

WAYSS INNOVATION

THE NICHOLSON PROJECT

Wayss is the largest provider of specialist family violence services in the South Melbourne area.

In conjunction with Protective Group, we are excited to announce the launch of **The Nicholson Project**.

This initiative is a privately funded pilot project aimed at minimising the technology-facilitated abuse of family violence survivors.



wayss.com.au



protectivegroup.com.au

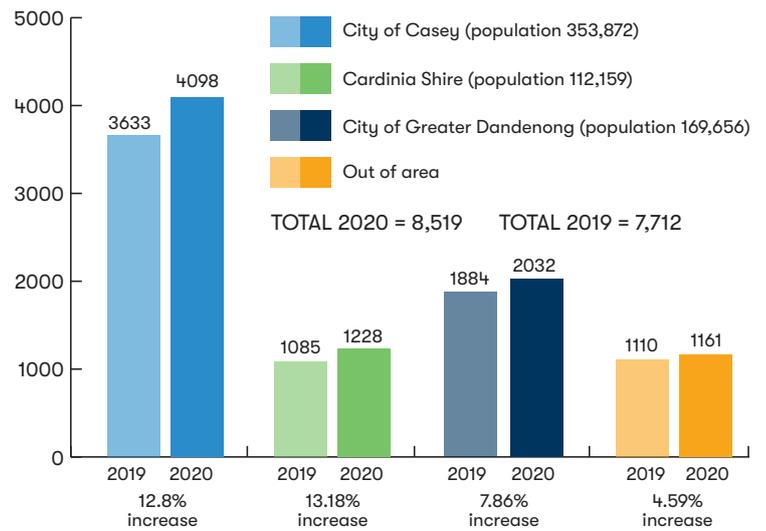


Addressing an urgent need

In 2020, Wayss responded to over 8,000 family violence reports from Victoria Police.

Our team contacted every survivor to offer support and safety planning for them and their children. Through working with our clients, we noticed the need for increased support to respond to technology-facilitated abuse.

The problem many of our clients face is that even though they have left an unsafe situation, their former partner still has access to information about their whereabouts and activities. This is possible because of online technology and connected devices.



Family violence incidents referred to Wayss 2019 & 2020

Technology and family violence

While technology has many advantages, it is also used as a tool for abuse. Family violence perpetrators can locate, stalk and control their partners and families by gaining access to personal online accounts and using GPS tracking devices.

A number of the women who are referred to Wayss after a family violence incident are not even aware of the extent to which the perpetrator has access to their social media, their email accounts and their real-time location.



About The Nicholson Project

While technology has enhanced our lives, it has also made it easy for family violence perpetrators to continue their threat to the safety and emotional wellbeing of others.

The Nicholson Project is a trial program that provides a remotely delivered service that will assess a family violence survivor's exposure to technology-facilitated abuse and take the steps to interrupt it (where it is safe to do so).

Raising cyber shields

As part of the trial, women and accompanying children who are referred to Wayss by Victoria Police because of a family violence incident will be offered a tech-safety review.

The review will assess whether early intervention could be effective in not only preventing further incidents of technology-facilitated abuse but providing women with a sense of empowerment so they can move on with their lives.





A groundbreaking pilot

Taking place over four weeks, The Nicholson Project will work with 48 family violence survivors.

Women and their children will be offered:

- An assessment of their exposure to technology-facilitated abuse
- A report on how and where they may be vulnerable online
- Protective measures aimed at stopping unauthorised access to their location and accounts, and strengthening cyber safety

As part of the service, use of computers and smart devices such as phones, iPads, gaming consoles and the internet of things* will be assessed for possible interference.

A range of steps will be taken to improve the family's personal safety, including:

- removal of spyware
- review of social media settings
- reset of passwords and security questions for social media and other accounts
- a detailed 'sweep' for listening, tracking, transmitting and recording devices

While the service is delivered remotely, if there is a likelihood a tracking device has been placed in the client's car or home, a physical inspection and electronic scan will be undertaken by Protective Group.

Disrupting tech-facilitated abuse

As a final preventative step, the pilot participant will be provided with practical information about how to keep themselves and their children tech safe.

In recognition of the cultural diversity of Wayss clients, information in relation to the service will be provided in a number of languages.

Project participants

The Nicholson Project will offer its service to 48 family violence survivors who are referred to Ways by Victoria Police during the pilot.

Of the 48 participants, half will be women who report they are being stalked or tracked via technology. The other 24 will have told us they either aren't being tracked or aren't aware of anyone using technology to track their whereabouts.



Reviewing the impact of the pilot program

Participants will be asked to respond to a short pre and post-service questionnaire that will assess whether The Nicholson Project has made a difference to the level of safety they experience and feel.

The questionnaire will be conducted verbally by the family violence worker before the service, via text message within two days of the service commencing and then one month later.

Family violence workers will also be given the opportunity to share their feedback at a group consultation after the first week and at the end of the pilot.

With The Nicholson Project, Ways and Protective Group are aiming to create an additional layer of security and confidence for women who are transitioning from a situation that involves family violence.

Ways and Protective Group will report on the outcomes of the pilot and share the results with Ways stakeholders and the media.