

# WESNET SAFETY NET AUSTRALIA PROJECT

Improving technology safety for women  
surviving domestic & family violence  
(The first five years)



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 [wesnet.org.au](http://wesnet.org.au)  
 WesnetAustralia  
 @WESNETAustralia

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# WHAT IS OUR SAFETY NET AUSTRALIA PROJECT?

## Our Objective

We help victim-survivors of domestic and family violence to access and use technology in ways that support their safety, recovery and ability to participate in society.

## How We Do It

- We train, educate and support frontline domestic and family violence workers to increase their capacity to support victim-survivors to use technology to their benefit
- We work with technology companies to increase victim-survivors' safe access to technology devices, products and services
- We support government, law enforcement and technology companies to adapt and create policies, products and services that meet the needs of victim-survivors.

## WHAT IS WESNET?

We are a national women's peak body that facilitates and promotes policy, legislative and programmatic responses relevant to women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence.

## OUR MEMBERS

are Australia's domestic and family violence services—a system of complex service delivery organisations that are specialists in assisting women experiencing or escaping domestic and family violence.

## VISION

That all women and children live free from domestic and family violence

# WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Perpetrators of domestic and family violence misuse technology to harm, threaten, stalk and damage victims. They misuse technology to gain and exercise power and control over their victims

Common ways that perpetrators misuse technology include:

- restricting access to technology (e.g. by smashing or taking her device),
- monitoring her (e.g. by tracking her location or internet use),
- harassing, threatening and/or humiliating victim-survivors (e.g. by sending abusive messages or threatening to share intimate images).

 <p><b>ABUSE</b> Sending large numbers of text messages per day</p>	 <p><b>CONTROLLING ACCESS</b> Breaking phones, controlling all accounts, limiting access to phones and technology</p>
<p><b>THREATS</b> Using social media or email to make threats or defame</p> 	<p><b>HACKING</b> Accessing accounts, changing passwords, impersonation</p> 
 <p><b>LOCATION TRACKING</b> Using GPS tracking via smartphone apps to monitor her location</p>	 <p><b>FINANCIAL ABUSE</b> Controlling bank accounts or access to government services</p>
<p><b>PROXY STALKING</b> Using friends' or family members' online accounts to stalk or contact the victim</p> 	<p><b>IMAGE BASED ABUSE</b> Threatening to share intimate images to prevent her leaving, or sharing images once she's left to humiliate</p> 
 <p><b>MONITORING</b> Installing spyware or stalkerware or using other apps to monitor and track</p>	 <p><b>SPOOFING</b> Using spoofing apps to impersonate, cancel accounts, change appointments, disrupt.</p>

**98%**

of domestic violence practitioners reported having clients experiencing technology abuse (Recharge 2015)

... WHEN WE LEFT, WE WEREN'T ABLE TO TAKE MY PHONE. WE THOUGHT WE HAD IT ON US BUT WE DIDN'T AND NOW HE'S KEPT MY PHONE AND ... EVERYTHING HE TOOK ... HE TOOK EVERYTHING IN THE BANK ACCOUNTS. SO WE JUST CAME WITH A BAG TO THE REFUGE  
(Rachel, WA)

HE USED TO FIND OUT EVERY DAY ... WHERE I WAS AND WHO I WAS WITH OR WHERE I WAS ... IT WAS JUST UNBEARABLE  
(Danielle, VIC)

I'VE GOT A RESTRAINING ORDER AGAINST MY EX-PARTNER. HE ACTUALLY LOCATED ME IN THE SHOPPING CENTRE. I'VE MOVED LIKE FIVE DIFFERENT TIMES ... HE FORCED ME TO GO HOME WITH HIM. HE'S KNOCKED ME OUT BEFORE ... ASSAULTED ME AND HE ACTUALLY TOOK MY PHONE AND BROKE IT. SO I COULDN'T CALL THE POLICE OR ANYTHING  
(Suzie, WA)

# WHAT ACTIVITIES DO WE UNDERTAKE?

**1** We work with technology companies to increase victim-survivors' safer access to technology devices, products and services

- Tech companies partner with us to give devices to victim-survivors. We manage the safe distribution of devices to victim-survivors via our national network of frontline service organisations.
- They also fund victim-survivor use of communication services (such as pre-paid mobile credit).
- We help tech companies connect with victim-survivors and administer funded services, reducing risks of unintentionally compromising victim-survivor privacy or safety.

**2** We train, educate and support frontline family violence workers to equip victim-survivors with strategies to use technology in ways that benefit them.

## Training events

- Our annual Technology Safety Summit
- Face-to-face training events
- Online webinars and videos

## Education

- Handouts and videos via [techsafety.org.au](http://techsafety.org.au)

## Technical advice

- Support for workers with technical advice and secondary consultation via 1800 WESNET, for when individual cases exceed their technology knowledge and/or skills.

## THE SAFER TECHNOLOGY FOR WOMEN TRAINING IS HAVING AN IMPACT ON WORKERS PRACTICE.



Immediately post-training, approximately 98% of frontline workers said that they felt more confident in advising clients on how to address phone-facilitated abuse after participating in our training.



At two months follow-up, 86% of workers agreed that our training had influenced their day-to-day practice with women.



# WHY DOES OUR MODEL WORK?

Giving victim-survivors access to free or low-cost devices is not enough.

It's essential that workers and women gain the knowledge and skills to identify what the abuser knows, where that information lives and how he is accessing it.

Without training and education for workers and victim-survivors, a perpetrator may continue to access information about the victim-survivor's activities and location. Without support and advice, the new phone could simply become another tool for the perpetrator's abuse.

Empowering victim-survivors with knowledge and skills is the only way to effectively interrupt the cycle of

technology-facilitated abuse. And the best way to equip victim-survivors is to train the workers who support them. It gives control back to the survivor.

These workers already have specialist skills in addressing domestic and family violence; our training, tailored specifically for the needs of victim-survivors, helps workers integrate technology safety into their practice straight away.

With support from a trained worker, she is empowered to work out what he knows, where that information lives, and how he is accessing it.

With this information, she can be supported to create a safety plan that integrates her access to and use of technology.

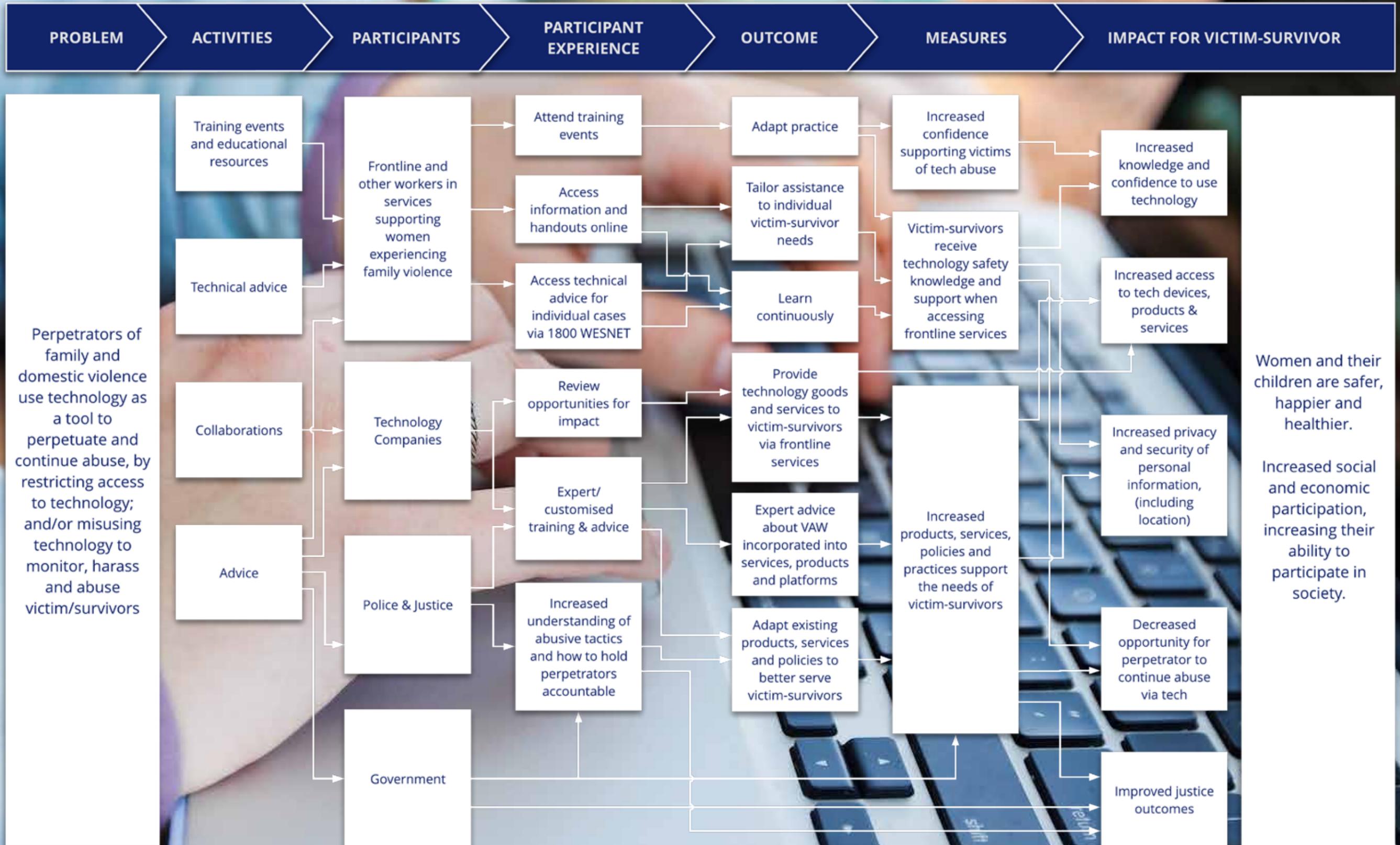
This enables her to:

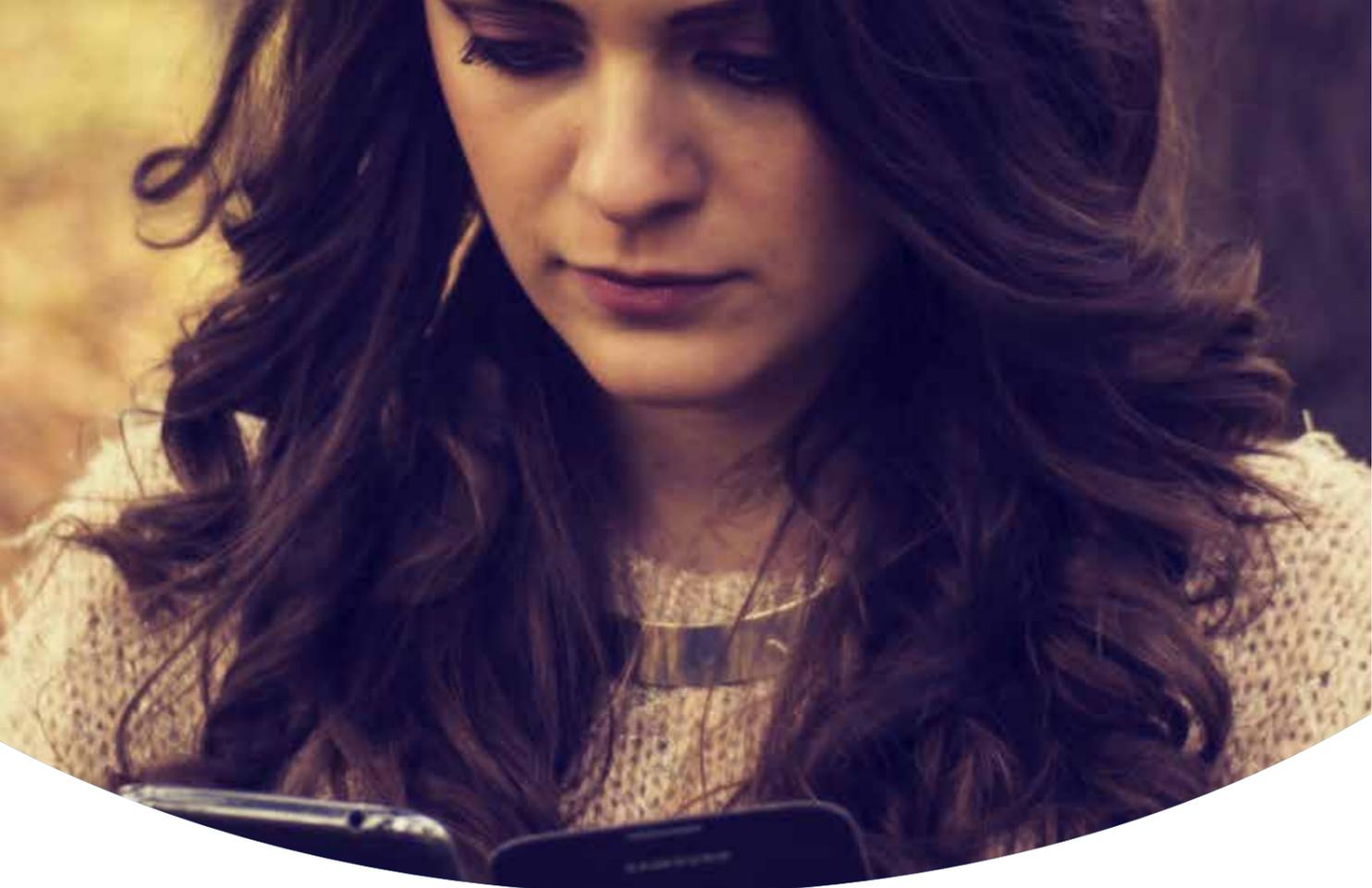
- access the services she needs
- remain connected with the people who support her,
- keep her personal information private, and
- document the abuse in a way that may assist her with achieving justice outcomes.

Our goal is to support her to access and use technology – an essential tool in accessing the support and opportunities she needs to rebuild her life.

Women cannot achieve gender equality without full, safe access to technology. Without gender equality, there will be no end to domestic and family violence.

# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE





# JOANNE'S STORY

Joanne was 30 years of age with 3 children, aged 10, 8 and 6 when she sought help from a domestic violence service participating in the Safe Connections smartphone program.

Source: Case study supplied by frontline practitioner, 16 June 2017.

The family had experienced severe domestic violence over a number of years. Joanne had moved house and replaced her mobile phone several times, but the perpetrator found her every time. He broke into her homes to damage property on numerous occasions, which was terrifying. He would also call her to let her know he had her new phone number. Joanne felt defeated because it seemed that no matter what precautions she took with her previous phones, he always found her. Because of this pattern, Joanne stopped using her phone to make calls, and avoided even turning her phone on. Joanne hasn't felt safe for a long time.

Joanne's worker decides to give Joanne a new smartphone, provided by the Safe Connections program. The worker, a specialist in domestic violence, has recently participated in WESNET's technology safety training. Using these skills and knowledge, the worker supports Joanne to identify how

the perpetrator is misusing technology to locate and abuse her. She assists Joanne to review which online accounts she is logged into, how to log out and ways she can prevent her perpetrator accessing her information. The worker also helps Joanne set up new Google and iCloud accounts, manually enter contact and other information into the new smartphone, and review and apply security settings.

Since then, Joanne has received no calls from the perpetrator (because he hasn't been able to access her new phone number), nor has he found her. Joanne tells her worker that this is the first time she has felt safe in a number of years. She is able to make phone calls and know for a fact that he cannot find her (via her phone or accounts). She knows that she is now safe when she goes out with the family and that she is safe at home. Her worker reports that Joanne's determination and strength has grown.



# CASE STUDY: THE SAFE CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

## WHAT IS IT?

### Telstra

- Donate new smartphones and pre-paid credit for victim-survivors of family violence
- Provide a dedicated 1800 number for victim-survivors to activate their new pre-paid service

### WESNET

- Distribute the smartphones to our national network of frontline services
- Provide training to frontline workers about supporting victim-survivors with tech skills and problem-solving

### Participating frontline services

- Support women to identify the ways the perpetrator is misusing technology and create a safety plan that also includes how to be safer on technology
- Give her the new smartphone, help her activate the service and set up her device and continue to safely access technology

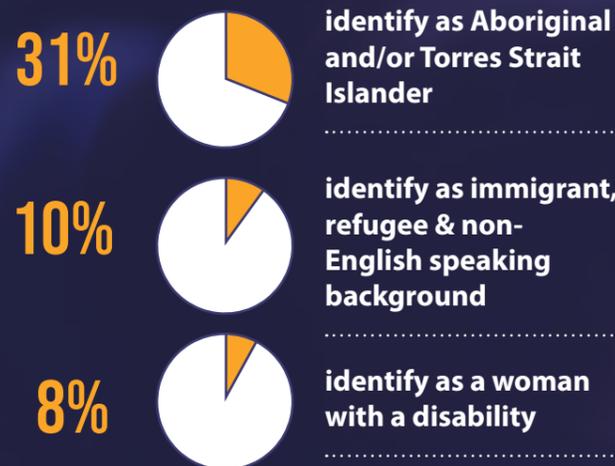


# OUR SOCIAL IMPACT

UP TO 30 JUNE 2019

Telstra and WESNET have been collaborating since 2014 to provide pre-paid smartphones with \$30 credit to women impacted by domestic and family violence. With funding support from the Commonwealth Government through the Women's Safety Package, WESNET has been able to significantly grow the program's reach and impact during the financial year. The program now also involves upskilling frontline workers through face-to-face technology safety training.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF VICTIM RECIPIENTS



## Gender Demographics



## Frontline Agencies

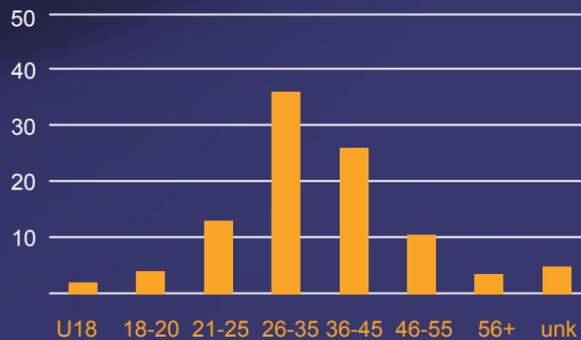


**276 AGENCIES**  
**+306% SINCE MAY 2016**

**2,886**  
**WORKERS**  
**TRAINED**

**1,320**  
**WORKERS**  
**WITH**  
**ACCESS**  
**TO ONLINE**  
**RESOURCES**

## Age distribution of women (%)

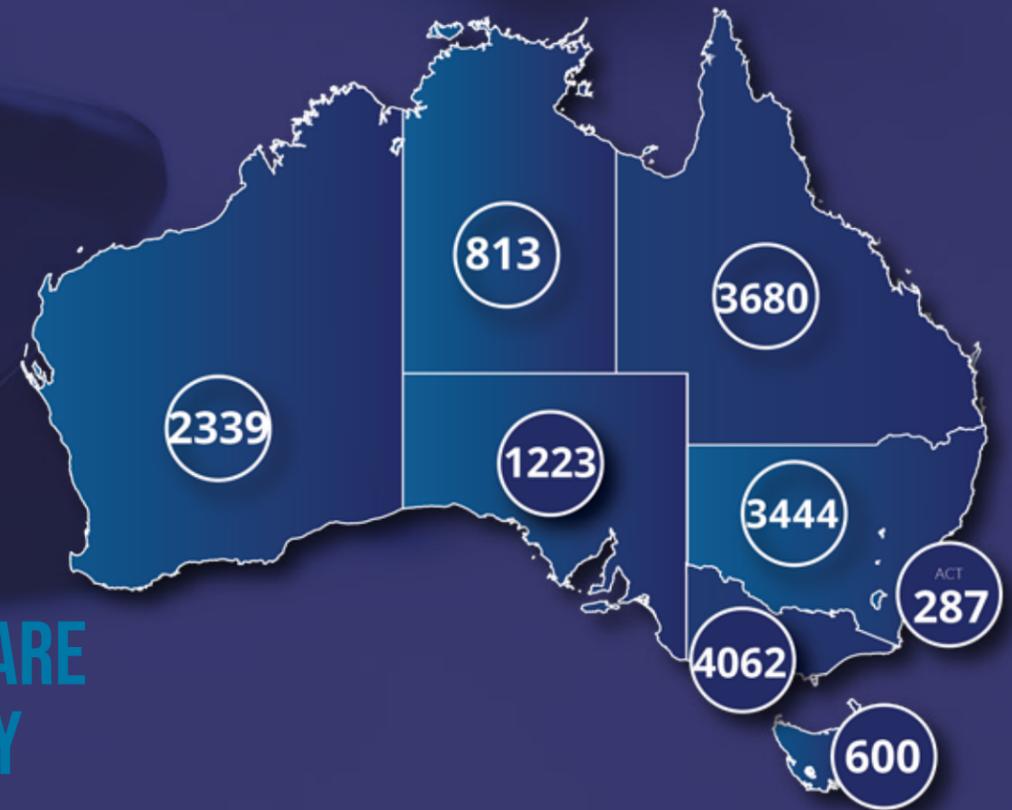


**1**  
**EXTERNAL**  
**EVALUATION**  
**WITH GREAT**  
**RESULTS**

**96.5%**  
**SAY CLIENTS ARE**  
**SIGNIFICANTLY**  
**SAFER**

**16,448**  
**PHONES GIVEN TO WOMEN**

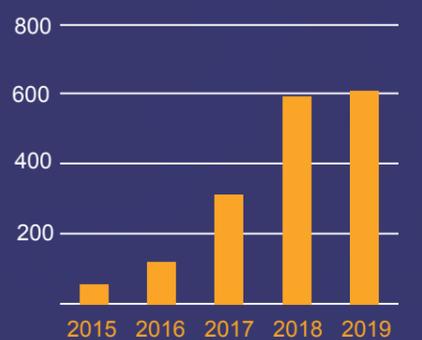
## Phones given to women by State and Territory



## Phones provided per 10,000 female population



## Average number of phones given per month



# OUR IMPACT

## VICTIM SURVIVOR VOICES



**ANNA, VIC**

“ I can sleep better knowing that he isn't tracking me.

**LINDSAY, NSW**

“ I feel like I can actually finally hopefully get my life back on track

**GEMMA, VIC**

“ Landlines are very easy to trace. I mean he has found us over and over again. Whereas now that we have a Safe Connections phone, it's only turned on for the duration of the [court ordered] call and the calls made in the car. Once we hang up, we move . . . [it] gives us that added layer of sort of anonymity and maneuverability.



**CHARLOTTE, VIC**

“ It was useful because I didn't have the money to go out and purchase another phone . . . to be able to . . . still be able to get in contact with whoever I needed to and the fact that I didn't have to spend money that I didn't have on trying to purchase a phone and at that time . . . when you're trying to run and hide the last thing you're thinking about is trying to get a phone and get it all organised.

**KELLY, QLD**

“ He used to isolate [me] from my kids and didn't let me talk to them, and so I can just relax and start talking to my kids properly, so that's been good



**RACHEL, WA**

“ [After leaving the relationship] I wasn't even able to contact my family for a few days or even my boss. No one knew where I was & they had to do welfare checks because they were quite concerned—because they'd known what was going on previously. So when I got the phone it was just - it was an absolute lifesaver.

It was just an absolute lifesaver and I cried and I couldn't begin to thank [the refuge]. It was just a connection to . . . the people that I loved the most and that were important to me and to be able to phone them to let them know that we were OK and we were in a safe place. So it was just - it was wonderful



# WHAT FRONTLINE WORKERS SAY ABOUT OUR TRAINING

## FROM THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

“I have been able to apply this training in my safety planning and discussions about technology abuse and domestic violence”

“I have felt more confident to provide support to women around their safety in their engagement with technology when experiencing DV/FV due to having up to date and extended information and training”

“All workers seek to enhance victim safety. The provision of a phone and information on safe use of technology has enhanced safety and [is an] opportunity to address risk for many victims”

## THE PROGRAM BUILDS CONFIDENCE IN FRONTLINE WORKERS

“I have sent a few women to the website for safety tips. I have also felt more confident helping women work out what the perpetrator may have access to”.

“Remember three key points—what does he know, where does the information live, what does he have access to?”

“In a practical sense, I can show clients safety tips when using their phones etc. Some of the tips I was not aware of before I attended this training so that was very useful”

# “THIS PROGRAM SAVES LIVES”

“I have more knowledge regarding what specific questions to ask to tease out more information about the problem”.

“All workers seek to enhance victim safety. The provision of a phone and information on safe use of technology has enhanced safety and [is an] opportunity to address risk for many victims”

“I have a greater awareness of the types and ways of tracking and locating a person. I use the training to educate clients further about these concerns”.

## “TECH SAFETY IS MORE ENTRENCHED IN SAFETY PLANNING NOW”



# WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP?

## **Opportunities to Contribute to Our Work**

- Donate devices, goods or services for use by victim-survivors
- Provide funding support for training development and delivery, strengthening frontline services for victim-survivors
  - Engage us to provide expert advice on new or existing strategies, policies, practices, goods and services needed by victim-survivors of family violence
- Donate skills, time or funding to help us increase our capacity, reach and impact

**WITH YOUR SUPPORT WE COULD DO SO MUCH MORE.**

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