



WESNET
The Women's Services Network

**SUBMISSION TO THE
JOINT SELECT
COMMITTEE ON AI
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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

Wesnet would like to acknowledge and pay respects to all First Nations people, as the Traditional and only Custodians of this country we call Australia. We recognise First Nations peoples' culture, wisdom, and connection to this land and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future. We recognise the loss of land and culture, acknowledging the consequences of dispossession and colonisation on First Nations peoples. We acknowledge that sovereignty over this land was never ceded. This land always was and always will be Aboriginal land. First Nations women have multiple roles and identities relating to their culture, community, age, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Wesnet works tirelessly for an inclusive future free from violence. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of First Nations women, particularly those who have experienced domestic and family violence, and those who support and advocate for survivors of domestic and family violence. We pay our deepest respects to those who have lost loved ones as a result of domestic and family violence. Wesnet will actively work to be informed by the experiences and advocacy of First Nations women, and to support First Nations women in their quest for safety and equality.

Acknowledgement of survivors

Wesnet also takes this opportunity to acknowledge all survivors of gender-based violence. We pay respect to those who did not survive and to their family members and friends.

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About Wesnet

We are the Peak body for Specialist Women's Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Services in Australia. Our vision is a future where all women and children live free of domestic and family violence and its consequences.

With almost 400 eligible members across Australia, Wesnet represents a range of organisations, the core business of which is supporting survivors of DFV, including women's refuges and supported accommodation services, crisis response and case management services, counselling, recovery and information and referral services.

Harnessing its large national network of members and associate members, Wesnet plays an important role in identifying unmet needs, canvassing new and emerging issues, facilitating policy and sector debate and providing advice to government to provide improved responses to the problem of domestic and family violence. We do this within our communities, and in partnership with non-government stakeholders.

Wesnet works within a feminist framework which promotes understanding domestic and family violence as gendered violence, and that women's and children's experiences are also intrinsically shaped by their ethnicity, culture, ability, age, gender identity and class.

Introduction

Wesnet welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Joint Select Committee on AI. As we are an unfunded peak body, we only have capacity to submit brief comments. Our submission highlights the lack of connection between national AI policy and gender-based violence response and prevention policy. Our comments pertain to AI, gender-based violence and inequality as risks to the safety and wellbeing of women, gender non-conforming communities and children, as well as the opportunity that AI could present in addressing gender-based violence.

AI and domestic and family violence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) poses challenges to addressing domestic and family violence (DFV). Perpetrator misuse of AI includes:

- Chatbot-simulated abuse such as roleplaying incest and child sexual abuse,¹
- Chatbot-enabled abuse like providing guidance on DFV, such as stalking,²
- Sexualised deepfake abuse³
- Synthetic Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM).⁴

In 2025, Wesnet, supported by the University of New South Wales and Curtin University, conducted the *Third National Survey of Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia* (Third National Survey).⁵ This survey builds on two earlier surveys in 2015 and 2020.⁶ The Third National Survey found that

¹ McGlynn, C., McDermott, Y., Macdonald, S., Toparlak, R.T., Tarrant, F., & Treacy, S. (2026) *Invisible no more: How AI Chatbots are reshaping violence against women and girls* (Durham University, Swansea University & UK Research & Innovation), <https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/current/research-news/2026/03/ai-chatbots/>.

² McGlynn, C., McDermott, Y., Macdonald, S., Toparlak, R.T., Tarrant, F., & Treacy, S. (2026) *Invisible no more*.

³ Flynn, A., Powell, A., Eaton, A., & Scott, A.J. (2025) "Sexualized Deepfake Abuse: Perpetrator and Victim Perspectives on the Motivations and Forms of Non-Consensually Created and Shared Sexualized Deepfake Imagery" *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/08862605251368834>.

⁴ Wolbers, H., Cubitt, T., and Cahill, M.J. (2025) Artificial intelligence and child sexual abuse: A rapid evidence assessment (Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology), https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-01/ti711_artificial_intelligence_and_child_sexual_abuse.pdf.

⁵ Wesnet et al., (2026) *Third National Survey of Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia* (Wesnet), <https://wesnet.org.au/3rdnatsurvey>.

⁶ Woodlock et al., (2020) *Second National Survey of Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia* (Wesnet), <https://wesnet.org.au/2ndnatsurvey>.

three-quarters of practitioners surveyed reported seeing perpetrators use AI-generated threats and impersonation tools.

Further, Wesnet's sister organisation, the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) based in the United States, details privacy risks of AI tools, particularly general purpose AI, such as data exposure and third-party access. This includes concerns about data storage, where user inputs are often stored on third-party servers, data logging where conversations are logged for analytics or quality assurance, no true consent mechanisms and emergency protocols.⁷

Despite the overwhelming misuse of AI to perpetrate abuse and the risks that AI poses to victim-survivor privacy and safety, it is concerning that national policy decisions, such as the National AI Plan and AI Safety Institute have not implemented a gender-based violence (GBV) lens. This is evident in the National AI Plan, AI guidance, the AI Safety Institute and the Office of AI. Without a GBV lens, policy decisions about AI are unable to address the harms experienced by many women, gender-non-conforming communities and children and young people. Wesnet recommends that Government AI policy decisions and frameworks are implemented with a gender-based violence prevention and response lens. This is best achieved by co-designing AI policy with specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services.

★ **Recommendation 1: That the Federal Government implement AI policies with a gender-based violence prevention and response lens that is co-designed with specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services.**

AI and inequality

AI is also reinforced by and contributes to inequality. A study of 133 AI systems finds that 44 per cent show gender bias and 26 per cent show gender and racial bias.⁸ This can look like women's job applications being deprioritised by AI recruitment tools and AI systems, including facial recognition technologies, in law

⁷ NNEDV (2025) Artificial Intelligence and Victim Services: A Comprehensive Guide for Advocates (NNEDV), <https://www.techsafety.org/artificial-intelligence-and-victim-services>.

⁸ Smith, G., & Rustangi, I. "When Good Algorithms Go Sexist: Why and How to Advance AI Gender Equity" *Stanford Social Innovation Review* published on March 31, 2021, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/when_good_algorithms_go_sexist_why_and_how_to_advance_ai_gender_equity.

enforcement reinforce racial discrimination in sentencing, bail and surveillance.⁹ If AI generates information based on its users, bias is reinforced as those with low levels of digital inclusion are absent. In Australia, there is a digital inclusion gap between First Nations and other communities, and users outside of capital cities.¹⁰ Design bias can also be reflected by the lack of women in technology. Women constitute only 22 percent of AI professionals globally.¹¹ This is despite the fact that AI use in Australia is more likely to affect women's jobs.¹² Given that the growing use of AI will impact women, particularly those from communities experiencing discrimination, more than men, thereby exacerbating inequality, AI policy should have an intersectional gender-sensitive lens.

We therefore refer the Federal Government to the recommendations pertaining to AI oversight and regulation and AI and women's employment outlined by Working with Women Alliance.¹³ Their recommendations include ensuring that all government AI strategies, frameworks, regulations and action plans include a gender impact statement and funding gender-sensitive and paid training pathways for women to develop the requisite AI skills to transition their careers sustainably.

⁹ UN Women. "How AI reinforces gender bias—and what we can do about it" *UN Women* published on February 5, 2025, <https://unwomen.org.au/how-ai-reinforces-gender-bias-and-what-we-can-do-about-it/>, Wilson, C., & Burns, A. "Privacy concerns raised over Australian-first live AI police face scanning trial" *ABC News* published on July 11, 2026, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-11/ai-police-face-screening-trial-sparks-privacy-concern/107009644> and Australian Human Rights Commission (2024) *Thematic Report on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Racial Discrimination* (Australian Human Rights Commission), <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/submissions/workplace-rights/thematic-report-on-ai-and-racial-discrimination>.

¹⁰ Australian Digital Inclusion Index (2026) "Measuring Australia's digital divide," <https://digitalinclusionindex.org.au/>.

¹¹ Vijayarasa, M. "Most AI assistants are feminine – and it's fuelling dangerous stereotypes and abuse" *The Conversation* published on January 27, 2026, <https://theconversation.com/most-ai-assistants-are-feminine-and-its-fuelling-dangerous-stereotypes-and-abuse-272335>.

¹² Office of the Chief Economist. (2026) *AI and employment in Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government), <https://www.dewr.gov.au/workplace-relations/resources/ai-and-employment-australia>.

¹³ Working with Women Alliance (2026) *Policy brief: AI, gender and economic equality* (Working with Women Alliance), <https://www.wwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/2WwWA-Policy-Brief-AI-Gender-and-Economic-Equality.pdf>.

- ★ **Recommendation 2: That the Federal Government implement the recommendations pertaining to AI oversight and regulation, and AI and women's employment outlined by Working with Women Alliance.**

Opportunities AI can present to address domestic and family violence

AI can pose opportunities to address DFV through data collection and monitoring, early intervention and response. AI is used to track GBV in low- and middle-income countries where data is limited. It can analyse large sets of unstructured data as well as real-time online harmful content across digital platforms.¹⁴ However, caution must be exercised when using AI, particularly Generative AI, for research on GBV.¹⁵ In the United States, a multimodal machine-learning approach uses clinical notes, including radiological notes, and data from electronic medical records to identify patients at risk of intimate partner violence in clinical settings.¹⁶ The research shows promising results for early intervention as it can identify survivors years before they seek support. In Australia, the Commonwealth Bank uses AI to identify TFA in digital payment descriptions, suspending perpetrators from online banking services or refusing their transactions when DFV is detected.¹⁷ Survivors are also using AI such as chatbots to access information and support for their experiences.¹⁸ This matters because survivors are unlikely to disclose their experiences to services.

¹⁴ DeGraw, E. "Using AI to Track Gender-Based Violence" *Think Global Health* published on May 29, 2025,

<https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/using-ai-track-gender-based-violence>.

¹⁵ Amazon-Brown, I., Tsui, Q., & Raftree, L., the MERL Tech Initiative (MTI) and Dartnall, E., Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI), *Using AI responsibly for research on violence against women* (MTI & SVRI),

https://www.svri.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/SVRI_C_012_AI_IN_RESEARCH_LAYOUTV5_WEB_.pdf.

¹⁶ Gu, J., Villalobos Carballo, K., Ma, Y., Bertsimas, D., & Khurana, B. (2026) "Leveraging multimodal machine learning for accurate risk identification of intimate partner violence" *npj Women's Health* 4(15), doi.org/10.1038/s44294-025-00126-3.

¹⁷ Brooks, E.J. "How AI is helping Australia's biggest bank stop domestic violence perpetrators" *Future Women* published on January 15, 2026,

<https://www.futurewomen.com/equity/artificial-intelligence-domestic-violence/>.

¹⁸ Poveda, J., Lanter, A., Antoniuk, I., Mazurek, M.L., Freed, D. (2026) "CHAT WITH ME below as if I were a human": Insights from Auditing AI Chatbots for Survivors of Domestic Violence" *FACCT '26: The 2026 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* 1398 - 1423, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3805689.3812260>, Hui, V., Tian, L., Feng, X., Chen, Q., Wong, AKC., Bloom, TL. (2026) "Perspectives and preferences of domestic violence survivors regarding digital platform and AI chatbot for help-seeking: A qualitative study." *PLoS One* 21(2): e0342453, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0342453>, and Mielismäki, H., & Husso, M. (2025) "Ethical Implications of AI-Driven Chatbots in Domestic Violence Support" *Social Inclusion* 13, <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.9998>.

Final remarks

As Wesnet is an unfunded peak body, our capacity to make recommendations is limited. We understand that Our Watch is also submitting to the Joint Select Committee. As the experts in primary prevention of violence against women, we also refer you to Our Watch's submission.