

# WESNET SAFETY NET AUSTRALIA PROJECT

Improving technology safety for women  
surviving domestic & family violence



## WESNET

The Women's Services Network



1800WESNET  
National Toll Free 1800 937 638



[wesnet.org.au](http://wesnet.org.au)



WesnetAustralia



@WESNETAustralia

# CONTENTS

- P2 - What is WESNET?
- P3 - What is our Safety Net Australia project?
- P4 - What is the problem?
- P6 - Our activities
- P7 - Why does our model work?
- P8 - Our theory of change
- P10 - The Safe Connections program: a case study
- P11 - Joanne's story
- P12 - Our social impact to date
- P14 - Our impact: victim-survivor voices
- P15 - What frontline workers say about our program
- P16 - Ways you can help victim-survivors

# WHAT IS OUR SAFETY NET AUSTRALIA PROJECT?

## Our Objective

To 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 provide material relief to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence and other forms of gender-based violence.
- We provide educational resources and advice to women to increase their safety.
- We train and provide educational resources on technology-facilitated abuse to frontline women's domestic and family violence workers to help them better support their clients (victim-survivors) to understand and use technology to enhance their safety and privacy.
- We provide expert advice on technology-facilitated abuse and gender-based violence to other services providing support to women experiencing violence, as well as to government (e-Safety Commissioner, law, justice, police).
- We work with technology companies to increase victim-survivors' safe access to technology devices, products and services.

# WHAT IS WESNET?

We are Australia's peak body for Women's Services, working alongside our members to provide benevolent relief to women and children who are affected by domestic and family violence and other forms of gender-based violence.

# OUR MEMBERS

are Australia's specialist women's domestic and family violence services - a system of complex service delivery organisations that assist women and children experiencing or escaping 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 in order to exercise power and control over their victims.

Common ways that perpetrators misuse technology:

- restricting her 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 her (e.g. by sending abusive messages or threatening to share intimate images).



**CONTROL PHONE**  
Controls, takes, breaks or forces her to share her phone.



**MONITOR & STALK**  
Uses location or GPS tracking, and monitoring, spyware or keystroke logger apps to monitor and stalk.

**CONTROL ACCOUNTS**  
Accesses her online accounts, changes passwords, locks her out or impersonates her.



**SPY**  
Installs spyware or stalkerware or uses other apps to monitor and track her.





**ABUSE**  
Harasses, abuses, punishes, or threatens her via text, apps, email, phone.



**IMAGE-BASED ABUSE**  
Threatens to share intimate images to prevent her leaving, or shares images once she has left to humiliate her.

**HUMILIATE & THREATEN**  
Uses social media to shame, defame, threaten, or impersonate her.  
  
Stalks or contact her through family/friends' social media.



**FINANCIAL ABUSE**  
Controls bank accounts or access to government services.





“... 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)

# OUR ACTIVITIES

**1** We provide direct material relief to women and children via our national network of frontline agencies to increase their safer access to technology devices, products and services.

- We partner with technology companies to donate devices to victim-survivors, and suitable products and services (pre-paid mobile credit, rideshare).
- We manage their safe distribution via our national network of trained and equipped specialist women's frontline services.
- We work with the technology companies to administer the products and services safely, reducing the risk of unintentionally compromising the safety and privacy of victim-survivors.
- Our 1800WESNET technical support helpline is available to all women, whether accessing help from a frontline service, or not.



**2** We train, educate and support frontline domestic and family violence workers to equip victim-survivors with strategies on how to use technology in ways that benefit them, and protect their privacy and safety.

## Training

- Technology safety training (face-to-face)
- Webinars
- National Technology Safety Summit

## Practitioner resources

- Videos and handouts on [techsafety.org.au](https://techsafety.org.au)

## 1800WESNET technical support helpline

- Support for frontline workers and their clients, to troubleshoot technically complex cases.

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

*“Remember three key points:  
what does he know,  
where does the information live,  
what does he have access to?”*  
Frontline worker, post training



# 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:

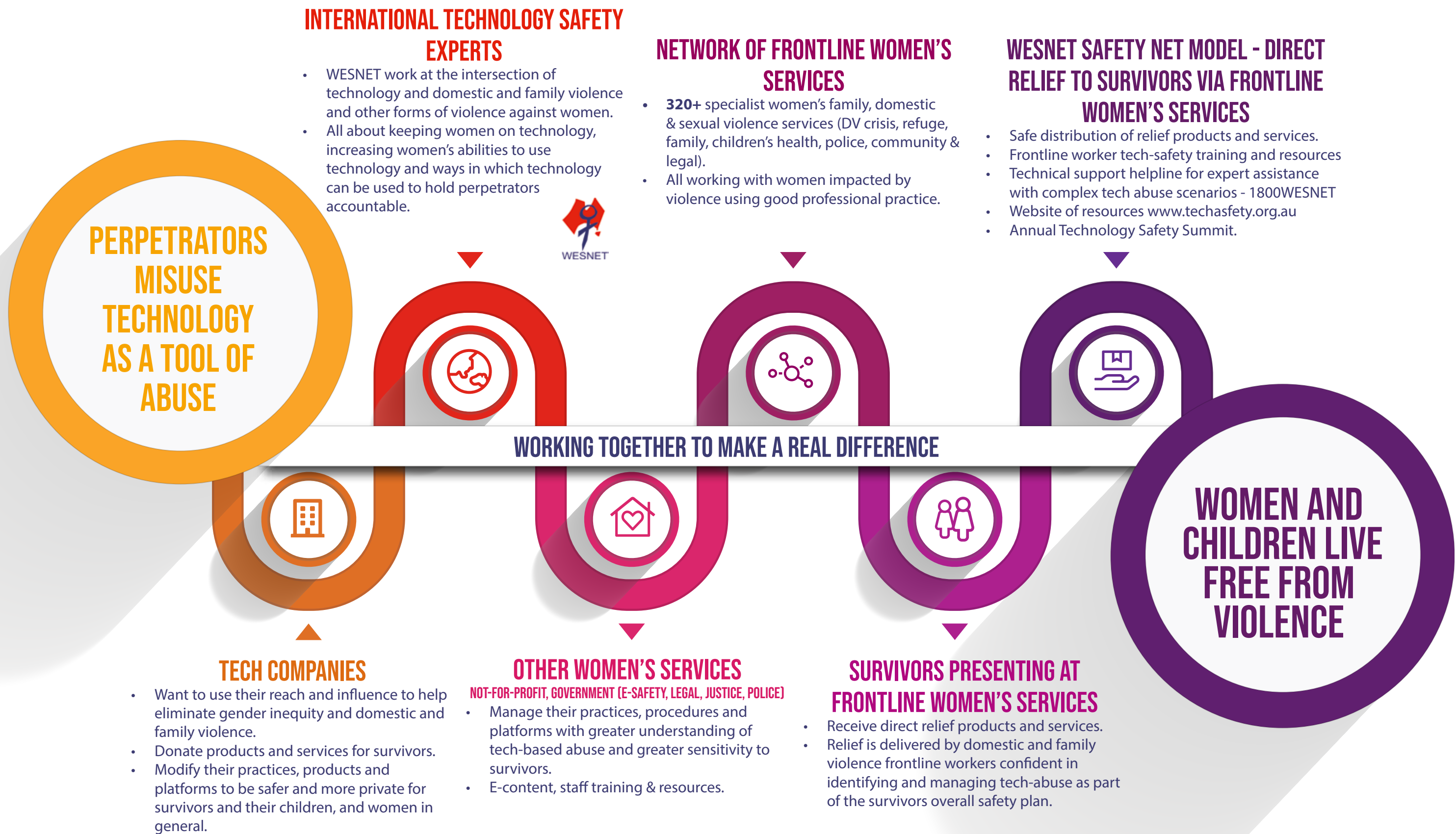
- access the services she needs,
- remain connected with the people who support her,
- keep her personal information private, and
- document the abuse in a way that may assist her with achieving justice outcomes.

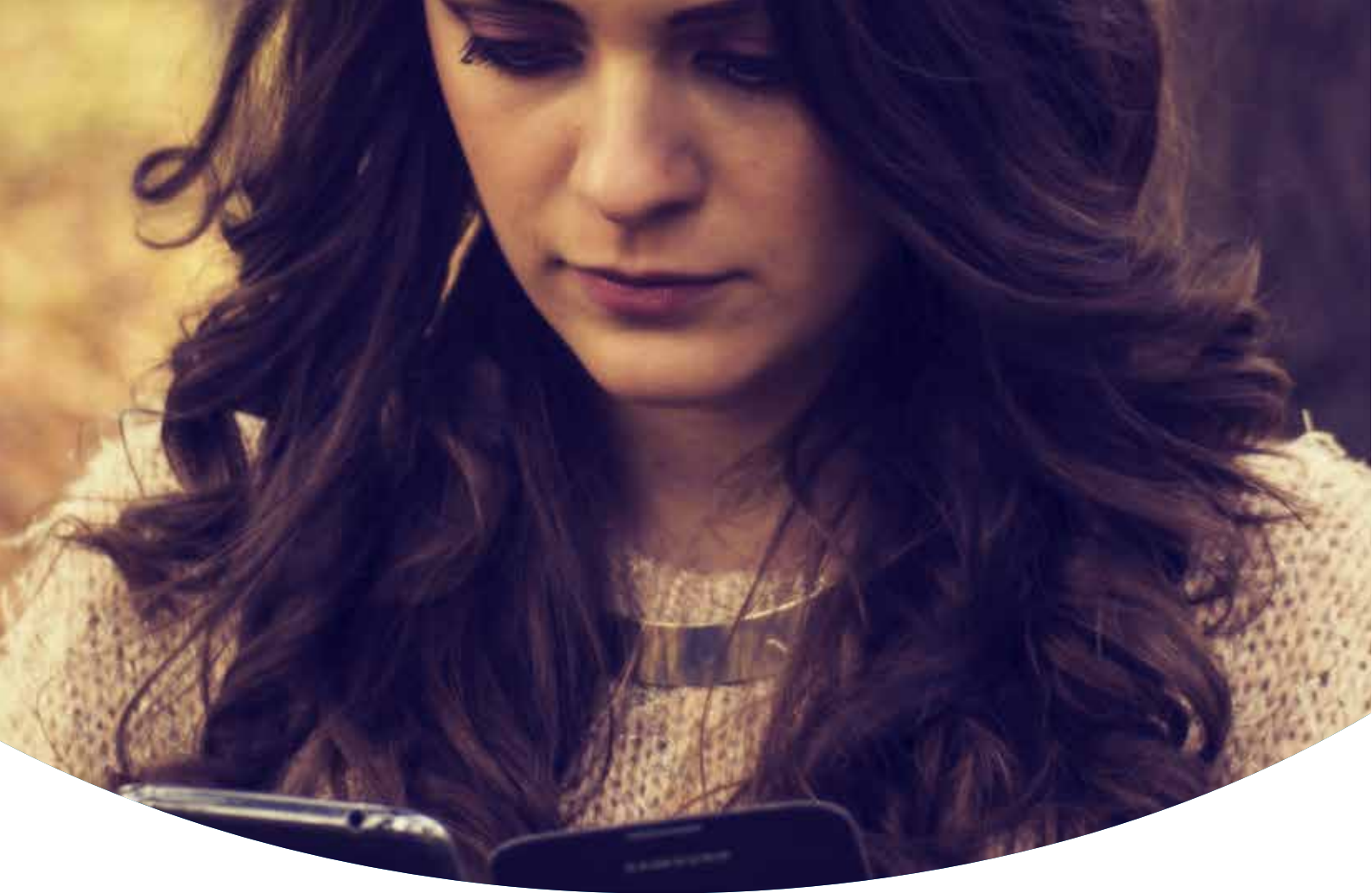
Our goal is to support her to access and use technology – an essential tool in accessing the support and opportunities she needs to rebuild her life.

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.

# THE SAFE CONNECTIONS PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY

## WHAT IS IT?

| Telstra  | WESNET  | Participating frontline services  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Donate new smartphones and pre-paid credit for victim-survivors of family violence.</li><li>• Provide a dedicated 1800 number for victim-survivors to activate their new pre-paid service.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distribute the smartphones to our national network of frontline services.</li><li>• Provide training to frontline workers about supporting victim-survivors with tech skills and problem-solving.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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.</li><li>• Give her the new smartphone, help her activate the service and set up her device and continue to safely access technology.</li></ul> |



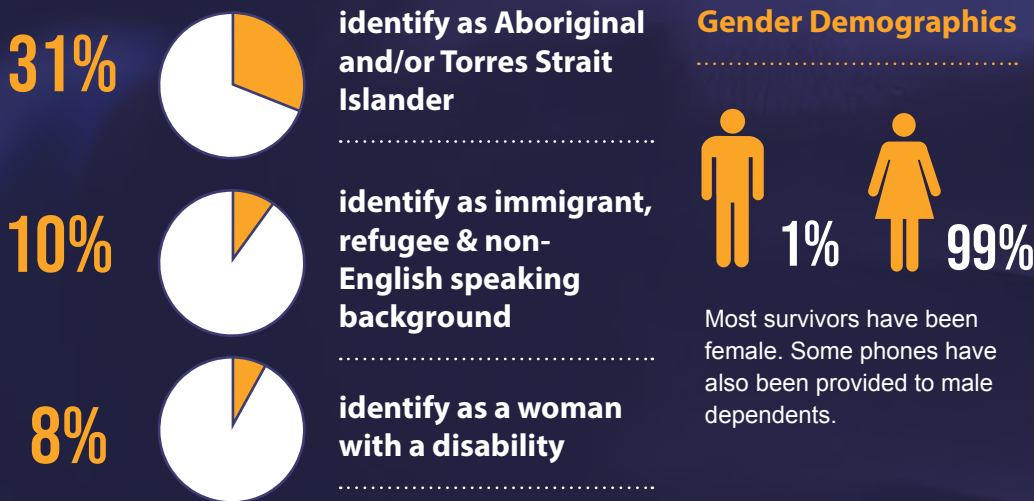


# OUR SOCIAL IMPACT

UP TO 31 DECEMBER 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 over the past three years. The program involves upskilling frontline workers through face-to-face technology safety training and the provision of a phone to survivors with advice on how to set it up safely.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF VICTIM RECIPIENTS



## Frontline Agencies

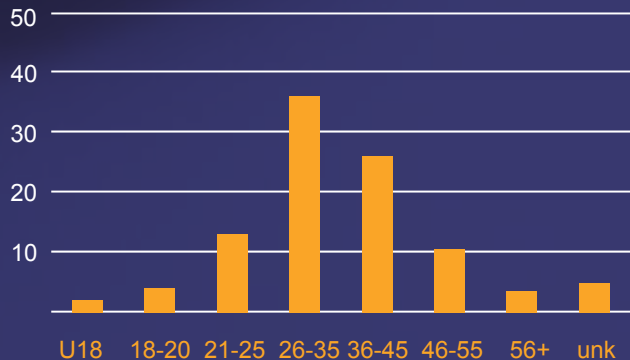


276 AGENCIES  
+306% SINCE MAY 2016

8,110  
WORKERS  
TRAINED

1,409  
WORKERS  
WITH  
ACCESS  
TO ONLINE  
RESOURCES

Age distribution of women (%)

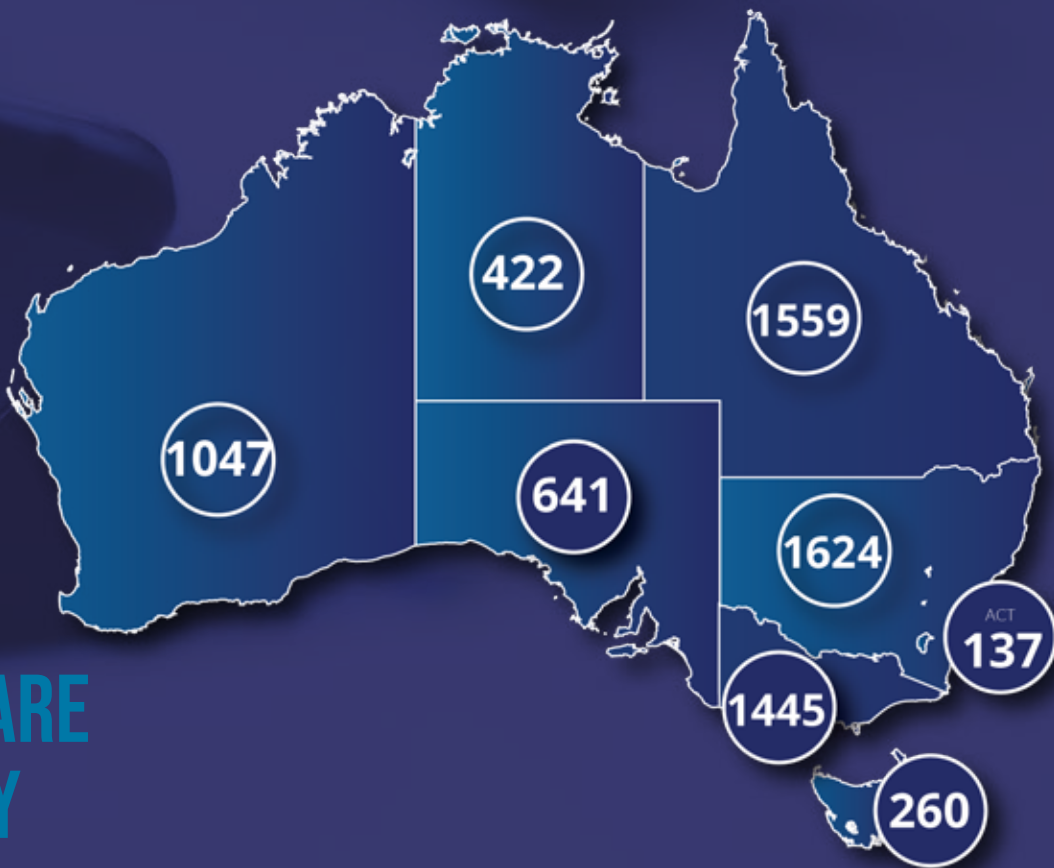


1  
EXTERNAL  
EVALUATION  
WITH GREAT  
RESULTS

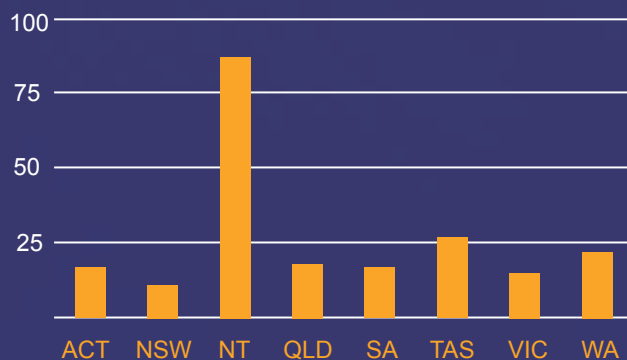
96.5%  
SAY CLIENTS ARE  
SIGNIFICANTLY  
SAFER

19,958  
PHONES GIVEN TO WOMEN

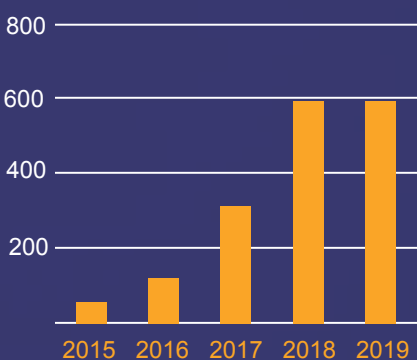
Phones given to women by State and Territory



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.”





# WAYS YOU CAN HELP VICTIM-SURVIVORS

- **SPONSOR A WESNET PROGRAM** to strengthen frontline services for victim-survivors
- **DONATE** devices, products or services suitable for use by victim-survivors
- **ENGAGE US** to assist your organisation to improve the safety of your products or services, organisational policies and practices, for women victim-survivors. We are internationally recognised experts on the intersection of gendered violence and technology, also bringing decades of experience working with domestic and family practitioners and victim-survivors
- **INCLUDE US** in your organisation's employee giving scheme
- **OFFER YOUR SKILLS, TIME, or MONEY** to help us increase our capacity, reach and impact

**WITH YOUR SUPPORT WE COULD DO SO MUCH MORE TO HELP WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN NEED.**

Contact us:  
Karen Bentley  
National Director, WESNET  
[safetynet@wesnet.org.au](mailto:safetynet@wesnet.org.au)  
1800 937 638