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Violence Erupts at Melbourne Women's Rights Rally

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— *Categories: Human Rights*

Melbourne, Australia — Violence broke out between police and protesters during a women's rights rally in Melbourne's CBD on Saturday, leaving three officers injured.

The "Women Will Speak" event, held near Parliament House, drew around 120 participants, including approximately 80 counter-protesters. Police established a significant presence with water barriers to maintain order and protect attendees.

Before speeches began around 12 p.m., footage showed a group of counter-protesters marching from Carlton Gardens toward Spring Street. Many were dressed in black and wore face coverings. Scuffles broke out as police attempted to control the crowd. Victoria Police deployed OC spray during the incident. While three officers sustained injuries, none required hospitalisation.

Victoria Police confirmed that four individuals were arrested, including a 21-year-old man from Flemington charged with assaulting an officer with an umbrella. Officers did not find any weapons among the counter-protesters. The Public Order Response Team, Mounted Branch, and Highway Patrol were all involved in maintaining public safety.

On the steps of Parliament House, speakers at the rally criticised Victoria's anti-vilification laws and political leadership, claiming that women's rights were being overshadowed by gender identity policies. One speaker questioned why expressing concerns about women's rights could be treated as hate speech.

Women Will Speak leader Jasmine Sussex told NewsWire that the group's focus was on women's rights rather than opposing any individual or community. She expressed concern over policies that prioritise gender identity over sex in law and policy, citing cases such as men convicted of violent crimes being placed in women's prisons. Ms Sussex also highlighted anti-vilification laws, suggesting they could restrict public debate on women's issues.

Several speakers singled out Victoria's Minister for Women, Natalie Hutchins, questioning her role in protecting women's rights. The event concluded without further serious incidents.

Victoria Police emphasized that their priority remained the safety of all attendees and the broader community during the rally.