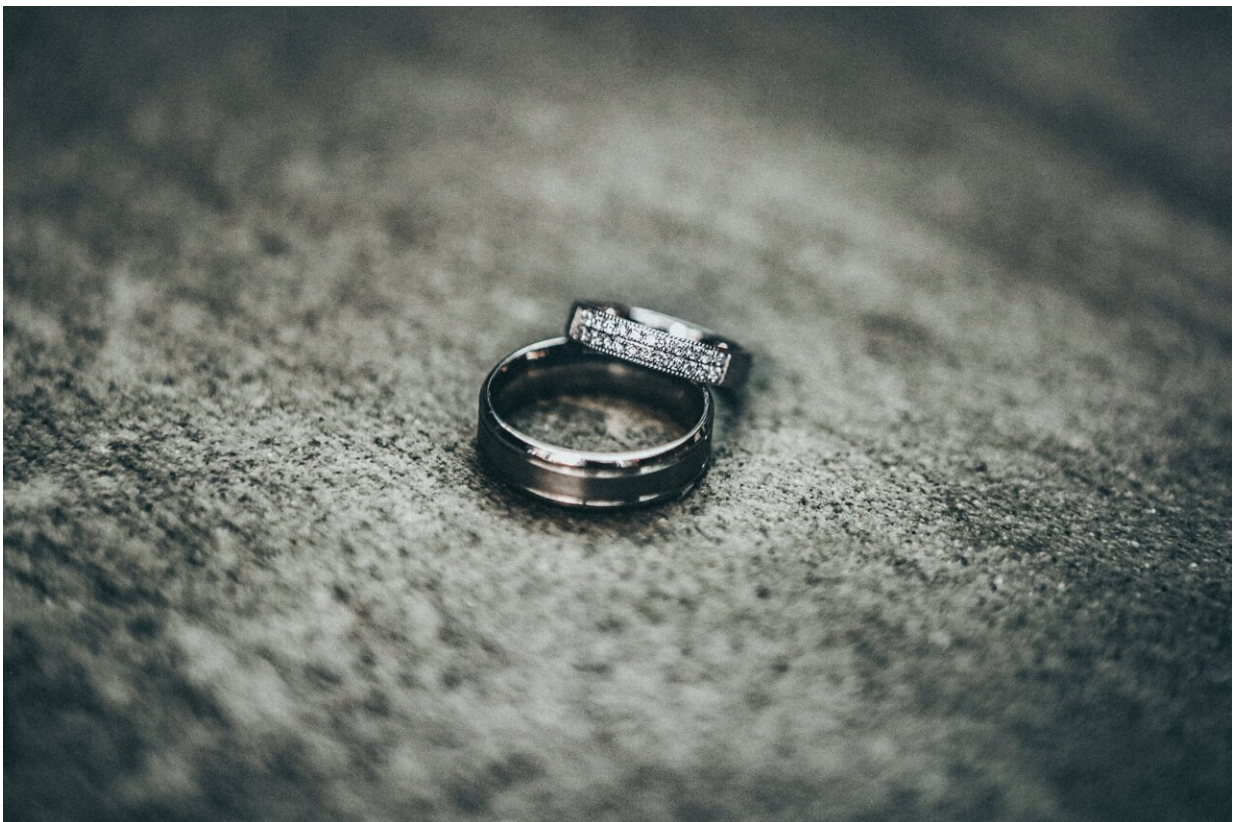


Report: Defining forced marriage as family violence in Victoria opens doors to more support for survivors

April 5 2023



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A Monash University report has revealed how the legal inclusion of forced marriage as a form of family violence in Victoria opens doors to

more support for victim-survivors.

The Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Center will launch the paper today (April 5) at an online event chaired by former Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon AO APM.

This first Australian-based research found services strongly supported the inclusion of forced marriage as a form of family [violence](#) as it expanded support options to affected persons.

Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Center's Shih Joo Tan, who led this research, said clear Victorian service coordination and reporting guidelines are needed.

"It is a positive development for Victoria to lead the way in recognizing forced marriage as a form of family violence in law because it increases opportunities for identification and pathways to support," Dr. Tan said.

"For impactful change, it requires a better understanding of the needs of persons affected by forced marriage and closer examination of how well existing family violence services are meeting their needs."

The study explores the impact of the legal recognition of forced marriage as a form of family violence in Victoria since 2019, especially the implications for family violence and other service practitioners' and frontline service providers' responses.

The study found putting forced marriage under the [family violence framework](#) expands the identification and resources available to support people affected by forced marriage.

However, it reveals more work needs to be done to ensure that supports are accessible. The report also finds a review is urgently needed to

determine suitability of current family violence support services in meeting the varied needs of people affected by forced marriage. This includes those threatened and coerced to marry, and those who are already in situations of forced marriage.

The report highlights the need to shift the strong associations of forced marriage being an issue of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and newly-arrived migrant communities.

It calls for greater recognition of the diverse ways it can occur, including the interplay with gender, poverty, sexuality and immigration policies.

Dr. Nixon, a Monash University Vice-Chancellor's Professorial Fellow, said the research showed physical, emotional, financial and [sexual abuse](#) constitute family violence.

"The research released today considers the addition of 'forced marriage' as a form of family violence, supports victim-survivors to get help and is an important step to elimination," Dr. Nixon said.

The study involved interviews and focus groups with 22 family violence and frontline service providers at state and Commonwealth levels, who respond to forced marriage in Australia.

Practitioners involved in the study said they were able to create clearer pathways with [family](#) violence services and [support services](#) since the Victorian law took effect in 2019.

Victoria is the only Australian jurisdiction to recognize forced marriage and dowry-related abuse as statutory examples of [family violence](#) following the royal commission.

Forced marriage is recognized in the Victorian Government's Multi-

Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) which supports better identification of controlling behaviors and risk factors.

However, there remains operational and jurisdictional challenges as the Commonwealth's human trafficking framework remains the primary mechanism for tackling forced [marriage](#).

The findings [support](#) the [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2023](#).

More information: Shih Joo, Laura Vidal, Forced Marriage as a Form of Family Violence in Victoria. [DOI: 10.26180/22057280](#)

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Report: Defining forced marriage as family violence in Victoria opens doors to more support for survivors (2023, April 5) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-04-marriage-family-violence-victoria-doors.html>

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