

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-21



WESNET

The Women's Services Network

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. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the people of the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung where our main office stands. Throughout the year—to adapt to Covid-19 conditions but also to realise greater flexibilities for our staff—we have had staff working in other nations including Eora, Ngunnawal, Woiworung, and Bundjalung, and we would like to acknowledge those traditional owners as well. 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 continuously for an inclusive future free from violence for all. 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 victim-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 VICTIM-SURVIVORS

WESNET also takes this opportunity to acknowledge all victim-survivors of gender-based violence and their family and friends.



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NATIONAL CHAIR REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM JULIE OBERIN AM

Looking back at last year's annual report we were full of hope that 2021 would have largely returned us to 'normal' following the pandemic. That wasn't to be, with most states and territories rolling through a cycle of lockdowns and restrictions, and with many services continuing to be impacted by an increased demand for services.

We again hope that the year ahead alleviates at least some of the COVID-related pressures on our services and on our frontline workers.

Sadly of course 'normal' is not an aspiration when it comes to violence against women and children. Regardless of the pandemic, family and domestic violence continues to be endemic, and WESNET and its members continue their work to support women and to ultimately eliminate violence against them.

As hard as we work, and as strong as our commitment is, we are well aware that the global goals of preventing violence against women and children cannot be achieved by just one sector of the community. It requires a concerted and coordinated effort from governments, the community, business and individuals.

This is why—despite the modest success of the first National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children—we continue to participate in the development of the second plan. We know that the second plan will only be better if the knowledge, expertise and experience of WESNET and its members are taken into account, and we continue to advocate strongly as a member of the National Plan Advisory Group.

Along with the national plan, we have also been closely involved in government consideration of national principles to underpin coercive control approaches. While many jurisdictions are moving to criminalise coercive control we recognise that this raises significant concerns for many of

our members and vulnerable groups of women we support, and these must be addressed at a national level.

Against a backdrop of major policy deliberations it was particularly disheartening to experience the defunding of AWAVA in June this year. AWAVA has been central to providing advice to government on how to improve national responses to violence against women, and the sector will dearly miss the individual and collective contributions of AWAVA staff. Over its decade-long history, these contributions were immense. We talk more about AWAVA's achievements in this report ([see page 28](#)).

WESNET is of course continuing where we can to keep the AWAVA legacy alive and to ensure a strong voice for our members.

Our voice and our influence—under the expert stewardship of **CEO Karen Bentley**—continues to grow year by year, to benefit our members and ultimately all Australian women. I thank her and the great staff team working with her.

It is with pleasure that I present the 2020-21 annual report, and give thanks to our members and supporters.

Julie Oberin AM | National Chair

Many of our most visible achievements relate to our work in the tech safety space, having achieved recognition at national and international levels. We will continue this work, but also build on our expert reputation in this area to effect action more broadly and to continue to strengthen our membership services.





CEO REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM KAREN BENTLEY

I think I, like many, feel like 2020 never ended, and yet here I sit in late 2021 to write some reflections of the 12 months to June 2021.

July 2020 was a couple of months out of Australia's first wave lockdown, but just as the financial year started Melbourne's postcode lockdowns commenced. Shortly thereafter, regional Victoria—where most of the WESNET team are headquartered—went into a second wave lockdown between August and September. Our Canberra, New South Wales, and Queensland based staff also went in and out of lockdown at various times during the year and by June 2021, almost half the population of Australia was under lockdown with all sorts of flow on impacts. We talk more about the huge impact of COVID on survivors and our members on [page 26](#).

Fortunately, WESNET had already been working remotely prior to the global pandemic and so our systems and structures served us reasonably well. During the lockdown, the number of Safe Connections phones being given to women dropped from around 600 per month to 500 per month, in large part because some of our Victorian agencies ceased giving out phones

while they worked from home. At the same time, we noticed that the number and complexity of calls to our 1800WESNET tech helpline were increasing.

In September, we finished a major joint project funded by ACCAN on Safety Apps for survivors with Western Sydney University and Dr Robert Merkel. WESNET was invited to present evidence about Tech Abuse to the Social Policy and Legislative Affairs Committee Inquiry into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence.

We put our *Second National Survey on Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia* into the field in the early part of 2020, and around 500 frontline workers participated answering a range of questions about what kind of technology-facilitated abuse their clients were experiencing. We worked closely with the fabulous Dr Delanie Woodlock and the team at Curtin University, Prof Donna Chung, Darcee Schulze, Amy Pracilio, and Natasha Mahoney to pull the findings and report together. The survey was released on 24 November 2020 and is available at: www.wesnet.org.au/2ndNatSurvey.

The survey found that frontline workers were seeing nearly every form of technology abuse more often than when we asked them the same questions five years earlier.

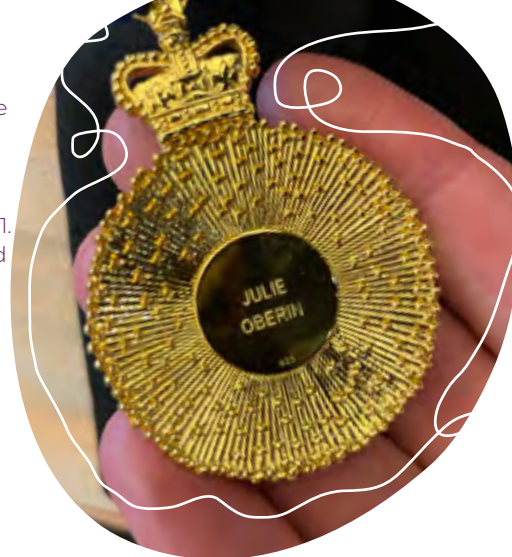
With the new year, the federal government kicked off a range of consultations around the Second National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children. I was fortunate to be selected as a member of the National Plan Advisory Group and to be able to present the views of AWAVA and WESNET at the meetings as well as throughout the consultation process leading up to the National Women's Safety Summit.

Our excellent partnerships with corporate Australia continued throughout the year. A particular highlight was seeing WESNET inducted into the global Coalition Against Stalkerware, the first Australian organisation to join. We continued our excellent partnerships with Telstra, Uber, CommBank, Facebook, Kaspersky, and many others ([see more on page 33](#)).

The year ended, however, on a very low note with the announcement on 4 June that AWAVA would not be continuing as the National Women's Alliance on Women's Safety. Sadly this also means that the very meagre funding that supported the three AWAVA team members also ceases. Most of our AWAVA Advisory Group, along with many others in the sector and others, were in a state of shock and non-comprehension after the announcement.



Congratulations to our National Board Chair Julie Oberin AM who received the Australian Honour in the Queen's Birthday Honours List on June 2021. Julie has been recognised for her significant service to women & children experiencing DFV.



Despite this set back, the AWAVA Advisory Group has agreed to stay together as an unfunded women's alliance.

I'd like to thank the WESNET and AWAVA Teams for their incredible work over the past 12 months, especially during the pandemic and with ongoing uncertainty. They continuously display immense passion and determination to assist women and our members in the fight against gender-based violence.

The quality and sheer quantity of policy advocacy and advice that AWAVA delivered over 11 years is unparalleled. Some of AWAVA's achievements can be found in the coming pages and their invaluable work is available on the AWAVA website at www.awava.org.au.

Thank you to **Julie Oberin AM** and the rest of the WESNET Board for their continuing strategic leadership, 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 | CEO

OUR MEMBERS

VISION

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

PURPOSE

WESNET ameliorates and prevents suffering and distress experienced by women and children affected by Gender-Based Violence. It does this as Australia's national peak body for women's specialist services.

WESNET represents 320+ specialist women's services across Australia who are providing support to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV) and other forms of gender-based violence. WESNET member services are women-led, and work within an intersectional feminist framework—acknowledging the disadvantage women face, and the further disadvantage faced by women from vulnerable populations—and deliver their services with a woman-centred, empowerment approach.

WESNET's member services are diverse, and include women's refuges and shelters, safe houses, halfway houses and medium-term housing schemes, information and referral services, outreach and advocacy services, women's legal and court advocacy services, counselling services, state-wide peak bodies, community and health services, and sexual assault services. Some member services provide targeted support to women from vulnerable populations, and include Indigenous services, migrant, refugee and non-English speaking background services.

The majority of WESNET's member services are Public Benevolent Institutions and/or direct service providers. They are distributed across all states and territories and are located in cities, regions, rural, and remote.

Their unique and rich on-the-ground experience has led to specialist women's services providing leadership in developing Australian best-practice DFV early intervention and prevention programs, and frontline practitioner education and support. Their collective knowledge informs research and provides the foundation on which emerging domestic violence practices, policy and law reform is shaped.

OUR NATIONAL BOARD

WESNET's National Board is made up of elected representatives who are highly experienced leaders within the women's services sector, committed to eliminating gender-based violence.

Our Board representatives are elected by members to represent each state and territories, as well as diversity groups within Australia. They are frontline service managers, domestic violence child specialists, youth support workers, social workers, policy and communication officers, CEOs and advisors. Their collective expertise spans from domestic and family violence, to best-practice service provision, policy and advocacy, research and evaluation across Australia, and is recognised internationally.

Gratitude is extended to all our Board members for their generous contribution to govern WESNET and further the interests of WESNET's member services, by volunteering their time, expertise, and energy.

We farewelled two Board Members this year who have contributed years of their personal time and knowledge to WESNET. **Kedy Kristal** served on the WESNET Board, including as the Board Treasurer, on and off from 1995 through to March 2021 when she retired. **Denise Healey** joined the WESNET Board in early 2019 and retired from the Board in February 2021. WESNET thanks both for their commitment to both the organisation and to the specialist women's services sector.

We welcomed **Delia Donovan** as our New South Wales Representative, **Jennifer Kingwell** as our South Australian Representative and **Jo Gamble** as our Northern Territory Representative.

During 2020-21, WESNET's Board has provided strong leadership across the women's services sector and their contributions include:

- Chairing and participating in local family violence advisory groups.
- Participating in statewide family violence steering committees and state peak advisory groups, and participating in the national consultations to inform the Second National Plan Submissions to state and commonwealth inquiries.
- Contributing to best practice guidelines around prevention and response.
- Advocating for women on temporary visas experiencing violence to receive financial support.
- Ongoing advocacy in support of women without access to income support.
- Advocating for the strengthening of specialist women's services including the importance of funding and improvements to systems to ensure safety for women and children.
- Contributing to state and national responses to victim-survivors of family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Working as a national Board to identify common strengths, gaps, and opportunities in policy and legislation across the country.
- Connecting with our grassroots services to identify opportunities and gaps in strengthening service provision for victim-survivors.
- Participating in the Global Network of Women's Shelters to support shelter work across the globe, especially during the pandemic.
- Participating in the development of the Global Network of Women's Shelters on developing a vetted safe hotline for victim-survivors across the globe.
- Supporting the work of AWAVA by providing advice and managing the funding contract with the Office for Women in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- Working to host the 5th World Shelter Conference in Australia.

BOARD MEMBERS

JULIE OBERIN AM

National Chair & Victoria Rep

LINDY EDWARDS

Deputy Chair & Queensland Rep

KEDY KRISTAL

Treasurer & West Australian Rep (resigned Mar 2021)

MARGARET AUGERINOS

Secretary & Rural, Regional and Remote Rep, Treasurer from Mar 2021

ANGIE PIUBELLO

ACT Rep

JO GAMBLE

Northern Territory Rep (elected Nov 2020)

JENNIFER KINGWELL

South Australian Rep (elected Nov 2020)

DELIA DONOVAN

New South Wales Rep (elected Nov 2020)

DENISE HEALEY

Tasmanian Rep (departed Feb 2021)

CECILIA BARASSI-RUBIO

Immigrant, Non-English speaking background, & Refugee Women Rep

Public Officer

DR MERRINDAHL ANDREW

BOARD REPORTS

ANGIE PIUBELLO

Beryl Women Inc.,
ACT Representative

The opportunity to represent specialist services in the ACT as a member of the WESNET board in 2021 has been invaluable. My role has been alongside other state representatives from a diverse range of backgrounds all with strong feminist values, a collective and extensive breadth of knowledge, expertise and leadership in the areas of domestic violence, service delivery, and feminist policy and social justice.

My experience on the board has provided me with greater insight of the priorities and challenges that women's services across

Australia experience, regardless of jurisdiction. It has also allowed me to have an increased understanding of technology-facilitated abuse and the degree of impact that this places on organisations that support women and children escaping domestic violence across the country.

This year, I attended the Women's March4Justice and was moved by the bravery and commitment of the women that spoke out to demand change for women and children in this country. Every day I am reminded of the importance of collective advocacy and how a strong feminist voice with an intersectional lens is necessary more than ever if we are to make an impact on the lives of women and children that are victim to all forms of violence and abuse.

There is still much work to be done, at both a national and a state level, and it is vital that services such as WESNET are able to continue to provide the support and advocacy to services that are under increasing pressures and demands to provide high quality service delivery on limited budgets.

This year has had many highs and lows. It has been a great loss to see organisations such as AWAVA no longer funded after the many years of important and groundbreaking work and research that this organisation has provided to ensure the voices of women from a culturally and linguistically diverse background have been heard.

AWAVA has left behind a great legacy of contribution to the feminist dialogue in our country and should be proud of what a difference it has made in the national conversation surrounding ending violence against women.

Services across the country have experienced many difficulties and challenges this last year and the ACT is no different in this. COVID-19 has pushed many small specialist services to their limits, but has also shown the amazing strengths and level of commitment to women and children throughout the pandemic.

In the ACT we were able to have a localised response with services collaborating in support of one another, to ensure the doors of our specialist services remained open as essential services to women and children escaping domestic violence.

Additional short term crisis accommodation programs were specifically set up to identify the high and complex response required in a health pandemic to support victims of violence.

The ACT government provided additional funding from the Federal National Partnership Agreement with specific allocated funding for COVID needs, such as additional casual employment costs to assist services dealing with staffing shortages while lockdowns occurred. Support was provided to our clients in the areas of technology to enable children, young people, and women in crisis accommodation to access technology for online learning and staying connected to loved ones during lockdowns.

Specialist domestic violence workers were able to access WESNET resources such as technology training, Safe Connections phones, and Uber rides throughout the pandemic to ensure online safety and support to clients.

Significantly, reports of increased levels of technology abuse and coercive control occurred during the lockdowns while women from non-English speaking backgrounds, with complex visa situations, were further disadvantaged with increased barriers to accessing services and reduced service delivery in some government sectors.

For single parents leaving violence with children and being the sole income earner, shutdowns also placed increased financial pressures and stressors on families already experiencing trauma. Specialist services worked tirelessly in providing basic support such as food, access to medical and health services all the while continuing to address the impacts of trauma and domestic violence on families.

Work continued in a number of areas across the community with the *Our Booris Our Way* report being presented to the ACT government. This vital work addresses the systemic racism and high levels of Aboriginal child removal in the ACT with violence against Aboriginal women and children being a major cause of child removal.

The ACT Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Program and the Domestic Violence Prevention

Council inquiry into domestic violence coercion and control legislation continued. All this work has continued throughout the pandemic to ensure improvements and better outcomes for women and children impacted by violence.

I finally would like to acknowledge the great work of the ACT domestic violence sector and all involved in supporting the women and children we work with every day. I would like to also express my thanks to the inspiring and dedicated work of WESNET over the years in supporting women and children escaping domestic violence across the country and helping them to live lives free from violence.

DELIA DONOVAN

Domestic Violence NSW,
New South Wales Representative

NSW has been impacted by COVID-19 twice during the last reporting year. In 2020, with limited understanding of what might lie ahead, there was a feeling of urgency to ensure that services and the government responded to the pandemic crisis as quickly and effectively as possible. During 2021, there was more space for learning and embracing more collaborative work between the government and women's services. Although there has been an improvement, unfortunately, we are still seeing multiple challenges in the sector due to insufficient funding to respond to the increased level of demand for women's services in New South Wales.

The greatest challenge faced by Domestic Violence NSW and our members continues

to be a lack of funding sustainability to not only maintain our ongoing operations but also manage the wave of increased demand. The lack of a housing pathways also concerns the DV NSW team. Approximately 9,120 women a year are becoming homeless after leaving their homes due to DFV and being unable to secure long-term housing (Equity Economics, 2021). Additionally, many of our regional areas have had harsher lockdown rules which made them feel more isolated and discriminated against. It is wearisome to see that the most disadvantaged and marginalised communities continue to be the most impacted—including those who live below the poverty line, temporary visa holders, and the homeless.

There is a new urgency to step up, as a community, and have appropriate responses in place that do not discriminate to ensure we are giving help and support to everyone who needs it. Earlier this year, DV NSW launched a new report surveying over 78 members on the impact of the lockdowns.

Key findings included 73% of our members reporting an increase in demand for services and a heightened complexity in the cases. Concerningly, 15 services noted a decrease in demand due to barriers accessing support.

Nonetheless, one of the big wins we celebrated was the recent announcement of NSW record investment in tackling domestic violence. From our data, around 1 in 2 women are turned away from refuges due to the state's accommodation crisis. With this new investment in place, we are hoping for 75 new women's refuges to help support women and children fleeing their homes. This is a big first step that offers some hope that we are moving in the right direction

to systematically address some of the housing issues that critically affect victim-survivors of domestic violence.

On a more personal level, at DV NSW, we were excited to relaunch our Community of Practice for Women and LGBTIQ+ People on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence. This provides more support to temporary visa holders who are one of the most vulnerable groups in our community and who still don't have adequate support in terms of healthcare, education, housing, and domestic violence support. We are thankful for WESNET's fantastic advocacy on this front.

It has been a couple of tough years, but we are so proud of our sector and our state—particularly our member services—for being so agile in responding to a crisis, and for showing up every day despite the pressures of being underfunded, under resourced, and dealing with extremely scared and vulnerable clients.

As part of WESNET's board, I absolutely love the board's collaborative culture and engaging in such passionate discussions to find solutions in our sector with other members across Australia.

It is great to see how WESNET has continued to evolve during these past years and work as a national voice to connect the work other states and jurisdictions are doing to ensure we are all working in coordination.

It was disappointing to see AWAVA defunded by the government, and the resulting loss of key staff and their knowledge and expertise. AWAVA's contribution to the National Plan and the sector collaboration efforts and advocacy has been tremendous. However, we are pleased that AWAVA work is being continued in some form through the passion of WESNET members.

LINDY EDWARDS

Sera's Women's Shelter,
Queensland Representative

As is the case for women's specialist services across much of the nation, Queensland-based services continued to feel the impacts of the pandemic over the course of the 2020-21 annual reporting year. The challenges associated with providing an essential service and keeping women safe while also dealing with sporadic lockdowns, restrictions, and health directions are hard to overstate.

Demand for services continued to increase as the year progressed, not just numerically but also in terms of the complexities with women facing restricted movement and being more difficult to reach through usual communication channels. Access to affordable housing becomes a more critical need, year after year. Occupational health and safety for our frontline workers also became an acute focus.

Despite these challenges, there were some developments in Queensland worth noting and celebrating. The Queensland Government's Women's Safety and Justice Task Force held consultations across the state to examine coercive control and justice responses to family and domestic violence. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is doing other good project-based work around data collection and affordable housing in the domestic violence context, as well as carrying out meetings with peaks to talk about funding arrangements.

Thankfully the COVID-19 enhancement funding and brokerage were accessible by the sector and have been able to be used flexibly to at least meet some of the costs of increased demand.

The tech safety work is one aspect of WESNET's work that our members consistently highlight as being of great value to them and to victim-survivors, no more so than in the last year with the use of technology by perpetrators noticeably increasing.

Stepping down after thirteen years on the WESNET board, I leave very proud of WESNET's many achievements, and privileged to have watched WESNET grow into a fully-fledged peak body, growing in both influence and reputation.

One of the other major highlights of my time with WESNET was the establishment of AWAVA. While AWAVA's work spanned many issues, and was valuable in so many regards, I particularly appreciated their *Blueprint for Reform* work on removing barriers to safety for victims-survivors who are on temporary visas, along with their positioning on women's specialist services. These pieces of work proved invaluable resources enabling lobbying and representation on these critical issues.

I leave WESNET reassured that it will continue its own and AWAVA's excellent work in representing the sector through its contributions to the national framework aimed at reducing and eliminating violence against women.

JENNIFER KINGWELL

Embolden,
South Australian Representative

2020-21 has been my first year as a WESNET Board member, and it's certainly been a challenging time for the South Australian domestic, family and sexual violence sector—which I'm honoured to represent—for the

national sector more broadly, and of course for us all as we continue to navigate through a global health crisis.

COVID-19's impact on South Australia's specialist women's service providers and clients is ongoing, with our state peak body members playing a key role in supporting clients to access Commonwealth and state brokerage and emergency crisis payments. Embolden, as the state peak body for the sector, remains committed to working closely with the South Australian Office for Women to support our member services throughout this process, and throughout the pandemic more generally, as they in turn support growing numbers of clients who have been critically affected by increases in the prevalence and severity of domestic and family violence (DFV); economic insecurity; a housing and homelessness crisis; childcare and home schooling pressures; amid a range of intersecting impacts that continue to be faced by victim-survivors of gender-based violence.

WESNET's leadership and connective role has been instrumental in the national sector's capacity to continue to advocate for progress and improve service and system responses throughout this time.

Despite these challenges, this is a sector that continues to demonstrate incredible resilience, innovation, and fierce support and advocacy for women and their children, including advocating for improved responses to DFV at the international, national, and state level.

In March this year, I participated in the United Nations Conference on the Status of Women (UN CSW65) as part of the non-Government organisation (NGO) virtual delegation, and in the same month we were an active part of South

Australia's March4Justice, advising on trauma informed practice and safety and support for participants, as well as carrying out stage manager duties.

The March4Justice rallies around Australia have been a flashpoint for the growing movement to amplify survivors' voices in public policy and discourse, and in May our survivor advocate program, Voices for Change SA, received a Premier's Certificate for outstanding volunteer service to recognise the expertise by lived experience of our advocates, with similar survivor advocacy programs flourishing with support from our sister peaks in other states.

The same month (Domestic Violence Awareness Month), we took part in the annual vigil to honour the lives lost to domestic and family violence with a virtual event themed No Woman Left Behind, and partnered with the SA LGBTIQ+ Domestic Violence Action Group to create a video in recognition of LGBTQ Domestic Violence Awareness Day, supporting LGBTIQ+ communities and survivors of domestic and family abuse.

Embolden's representation on the WESNET Board has strengthened our capacity to advocate at both state and federal levels and to connect with our sister services.

Across the year, Embolden advocated on a range of significant legislative and policy developments, including being closely involved in consultations relating to the National Plan, coercive control (bills from both major parties are currently before state parliament), abortion law reform, the abolition of the defence of provocation and self-defence, housing and homelessness, sexual assault, and survivors' voices. This work has also drawn from and been

done alongside AWAVA, which continues to be a strong collective voice for specialist women's services which has provided invaluable specialist expertise in policy and practice for the sector.

I look forward to continuing to work with AWAVA and WESNET with a particular focus on collective advocacy, strategic planning and development for the specialist women's services sector in the coming year.

Julie Oberin AM

**WESNET National Chair,
Victoria Representative**

The Victorian government is developing the Second Action Plan 2022-2025 under the state's Free from Violence strategy. Free from Violence, Victoria's 10-year strategy for the prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women, sets Victoria's direction for primary prevention activity and builds on Ending Family Violence—Victoria's 10-year plan for change and the Rolling Action Plans that sit underneath it.

The Family Violence Reform Advisory Group (FVRAG) has a working group called the Primary Prevention Sector Reference Group that has worked closely with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Respect Victoria to develop shared priorities and action areas of the Second Action Plan 2022-2025. The reform priorities are Aboriginal self-determination, intersectionality, and lived experience. The action areas will cover testing new and innovative approaches, Aboriginal-led prevention, tailored approaches for diverse community groups, key settings, community engagement and awareness, partnership and advocacy, governance, coordination and system development, workforce and sector development, building knowledge, and monitoring and sharing outcomes.

The Victorian government consulted widely on priorities to feed into the next National Plan. A key focus is on prevention through an emphasis on addressing the gendered drivers that allow family violence to flourish. Other key issues raised by our sector were the need for improvement in:

- Sustained investment in family violence primary prevention and early intervention.
- Housing stability and supporting victim-survivors to remain in the home.
- Targeting perpetrator interventions to cohorts, including rural and regional areas.
- Specialist supports in courts and protections against the concurrent impacts of custody issues, legal fees and homelessness after a relationship breakdown due to family violence.
- Including responding to sexual assault as part of family violence responses.
- Focussing on prevention and intervention therapeutic responses to adolescents who use violence to break familial cycles.
- Cross jurisdictional information sharing
- Ensuring legal services are available, accessible, and adequately funded to support women and children who experience family violence.
- Removing barriers to visibility and reporting, particularly for CALD, LGBTIQ+, young people and older people, people with disability and Aboriginal people.
- Building the national evidence base and streamlining data collection and sharing
- Workforce capability and capacity.

The Family Violence Outcomes Framework (FVOF) is another reform the Victorian government has been working on. This framework was developed in response to a need for clear outcomes, indicators and quantifiable measures that would support understanding of the impacts of the family violence reform. The four domains in the framework are:

- Family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated.
- Victim-survivors, vulnerable children, and families, are safe and supported to recover and thrive.
- Perpetrators are held accountable, connected, and take responsibility for stopping their violence.
- Preventing and responding to family violence is systemic and enduring.

Current work is focused on measuring progress of efforts and the impact of the investments made. The FVOF has established a common set of goals across prevention, early intervention and response, with outcomes, indicators and measures that demonstrate progress of the whole-of-reform, system-wide nature of the goal to end family violence.

Our peak body DVVic and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria merged and renamed as Safe and Equal. They have been busy supporting and resourcing our sector during what has been a difficult year with the pandemic, increased demand, and significant government reforms. They formed an Expert Advisory Panel following the development of the Experts by Experience Framework. This is to formalise mechanisms for best practice engagement with survivor/advocates in the design, delivery and evaluation of the work of the peak and the sector more broadly. They also expanded the successful Fast Track Leadership Development Program. The aim is to substantially grow the supply of suitably skilled professionals available to take up management and leadership roles, mitigate workforce retention challenges, and ensure critical experience and feminist values are retained within a thriving sustainable sector. The Victorian government also supported them to capability build our sector in the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework.

Like other states, Victoria has had many and broad conversations about the criminalisation of coercive control. DVVic/DVRCV released a position paper after significant consultation with the sector including victim-survivors. The position concludes "that a whole of system approach is required to improve responses to coercive control to ensure all victim-survivors can access safety and support, regardless of whether they engage with the justice system". The conversations continue particularly around consequences for marginalised groups of

women such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women with disabilities. More work is also being done within Victoria Police training members to better identify primary aggressors so that the victim-survivor is not misidentified as the perpetrator.

These are just some of the reforms and sector development occurring in Victoria. Strong progress has been made against the Royal Commission into Family Violence Recommendations (Victoria).

MARGARET AUGERINOS

Centre for Non-Violence,
Rural, Regional, and Remote
Women Representative

The last 12 months have been an incredibly challenging space for specialist family violence services across the country. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, together with ongoing chronic underfunding of our sector has presented unique challenges for services located in rural, remote and regional parts of Australia.

I work in a regionally based organisation that delivers critical services to women and children across a large geographic base. Our experience over the last 12 months echoes the experience of many specialist family violence services located in rural, remote and regional areas. Where access to services was already challenging, COVID-19 made it even more difficult for women and children to access the essential and lifesaving and changing services they needed.

Demand for services soared during the pandemic and in states where lockdowns were quite significant, services not only had to find new ways to reach women and children in need, but to also do this with remote working arrangements in place for much of the time.

Adapting services to deliver in a COVID-safe way required significant time, effort and investment of funds and resources. Many rural, remote and regional services are quite small, and the impact of this expenditure has been significant.

In states like Victoria, there were some COVID-19 capacity grants made available to reduce the cost burden, but in other states there was very little financial assistance forthcoming.

Many services also faced increased demand without any increase in funding or capacity. It would be fair to say that all services, including those in rural, remote and regional Australia, have been working beyond capacity. A key issue for our services is not only the lack of growth and capacity funding, but also that our funding and cost models do not adequately take into account the increased costs and infrastructure required to deliver services across a large geographic base. For example, it is not unusual for rural, remote and regional services to need a number of office locations to deliver services from. We experience additional infrastructure costs such as vehicles to travel long distances, increased IT costs and the difficulties of supporting our staff who often work hours away from the main office base and other colleagues.

Additional challenges experienced by specialist services in rural, remote and regional locations include workforce recruitment, training and development challenges. It is not uncommon for our services to be continually carrying workforce shortages due to difficulties in recruiting skilled and qualified staff. In addition, there are limited training pathways in rural and remote areas for people to undertake relevant skill development and qualifications (ie., social work). This places considerable pressure on our services and our hard-working workforce.

Whilst we had high hopes for the 2021 National Summit on Women's Safety, unfortunately it did not deliver what we had hoped across the sector.

[The Statement from Delegates](#) has highlighted the particular needs of rural, remote, and regional communities:

"People in regional, rural, remote and very remote communities must not be left behind, particularly when it comes to infrastructure, such as housing, health services, technology, and transport. Local communities must be empowered and resourced to develop local, place-based solutions to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in their communities. There must be greater focus on ensuring reliable, accessible and appropriate support services in these areas, especially in remote communities. Innovative solutions should be used to link services, such as health or veterinary services, and specialist domestic violence services. Service arrangements must take into account the increased costs of providing services in these communities and needs-based funding must be provided, including for data and evaluation. These must be co-designed with communities, and policies and projects must recognise voices of lived experience to ensure they are effective and safe.

Responses must be locally designed and delivered, and recognise specific challenges experienced by those at risk of gender-based violence in these communities, such as help with livestock or pets, access to housing, or the need to access cash payments to be able to leave violent relationships. Mainstream counselling responses must be able to respond to localised challenges to ensure women receive appropriate support. Specialist sexual assault services must be available for women in all areas. Mainstream counselling responses must be able to respond to localised challenges to ensure everybody impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence is able to access culturally safe and trauma-specialist support. This must also reflect the specific and unique needs of people in remote and very remote communities, as well as the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other communities with diverse backgrounds (such as those living with disability, LGBTIQ+ people and CALD communities)."

”

To achieve this will require concerted and dedicated effort, investment and cooperation between Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

In the meantime, our specialist services will continue to work hard to ensure responsive services are tailored to the unique needs of our rural, remote, and regional communities.

OUR WORK

A public benevolent institution, WESNET provides relief and support to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence, and other forms of gender-based violence.

PEAK BODY

SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS

WESNET is Australia's peak body for Specialist Women's Services. We provide strong, connected leadership for frontline domestic and family violence services and their workers, helping them to support their clients. Established in 1992, WESNET is a grassroots organisation, run by women, for the women's services sector and the women and children they support. In 2020-21 our work centred around three main pillars:

1. **Firstly**, our work as a peak body for specialist women's services;
2. **Secondly**, our work as Australia's leading NGO working at the intersection of technology and gender-based violence; and
3. **Thirdly**, our work supporting the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA).

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Across 2020-21 we were invited to serve on the National Plan Advisory Group, and wrote a submission to and gave evidence at the federal Social Policy and Legislative Affairs Inquiry into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. WESNET also contributed to round tables and advisory groups across 2021-22, including the Telstra Domestic and Family Violence Forum, Uber Women's Safety Forum, Facebook's Global Women's Safety Forum, CommBank's Community of Practice, Thriving Communities, the Economic Abuse Reference Group.

We also provided advice to the Victoria Police Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT), Monash University Technology Facilitated Violence Advisory Group, the Victorian government on Sentencing of image-based abuse, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, and Deakin University on its eSafety review.

RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

Between May and August 2020, WESNET, with the assistance of Dr Delanie Woodlock and researchers from Curtin University, conducted a national survey on the abuse tactics frontline workers are seeing in their work with domestic and family violence (DFV) survivors. The research—Second National Survey on Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence—followed-up the 2015 ReCharge study conducted by DVRCV, Women's Legal Services NSW and WESNET. The findings of the survey of 442 frontline DFV workers across Australia, were published in November 2020 on the WESNET and techsafety.org.au websites. The findings have framed our subsequent work with frontline practitioners and survivors.

SAFETY NET AUSTRALIA

WESNET is Australia's NGO expert working at the intersection of technology and violence against women. WESNET established and runs Safety Net Australia, a core service that empowers and protects Australian women from abusers who utilise technology to surveil, monitor, stalk, and invade privacy with the goals

of coercion and harm manifesting as physical, emotional sexual or financial abuse. At the same time, WESNET works to ensure that women are able to remain on technology.

SAFE CONNECTIONS

SAFER TECHNOLOGY FOR WOMEN

During 2020-21, our Telstra-partnered Safe Connections program distributed 5,682 new smartphones with \$30 prepaid credit to women via practitioners trained to assist them to set up and use their new device safely. In total, 28,300 new phones donated by Telstra have been given to women since 2014. The program is also supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services and has been recently highlighted as leading practice in several international fora and conferences.

Across 2020-21, our Safety Net Australia team responded to 4,440 calls and emails, mostly from frontline workers and their clients requesting assistance. The client caseloads our Technology Safety Specialists managed were predominantly high-risk and technically complex technology abuse cases, as new technologies emerged as tools of abuse during COVID-19 restrictions.

UBER RIDES

Our Uber-partnered WESNET Rides program distributed 1,932 Uber rides to survivors to help them get to essential appointments including DFV support, medical appointments, police, and legal services in 2020-21. In total, 3,885 rides have been provided since 2019. The program enables women to travel when they otherwise would have difficulty. We are very grateful to Uber for donating \$60,000 in ride share credit to WESNET.

TINY CHECK

In 2020 we partnered with cybersecurity company Kaspersky to explore the possibility of building and distributing stalkerware-detection devices to frontline domestic and family violence services. The Tiny Check device will allow services to assist clients to scan smartphones for signs of perpetrators monitoring activities and locations via phones. The program still needs funding for the devices.

WEBINARS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FOR THE SECTOR & OTHERS

Our Technology Safety Specialists delivered 52 webinars on tech safety during the year, including 35 for our Safe Connections Agencies, and a further 15 on a wide range of topics including the latest on stalkerware; working with children and young people and tech abuse; social media and survivors; and a special training session for the Forcibly Displaced People Network on the interaction of technology, refugees, and diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. In total, we trained 1,706 practitioners and participants in 2020-21. In total, we have trained over 11,713 participants at 399 training events since 2015.

TECH SAFETY RESOURCES

The Safety Net Australia team also develops and publishes tech safety resources for women, practitioners and their clients on techsafety.org.au. Resources include: Women's Safety and Privacy Toolkit, Technology Safety for Agencies, App Safety Centre, Women's Legal Guides, and printable resources for services and practitioners. The Techsafety website was visited by over 153,000 unique visitors over the 12 months to June and had 707,905 page views.

LEGAL GUIDES

The Techsafety website hosts a set of comprehensive Women's Legal Guides for survivors and practitioners on image-based abuse, surveillance, violence orders and relevant criminal offences. The Women's Legal Guides were created in 2015 as part of the Recharge Project in collaboration with Domestic Violence Resource Centre and Women's Legal Service NSW, who updated the content in 2019.

APP SAFETY CENTRE

The App Safety Centre provides advice to survivors about popular apps that are marketed to women as well as to developers and others who are considering building an app for this group. In late 2020 we published the findings of our App Safety Centre research project, funded by the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN). The project reviewed apps marketed towards women's safety, testing for functionality and limitations. We hope our app reviews will help women to better understand the apps they are using to increase their privacy and personal safety.

WORKING WITH TECH & OTHER CORPORATIONS

GLOBAL COALITION AGAINST STALKWARE

In November 2020, we joined the global Coalition Against Stalkerware as its only Australian member to address the growing threat of non-consensual tracking of survivors via digital devices.

OTHER PARTNERS

We were delighted to work with corporations on a wide range of projects during this year. This included working on four new handouts on digital financial security with the Commonwealth Bank as part of the *Next Chapter* project; working with Facebook on safety and other measures particularly in relation to image-based abuse; and with Aussie Broadband to develop some videos for survivors.

We worked with various governments and agencies during the year including Women NSW, the WA Department of Transport, the Department of Human Services, the Australian Federal Police, and the Queensland Government.

AWAVA

WESNET also continued to be the contract manager and lead agency for the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) during 2020-2021. To read more about AWAVA, please [see pages 28 to 32](#).

KAREN BENTLEY CEO	KIT MUIRHEAD from March 2021	SARAH I from March 2021	TINA DIXSON til April 2021
BONNIE P	LAUREN READ	SUSAN S	VANAMALI HERMANS
DIANA H	NATALIE M	WILLA WHITEWOLF	VICKI LACHLAN from April 2021
JUNE W	SARAH B	MERRINDAHL ANDREW til July 2020	

OUR STAFF

STATS, FACTS & QUOTES

FY 2020-2021

1706

frontline workers
trained in tech safety
during 2020-2021

5882

Safety Connections
smartphones given to
survivors during 2020-2021

1932

free Uber rides taken
in the last 12 months

11,713

frontline workers,
police, magistrates,
customer services,
call centre staff,
trained since 2015

335

prepaid credit top-ups
were provided to survivors

4038

calls answered to our
1800WESNET number

52 webinars
delivered
in total

To the end of June,
28,300

smartphones and
pre-paid credit,
donated by Telstra,
have been safely given
to women and children
via our network

402

supporting emails
responded to women
experiencing tech abuse

97.4%

of our Safe Connections
attendees felt more
confident in improving
their client's safety
following the first
unit of our training

2019

frontline workers registered
on our online portal for the
Safe Connections Program

153,484

users visits to our
Tech Safety Website

707,905
page views

TESTIMONIALS

"McCombe House has found [WESNET's Women's Technology Safety and Privacy Toolkit] an important step for all women in keeping safe.

All information on the toolkit is easy to understand and is updated regularly, with great links to other sites. [We] have run a couple of Tech Safety Information Sessions this year for women accommodated at McCombe House using [the toolkit] for support, which have been very successful. Case Workers regularly use the toolkit to support women to navigate all their tech knowledge, especially regarding privacy and security settings on phones and social media."

—McCombe House, TAS

"We've given out a few WESNET phones in After Hours. Perps break/take away or stalk through women's phones so some women in emergency accom need a safety phone. They've been especially helpful as the COVID-19 restrictions are making women feel even more isolated. Without the phones they can't contact supportive family/children, much needed counselling services, 000, support services, Centrelink, banks, etc. The phones help them stay connected. With it, they're also able to safely connect to the internet so they can get information about where they are, where local services are and how to get there."

—South EDVOS, VIC

"As a case manager in a high security women's refuge I regularly work with women and children who have experienced a loss of autonomy and independence and high levels of isolation. This can be compounded by the refuge's security measures and limited access to public transport. The generous Uber funding through WESNET Uber Rides Program enabled us to support our clients to independently access vital medical and therapeutic appointments and increase their social and community participation. It was a life changing initiative for countless people at one of the most difficult times in their lives."

—Agency Frontline Worker, VIC

"I am writing to say a big thank you to WESNET and to let you know how invaluable the phones are in the time of COVID-19. The WESNET phones are always invaluable for our clients, but even more so at the moment."

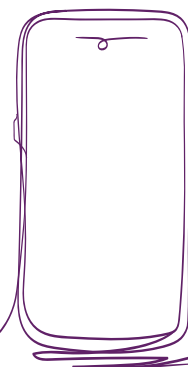
—SW Sydney Legal Centre, NSW

"We were in a family law case about an Aboriginal child separated from her mother and her Country. An Aboriginal Elder was a witness in the case. She lived in outer Western Sydney and had to be at court in the city first thing in the morning. We arranged for an Uber ride to pick her up the night before and take her to a hotel in the city to stay the night. In the morning she gave her evidence and then Uber rides took her safely back home again."

—Agency Executive Officer, NSW

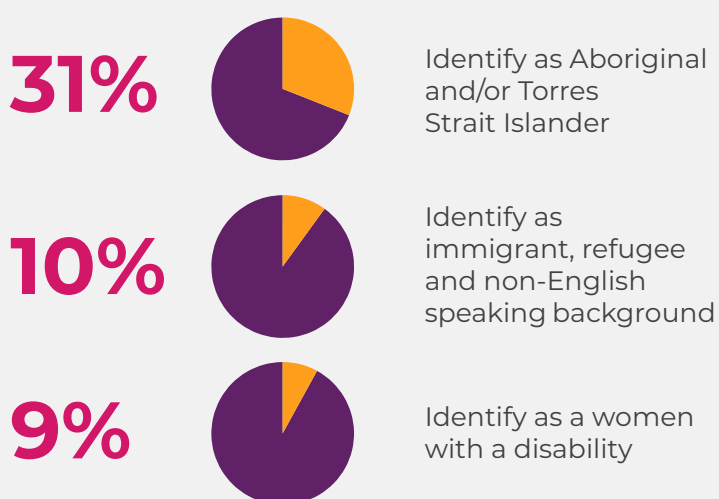
SAFE CONNECTIONS SOCIAL IMPACT

UP TO 30 JUNE 2021

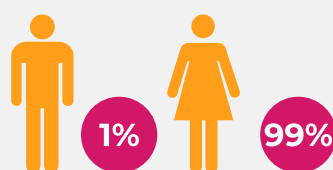


Telstra and WESNET have been collaborating since 2014 to provide pre-paid smartphones with \$30 credit to women impacted by domestic and family violence. With funding support from the Commonwealth Government through the Women's Safety Package, WESNET has been able to support 28,300 women over the past five 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



GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS



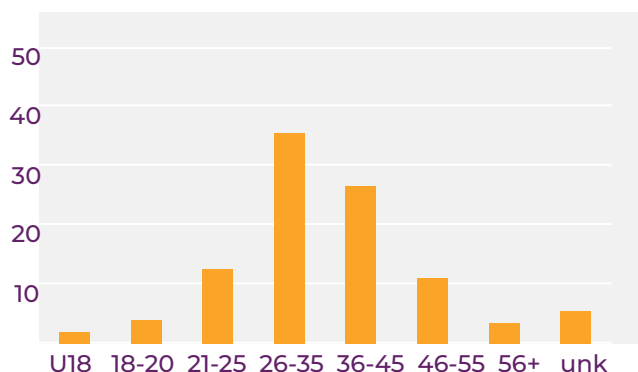
Most phones recipients were women or girls. Some phones have also been provided to male dependents.

FRONTLINE AGENCIES



276
agencies providing
phones to women

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN (%)



28,300

PHONES GIVEN TO WOMEN
TO JUNE 2021

11,713

Workers trained

2,019

Workers with access
to online resources

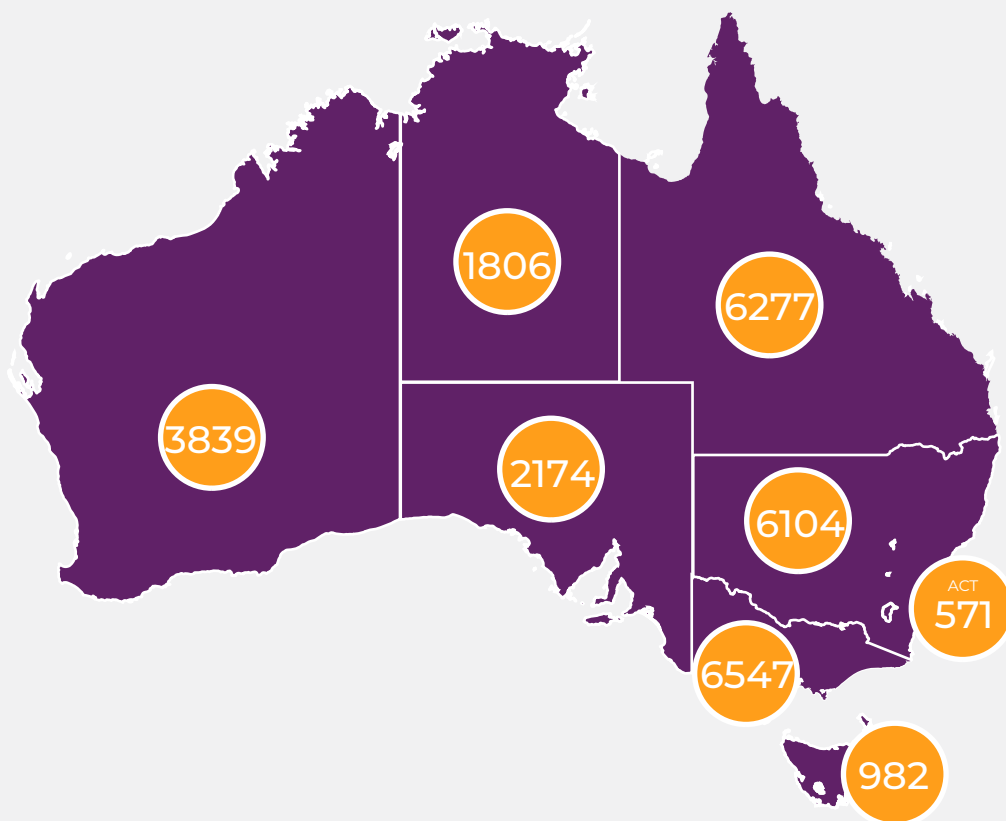
1

External evaluation
with great results

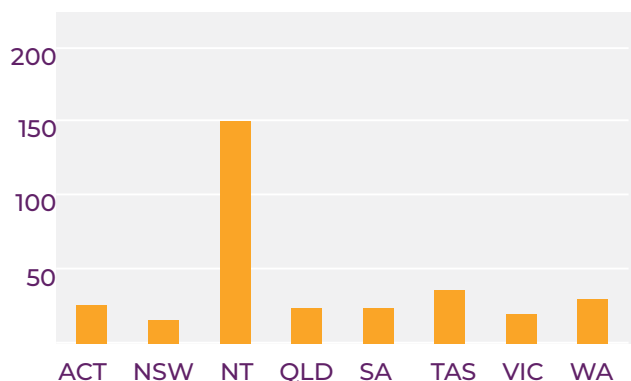
97.4%

say clients are
significantly safer

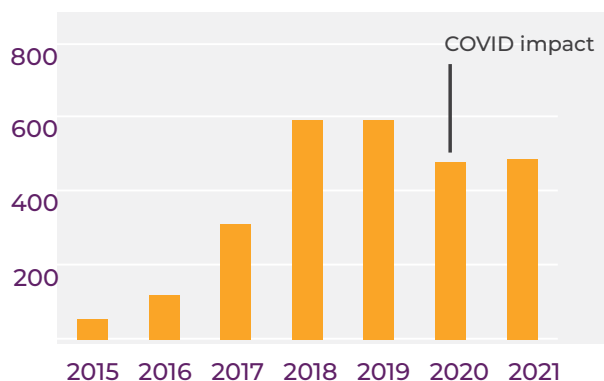
PHONES GIVEN BY STATE AND TERRITORY



PHONES PROVIDED PER 10,000 FEMALE POPULATION



AVERAGE NUMBER OF PHONES GIVEN PER MONTH





COVID-19 IMPACT

The pandemic presented multiple complex challenges for our sector, just so services could remain available to those needing them.

The impact of COVID-19 on women's specialist services has been profound with demand for services growing along with acute workforce pressures.

An increase in domestic violence in the early months of the pandemic was widely reported by Australian media, founded largely on local reports and international research. In response, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) commissioned a survey of 15,000 women in May 2020 finding that for many women the pandemic did coincide with the onset or escalation of violence and abuse. Two-thirds of the women surveyed responded that violence had started or escalated during the COVID-19 lockdowns.¹

WESNET's own *Second National Survey of Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia*—held between May and August 2020—highlighted COVID-19's influence on perpetrators' use of technology-facilitated abuse. The findings showed how COVID-19 added another layer of complexity to clients' needs, requiring additional support and more time from their support workers. Some practitioners noticed an increased complexity of cases and new tactics of abuse they had not seen before. For example, respondents reported that perpetrators were using the pandemic's climate of isolation and reliance on technology for school, work, and connection to control and monitor victim-survivors.²

As well as increasing social isolation and decreasing social movement, lockdowns compelled many women to spend more time with offenders. The AIC found some services reported challenges in accessing and engaging with women due to lockdown and movement restrictions—some imposed by health directions, some by perpetrators.³ In other words, more women needed help but experienced greater difficulty in accessing it. This echoes reports from many WESNET members who added that contributing factors—such as increased financial stressors and alcohol use—during the lockdowns, exacerbated perpetrators violence against their victims.

More recent research by ANROWS, in line with the findings of the AIC and WESNET surveys, found that police data, service provider surveys and victimisation surveys all suggest a pandemic-related increase in intimate partner violence (IPV), changes in the dynamics of IPV, and that overall safety concerns were significant barriers to help-seeking.⁴

COVID-19 has meant that many people have learnt new ways to work with technology. This has been true for our members and the women and children we work to assist. But it has also been true for abusers who found new and novel ways to misuse technology during the global health crisis. We need to be prepared that abusers will be reluctant to give up those new tools when life hopefully returns to normal.⁵

In terms of workforce, and while some states and territories were impacted more than others, few frontline workers escaped the crunch of managing increased workloads, in tandem with remote schooling and caring for aged and other dependents.

In an early survey of WESNET Members in April 2020, half the DFV practitioners responding said they had difficulty accessing accommodation, groceries, baby goods, and cleaning products for their clients.

Most services experienced some form of lockdown or restrictions where workers had to work from home, balancing their often-confronting work with being at home with their families or housemates. Women—and particularly women in the health and community service sectors—carried a huge burden across the economy and the community.⁶ Global reports show that women took on an increase of 5.2 additional hours of childcare per week during COVID-19 compared to 3.5 hours for men.⁷

Fortunately, the WESNET office remained relatively cushioned from the worst impacts of COVID-19. Already operating under a model of geographical dispersion of staff, we were able to adapt at short notice. As lockdowns hit, staff were able to work from home while continuing to deliver WESNET programs and services, notwithstanding their own responsibilities associated with schooling and caring. But we remain able to pivot at short notice to different work modes.

Unfortunately for others, some services were forced to decrease their service options to clients due to the nature of their work or their location. WESNET supported workers unable to access their work premises in many different ways. To help support our members shift their services to remote service delivery, WESNET published [COVID-specific resources](#) for service providers early in the pandemic which proved to be a valuable resource. We did, however, notice that the number of phones being provided to women through our Safe Connections program dropped from an average of 600 to around 500 a month—as some services were simply unable to manage providing the phones to clients while working remotely.

COVID-19 has highlighted the critical importance of connection—both in real life and via technology. The shift from the traditional service model of face-to-face service to remote service delivery, raised some critical issues with privacy and data security.

Other services were faced with unique challenges to meet their client's emerging needs. One of our WESNET members, Women's Safety Services of Central Australia, supported an initiative by Central Australian Aboriginal organisations to offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women the choice to return to Country to minimise their risk of contracting the virus. To best support these women, the service decided that every client who was going back would be offered a phone as part of their safety plan. WESNET was able to assist the service by providing additional phones and postage, which can be a prohibitive cost to services supporting women in remote locations.

The work to support and respond to women and children affected by domestic and family violence has changed and become more all-encompassing due to the misuse of technology by abusers. We know that new challenges and the compounding consequences brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, will inform our future and continued work in connecting with our membership, and in keeping victim-survivors connected to essential services.

-
1. Boxall, H., Morgan, A., and Brown, R., (2020). The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistical Bulletin no. 28. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.
 2. Woodlock, D., Bentley, K., Schulze, D., Mahoney, N., Chung, D., and Pracilio, A., (2020). Second National Survey of Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia. WESNET.
 3. Morgan, A., & Boxal, H., (2020). Social isolation, time spent at home, financial stress and domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Trends & Issues in crime and criminal justice.
 4. Boxall, H., & Morgan, A. (2021). Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: A survey of women in Australia. ANROWS.
 5. NNEDV (2021)
 6. Cortis, N & Blaxland, M (2020): Australia's community sector and COVID-19: Supporting communities through the crisis. Sydney: ACOSS
 7. Azcona, G., Bhatt, A., and Love, K., (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the care burden, but by how much? UN Women.

AWAVA

THE FIRST ELEVEN YEARS

The Australian Women Against Violence Alliance was established in 2010 following a successful tender to the federal government which established the national women's alliances. By 2021, AWAVA accomplished the following:

- Amplified and represented the voices of women and women's organisations working on violence against women (VAW) in their diversity.
- Sustained and strengthened its engagement with diverse membership within and beyond the VAW sector and ensured the most marginalised groups of women were represented.
- Provided expert advice on addressing VAW in accordance with the five agreed priority areas to the Government and practitioners.
- Contributed to the development of policies in relation to primary prevention, effective responses to VAW across systems, access to justice and upholding of women's rights to be safe domestically and internationally.
- Connected and informed the public, services, and victim-survivors on issues, opportunities, and practices in the areas of prevention and response to all forms of VAW.
- Supported solution-focused networks of practitioners and allies with policy advice and strengthened collaboration with all National Women's Alliances.
- Sustained and developed AWAVA's function as an expert voice on prevention and response to all forms of VAW.

MERRINDAHL ANDREW

Program Manager 2015-2020

"Many of the best things that AWAVA did were not things that had our name on, or that could be launched under our banner alone. They were things we did jointly with other organisations, like the cross-sector National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence, and our contributions, sometimes large and sometimes small, to the amazing work led by others, like Women With Disabilities Australia's [Our Site website](#), an invaluable online resource for women and girls with disability. Educating ourselves about about issues and working out how to support others' priorities was crucial for AWAVA to become a genuine alliance. I am so grateful to all the people in other organisations that enabled us to play a role."



Dec 2010

First face-to-face meeting of the AWAVA Advisory Group in Adelaide

2010

AWAVA established by WESNET following successful tender

Jan 2011

AWAVA makes its first submission on Family Law with Women's Legal Services NSW

Feb 2011

First National Plan is published

Mar 2011

Centenary of IWD & launch of Australian Women's Timeline

MAIRI STEELE

Former head of the Office for Women

"I engaged with AWAVA for over three years when I was heading up the Office for Women. Given their limited resources, I was amazed at the amount and quality of information, policy analysis, and advocacy AWAVA generated. In terms of making sure the government heard their message AWAVA—and Julie Oberin AM in particular—did an amazing job. A very big pain in my arse as a public servant so I reckon AWAVA did a very good job! And as a person who experienced domestic violence, I have no words other than a massive thanks to Julie and AWAVA."

KAREN BENTLEY

WESNET CEO,
AWAVA Contract Manager 2017-2021

"I had the pleasure of working with AWAVA in its very early days and then again from 2017 onwards. The evolution of AWAVA into a truly intersectional and inclusive organisation took years of work and dedication. It didn't happen overnight and is a testament to the skills and experience of the highly dedicated team members who always operated with respect and humility and the many, many advisory group members over the years who brought their views and wisdom and perspectives to the table to ensure that AWAVA was a true melting pot of the entire sector. From there the synergies began. Working with an incredibly tiny budget AWAVA influenced many of the discussions taking place today in relation to gender-based violence."

AMY BLAIN

Program Manager 2012-2013

"Joining AWAVA back in 2012, as one of the first Program Managers, was so exciting. It was the dream job I was so surprised to actually get! I loved helping to build its network, establish AWAVA as an organisation and to work towards its ambitious but essential vision to ensure that all women and children are able to live free from all forms of violence and abuse. I'm proud to have played a part in AWAVA's history and to have had a role in making sure women's voices are heard, and that those voices led to change."

I'm incredibly honoured to have employed the late Eun Ju Kim-Baker as AWAVA's Communication & Admin Officer, who was an incredibly talented young person and advocate and whose legacy remains profound."



Aug 2012

Stopping VAW
before it happens



Sept 2012

National Plan Roadshow
talks prevention to regional
& remote communities

May 2015

AWAVA Chair, Julie Oberin AM
joins COAG Advisory Panel on VAW

Sept 2016

AWAVA and OurWatch
host the Prevalent &
Preventable Conference

TINA DIXSON

Policy Officer 2017-2020 A/g Program Manager 2020-2021

"Australian Women Against Violence Alliance has been a representative true alliance of women's and feminist organisations from all around Australia. For over a decade it has brought together a range of experts to provide unique and comprehensive analysis of issues on prevention of, responses to and recovery from sexual and gender-based violence. As an Alliance it has embodied and practiced intersectionality, allyship and solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and organisations, culturally and linguistically diverse women and organisations, and women with disability and disabled people's organisations. Policy work produced by AWAVA and its members will be foundational for years to come. I feel so honoured to have been part of the team and working alongside such incredible women!"

VICKI LACHLAN

Founding member of AWAVA, Locum Program Manager 2021

"Having been involved from the very beginning of AWAVA—being one of the small working party even before a name, recognition or funding for it—I can clearly remember the hard work and energy put into its establishment, particularly from Julie Oberin AM, but also from all of the WESNET board members at the time including me. It was not easy, but we all thought it was worth it. To get funding and reassurance from government that they also wanted an alliance of national women's organisations voicing the fight against violence perpetrated toward women, was truly reaffirming. And then, amazingly enough, there I was working for AWAVA when it was announced 10 years later that we had lost that precious funding! To say that was a disappointment was putting it mildly!"

I believe AWAVA achieved many things during its existence and the work I treasured most was the facilitation of bringing many and varied women's voices, from a wide range of backgrounds, together to fight the good fight against the scourge of violence against women. Thanks to Julie Oberin AM, Karen Bentley, the WESNET board and lastly but not least all of the staff over the years for their hard work and dedication. I think we can hold our heads high and say we gave it our best!"

Aug 2017

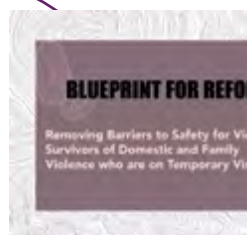
The Unique Roles of Specialist Women's Services in EVAW is published

May 2018

Joint submission with NATSIWA on Family Law Systems Issues Paper

Oct 2019

Blueprint for Reform: Removing Barriers to Safety for Victim-Survivors on Temporary Visas



Jul 2017

10 Steps you can take to eliminate violence published



Dec 2018

National Survey on Primary Prevention of VAW Survey

2019

The last face-to-face meeting of Advisory Group in Melbourne before COVID

11 YEARS

18 Quarterly updates

17,000+

Combined followers and subscribers to AWAVA's channels

13 Invaluable resources

13 Activity workshops

440

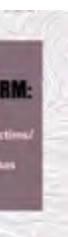
Weekly Roundups

80

Policy submissions

10 Budget lockups with analysis

Last face-to-face advisory meeting in 2019 in Melbourne.



Aug 2020

Submission to Social Policy and Legislative Affairs Inquiry

Jan 2020

Landmark position paper on Coercive Control released

Dec 2020

Good Practice Principles in Addressing Sexual & GBV released

Apr 2021

Young Women's Survey & consultation

May 2021

AWAVA appointed to National Plan Advisory Group for Second National Plan

Aug 2021

AWAVA to continue as an unfunded alliance



Amy Blaine



Sophie Hardfeldt



Tara Willoughby



Merrindah Andrew, Megan Morris, Teena Saulo



Sumithri Venketsubramnian, Merrindah Andrew, Tina Dixon



Vanamali Hermans, Tina Dixon, Pam Rugkhla



Kit Muirhead



Eun Ju Kim-Baker



Mary Barry, Nastasha Stott-Despoja, Julie Oberin AM, Rashida Manjoo



THANK YOU!

FOR SUPPORTING US THIS YEAR

MAJOR DONORS

- Telstra
- Uber
- Billie Jean King Foundation

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

List of all financial donors that donated, in alphabetical order:

- Christiane Ash
- Trudie Bernet
- John Caley
- Shelley Cox
- Liat Dover
- Martin Dumbrell
- Renee Farrow
- Filantropia
- S. Fong
- Rachel Garnsey
- Harrison Gilbertson
- Amy Hu
- Gemma Jameson
- Megan Kolb
- Robert Merkel
- Sharron Middleton
- Jim Mussared
- Chrys Oustas
- Heather Rutherford
- Eva Staples
- Carmel Sullivan
- Priyanka Sunder
- Brigid Symes
- Aruna Thinakkal
- Matilda Tonkovic
- Michala Underwood
- Josephine Whitfield
- Laura Wuetschner

SUPPORTERS

Organisations that provided in kind support and valuable advice:

- Price Waterhouse Coopers
- Aussie Broadband
- Filantropia
- Dr Robert Merkel

FUNDING BODIES, CONSULTANCY CLIENTS AND PARTNERS

- Department of Social Services
- Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Telstra
- Uber
- Kaspersky
- ACCAN
- Australian Federal Police
- Commonwealth Bank
- Facebook
- Deakin University
- Queensland University of Technology
- Victoria Police (OIC, JACET, SOCAT)
- Queensland Government
- Women's Centre for Safety and Wellbeing
- Women NSW

PROJECT PARTNERS

We have had the pleasure of working with:

- 276 frontline agencies, many of whom have elected to remain anonymous due to the work that they undertake.
- ABC Television
- Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)
- British Columbia Society of Transition Houses
- Coalition Against Stalkerware
- Commonwealth Bank
- Communications Alliance
- Cornell University
- Curtin University
- Deakin University
- Department of Human Services (Federal)

- DV New South Wales
- DV Victoria
- Economic Abuse Reference Group
- Economic Security 4 Women
- Equality Rights Alliance
- Facebook
- Global Network of Women's Shelters
- Harmony Alliance
- Infoxchange 'Ask Izzy'
- Medibank Health Solutions / 1800RESPECT
- Melbourne University
- Monash University
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA)
- National Network to End Domestic Violence
- National Network to End Domestic Violence
- National Rural Women's Alliance
- Office of the eSafety Commission
- Queensland Government
- Queensland University of Technology
- RAINN
- RMIT
- SBS Television
- Telcos Together
- Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman
- Telstra
- Thriving Communities Partnerships
- Uber
- Women With Disability Australia
- Women's Legal Service NSW "Ask Izzy"
- Women's Refuge NZ



TREASURER'S REPORT

MARGARET AUGERINOS

The last financial year has seen a stable financial outlook for WESNET, with revenue of \$1,617,242 compared to \$1,373,169 the previous financial year. Most of our funding this year came from Commonwealth Government grants for our Safety Net Australia service and as contract manager for AWAVA.

We are starting to diversify our revenue streams with more sponsorship and other income sources. Membership revenue remained stable this year, but we saw an increase in donation income following our transition to a Public Benevolent Institution the year before last.

WESNET ended the year with an overall surplus of \$315,268. Our assets at 30 June 2021 were \$1,286,381, with liabilities of \$391,451. Most of these liabilities relate to payments/grants in advance and associated end of financial year liabilities. Our equity at 30 June 2021 was \$894,930.

The 2020-21 audit was an unqualified audit, and on behalf of the Board I would like to thank RSD Audit Pty Ltd and Karen Bentley, Diana H, and Tyler Oliver for their work during the year and taking the finances through to audit.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Below is a summary of our audited financial statements. A full copy of the 2020-21 Financial Statements is available on request or from the ACNC website. The audit of our financial records was completed in November 2021 by RSD Audit Pty Ltd.

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS		
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Net cash provided by operating activities	243,647	180,213
Net increase in cash held	243,647	180,213
Cash on hand at the end of financial year	1,224,867	981,220
INCOME STATEMENT		
Revenue	1,617,242	1,373,169
Expenses	1,301,974	1,222,596
Net current year surplus	315,268	150,573
BALANCE SHEET		
ASSETS		
Current Assets	1,286,381	1,032,798
Non-Current Assets	0	0
Total Assets	1,286,381	1,032,798
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities	365,011	429,284
Non-current Liabilities	26,440	23,852
Total Liabilities	391,451	453,136
Net Assets	894,930	579,662
Total Equity	894,930	579,662



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1800WESNET (National Toll Free: 1800 937 638)
ABN: 16 068 548 631 | ACN: ACT A 02400

Click to follow us on social media:



www.wesnet.org.au