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Youth violence response must not overlook violence against young women by their partners

Women's Health Victoria commended a report on youth violence to be released today by the House of Representatives Family and Youth Committee: *Avoid the Harm – Stay Calm*.

"This Report should be a call to action by all political parties at State and Federal level to act on violence against young women by their current or ex partners," Senior Policy Officer, Rose Durey said.

In its submission to the report, WHV called for a focus on violence against young women as they are the most common victims of intimate partner violence, rape and sexual assault.

"Women's Health Victoria is particularly concerned with the health impacts of violence.

"Violence against women is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness for women in Victoria aged 15 to 44 years, according to a VicHealth study.

Violence against women also has serious implications for the sexual and reproductive health of young women. Women aged between 18 and 23 years of age who have experienced recent partner violence are:

- Almost three times more likely to report a miscarriage than women who were free from violence;
- Twice as likely to report a birth and a miscarriage;
- Five times more likely to report miscarriage and abortion only;
- Three times more likely to report ever having had herpes;
- Eleven times more likely to report Hepatitis C infection in the last four years; and
- Thirteen times more likely to report depression.

This evidence shows clearly that the health impacts of violence for young women in Australia are profound and must be addressed.

"Young women are more at risk from their boyfriends than strangers. We need to look at community attitudes towards violence. Certain social norms within Australian culture encourage tolerance of violence against women – these factors need to be addressed at an early age.

"Any youth violence strategy must address violence against young women and must promote non-violent social norms and equal and respectful relationships between young men and women," said Ms Durey.

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