note that a pandemic does not refer to the severity of a disease, rather the degree to which it's spreading.

Notwithstanding the seriousness of COVID-19, Respect Victoria is keen for people to understand the language being used across all media and the many avenues through which populations are keeping abreast of COVID-19 developments.

With rapidly evolving developments, many people have been encouraged or required to change their routine by restricting movements and social interaction, including working from home and avoiding non-essential hubs of activity and group gatherings.

Thankfully, pandemics are infrequent events. Like the rest of the world, we are eager for the State of Emergency to play out swiftly and efficiently to minimise the impact of the virus, so we can return to a life rich with social interaction. Until that time, Respect Victoria encourages people to consider the following:

1. If you are working from home, take full advantage of any and all technology that will allow you to stay in touch with colleagues.
2. Resist the urge to over-stock and panic buy. Buy what you need and familiarise yourself with temporary purchase restrictions as well as [stand-alone shopping times](#) implemented for the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
3. Check in on older people and others who might not have online access.
4. Be kind and considerate. This is new terrain for everybody, if you're feeling anxious visit [beyondblue](#) for advice.

For people affected by family violence, social distancing and self-isolation measures can pose increased risk.

Being forced to share space with perpetrators for extended periods of time with a backdrop of external stressors including anxiety arising from the state of flux, financial uncertainty (e.g. job losses in the wake of COVID-19), food insecurity (fuelled by panic shopping), and restlessness from changed daily habits and reduced social interaction could lead to a spike in family violence.

No matter what the external stressors, violence is never excusable.

If you need assistance call [1800 Respect](#) and speak with a trained counsellor who will listen and support you with what is right for you and your situation, this includes making a safety plan.

If you are in immediate danger call 000.