

Changes to 1800RESPECT to improve our service

September 2017

1800RESPECT is a world-class national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service providing a crucial service to Australians. We take our role in supporting our community very seriously – Australians need to feel safe and have trust in the support services available to them.

You may have seen some recent media coverage about 1800RESPECT, so here we answer some of the questions you may have about improvements we have made to the service we offer callers and people contacting us online.

Who answers calls and online chats at 1800RESPECT?

From the moment a call or online chat at 1800RESPECT is taken, it is handled by highly experienced and qualified counsellors. These counsellors hold as a minimum a three year tertiary qualification in a relevant field and have two years minimum full time counselling experience.

These counsellors provide confidential telephone and online, information, counselling and support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Some of our callers may require trauma specialist counselling, and this can be offered and arranged quickly and smoothly while the caller is on the phone. Trauma specialist counsellors hold a three year tertiary qualification in a relevant field and have three years minimum trauma specialist counselling experience or full time equivalent experience in specialised sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling and working with people from diverse backgrounds and locations.

Are calls and online chats to 1800RESPECT private and confidential?

Yes, we take the privacy of callers extremely seriously and ensure that the protection of our callers' personal and confidential information is our priority.

Your contact with 1800RESPECT will continue to be confidential. Anybody contacting 1800RESPECT has the right to also remain completely anonymous.

Call records are protected by privacy and health information legislation and will not be shared with other people without your consent. There are rare circumstances where we may need to share information without your consent – for example to ensure your safety or the safety of somebody else, or when required to do so under applicable legislation. In these circumstances we will always, wherever possible, consult with you first and let you know what is happening.

We take protecting your information very seriously and will use all powers and privileges available to us to prevent that information being shared without your consent. It is rare to receive subpoenas for call records, and we will always look for legitimate ways to object to a subpoena if disclosure has the potential to cause distress, harm or danger to the caller or to others.

All callers to the 1800RESPECT service are advised that their calls are recorded for quality clinical care and training purposes. Callers can also ask for their call to not be recorded, and have the option to remain anonymous, to use a pseudonym, or to withhold identifying information such as their birthdate or surname.

Callers to 1800RESPECT place their trust in us, and we have a duty of care to them. Our priority is always our callers – whether they are seeking information, support, advice or counselling.

I have heard about some changes at 1800RESPECT – what are these changes?

Some of our callers may require trauma specialist counselling. In August 2017, 1800RESPECT announced a new arrangement with a panel of organisations to provide the trauma specialist counselling component of 1800RESPECT. A group of not-for-profit sexual assault, domestic and family violence organisations were invited to join the panel.

Our new partners are not-for-profit organisations who are experienced in delivering specialist counselling – they are committed to providing world-class trauma specialist counselling for 1800RESPECT callers. They include:

- DVConnect in Queensland
- Women’s Safety Services in South Australia
- safe steps Family Violence Response Centre in Victoria

The new panel arrangement means we have a broader base of partner organisations to rely on, regardless of the location of the caller, ensuring the right number of trauma counsellors are available to answer calls at the right time.

Our priority is to ensure the best possible care is available to 1800RESPECT callers and that Australians impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence get the support they need as quickly as possible. We are confident that this 1800RESPECT service improvement will mean those impacted get the support they need, when they need it.

Is R&DVSA withdrawing from providing trauma specialist counselling?

R&DVSA were invited to be part of the panel of organisations, and we had hoped that R&DVSA would continue to be part of the service but we respect their decision to decline the invitation and wish them the very best. We appreciate the opportunity to have worked with R&DVSA in the past, recognising their role in addressing sexual assault and domestic and family violence in Australia.

With the expertise and commitment of our experienced partners from across Australia, we will continue to provide a high quality service that is consistent, responsive and accessible for Australians, 24 hours a day 365 days of the year.

Is 1800RESPECT not-for-profit?

1800RESPECT is a Federal Government funded national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service that provides best practice professional counselling, information, resources and referrals for individuals and their families and friends who have experienced, or are at risk of, family and domestic violence or sexual assault. The new partnership arrangement combines our specialist expertise in delivering important 24-hour care and mental health phone support with experienced not-for-profit sector organisations to deliver 1800RESPECT trauma specialist counselling, and is evidence of a strong alignment in values and commitment to supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Our priority is to ensure the best possible care is available to 1800RESPECT callers and that Australians impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence get the support they need as quickly as possible.

Should I have confidence to contact or recommend 1800RESPECT?

All Australians should have confidence to call 1800RESPECT. If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence, we are here to support you – please call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit 1800RESPECT.org.au. In an emergency, call 000.

1800RESPECT and our partner organisations for the delivery of trauma specialist counselling (DVConnect, Women’s Safety Services and safe steps Family Violence Response Centre) provide a vital service to the community, which is funded by the Federal Government. With the expertise and commitment of our partners from across Australia, together we will provide a high quality service that is consistent, responsive and accessible for women 24 hours a day 365 days of the year.

About 1800RESPECT

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1800RESPECT is an initiative of the Federal Government and is a free, confidential online and telephone counselling, information and referral service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This includes information and counselling, as well as capacity-building resources to support frontline workers and professionals (such as online toolkits, newsletters and webinars). 1800RESPECT also hosts the Daisy app which provides localised information on support services. Medibank is proud to have delivered this important service on behalf of the Federal Government since its inception in 2010.