



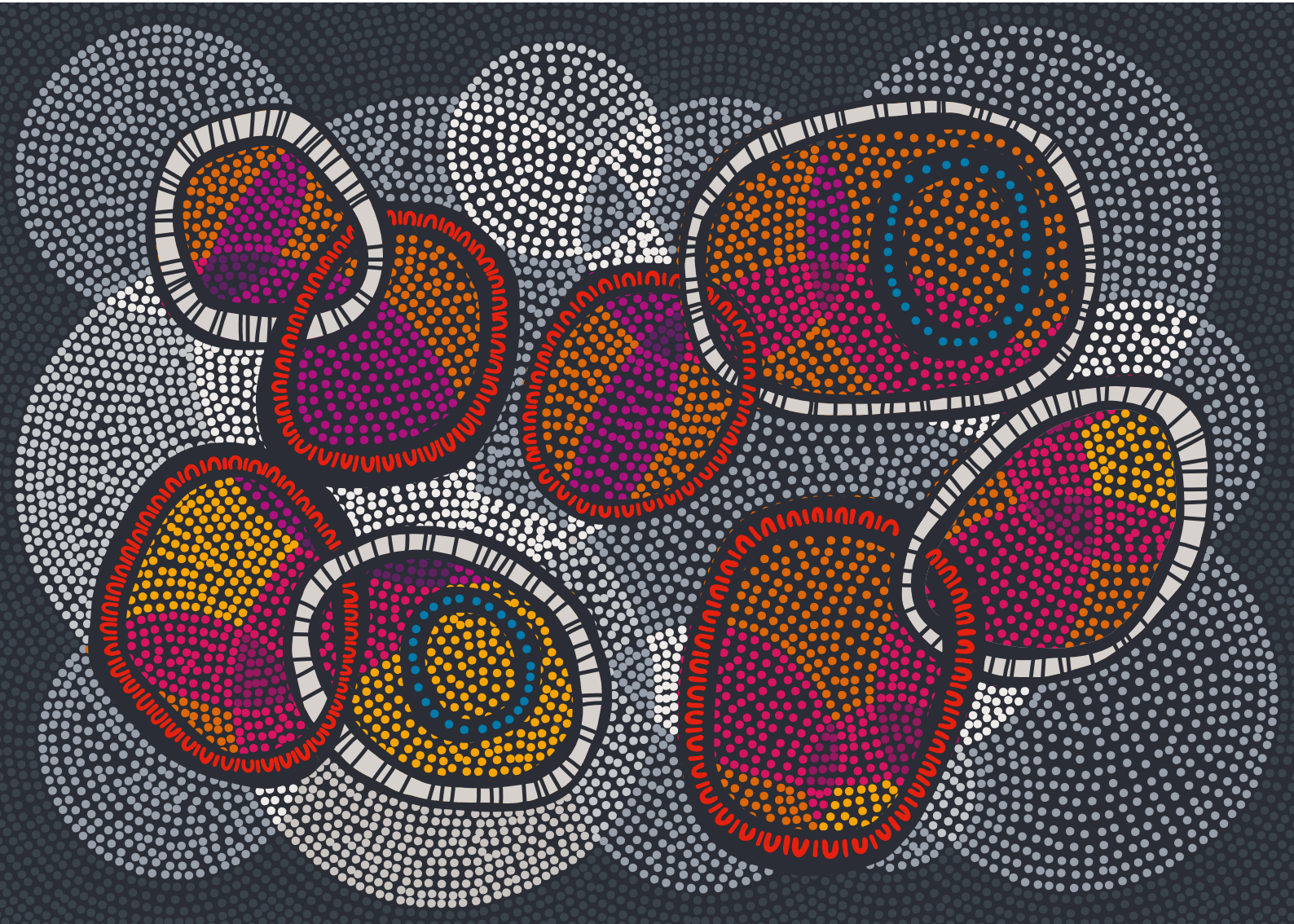
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT 2018-19**

 **1800WESNET**  
National Toll Free 1800 937 638  
 [wesnet.org.au](http://wesnet.org.au)  
 **WesnetAustralia**  
 **@WESNETAustralia**

This artwork was created to represent the work of The Women's Services Network.

**'strength in women'**

*When women support each other and bind together, there is strength. This allows them to face adversity and empowers them to impact their future in a positive way.*



**'strength in women' artwork by Keisha Thomason**, Aboriginal Graphic Designer and Digital Artist. Keisha is a proud Waanyi & Kalkadoon woman from Mount Isa, Queensland. Her artwork merges the handmade with the digital landscape, influenced by her culture and the modern world.  
[www.leondesign.co](http://www.leondesign.co) Insta @leondesign.co



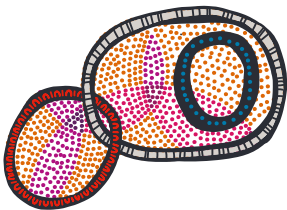
The white shape represents **women in need of support** or at risk. The smaller blue shape represents their **children**.



The red shape represents **female support groups**, from organisations to communities.



The **female support groups** link up with **the women (and their children) in need** to positively impact and strengthen. Each link extends the surface area of positivity.



The coloured background circles represent the **diversity in female groups**, from situational to race. The brightly coloured areas represent feelings of empowerment, confidence and strength, while the grey areas represent feelings of negativity and risk that women face everyday.

# WESNET ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

GPO Box 1579  
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601  
AUSTRALIA  
ABN: 16 068 548 631  
ACN: ACT A 02400



## WESNET Chair Report Julie Oberin



In the past three years, on average, more than one Australian woman every day has lost their lives at the hands of a man who was her partner or ex-partner, family member or man known to her<sup>1</sup>, and countless women were brutally assaulted and/or raped, and live in fear of further violence against themselves (and their children).

The scale of the ongoing risk of gendered violence against Australian women is shocking, with at least one in every six women having experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of her partner or ex-partner<sup>2</sup>. Young women, women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and/or CALD communities and women with a disability are at a significantly higher risk.

The women's services sector stands firm on the front line against the widespread human disaster of domestic and/or family violence. It is difficult, challenging work, and those drawn to it

recognise the stark reality of the danger their clients face. They have seen the raw fear in their client's eyes and hear it as their client tells their story. However, as the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) so succinctly captures, "These services know how to plan for safety and assess complex and changing risks; they advocate for and with victim-survivors and support them to navigate complex systems; they understand the dynamics of violence and the impacts of trauma; and they use principles of empowerment and client-centred approaches to support women and their children

*"Every two minutes, police are called to a family violence matter. Every week, a woman is killed by a current or former partner. This is Australia's national emergency".*

Natasha Stott Despoja, Chair, Our Watch, 2019.

to recover from the impacts of violence and trauma".

The role frontline workers play is vital in helping women and children to find safety. We see the skills, professionalism and enthusiasm of workers helping vulnerable women and children, but also the sadness and personal cost of working at such close range to distressing and heartbreaking situations. Many workers themselves have experienced domestic and/or family violence in their own families and are working to ensure others can live free from it. Through sheer courage and strength of will frontline workers keep showing up to support women to safety, and for that, we honour them.

Co-creating safety for victim-survivors often requires highly skilled risk assessment and management, intensive frontline support and direct material assistance. Specialist women's services have been increasingly overlooked for funding and it is challenging for services to sustain their programs to adequately meet the needs of the victim-survivors they support. The weakening of specialist women's services puts victim-survivors at risk. Specialist women's services work from a trauma-informed framework understanding that women are having a normal reaction to a trauma. They understand the nuance of

gender-based violence, believe the victim/survivors and work to hold perpetrators to account. The demand on our services has been growing rapidly, alongside the dramatic increase in public awareness about domestic and family violence and gender-based violence this decade. The women's services sector is performing its work under extreme pressure due to the increase in need, lack of funding and resources, and sector-wide reforms.

Together we are making a difference in changing destructive societal attitudes as we challenge violence-supporting attitudes and beliefs which blame the victim and justify and excuse the perpetrator's behaviour. We need to continue to focus on the structural gender-based drivers of violence against women as we continue to provide the best response we can to victim/survivors.

I take this opportunity to thank all of the WESNET staff for their work during the year. We have an amazing skilled and dedicated team. I also thank the WESNET Board for their strong governance over the last year along with you, our members who are working at the grass roots, for all that you do.

As always, your financial membership is crucial to WESNET's ability to push for further improvements and funding for the specialist women's services sector to adequately

respond to women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence. We thank you for your continued support and extend our commitment to keep working toward securing the safety of vulnerable women and children and helping with capacity building for our members.

It is with pleasure that we present the 2018-19 Annual Report to our members and supporters.

  
Julie Oberin  
National Chair

<sup>1</sup> Counting Dead Women Australia researchers of Destroy the Joint. (2019).

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017). Personal Safety, Australia, 2016, ABS cat. no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS.

# Our Members

WESNET’s membership is drawn from an estimated 320 complex service delivery organisations across Australia who are specialists in assisting women and their children who are, or have been, victims of domestic and family violence, intimate partner violence and other forms of gender based violence.

The models of domestic and family violence services in Australia are diverse. They range from single communal shelters to multi-building cluster models of self-contained units with counselling rooms, children’s resource buildings, playgrounds, and group or training rooms; to shop fronts in busy shopping centres servicing dispersed houses throughout the community; to large purpose-built facilities in remote areas; to lone outreach workers working out of other

organisations. They may specialise in certain disadvantaged groups of women and children in their community. They may be a crisis phone service that also provides crisis accommodation, a community development worker, a counsellor, a networker, a children’s worker, or a worker in an isolated community with little support. The majority of members are Public Benevolent Institutions and/or direct service delivery agencies working with women impacted by domestic and family violence.

Our members are specialised women’s domestic and family violence services, that provide:

- frontline support to women and children victim-survivors,
- are led by women, and
- work within an intersectional feminist framework.

Members are organisations, programs or allies, including:

- Women’s refuges/shelters
- Halfway houses
- Safe houses
- Women’s medium-term housing schemes
- Information and referral services
- Indigenous services
- Migrant, refugee and non-English speaking background services
- Sexual assault services
- Outreach services
- Advocacy services
- Counselling services
- Other women’s services

## VISION

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

## PURPOSE

Our principal purpose is to ameliorate and prevent suffering and distress experienced by women and children affected by domestic and family violence, intimate partner violence and other forms of gender-based violence.

It does this as Australia’s national peak body for Women’s Services. WESNET works within a feminist framework which promotes an understanding of domestic and family violence as gendered violence. In addition, we acknowledge that women and children’s experiences are also intrinsically shaped by their ethnicity, culture, ability, age, gender identity and class.



# Our National Board



The WESNET Board comprises eleven highly experienced and effective women who generously volunteer their time and skill to further the work of the women’s services sector to eliminate violence against women.

They are the industry leaders and their collective expertise spans domestic and family violence, policy and legislative frameworks, best-practice direct service provision, research and evaluation.

Board members, elected by the WESNET membership include grassroots service managers, direct service workers, counsellors, trainers, community educators, policy officers, researchers and expert advisers.

This year, our board members have provided consistently strong leadership across the women’s services sector and we are grateful for their contributions, including:

- innovative approaches to protection with police, justice, community services, education, women’s health, and women’s legal personnel, including cross-sector collaboration,

- improvements and innovation in direct service provision to women and children survivors,
- addressing homelessness and poverty as systemic contributors to family and domestic violence,
- providing feedback and advice to State and Territory Government departments on D&FV policy strategies as they seek to implement recommendations from the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children,
- ensuring the unique role of specialised women’s services.

## OFFICE BEARERS

- National Chair**  
Julie Oberin  
Annie North Inc (Vic)
- Deputy Chair**  
Lindy Edwards  
Sera’s Women’s Shelter (Qld)
- Treasurer**  
Kedy Kristal  
Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA)
- Secretary**  
Vicki Lachlan  
Louise Place (SA)
- Public Officer**  
Mirjana Wilson  
Domestic Violence Crisis Service (ACT)

## STATE & TERRITORY REPRESENTATIVES

- ACT**  
Frances Crimmins  
YWCA Canberra
- New South Wales**  
Hayley Foster (to 05/04/2019)  
Women’s DV Court Advocacy Service.
- Northern Territory**  
Di Gipey  
Women’s Safety Services of Central Australia
- Queensland**  
Lindy Edwards  
Sera’s Women’s Shelter
- South Australia**  
Vicki Lachlan  
Louise Place
- Tasmania**  
Jacinta Atkins (to 11/11/2018)  
Safe Choices
- Denise Healey (from 28/02/2019)  
Warrabee Women’s Shelter
- Victoria**  
Julie Oberin  
Annie North Inc
- Margaret Augerinos (Alt) (to 13/06/2019)  
Centre for Non-Violence
- Western Australia**  
Kedy Kristal  
Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services

## INTERSECTION & DIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVES

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women**  
Maxine Yaxley (from 28/02/2019)  
Domestic Violence Action Centre Toowoomba
- Immigrant, non-English speaking background and Refugee Women**  
Vacant
- Older Women**  
Pauline Woodbridge  
North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service



# Our work

The Women’s Services Network (WESNET) is the national peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services. Established in 1992, we are a grassroots organisation, run for women, by women.

We represent specialist women’s services providing direct relief, refuge, accommodation, information, legal and referral services to women and children experiencing or escaping violence. We provide strong, connected leadership for frontline organisations and their workers, to support them to help their clients.

We are experts in family and domestic violence specialising in technology-facilitated abuse. Our Safety Net Australia program examines the intersection

between technology and violence against women, providing support and services including direct relief to survivors, training events and educational resources for frontline workers, and technical support for survivors and frontline workers.

We also manage the Telstra Safe Connections program, which at the end of June 2019 has provided close to 17,000 smartphones to women impacted by domestic and family violence. The program ([phones.wesnet.org.au](http://phones.wesnet.org.au)) helps women and children-at-risk stay safely connected by giving them a smartphone and \$30 credit, and training frontline agencies and their workers to teach them how to use their new smartphone safely. Between 1 July 2018 and 30 June 2019 WESNET provided a total of 7,320 phones to women.

In order to ensure better practice outcomes, we contribute our expertise to academic research projects, national and international conferences,

women’s sector organisations, technology organisations, and key State and Federal policy consultations, round tables, and high-level State and Territory advisory mechanisms.

In addition to this work WESNET is a member of and currently acts as contract manager for the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA).

The WESNET Board and staff members hold positions on key advisory mechanisms including the ANROWS Practitioner Engagement Group (an advisory group to assist in the translation of research to practice), the Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey Specialist Advisory Group, the 1800 RESPECT Advisory Group, the National Community Attitudes Survey Advisory Group, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Data Users Group, and Our Watch Awards Technical Advisory Group.

# Our staff

**Interim National Director**

Karen Bentley

**Staff members during 2018-19**

Diana H  
Ella B (left Dec 2018)  
Elly S (left May 2019)  
Heidi Guldbaek (left Nov 2018)  
June W  
Kaofeng Lee (left Sep 2018)  
Natalie M

Merrindahl Andrew  
Sumi Venkentasubramanian  
Tina Dixon  
Willa W





# Interim National Director Report

## Karen Bentley

It has been another very busy year for the team at WESNET. Together with our network of 276 Safe Connections agencies, donated smartphones from Telstra and funding from the federal government we have given over 600 women a month a new phone and tech safety advice.

We are so grateful for Telstra's ongoing support for our work in technology safety and for their donation of thousands of smartphones and \$30 prepaid cards to victim-survivors. This financial year we were able to distribute 7,320 phones to women through trained Safe Connections agencies across Australia.

The demand for phones continues to grow, as does the list of agencies waiting for onboarding onto the program. We worked hard across the year to achieve a federal funding commitment and and we were granted an extension to 30 June 2020 (at 60% of what we need to successfully run the program).

Our Safe Connections program is generating a lot of interest overseas and in Australia. During the year WESNET was invited to present about the program at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting in Vienna, the NNEDV's Tech Summit in San Francisco, and at QUT's DVTech18, on the intersection between violence and technology and the Safe Connections program.

WESNET has been working well with corporate partners and agencies to provide support for women experiencing gender-based violence.

We welcomed Australia Post as a new partner to the Safe Connections program, donating free postage for Safe Connections phone kits to participating agencies.

The Commonwealth Bank asked us to provide smartphones to their female customers and employees through their domestic and family violence initiative.

We were also delighted to receive a donation from Uber on behalf of their Driving Change Program comprising \$50,000 rideshare credit to be distributed by members to their at-risk clients and \$50,000 for expert advice and costs associated with developing online misogyny and rape culture resources for both women and frontline workers.

We worked with 1800RESPECT to update their frontline worker toolkit and their website content on technology abuse so both frontline workers and victim-survivors seeking assistance from 1800RESPECT have up-to-date and best practice material to read.

In September we convened our 3rd successful National Tech Summit, with keynote speakers including social justice journalist Ginger Gorman, Erica Olsen and Cindy Southworth from the

Safety Net Project, National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), and technology insights expert Sami Makelainen from Telstra. We hosted a Law Enforcement special workshop on the preceding day with Detective Bryan Franke and Kaofeng Lee providing specialised content relevant to Police about technology facilitated abuse. We were grateful to our sponsors, Telstra, Google, Facebook and 1800RESPECT for helping fund the event.

We worked with Dr Diarmaid Harkin, Dr Adam Molnar and Ms Erica Vowles on the ACCAN consumer spyware research project, testing spyware apps and developing educational resources including a Mobile Spyware handout for victim-survivors and a Practitioner's Guide.

Another new handout was created for practitioners, Tech Safety Assessment, and two were created for both practitioners and victim-survivors, *Privacy & security for smart devices* (*Internet of*



*Things*), and *Dealing with harassing calls, texts, and messages*.

We made contributions to national consultations and round tables to shape the 4th Action Plan and were key contributors to an initiative of the Communications Alliance (voice for the telecommunications industry) which produced guidelines to help telecommunications providers assist customers affected by family and domestic violence.

We acknowledge the work to increase the understanding and impact of Australia's gendered violence epidemic undertaken by the women's services



Torres Strait Islander and/or culturally and linguistically diverse.

And last, but by no means least, I would like to thank all the staff for their professionalism, dedication and tenacity to keep on going despite very demanding and confronting work and the uncertain funding future.

On behalf of the WESNET team we also thank the board of WESNET and all the WESNET members, friends and supporters for the work they do every day to support women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

  
Karen Bentley  
Interim National Director



Karen Bentley was appointed the Interim National Director on 1 November 2018

# Voices from the frontline

## Stats, facts and quotes

*"Being able to provide our clients with a new mobile and phone number is a powerful way to assist already vulnerable women who are terrified their partners will find them."*

*"I have a young client (16) who is 23 weeks pregnant and sleeping rough with a violent older partner. Her safe phone is her life line to her support network that is being built while she takes steps leave the relationship. It is the single most important tool she has at the moment."*

*"Just this week we helped a woman escape an arranged marriage where her communications were all monitored. Without the WESNET phone she would not have been assisted."*

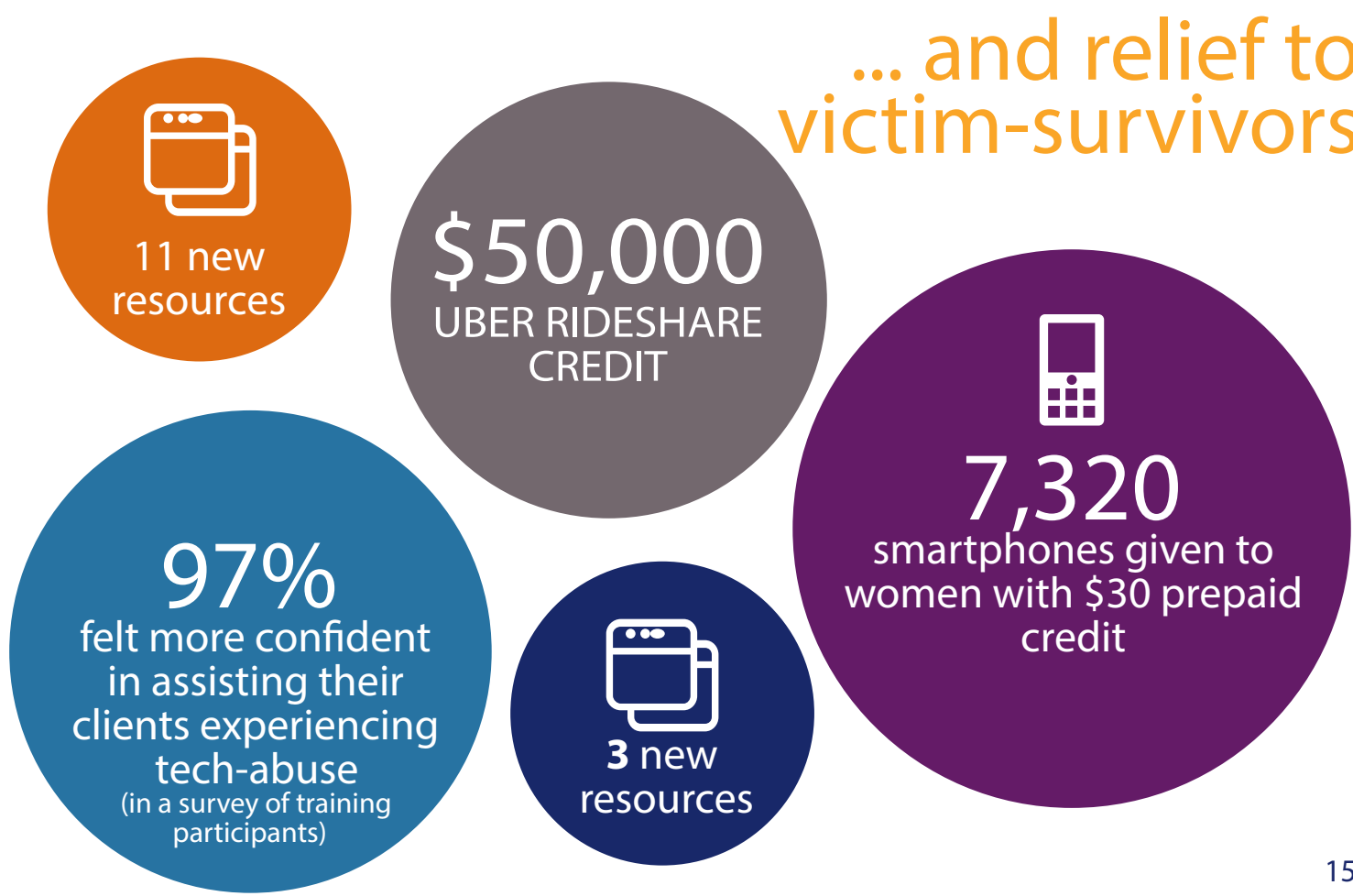
*"I have been able to give safe phones to children whose parents are drug affected, abusive and they have no way of contacting the police, child protective services or workers because their parents take their phones or don't have finances to buy them one."*

*"Each client that I have provided a WESNET phone have been able to significantly increase their safety and avoid harassment and abuse. Women were able to dispose of their old phone, move addresses and cease to be tracked by offenders."*

Feedback received from frontline workers who provide smartphones and tech safety planning to victim-survivors



# The Safety Net Australia program delivered training and tech support to frontline workers ...

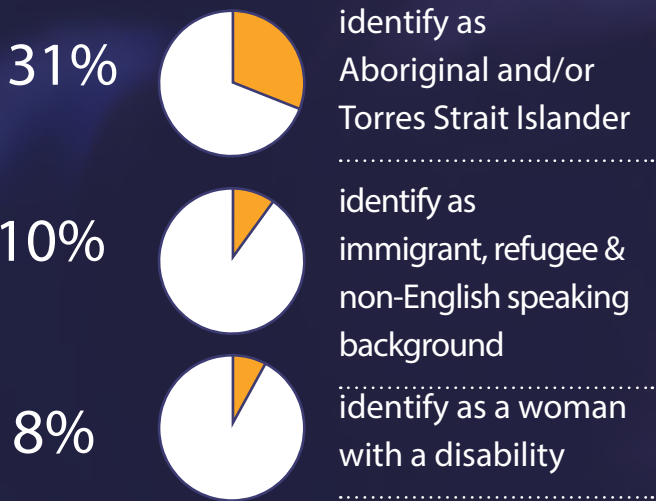




# OUR SOCIAL IMPACT UP TO 30 JUNE 2019

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 was able to significantly grow the program's reach and impact during the previous two financial years. The program also involves upskilling frontline workers through specialised technology safety training. The program remained steady through 2018-19.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF VICTIM RECIPIENTS



## FRONTLINE AGENCIES



**2,886**  
Workers  
Trained

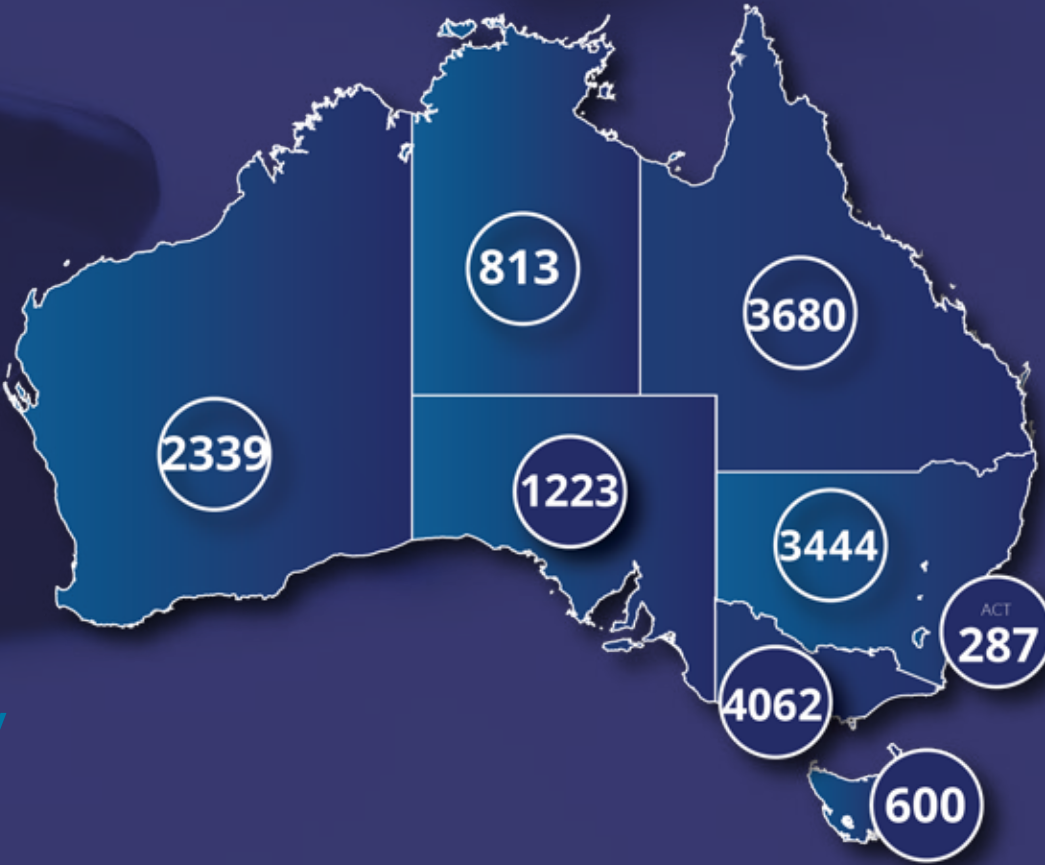
**1,320**  
Workers  
with access  
to online  
resources

**1**  
External  
evaluation  
with great  
results

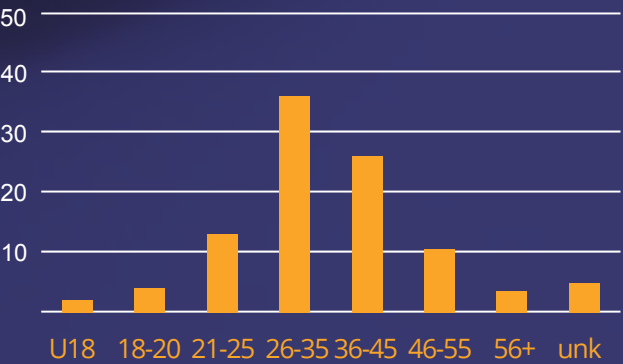
**96.5%**  
say their clients  
are significantly  
safer

**16,448**  
PHONES GIVEN TO WOMEN

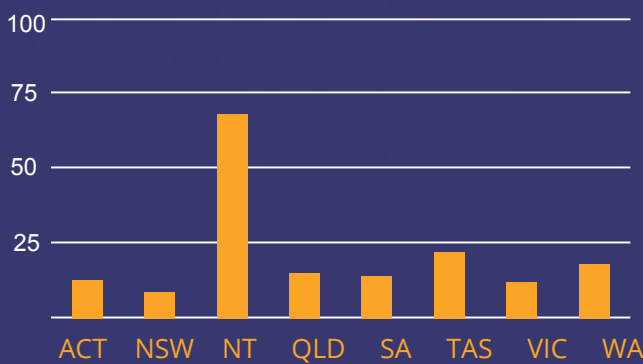
## PHONES GIVEN TO WOMEN BY STATE AND TERRITORY



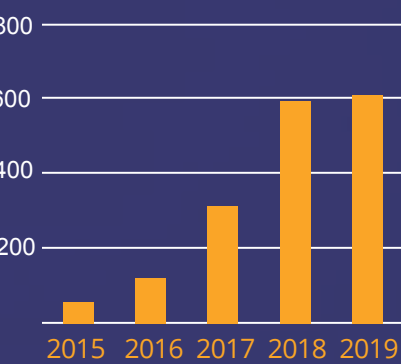
## AGE DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN (%)



## PHONES PROVIDED PER 10,000 FEMALE POPULATION



## AVERAGE NUMBER OF PHONES GIVEN PER MONTH







In 2018, WESNET undertook a National listening tour of frontline agencies to better understand how to support survivors of tech-abuse identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or culturally and linguistically diverse

Interview with Karen Bentley, Interim National Director

What was the study?

WESNET have been training frontline workers on technology abuse for several years now. Two groups we knew very little about—in terms of the incidence and impact of technology-facilitated abuse—were women from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We knew from our Safe Connections smartphone program that a much higher proportion of phones have been distributed to women who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and women with disabilities, than the proportion of those women in the general Australian population. We expected that these groups of women needed more support with mobile technology.

We wanted to find out about the types of technology related issues

impacting these women and whether there was anything that the frontline workers who were supporting them might need, to help provide more targeted support to these clients. We realised that it would be difficult to speak with the women in person because they are often in a crisis situation when they present at a support service, so we identified Safe Connections phones distribution domestic and family violence agencies who were giving out phones to higher numbers of women identifying as either Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse, and we approached them to participate in the study.

Two of our trainers travelled to deliver training to those agencies on technology-facilitated abuse and conducted a listening session where workers were invited to provide their thoughts on what

the issues for these women were, what some of the barriers were, and what might be of benefit to both the women accessing those services but also the frontline workers.

What are the findings?

The study confirmed the almost complete overlap between domestic and family violence and technology-facilitated abuse. We already knew from the survey in 2015 from WESNET, Women’s Legal Services NSW and the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria - the ReCharge Survey of 549 frontline practitioners - that 98% reported that their domestic and family violence clients were experiencing some form of technology-facilitated abuse. That has been borne out by everything we’re seeing from the listening tour, which is that if you have a client experiencing domestic and family violence, they’re almost certainly

experiencing some of that abuse through technology.

The study further confirmed that in regional areas of Australia it can be harder to access technology so a woman’s capacity to access it or afford it is also reduced. When this happens, the types of tech-abuse exists in parallel to that. For example, if a woman doesn’t have a lot of access to technology then the types of technology abuse she might experience from a perpetrator is likely to be of a more physical nature—like hiding or controlling or smashing her phone—rather than installing an app on her phone or something more ‘high tech’ from the other end of the spectrum.

The study showed us that women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities experience

common factors that increase their vulnerability to technology-facilitated abuse, including low technological literacy, not recognising technology control and coercion as abuse, social and technological isolation, lack of money, and limited English literacy. Language and literacy barriers can compound the abuse experienced by survivors, and can also result in tech-abuse not being addressed as a priority for workers or survivors.

The frontline workers were very clear that client-facing resources for women from these communities should be simple and accessible to a diverse audience. They also want strategies on how to discuss technology safety with survivors, and more technology safety training and resources so they can provide a more informed response to their clients.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors, the number of people involved in the abuse can grow from just one perpetrator to many perpetrators within a woman’s community, and her vulnerability to abuse may increase if she shares her device within her community.

Many culturally and linguistically diverse survivors don’t recognise the technology-facilitated control as abuse, which increases their vulnerability and can permit higher levels of control by the perpetrator. For women with families outside of Australia, their abuse is compounded by their geographical isolation. Perpetrators can use this as leverage to increase the abuse of a woman and her family by enlisting other abusers - both in Australia and overseas.

One of the things that we’ve always found a barrier to increasing knowledge of





Posters on tech-abuse were developed and translated into Simple English, Simple Chinese, Arabic, Hindi & Vietnamese

continued from previous page...

technology-facilitated abuse is that technology is not a simple topic. By its very nature, technology can be a complex issue to communicate and successful transmission is reliant on a person's base-level understanding of technology. It can be very hard to comprehend in English, let alone if you have low English literacy levels or speak a different language, or if you haven't had the opportunity to have good access to technology. The study confirmed that we needed to try to simplify how we talk about what technology-facilitated abuse is and put it into really simple English, and other languages.

#### What do you think the impact of this study will be?

We hope that it provides some much-needed research and evidence around this particular issue because there's hardly anything in Australia on it at the

moment.

It's definitely going to inform how we produce some of the resources that we do moving forward, and we think more targeted resources will be beneficial to the frontline workers and also to women impacted by technology facilitated abuse. We hope that that's actually going to actually lead to potentially have these women being able to flag technology abuse issues with their frontline worker, and for frontline workers to be able to start a conversation about technology abuse with their clients. over a long time frame. Frances asked "How much longer do we tell women to wait for affordable appropriate accommodation on a single age pension?"

Inequality in wages and superannuation, unpaid caring roles, deaths, housing insecurity,

breakdown in family relationships and domestic violence, all contribute to women falling into the cracks.

#### What's next for WESNET?

Posters have been developed for frontline services to display, and we will be producing practitioner conversation starters, to help facilitate a conversation about tech safety with their clients. The resources are targeted toward women from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and also to women who might have low literacy levels and would benefit from a visual prompt to recognise that tech-abuse might be happening to them.

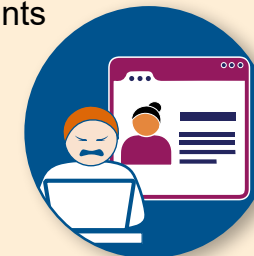
# Is tech abuse happening to you?

## It can be tech abuse if someone:

- controls your phone
- takes your phone away from you
- breaks your phone
- makes you share your phone



- controls your online accounts
- stops you using your online accounts
- uses your online accounts when you don't want them to



- shares pictures of you that you don't want people to see
- tells you they will share pictures of you that you don't want people to see unless you do what they say.



## It can be tech abuse if someone watches what you do using:

- your phone
- hidden cameras
- apps.



## It can be tech abuse if someone uses a computer, phone or tablet to:

- keep contacting you over and over
- say things that hurt you
- punish you
- say they will hurt you or a member of your family.



## It can be tech abuse if someone uses apps or social media to:

- say things that make you feel bad
- say things that make you or your family look bad
- make threats about things they will do to you.



## It can be tech abuse if someone uses tech to:

- find out where you are when you don't want them to
- find out what you are doing when you don't want them to
- follow you.



**If tech abuse is happening to you, talk to your support worker.**



You can get more information from the website.  
[www.techsafety.org.au](http://www.techsafety.org.au)



## Older Women Report Pauline Woodbridge



A recent report by Pro Bono news 10/10/19 is headlined “Australia is bracing for a tsunami of homeless women” which states, *“if a nation’s greatness is measured by how it treats its elderly and vulnerable, Australia is set to fall shamefully short”*.

*“We only have to look around us to see the state of our society and the many ways it is still disadvantaging women, and, it can be argued the wellbeing and safety for older women that comes from being housed and supported, is steadily deteriorating”.*

Pauline Woodbridge, 2019.

Women aged over 50 are the fastest growing group of people at risk of homelessness in this lucky country, with a 30% rise in the number of grandmothers, mothers, aunts and sisters sleeping in their cars, couch surfing or accessing crisis accommodation since 2011.

Becoming homeless is the tip of the iceberg, the emotional states that accompany it include fear and anxiety, depression and loneliness, inadequate nutrition and poverty. The slide into homelessness can happen to any woman because of the circumstances she finds herself in which can include low paid and insecure work, divorce, poor health and violence.

One of the problems identified in the recent ABC’s *Australia Talks* showed that those aged between 50 and 64 cited job security and ageism were leading concerns. National Seniors Australia advocate Ian Henschke, told the ABC, *“We are hearing stories in the Aged Care Royal Commission about people being treated with disrespect ... many issues impacting older Australians could be directly linked to*

*ageism”* 17/10/19. More than half of the elderly will be women who could be living with pension poverty finding it more and more difficult to make ends meet. The largest group on Newstart in Australia today are those between 55 and retirement age.

Older women are increasingly being considered as unemployed as they age and are being trapped in poverty and facing penalties for failing to be effective in finding a job as they compete for jobs that do not exist.

Then the issues of ageism, homelessness and poverty all act as barriers to employment. Not having a living income means that so many aspects of an Australian average way of life are unattainable.

The Poverty Commission found two thirds of low-income renters in Australia are in rental stress – spending more than 30% of their income on rent. This leaves 170,000 Australian homes with less than \$35 a day after covering rental payments.

The Foodbank Hunger Report (Oct 2019) paints a picture of the nation’s growing hunger

crisis. They found more than one in five Australians have experienced food insecurity in the past year, with women fifty percent more likely than men to go without enough food.

So many aspects of our current lives are putting women and older women in precarious situations: in climate change that affects our lives; in the plight of women on land that is in drought with debts piling up; in small community businesses with no customers who have income; and in remote or rural areas where adequate health care and access to mental health services decreases the further from a metropolitan city a woman lives.

There are so many challenges for women workers, mothers, grandmothers and carers. The deliberate suppression of gender awareness, the discrimination and hardship experienced by Aboriginal women, the violence and deaths of women that occur all too regularly, all demonstrate that although women make up more than half Australia’s population, it is not hard to see that our patriarchal society considers women’s lives as having less value.





## 2018-19: ANOTHER BUSY YEAR



Top row: Karen Bentley was invited to present on WESNET's Safe Connections program to the United Nations Expert Group Meeting of the Joint Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, held in Vienna, Austria in November 2018. Bottom right: The team and some of our keynote speakers celebrate after another successful Tech Summit, this time held at the Gold Coast in September 2018. Bottom 2nd from left: Karen and Merri were invited to present on technology and violence against women in rural, regional and remote Australia at the National Rural Women's Round Table in May 2019. Bottom left: Karen participated in a discussion panel on the launch of Natasha Stott-Despoja's book 'On Violence', in an event hosted by Nicole McMahon from 1800RESPECT. Above left: Ginger Gorman was a keynote at our 3rd Technology Safety Summit and caught up with Noelle Martin at the event. Above right WESNET was also invited to be part of a panel discussing innovative use of Technology at the US Tech Safety Summit in San Francisco in July 2019.





# Treasurer's report

## Kedy Kristal

The last financial year has seen stable financial outlook for WESNET, with revenue of \$1,445,577 compared to \$1,510,590 the previous financial year. This is mainly due to our continued partnership with Telstra and funding from the Commonwealth Government focusing on training front-line workers and supporting women impacted by domestic violence to stay safely connected.

Membership revenue has remained fairly stable, however, a key part of our next strategic plan will be working on increasing the membership of WESNET, as these fees are essential to WESNET's continuing activities.

WESNET ended the year with an overall surplus of \$237,834.

Our assets at 30 June 2019 were \$886,511, with liabilities of \$445,152. Most of these liabilities relate to payments/grants in

advance and associated end of financial year liabilities. Our equity at 30 June 2018 was \$429,089.

The 2018/19 audit was an unqualified audit, and on behalf of the Board I would like to thank Mark Fitzpatrick, Diana Hookey, Edith Willoughby and Trudy McNaught for their work during the year and taking the finances through to audit.

**Kedy Kristal**  
Treasurer

# Financial Summary

## 2018-19

Below is a summary of our audited financial statements, A full copy of the 2018-19 Financial Statements is available on request or from the ACNC website. The audit of our financial records was completed in November 2019 by RSD Audit Pty Ltd.

	2019 \$	2018 \$
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### STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

#### Cash Flows From Operating Activities

Net cash provided by operating activities	(274,107)	137,461
<b>Net increase in cash held</b>	(274,107)	137,461
<b>Cash on hand at the end of financial year</b>	801,007	1,075,114

### INCOME STATEMENT

Revenue	1,445,577	1,510,590
Expenses	1,207,846	1,415,010
<b>Net current year surplus</b>	237,731	95,580

### BALANCE SHEET

#### Assets

Current Assets	886,511	1,136,076
Non-Current Assets	0	0
<b>Total Assets</b>	886,511	1,136,076

#### Liabilities

Current Liabilities	445,152	994,713
Non-current Liabilities	12,270	0
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	457,422	994,713

Net Assets	429,089	191,358
<b>Total Equity</b>	429,089	191,358

Another productive year for the Women's Services Network



