

21 September 2022

## VLRC Stalking report released

The Victorian Law Reform Commission's final report on Stalking was tabled in Parliament and published online today.

Stalking affects at least one in six women and around one in 15 men. It is a set of behaviours that can cause great harm to victims' mental and physical health and can also escalate to serious violence, homicide and suicide.

This report is the first Australian inquiry into non-family violence stalking laws. It contains 45 recommendations to improve the ways that the justice system treats people who have experienced stalking in a non-family violence context. The Commission received 115 submissions to its inquiry, and 254 responses to an online form asking about people's experiences of stalking.

The VLRC says that victims should have easier access to financial and practical support, such as technology to prevent cyberstalking. Victims should be supported by independent advocates to guide them through every stage, from reporting the stalking activity to accessing support services and any court actions.

The report also recommends improvements to the personal safety intervention order (PSIO) system. The system is currently swamped, so non-family violence stalking matters do not receive the attention they need. The VLRC recommends developing guidance on how to identify and prioritise stalking cases.

Another recommendation calls for the Crimes Act to be amended to make the stalking offence clearer and easier to apply.

"Stalking is not well understood in our society, and many people do not even realise that it is a crime," said Chair of the VLRC, the Hon. Tony North KC. "People who experience stalking often do not report it, and when they do, they often fail to receive the help that they need.

"For too long, the response to stalking has relied heavily on victims taking action to avoid being stalked. We need to shift the focus to the people who commit the crime."

The report is available at [www.lawreform.vic.gov.au](http://www.lawreform.vic.gov.au).

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