

Minister Catherine Martin T.D. Dáil speech on violence against women

From [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#)

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**Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Catherine Martin T.D. Dáil speech on violence against women, 25th January, 2022.
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Two weeks ago tomorrow, Ashling Murphy went out for a run along the Grand Canal in Tullamore. It was the start of the New Year for the talented musician and much loved beautiful young woman. She never made it home.

Ashling's tragic and horrific death shocked the nation.

I wish to convey my deepest sympathy to Ashling's family, her partner, her friends, colleagues, pupils and the community in which she was so loved and had an active part. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.

Ashling's death did indeed stun the country. It also brought us together.

Together to say enough is enough, that violence and abuse of women will not be tolerated anymore. Where we see it, call it out. Where we hear it, call it out. Whoever is involved in it, call them out. Whether that abuse or threat is in the workplace, in someone's home or online-call it out. Call the abuse out. I agree with the Taoiseach: it is time for a zero tolerance approach to violence against women.

When I attended her funeral at St Brigid's Church, close to her home in Co Offaly last week, I was struck by the little notes alongside the candles in the nearby community centre which recalled Ashling in all her brilliance, youth, happiness and talent.

And the commitment of friends and fellow-musicians was so evident at Ashling's funeral. I'll never forget the tearful faces of the players, strumming on a guitar, playing the bosca ceoil, united in grief on that cold morning at the crossing in Mountbolus, as Ashling's remains passed. Scores of musicians later attended the graveside where she was buried.

The moment showed how Irish rural communities rally around each other when there is pain or suffering. We can equally as a society build support to ensure violence against women is stopped.

Violence against women is not a string of random, freak or isolated events. They are frightening to read or hear about and it is perhaps more comforting to think of them as individual. However we will never move to a truly equal society until we admit the depth, breadth and pattern of gender-based violence. **Whether in the most private or public of settings, the fact is women and girls are less safe.**

As the House knows, work is progressing on a new whole-of-government strategy to combat domestic, sexual, gender-based violence. Work by Justice Minister Helen McEntee is nearing conclusion. The crux of the strategy is what we talked about: zero tolerance of violence against women.

There are legislative improvements too.

The commencement of the Domestic Violence Act 2018 on 1 January 2019 created significant improvements, including the offence of coercive control.

Minister McEntee also prioritised the enactment of Coco's Law, which outlawed image-based sexual abuse. She also intends to publish a Bill covering new criminal offences for stalking, an issue Senator Lisa Chambers is also working on.

But preventing abusive behaviour also requires an end to certain attitudes held by men.

Misogyny in our society must stop. There is no easy way to ending Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence. **It will take a combination of new well-resourced services, robust legislation, fresh thinking, dynamic new strategies, and above all education and awareness.**

And here briefly, I want to outline areas I am progressing under my responsibility as a Minister.

In relation to the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill, an Online Safety Commissioner will devise safety codes to ensure services minimise the availability of harmful content.

This includes reducing availability of criminal content that disproportionately hurts women. For example, image based abuse, revenge porn, threatening content and harassment.

And reducing the availability of material used to bully or humiliate people.

In relation to protection of women in the Arts, my Department recently funded the Irish Theatre Institute's report on bullying and harassment, Speak Up: A Call for Change. It found 70% of those surveyed in the Arts experienced some type of harm, including sexual harassment or assault. Women were 3.5 times more likely to experience sexual harassment than men.

In response, the allocation of public funds in Arts agencies will now be in line with work safety and reporting rules. Counselling has also been extended for artists and workplace training is being improved.

My Department is also funding vulnerability training courses' in the Night-Time Economy.

The objective of six recent courses was to enable workers in the night-time economy to identify issues around vulnerability management and violence against women.

Hundreds of staff across 70 venues took part. Training was done with the support of An Garda Síochána, vintners groups and practitioners in night culture such as Give Us the Night.

Whatever sphere of life violence enters through, it pierces the heart of every corner of life. One woman described it to me:

"A source of great pain that it happened to me when I was a young woman. That scar never gets to truly heal over, it opens every time I hear of another woman who has been raped, assaulted or worse. The edges widen when that violence is diminished."

**Tá mná agus cailíní ag éisteacht liom inniu atá ag fulaingt de bharr foiréigin. Agus fanann sé leo ar feadh a saoil. Siad ár máithreacha iad, ár n-íníonacha, ár ndeirfiúracha, ár gcairde.

Tá sé i ngach réimse den saol, i ngach cearn den tír. Agus cibé áit atá sé, tá daoine ciaptha agus céasta dá bharr. **

Equality for women and girls, as our end goal, must start with the elimination of violence that has a basis in gender.