



Media Release

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Fears that domestic violence support needs will rise in the wake of COVID-19

As more people are forced to work from home, and others may even be made redundant as COVID-19 takes a grip on the nation, family and domestic violence organisations, such as RizeUp Australia, are becoming increasingly concerned about the ramifications for families that will be put under emotional and financial stress.

Domestic violence increases in communities that experience natural disasters and this increase can be related to stress factors such as loss of housing or unemployment experienced during and after the disaster. Perpetrators might feel a loss of control during the chaos of a disaster and this can then be followed by the use of abusive behavior to gain control within interpersonal relationships.

Domestic violence that is ongoing before or during a disaster can be exacerbated and RizeUp CEO and Founder, Nicolle Edwards says it has never been more important for the community to show their support for families facing these challenges.

“Of course the health of everyone is important at the moment and there will be many families doing it tough, but we are very concerned about the potential increase of cases in which women and children may find themselves in danger due to the stress of being isolated in the home, potentially with a violent partner, coupled with the pressures of dealing with a stressful economic situation,” says Ms Edwards.

“Demand for our services was already outstripping what we could deliver before COVID-19,” she explained. “My fear now is that at a time when businesses are tightening their belts and volunteers are unable to support in the numbers they usually do we are going to have fewer resources to face what will be an even greater problem than before.”

Research demonstrates that there is a significant relationship between being exposed to natural disasters and an increase in violence against women and girls, including rape, intimate partner violence and child abuse (Rezaeian, 2012)

RizeUp supports affected families with a range of programs that enable women and children to safely escape the traumas of domestic and family violence. Founded in 2015 the organization has rapidly grown across Queensland and New South Wales as it has worked hard to meet the ever-growing need.

As more attention however is focused on the health issues around COVID-19, Ms Edwards fears that the on-flow effect that may occur behind closed doors for some families may be forgotten and urges people to keep a watch out for those that may need support beyond extra grocery supplies or toilet rolls.

“It is during times of stress that those at risk of family violence are likely to be most in danger so it is imperative that these women and children have the support that they need to enable them to get to a safe place if required.



“Our RizeUp Homes Program already supports five to six families per week who are at the greatest risk of homelessness and homicide. It has not been enough. Demand has always outstripped supply and now with the current climate I am expecting this need to rise further still as services are inundated with women fleeing violent relationships.”

Research has revealed up to a 400 per cent rise in women seeking refuge from a violent partner after disaster (Hawkerk, 2015)

“Much of our work is done through the wonderful support of volunteers, but with many forced into lock down due to COVID-19 this is going to prove a challenge however with the support of the Department of youth, women and domestic violence we have adapted our service delivery and will continue to provide life changing support for the most vulnerable families in our community and continue our support of the front-line services.”

“Stopping our work is not even an option so we will continue to work in a safe, risk-assessed manner to support these at-risk families. The biggest obstacle we now face is lack of fundraising activity with all our events for the year cancelled however our worries would be significantly allayed if we reached our campaign goals.”

The #change5000 campaign is a dynamic, cost effective way for everyday Australians to reclaim their sense of control in these uncertain times and involves securing the support of 5000 Australians to each donate two dollars a week. The #change5000 campaign is being launched in the coming week with the support of RizeUp Patron Mia Freedman who is a champion of RizeUp and the work the organization achieves.

“No women or children should ever be in danger in their own home. For women and children in these terrifying situations, it’s important for them to know that help is available to them; there are people who care about them, believe them and will acknowledge their courage in leaving a violent life behind,” said Ms Edwards.

For more information about RizeUp and the #change5000 campaign to change the ending, please visit: <https://www.rizeup.com.au/>

If you or anyone you know needs help, please call the national helpline 1800RESPECT or contact your local domestic violence centre.

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About RizeUp Australia:

RizeUp Australia is a community-driven organisation dedicated to providing practical support to the many women and families affected by domestic and family violence. RizeUp’s mission is to work in partnership with domestic violence services to enhance the service options that they can offer and provide to women and families that have experienced domestic violence. RizeUp believes it is essential to ensure families are linked with services in order to receive the vital wraparound support required to break the cycle of violence and ensure their safety.