

## Media Statement

# Women Silenced on Violence

9 September 2001

Australia's inaugural Conference on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault held last week in Queensland expressed strong concern that the Federal coalition government is ignoring the voices of experts in the field.

The conference, attended by more than 450 participants from across Australia (mainly workers in domestic violence and sexual assault services), demanded that the government provide operational funding for the two peak women's organisations representing women's domestic and family violence and sexual assault services across Australia - WESNET (Women's Services Network) and NASASAV (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence).

Ms. Julie Oberin, National Chairperson of WESNET (Women's Services Network), the domestic and family violence peak body said: "By refusing to provide operational funding for these peak organisations the government has effectively excluded the advice of experts in the field who are working with these issues on a daily basis".

"The government's spending on domestic violence and sexual assault cannot be effective without proper consultation with the domestic violence and sexual assault sectors though their peaks" said Ms. Oberin.

Ms. Oberin stated that participants at the conference expressed grave concern that this government is failing to listen to those workers in the field who are advocates for the thousands of women and children who experience violence each year.

She said "this is of particular concern because the Federal government is about to spend \$25 million on domestic violence and \$16.5 million on sexual assault without being informed by those who work with these issues on a daily basis. This will jeopardise any attempt to improve responses to violence against women, and brings into question the meaningfulness of this expenditure".

The delegates at the conference endorsed the following conference statement: "Women's domestic and family violence services, and sexual assault services are the advocates for the thousands of women and children who experience male violence in Australia. This conference demands that the Federal government acknowledges the expertise and experience of women's domestic and family violence services, and services against sexual violence through operational funding for WESNET (Women's Services Network) and NASASV (National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence) to provide informed advice to government".

Contact:

Marg D'Arcy, National Convenor, NASASAV, 0409 859046

Julie Oberin, National Chairperson, WESNET, 0419 539346.

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Please contact [wesnet@wesnet.org.au](mailto:wesnet@wesnet.org.au)

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