

Annual Report

2021-22



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 we have had staff working in other nations including Palawa, Eora, Ngannawal, 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 tirelessly for an inclusive future free from violence. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of First Nations women, particularly those who have experienced domestic and family violence, and those who support and advocate for 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. We pay respect to those who did not survive and to their family members and friends.



Contents

National Chair Report	<u>4</u>	Statistics and Facts	<u>25</u>
CEO Report	<u>6</u>	Our Social Impact	<u>26</u>
Our Members	<u>8</u>	Member Survey	<u>28</u>
Our National Board	<u>9</u>	Building the Evidence-Base	<u>32</u>
Board Reports	<u>10</u>	Testimonials	<u>34</u>
Our Work	<u>19</u>	Donors and Supporters	<u>35</u>
Our Staff	<u>24</u>	Treasurer's Report and Financial Summary	<u>36</u>

National Chair Report

A MESSAGE FROM JULIE OBERIN AM

It is a pleasure to again present Wesnet's annual report, this time for 2021-22. On the national stage, this year was one of those strange holding years, leading up to a federal election where change seemed more likely than not. At the more local and personal level, we continued to struggle with the effects of the pandemic even as the dominant message from authorities and the media was that we had entered the recovery phase. The reality, regardless, was dealing with illness and its impacts on our families, our workplaces and our clients.

Over the course of the year, Wesnet continued its work as a national voice for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and the specialist services that support them.

At the beginning of the 2021-22 financial year, still reeling from the defunding of the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA), Wesnet took action to step up its own capacity to drive policy and to communicate it more widely.

We employed a new policy and program officer, as well as a new fundraising and communications coordinator. As a consequence, both our policy and media presence and capabilities have improved.

Although quieter than pre-Covid-19 in terms of public Wesnet events and launches—the Technology Summit was to come later in the 2022 calendar year—Wesnet continued to embrace new digital opportunities and to work with key stakeholders and partners.

Wesnet's role on the National Plan Advisory Group was important in generating improvements in the draft plan. When the January 2022 version was released with a three week consultation window—in school holidays—this was understandably met with considerable backlash. It was women's and victim-survivors' voices that ensured a more reasonable consultation period as well as sending a very strong message that the National Plan mattered. This enabled advisory group members to drive home key messages such as the centrality of victim-survivors to the plan and to the process.

In February we saw the final culmination of government-supported AWAVA work with the launch of the [*Report on Young Women and Non-Binary People's Experiences of Gender-Based Violence across Australia*](#). The finalisation of the report and its launch was only made possible through the combined efforts of Wesnet, Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA), and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA). AWAVA may no longer be a funded alliance but the majority of the AWAVA Advisory Group members agreed to continue the work as an unfunded Alliance so as not to lose the momentum and important collaborative network. Wesnet's support through dedicating some staffing resources to the work of the Alliance has enabled it to continue good work with great partners. The AWAVA Round Up—although reduced to fortnightly—has actually grown in circulation and influence.

Much of the year was spent in consolidating and advancing our influence. We continued our partnership in a number of research projects—including with Deakin and Monash Universities—to build the evidence base. And we built on our partnerships in our project work—including with Uber, Meta, Kapersky, Apple, Match and Tinder. This work—along with our signature Telstra/Wesnet Safe Connections program and the training and advisory work undertaken by our technology safety specialists—cements our reputation as a world leader in the intersection between technology and domestic and family violence.

Moving towards the end of the 2021-22 financial year, we circulated a new member survey. The survey was important in two key ways: it told us more about our members, and it enabled us to get a better view of Wesnet from our members' perspectives.

We got sent a strong message that both our peak body and our technology safety work was important and valued.

It also illuminated some areas where we hope to build capacity, including a focus on membership engagement and consultation.

I would again like to thank our talented and dedicated **CEO Karen Bentley**—along with the **Wesnet team of staff and board members**—who work tirelessly to advance the interests of our members and all the women and children that specialist women's services support.



Julie Oberin AM,
National Chair

CEO Report

A MESSAGE FROM KAREN BENTLEY

2021-22 has been another year where we were simultaneously busy and yet also felt as though we were treading water while waiting for the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to be over. Meanwhile in the second half of the financial year many of our members literally were treading water with floods devastating many parts of eastern Australia. The rest of us were also in a holding pattern while we awaited the outcome of the 2022 federal election.

July and August saw us winding up the final deliverables as an official National Women's Alliance and saying goodbye to the last of the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) staff members. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with the many highly talented team members that have been the powerhouse of AWAVA over the past 11 years of amazing service and policy work. The final project was the launch of the joint Wesnet/ AWAVA/NATSIWA and WWDA *Report on Young Women and Non-Binary People's Experiences of Gender Based Violence across Australia*.

I was also very pleased that the AWAVA Advisory Group agreed to continue as an unfunded women's alliance and Wesnet was able to fund two part time staff to support the secretariat function at this critical time. Wesnet now has

a policy and projects officer for the first time in many years, as well as a communications and fundraising officer.

On the national policy agenda - the remainder of the year was largely focused on the finalisation of the second National Plan. In September 2021 the Morrison Government convened a National Summit in preparation for the development of the plan. Initially an in-person event, the summit was held virtually as yet another wave of Covid-19 swept the nation. Convened over three days, the invited guests were able to listen to a range of panels and then participate in one or two roundtable discussions.

After a flurry of activity towards the end of 2021, a first draft of the *Second National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children* was released for public consultation in January 2022 with a very short window for feedback. There was considerable backlash from the sector about the short time frames and the document itself. As a member of the National Plan Advisory Group a lot of my time was spent working with my colleagues and the Department of Social Services and the Office for Women in trying to influence the final shaping of the National Plan which we had assumed would be released by the then government before the election.

However this did not happen, and the incoming government saw a reconvening and another major overall of the plan, and a planned release later in 2022..

The staff team again has done a sterling job of managing all of our many programs over the year, particularly in relation to the Safe Connections program (also known as the Safe Phones program). The team has consistently performed incredibly well under long-term funding uncertainty. During the year the program was granted its seventh short term extension since 2018. Despite this level of uncertainty and the general climate of exhaustion being experienced across the sector and the country generally, the team has maintained a good morale and are highly dedicated to the work they are doing to assist survivors and those who interact with them about the issue of technology-facilitated abuse.

I also want to extend our thanks to the hundreds of agencies that we have on board who attend our training and give the phones to women attending their services, and the team at Telstra who continue to not only donate 6,000 brand new smartphones with prepaid credit each year, but have also established a huge team of staff in the Telstra Safe Team, to help activate the phones safely for survivors.

Similarly a huge thanks to the agencies that have signed up for the Wesnet Uber Rides program and to Uber for their continuous support in donating free rides for survivors.

You can read more about the amazing achievements of these programs on [page 19](#) of this report.

We also continue to work for all our member services across the country in advocating for recognition and funding for the specialist women's sector. Thank you to all the Wesnet members who have maintained their memberships despite funding and other pressures.

We also continued to work in partnership and advisory roles to a wide range of other technology companies, corporations and organisations during the year. I'd like to especially thank Telstra, Uber, Kaspersky and Match Group for their financial support during 2021-22.

What's ahead for 2022-23?

With a change of federal government and the release of the Second National Plan later in 2022, Wesnet is hopeful of continued and lengthy funding for the Safe Connections program. We'll also see the return of our Technology Safety Summit for the first time in four years and the continuation of some exciting research, collaborations and other programs.

Finally, a big thank you to **Julie Oberin AM** and the Board members as well as the amazing team at Wesnet for all the work over the past year.



Karen Bentley,
CEO

Our Members

Wesnet represents more than 320 specialist women's services across Australia who are providing support to women, non-binary people and children experiencing domestic and family violence and other forms of gender-based violence. Wesnet member services are women-led, and work within an intersectional feminist framework—acknowledging that patterns of oppression (including patriarchy, ableism, colonialism, imperialism, homophobia and racism) impact uniquely on multiple identities—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. Our members provide support to women, non-binary people, and children from diverse populations, and include services targeted to meet the needs of Indigenous women, children, younger and older women, migrant and refugee women, the LGBTQIA+ community and women with disabilities.

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, and rural and remote areas. Members' unique and rich on-the-ground experience has led to specialist women's services providing leadership in developing Australian best practice domestic and family violence prevention, early intervention, response and recovery 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 are shaped.

Our Vision

Wesnet's vision for the future is that all forms of gender-based violence are eliminated, and that all women and children live free from domestic and family violence.

Our Opportunities for Impact

Over the next strategic planning cycle, Wesnet aims to:

- *Provide support for women victim-survivors and their children,*
- *Strengthen and build the women's family and domestic violence sector,*
- *Strengthen Wesnet's position as the national leader of member services to the sector, and*
- *Use our specialist knowledge to achieve our purpose and maximise our capacity to eliminate family and domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence.*

Our National Board

Wesnet's national board is comprised of elected representatives who are skilled and experienced leaders within the women's services sector, committed to eliminating gender-based violence.

Board members are elected by member services to represent states and territories. Diversity representatives are also elected to help ensure we live our intersectionality and diversity values, as well as improving the quality and relevance of our work.

This year we redesigned and updated our skills matrix, surveying our board members to more fully understand the depth and breadth of the board's skills, knowledge, experience and expertise. We sought also to identify any gaps or weaknesses, with a view to short-term capacity building and longer term succession planning.

As a result of our new and improved board survey—which we run annually—we have an excellent overview of the diversity and depth of skills and experience that we can draw on to further Wesnet's strategic objectives and better support our member services. Key findings included:

- The current board membership has excellent experience in not-for-profit, non-government organisations, government, and peak and representative bodies.
- The board has a very good mix of skills with no concerning gaps. Major strengths include in relation to domestic and family violence services and policy, legal and governance, strategic development,

communications, advocacy, and in people and financial management.

- The board represents a range of experience across the sector, including substantial experience in crisis services, women's refuges and peak bodies; and significant experience in perpetrator programs and in research, education and policy development.
- The board is geographically diverse with members from all states and territories and from metropolitan, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote service delivery locations.
- The board is broadly representative of women in the community with respect to a diverse mix of lived experience and demographic characteristics. Wesnet is strongly committed to ensuring that our values continue to be embodied in board membership.

We are very grateful to our board members for their generous contribution to further the interests of Wesnet's member services, by volunteering their time, expertise and energy.



Board Members

Julie Oberin AM NATIONAL CHAIR & DIVERSITY REP	Lindy Edwards DEPUTY CHAIR & QUEENSLAND REP (RESIGNED NOV 2021)	Jennifer Kingwell DEPUTY CHAIR & SOUTH AUSTRALIAN REP	Margaret Augerinos TREASURER & VICTORIAN REP
Angie Piubello SECRETARY & AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY REP	Kedy Kristal WESTERN AUSTRALIAN REP & TREASURER (RETIRED SEP 2021)	Jo Gamble NORTHERN TERRITORY REP	Delia Donovan NEW SOUTH WALES REP
Diane Burton TASMANIAN REP (FROM NOV 2021)	Leanne Barron WESTERN AUSTRALIAN REP (FROM NOV 2021)	Amie Carrington QUEENSLAND REP (FROM NOV 2021)	Cecilia Barassi-Rubio DIVERSITY REP (RESIGNED NOV 2021)
PUBLIC OFFICER			
Dr Merrindahl Andrew			

Board Reports

Angie Piubello

SECRETARY & ACT REPRESENTATIVE

My name is Angie Piubello, Secretary of Wesnet Board and ACT Representative. I work at Beryl Women Inc., one of the longest running women's refuges in the country. Beryl Women Inc. is a specialist domestic violence service working on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Land. 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.

What were some of the major things impacting ACT and the sector this year?

This year has seen specialist services still recovering from the impacts of Covid-19 with continuing staffing challenges including staff working remotely, programs being delivered remotely, and need for services increasing.

On a positive note, ASU members won a wage increase in the National Wage Case! As a small sector the specialist domestic violence sector has been working together with the support of ACTCOSS and the ASU to have our multi-employer enterprise agreement finalised. Advocacy and negotiations have been underway to improve conditions and salaries for staff working in the sector.

This is an important step towards government recognising the true cost of service delivery and ensuring services can provide salaries that recognise the value of staff and the complexity of working in specialist domestic violence services.

What were the highlights of 2021-22 in the ACT?

The ACT *Domestic and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework* was finalised during this period. The framework ensures a common understanding of domestic and family violence across all jurisdictions of the ACT and a common language for describing it. The framework will also guide a shared approach to screening, assessing and managing domestic and family violence risk. This will enable more consistency and better responses across the broad service system.

In May this year the ACT Legislative Assembly passed reforms of sexual consent laws in the ACT,

ensuring that consent to sexual activity must be actively and affirmatively communicated. Alongside this work, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program provided the report *Listen. Take action to prevent, believe and heal* in December 2021. The voices of victims-survivors were central with a focus on prevention and response. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group was also involved to ensure a cultural lens was applied to recommendations put forward.

The *Family Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2022* was presented in the Legislative Assembly on 10 February 2022 by the Attorney-General, Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA, aimed at improving victim-survivors' experiences with the justice system.

What are the big issues ahead for the sector in the ACT?

Currently the ACT Community Services and Homelessness Services are undergoing a commissioning process, looking to reform the domestic violence sector. Advocacy for the needs of women and children escaping domestic violence has been a strong focus in this area as all crisis accommodation funding in the ACT is funded from homelessness funding. The need to continue funding specialist domestic violence services is vital to the safety of women and children.

What were Wesnet's major achievements over 2021-22 and what do you hope for Wesnet in the future?

This year has marked many achievements for Wesnet, with one being our CEO, Karen Bentley sitting on the Advisory Group for the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-32*. The importance of Wesnet's advocacy on behalf of its member services regarding the plan is critical to the sustainability and funding of services and in ensuring the expertise of women's specialist services is

recognised and valued in the plan. I am also very proud of our Safety Net Project which produces an outstanding social impact on the ground to workers and victim-survivors.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of all the team at Wesnet and the Board. I hope that in the future Wesnet can continue to be recognised for the important role and contribution it makes nationally in ending gender-based violence against women and their children.

Amie Carrington

QUEENSLAND REPRESENTATIVE

My name is Amie Carrington, chief executive officer of Domestic Violence Action Centre and Co-Convener of Ending Violence Against Women Queensland.

What were some of the major things impacting Queensland and the sector this year?

Queensland has welcomed the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce review of the experience of women across the criminal justice system and the *Hear Her Voice* reports one and two. Queensland Government has accepted all 89 recommendations from the first report. The Commission of Inquiry into police responses into domestic and family violence commenced in May with recommendations expected in November 2022. The domestic, family and sexual violence sector and women's refuge services have contributed to several submissions, and have collaborated to represent a united voice for Queensland women and children affected by gender-based violence.

We have also welcomed Covid-19 enhancement funding boosts to help resource responses to the additional service needs for people experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

Covid-19, flooding and funding shortfalls have been a significant burden for our workforce and services who have worked tirelessly through natural disasters, Covid-19 lockdowns and Covid-19 illness this last year.

Homelessness has been an ever increasing risk for people fleeing domestic violence.

What were the highlights of 2021-22 in Queensland?

Collaboration across domestic violence, women's health, sexual violence and women's refuges in Ending Violence Against Women Queensland has provided a united voice on key areas of reform. Our sector has been resilient and demonstrated commitment to delivering quality services throughout the impacts of Covid-19 and natural disasters.

What are the big issues ahead for the sector in Queensland?

We are still unsure about the future of keeping women safe in the home (KWSITH) services to Queensland women, with—at the time of writing—no KWSITH services planned to be provided beyond 1 July 2023.

We are eagerly awaiting the Commission of Inquiry into police responses into domestic and family violence report recommendations expected in November 2022 and working with governments, survivors and First Nations people to influence the reform environment in Queensland.

We are pleased to see the announcement of the next National Plan and look forward to working together to make meaningful changes toward ending gender-based violence.

What were Wesnet's major achievements over 2021-22 and what do you hope for Wesnet in the future?

Wesnet continues to provide support for victim-survivors and is trusted to provide information and expertise around technology-facilitated abuse with a broad national reach.

Wesnet provides a powerful voice and positive solutions to gender-based violence—the impact is demonstrated through the training provided, phones provided and increased safety reported by clients.

I hope for Wesnet to continue to strengthen as the national peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services.

Jennifer Kingwell

DEPUTY CHAIR & SOUTH AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVE

My name is Jennifer Kingwell, Wesnet Deputy Chair and state representative of South Australia. I am also policy and communications manager at Embolden, the South Australian statewide peak body of domestic, family and sexual violence services.

What were some of the major things impacting South Australia and the sector this year?

The change in government at the state level resulted in new commitments to coercive control criminalisation and legislative reform.

We also saw an escalation of the ongoing housing crisis. The availability and supply of public and social housing stock continues going backwards, critically impacting those currently experiencing or who have been impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence.

What were the highlights of 2021-22 in South Australia?

As the year came to a close, we were finally on the brink of abortion decriminalisation coming into effect.

Other highlights throughout the year included the introduction of the new South Australian Housing Authority (SAHA) service alliance model, including the formation of the SAHA domestic and family violence statewide alliance.

The Powerful Interventions research report by University of South Australia and Uniting Communities was released, highlighting

gaps and inequities in the South Australian intervention order system and offering recommendations for reform.

As a statewide peak, Embolden expanded its membership offerings to include associate and supporter members in order to more effectively engage with and mobilise organisations outside the sector which share our values, as well as businesses and individuals.

What are the big issues ahead for the sector in South Australia?

We will be looking ahead towards the launch of the new *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children* later this year, and the development of the statewide framework in 2023.

There is an ongoing and urgent need for systems improvement and cultural change, particularly in legal and justice responses, including intervention orders and coercive control legislation implementation.

There is also a clear need for, and growing engagement with, lived experience advocacy. This needs to be appropriately funded and promoted.

Work must continue on addressing barriers to, and gaps with regard to, sexual assault services, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas.

What were Wesnet's major achievements over 2021-22 and what do you hope for Wesnet in the future?

Although yet to be fully realised, Wesnet applied sustained and strong advocacy and input into the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children*.

It also continues to support the work of the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA), despite the absence of funding support by government, along with strengthening its own policy and communications footprint thanks to a stellar staff team.

Wesnet demonstrated strong leadership particularly from CEO Karen Bentley and Chair Julie Oberin, in the development of the new strategic plan which will be finalised later in the year and which will look ahead until 2026.

Diane Burton

TASMANIAN REPRESENTATIVE

My name is Di Burton and I am the Tasmanian representative on the Wesnet Board. I am also the Salvation Army's State Manager Family Violence and team leader at McCombe House.

What were some of the major things impacting Tasmania and the sector this year?

Demand for services in Tasmania continues to increase since slowly coming out of Covid-19 restrictions. Tasmania has also seen changes with the complexities of cases with women and children, plus increasing difficulties accessing affordable, safe and secure housing. Tasmania, like all over Australia, is experiencing a housing crisis which is impacting significantly on women and children escaping family violence.

New family violence laws have come into effect for Tasmania, which include a new stand-alone criminal offence of non-fatal strangulation, choking and suffocation. Repeat family violence offenders are required to participate in behaviour change programs as part of the new laws. The

definition of consent has also been extended to now include what is colloquially known as 'stealthing', the intentional removal of a condom without consent.

What were the highlights of 2021-22 in Tasmania?

The Tasmanian Government committed \$15.1 million over two years for three multidisciplinary centres: one in the South, one in the North, and one along the Northwest Coast. The centres are intended to ensure that victim-survivors of family and sexual violence receive immediate and integrated support in a safe place. Importantly, these centres will recognise the intersection between sexual and family violence, by expanding the capabilities and resourcing of the Safe Families Coordination Unit to include sexual violence more broadly, including child sexual violence, creating a multi-agency response and intelligence hub.

What are the big issues ahead for the sector in Tasmania?

We are looking forward to the opening of the new multidisciplinary centres, and to working towards to the fourth Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan and having it ready for 2023.

The misidentification of clients continues to be a major concern, with improvements needed in police culture, training and understanding regarding coercive control.

What were Wesnet's major achievements over 2021-22 and what do you hope for Wesnet in the future?

The online tools and guidance at Wesnet's [Technology Safety Australia](#) remain a first-class

resource for women and children escaping violence, and the services that support them. I hope that support for these from our key collaborators continues.

Although not held until September 2022, a significant amount of preparation is going into the fourth Technology Safety Summit, bringing together national and international experts on technology safety and violence against women. This is especially the case when Covid-19 continues to require a high degree of contingency planning. I am confident—given the preparation and previous experiences of these summits—that it will be successful and very valuable to those who participate.

Margaret Augerinos

TREASURER & VICTORIAN REPRESENTATIVE

My name is Margaret Augerinos, Wesnet Treasurer and state representative for Victoria. I am also the chief executive officer for the Centre for Non-Violence.

What were some of the major things impacting Victoria and the sector this year?

Over the course of the year there was continued investment and reform into specialist family violence services including workforce development and support, crisis accommodation, crisis case management and supporting expansion of perpetrator responses.

We also saw a further rollout of *The Orange Door* network across the state with 18 sites now operational across Victoria, in addition to 14 access points across the state. *The Orange Door* brings together intake services for specialist

family violence, perpetrator programs, family services and child protection into an integrated service response.

The Victorian Government continued its work on strengthening service responses including through development of new case management program requirements and crisis response model.

And—as with most states—there have been continued workforce challenges including recruitment and retention challenges, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and growth/expansion of the sector.

What were the highlights of 2021-22 in Victoria?

One highlight this year was the launch—by our state peak Safe and Equal—of the ‘Are You Safe At Home?’ campaign to educate and support communities to start the conversation to end family violence.

The *Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor* released a report regarding the misidentification of victim-survivors as perpetrators of family violence incidents. The report explored the impact of misidentification, including re-traumatisation, lack of access to vital support services, and the serious and ongoing violence that misidentified victim-survivors experience. The report said there was a need for greater understanding of the dynamics of family violence and coercive control, clearer guidance and more joined-up processes for dealing with misidentification, and better system monitoring.

Victoria Police launched a dedicated unit to investigate serious cases of family violence involving its employees.

What are the big issues ahead for the sector in Victoria?

While ongoing funding and sector reform will continue, Victoria faces key challenges relating largely to workforce and funding. The big issues will include workforce development and workforce recruitment and shortages. Funding continues to lag behind demand, with services facing indexation and financial pressures.

What were Wesnet’s major achievements over 2021-22 and what do you hope for Wesnet in the future?

The Wesnet member survey gave us rich information about what we are doing well and areas we need to build on and develop.

Wesnet maintained positive engagement with members and stakeholders during ongoing funding uncertainty, and it continues to be an effective and engaged voice on national policy matters. It demonstrated ongoing leadership in technology safety work.

Wesnet is developing a focused strategic plan that will build on our strengths and ensure we continue to advocate for and represent member services effectively.

Leanne Barron

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVE

My name is Leanne Barron, Western Australian representative on the Wesnet board. I am also CEO of Starick, a specialist family and domestic violence service operating in the south east metropolitan corridor of Perth (Boorloo).

What were some of the major things impacting Western Australia and the sector this year?

Covid-19 continues to impact the sector with staff shortages due to illness, the costs of additional leave for staff and the difficulties in recruitment.

The impact of the housing crisis also continues to be a major issue with the average length of stay for women and children in refuges doubling due to a lack of exit options, and women unable to leave partners who use violence due to lack of refuge space and other affordable housing options.

During the year, key legislative reforms were completed or underway, including the family violence reform package to increase protections for victims of family and domestic violence and to hold perpetrators to account. Reforms include new specific criminal offences for suffocation and strangulation, and for serial family violence offences. The Western Australian Government also released a discussion paper seeking feedback on legislative responses to coercive control.

What were the highlights of 2021-22 in Western Australia?

It was pleasing to see more work being done on the second *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children*, with a view to a launch later in the year. At the state level, there was also significant activity with the ongoing development of the state's second action plan under its *Path to Safety*, as well as work on the perpetrator response framework and the primary prevention framework.

There was also progress by refuges in the south east corridor to support implementation of the child safe principles in services.

What are the big issues ahead for the sector in Western Australia?

One of the key critical issues is the development of the workforce, particularly in the prevention space and also to respond to the greater complexity of issues facing clients.

Julie Oberin AM NATIONAL CHAIR & DIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVE

My name is Julie Oberin and I am the diversity representative on the Wesnet Board. I am chief executive officer of Annie North Women's Refuge and Domestic Violence Service in regional Victoria.

Intersectionality and diversity

Over the last year we have been involved in the following groups/research projects that have highlighted the need for more focus on intersectionality and diversity:

- AWAVA (Australian Women Against Violence Alliance) Advisory Group.
- Release of our conversation guides and also our 'What is tech abuse?' posters in another 12 Languages.
- Participation on the National Advisory Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence.
- Working with the Australian Federal Police on delivering training as part of the CyberPasifika program.
- Research projects including:

- **Technology-facilitated coercive control: Mapping women's diverse pathways to safety and justice** (Australian Institute of Criminology) with Dr Asher Flynn (Monash University) and Dr Anastasia Powell (RMIT University).

- ***Understanding Technology-Facilitated Domestic Violence in the Pacific and Building Support Services for Victim-Survivors*** with Dr Diarmaid Harkin, Dr Mary Iliadis and Prof Marilyn McMahon (Deakin University).
- ***Research with Respect Victoria, Preventing coercive control for migrant and refugee women*** (Marie Segrave, Monash University).

AWAVA's *Report on Young Women and Non-Binary People's Experiences of Gender-Based Violence across Australia* and AWAVA's *Young Women Survey* is a valuable publication with key findings including that young women experience high levels and diverse forms of violence; they have a fear of not being believed; and they experience barriers to support, a lack of primary prevention with an intersectional focus, and a lack of access to justice—with a particular emphasis on transformational justice that focused not only on repairing harm but also on structural change.

‘The report introduces new ways to understand both interpersonal and structural experiences of diverse forms of violence, relying on first-hand accounts from young people living in a range of circumstances across Australia. Importantly, the report captures what justice means to young victim-survivors—a question that is rarely asked’.

Wesnet Members Survey 2022

Applying an intersectionality lens over the latest Wesnet member survey questions and responses showed there was an overall lack of data about diverse groups. Consequently, Wesnet will add additional questions to help capture richer and more useful diversity data next time the survey

is undertaken. In the 2022 survey, the following represents some of key diversity findings.

Of Wesnet members that responded:

- **18.5%** identified as Indigenous organisations, and
- **7.4%** identified as migrant and refugee organisations.

One of the specific occupations mentioned that wasn't generic was:

- First Nations Access Officer.

When asked who they provided targeted services to:

- **50%** said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- **42.4%** said migrant and refugee women
- **30.8%** said LGBTIQ+ people
- **23.1%** said older women
- **26.9%** said younger women
- **30.8%** said women with disabilities
- **30.8%** said rural or regional women.

Others said they provided services to all women, but that their services were not targeted.

A massive majority of 95.8% said they assisted women on temporary visas but only 65.2% said they helped women with visa applications under the family violence provisions (30.4% did not). This could reflect the type of services, for example some services may refer clients to an immigrant women's service or a migration lawyer. Some may have no access to these specialist services. We will be adding an additional question to flesh this out a bit more.

We will also be adding additional questions reflecting intersectionality, specifically concerned with what future functions and services members would like from us and to ensure marginalised groups of women are a clear focus throughout future surveys.

Note: Wesnet's New South Wales representative was on parental leave this year; and for other reasons the Northern Territory report was also not available.

Our Work

Peak Body

SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS

Wesnet is Australia's peak body for specialist women's domestic and family violence services. We provide strong, connected leadership for services and their workers who are supporting women and children experiencing and escaping violence. Established in 1992, Wesnet is a grassroots organisation, run by women, for the women's services sector and the women and children they support.

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

Following last year's defunding of the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA), a focus for this year was on building Wesnet's capacity in policy development and in communications. We also looked to our members in the development and roll-out of a member survey aimed at finding out what members most wanted from Wesnet. On the basis of the survey, we will continue doing all the things that currently add value for our members, as well as looking to build membership consultation and engagement. Our work as Australia's leading non-government organisation working at the intersection of technology and gender-based violence will remain a key priority.

Policy and Legislative Reform

NATIONAL PLAN TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Across 2021-22 we continued to serve on the National Plan Advisory Group, working towards the finalisation of the second *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children*.

The invitation-only National Summit was held virtually on 6-7 September 2021 and was preceded by a range of roundtables on specific subjects. The Wesnet Board and CEO were both invited to attend and participate in the roundtables on: technology-facilitated abuse, the service system, issues for rural, regional and remote women and others, and also to participate in the forum itself.

A first draft of the second National Plan was released for public comment in January 2022, providing the opportunity for Wesnet to escalate advocacy efforts aimed at improved recognition and centering of women's specialist services in the plan along with ensuring that the drivers of violence against women were understood as being firmly grounded in gender inequality. We look forward to its release later in the calendar year.

We also participated in the evaluation of the previous National Plan, through roundtables and other consultation processes hosted by KPMG.

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES TO ADDRESS COERCIVE CONTROL

Wesnet also continued its participation on the Advisory Group convened by the Australian and state and territory Attorneys-General on the development of national principles on coercive control. In an environment of increasing legislative momentum towards the criminalisation of coercive control in jurisdictions, a key pillar in our advocacy on the principles was to ensure that women most likely to be impacted by criminalisation—including First Nations women and migrant and refugee women—were central to consultation regarding the principles. We were also very keen to ensure that it was made clear that any approaches to addressing coercive control—be them legislative or non-legislative—needed to be underpinned by training and education aimed at effecting genuine and sustained cultural change, particularly in the justice and policing systems.

OTHER SUBMISSIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

In other work, Wesnet made a submission to the review of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, and to the inquiry into the Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill 2022. Following our submission to the parliamentary inquiry into social media and online safety, we were asked to appear to give evidence as well as provide supplementary information. We also made a pre-Budget submission (PBS) where we urged investment to dramatically expand the capacity of women's specialist services.

THINK TANKS, ROUNDTABLES AND SAFETY FORA

Wesnet also contributed to roundtables and advisory groups across 2021-22, including the Telstra Domestic and Family Violence Forum, Uber Women's Safety Forum, Meta's Global Women's Safety Forum, CommBank's Financial

Abuse Community of Practice, and the Economic Abuse Reference Group. We also provided advice to the Victorian Law Reform Commission's cyberstalking reference group, Monash University Technology-facilitated Violence Advisory Group, the Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council study on image-based sexual abuse offences, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and many many more.

Research and Evidence

Wesnet continued to participate in a number of research projects aimed at building the evidence-base, and at helping our member services provide best practice support to women and children escaping violence. Please see this year's special feature on building the evidence-base for more detail.

Programs and Services

SAFETY NET AUSTRALIA

Wesnet is Australia's NGO expert 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, invade privacy with the goals of coercion and harm manifesting as physical, emotional sexual or financial abuse, while at the same time ensuring that women are able to remain on technology.

SAFE CONNECTIONS / SAFER TECHNOLOGY FOR WOMEN

With funding support from the Australian Government, our Telstra-partnered Safe Connections program distributed 5,074 new smartphones with \$30 prepaid credit to women via practitioners trained to assist them to set up

and use their new device safely. As at 30 June 2022 that brought the number of phones given to women to 33,374 since 2014. These have been distributed through our network of over 230 specialist and other frontline services across Australia.

Across 2021-22, our safety net team responded to over 4,000 calls and 449 emails, mostly from frontline workers and their clients requesting assistance. The client caseload our technology safety specialists managed was predominantly high-risk, technically complex technology abuse cases, as new technologies emerged as tools of abuse during Covid-19 restrictions.

A big thank you to all our Safe Connections agencies across the country and the dedicated team members in the Telstra Safe Team for their time and commitment to providing safe phones to women who are in need of a new device. It is the risk and safety planning of the workers in these agencies that makes these phones “safe”.

Uber Rides

Our Uber-partnered Wesnet Rides program distributed 1,014 Uber rides to victim-survivors to help them travel to essential appointments including domestic and family violence support, medical, police, and legal services in 2021-22. That's 4,277 rides since 2019. The program enables women to travel when they otherwise would have difficulty. We are very grateful to Uber for their ongoing financial support of the Wesnet rideshare program.

Tiny Check

We continued our partnership with cybersecurity company Kaspersky to explore the possibility of building and distributing stalkerware-detection devices to frontline domestic and family violence services. The TinyCheck device will allow services

to assist their clients to scan their smartphones for signs their perpetrator is monitoring their activity and location via their phone. Due to a supply chain issue for parts around the world we have had to drop the build component of this project. We have received five pre-assembled TinyCheck devices from Kaspersky and these will be used in the pilot project with five frontline agencies.

Webinars and Professional Development for the Sector and others

Our technology safety specialists delivered 48 webinars on technology safety during the year, including 25 for our Safe Connections agencies, and a further 23 on a wide range of topics including the latest on stalkerware, working with children and young people and technology abuse, smart home technology, smartphones and safety, and supporting survivors from a distance. Additional training modules included safety training for Uber and combatting technology abuse in the Pacific for the CyberSafety Pasifika/Australian Federal Police (CSP/AFP) project, and some customised training for queer refugees with the Forcibly Displaced Persons Network and the LGBTIQ DFV Interagency in New South Wales. In total we trained 1,896 practitioners and participants in 2021-22. That's 13,809 participants at 467 training events since 2015.

Technology Safety Resources

The Safety Net Australia team also develops and publishes technology safety resources for women, practitioners and their clients on techsafety.org.au. Resources include the 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.org.au website was visited by 133,403 unique visitors over the 12 months to June and had 248,175 page views. Eight handouts were updated in this period in addition to the legal guides for each jurisdiction.

Women's 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 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. The content was updated again in 2022 by Wesnet.

App Safety Centre

The App Safety Centre provides advice to survivors about popular apps that are marketed to women, as well as advice to developers and others who are considering building an app for women. The safety centre also includes our research in relation to apps, including the findings of our App Safety Centre research project, funded by the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), reviewing apps marketed towards women's safety, testing for functionality and limitations. This year Wesnet met with Dr Jenna Condie and the research team from Western Sydney University (WSU) to discuss the progress of the App Safety Centre project journal paper.

Working with Technology Companies and Other Agencies

GLOBAL COALITION AGAINST STALKERWARE (CAS)

Wesnet continued to be an active member of the global Coalition Against Stalkerware which has been established to address the growing threat of non-consensual tracking of victim-survivors via digital devices. This year we continued to regularly attend Asia-Pacific regional and global online CAS meetings. Wesnet has also been involved in frequent and regular communication with other global CAS partners discussing issues involving stalkerware and other monitoring and tracking technologies.

AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE AND THE CYBERPASIFIKA PROGRAM

One of our major projects this year has been with the Australian Federal Police as part of the CyberPasifika Program. Together with the AFP Team in Canberra, Wesnet has developed and customised training units designed to bring awareness and skills to police officers across the Blue Pacific region in relation to cyber abuse as a form of domestic violence. Several webinars and training resources have been developed as part of the project.

OTHER PARTNERS

We continue to work with a wide range of technology and other corporations again during the year. In particular, we have strong and ongoing relationships with major technology companies such as Telstra, Meta, Match Group, Uber, Kaspersky, and Apple. Our partnerships with these agencies are now long-standing

and multi-faceted and we have felt that all staff we have worked with in these companies have been consistently engaged with us and other non-government organisations to end violence and abuse on their platforms and within their workplaces. We were very pleased to provide advice to Apple on their SafetyCheck project and the new Apple AirTag, and to the team from Future Friendly on mitigating abuse perpetrated through Commonwealth Bank Australia banking transactions. We also provided confidential advice and support to many agencies working through issues with survivors in relation to technology. We worked with several government departments during the year including the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, the Attorney-General's Department, the Office for Women and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, along with the WA Department of Transport, the WA Victims of Crime Commission, and Transport NSW.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE ALLIANCE (AWAVA)

Despite the withdrawal of government funding to the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)—and the consequent loss of dedicated AWAVA staff—Wesnet continued to provide in-kind support to AWAVA, recognising the value it delivers to Wesnet member services and to ending gender-based violence more generally. Wesnet's most significant contribution is the fortnightly collation and publication of the AWAVA Round Up—a free publication, with a wide distribution, providing links to the latest news, research and events in the women's sector, with a particular focus on gender-based violence. Wesnet also provides secretariat support to the bimonthly AWAVA meetings.

AWAVA continues its advocacy work—albeit in a more modest fashion than previously. The highest profile activity this year was the launch of the *AWAVA's Report on Young Women and Non-Binary People's Experiences of Gender-*

Based Violence across Australia. Wesnet, working with Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA), did the communications and social media plan and the finalisation and design of the report, contributing significantly to the success of the project and the report launch. In other work, AWAVA co-signed Wesnet's submission to the review of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth), made a media statement on the National Student Survey, and developed an election report card ahead of the May federal election.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

We also continued to work internationally with women's organisations and others. We progressed our strong partnership with the Safety Net team based in the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) in the United States and were also delighted to see the strengthening of the Safety Net Canada program.

We remain strong and foundational members of the Global Network of Women's Shelters and were proud to be a part of the official launch to the global helplines project Lila.help during the year. The Lila.help website is a directory of vetted helplines that women all over the world can reach out to safely. It helps provide women with a safe number to call with a trusted agency at the other end of the line.

Note: Please see a list of our partners and organisations we worked with during 2021-22 in [page 35](#).

Our Staff

While the core of Wesnet's staff remained very stable over the course of the year, we lost a huge complement of skills and experience due to last year's defunding of the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA). AWAVA staff wrapped up AWAVA activities and sadly moved on over July and August. To help fill the gap left in AWAVA's wake, Wesnet recruited a new policy officer and a new fundraising and communications coordinator.

Karen Bentley

Chief Executive Officer

Wesnet Team

Bonnie P
Diana H
Jennifer Bushell (from October 2021)
June W
Joanna C (from October 2021)
Kim E (from Oct 2021 to June 2022)
Lauren R (til July 2021)
Lina Orozco (from October 2021)
Natalie M
Rebecca O (til July 2021)
Sarah B
Sarah Isted (til July 2021)
Susan S (til August 2021)
Willa W

AWAVA Team

Kit Muirhead (til August 2021)
Sumithri Venkentasubramanian (July 2021 to Aug 2021)
Vanamali Hermans (til July 2021)
Vicki Lachlan (til July 2021)



Statistics & Facts

FY 2021-22

1,896

frontline workers
trained in tech safety
during 2021-22

13,809

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

4,003

calls received to our
1800Wesnet number

97.6%

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

5,074

Safe Connections
smartphones given to
survivors during 2021-22

335

prepaid credit top-ups
were provided to survivors

To the end of June,

33,374

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

2,733

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

48 webinars
delivered
in total

1,014

free Uber rides taken
by women in the last
12 months

We responded to

449

emails from women
experiencing tech
abuse or their workers

133,403

user visits to our
Tech Safety Website

248,175
page views

7,653

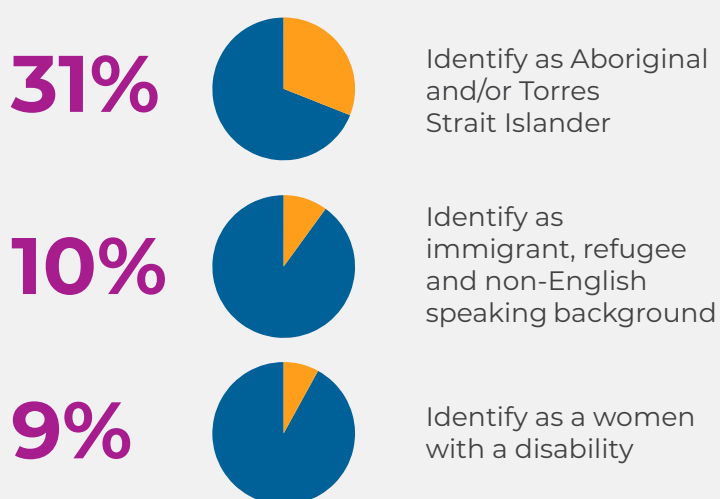
combined followers
on social media

Safe Connections Social Impact

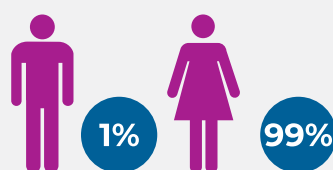
UP TO 30 JUNE 2022

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 33,374 women since the program began. 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-SURVIVORS RECIPIENTS



GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS



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

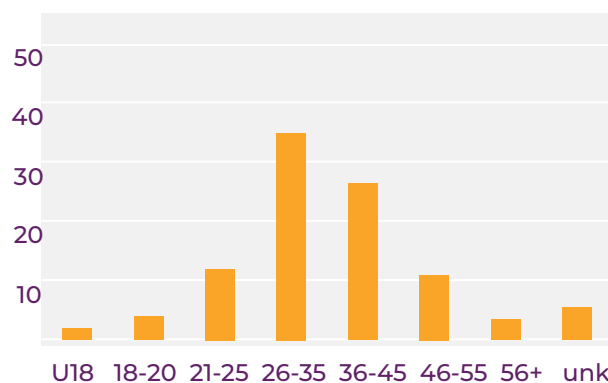
FRONTLINE AGENCIES



231

agencies providing phones to women

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN (%)



33,374

PHONES GIVEN TO WOMEN TO JUNE 2022

13,761

Workers trained

2,730

Workers with access
to online resources

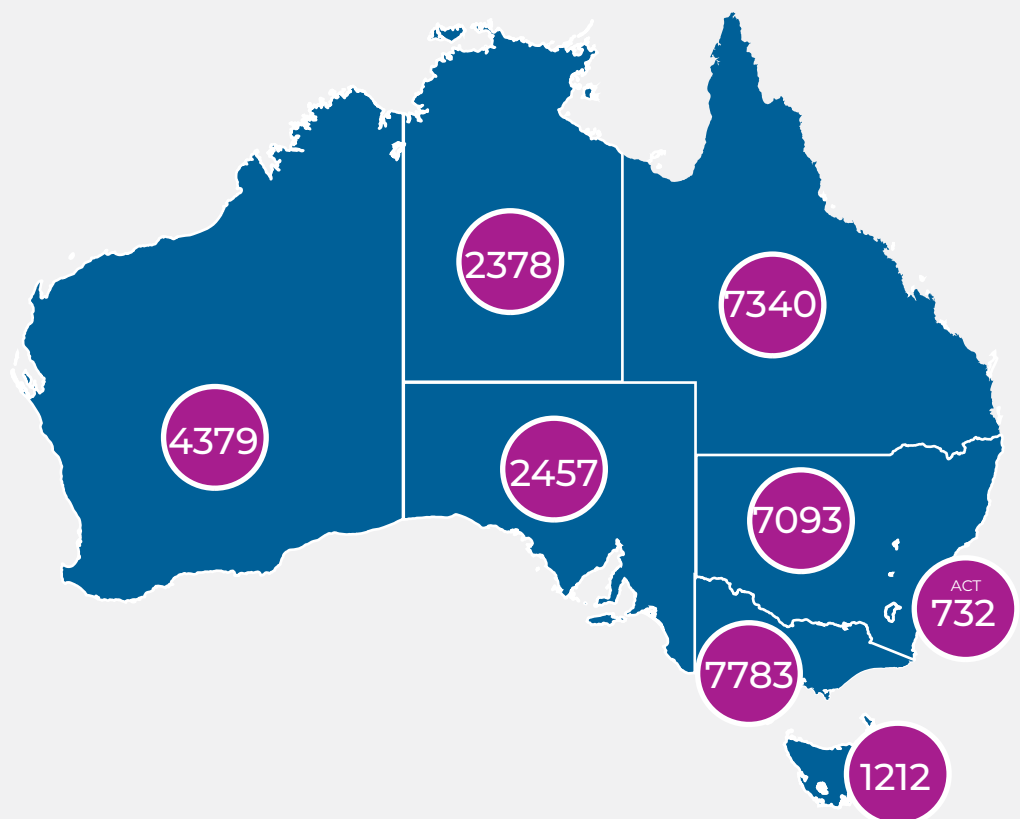
1

External evaluation
with great results

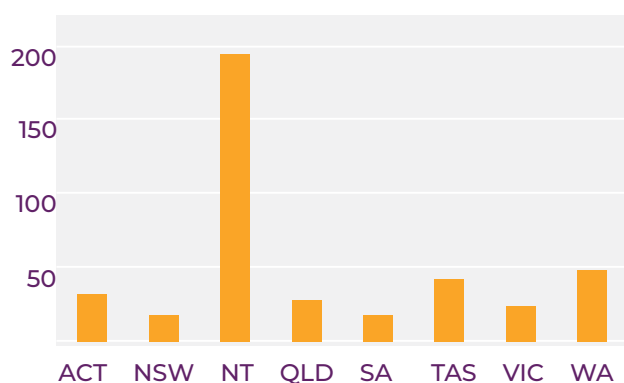
97.6%

of our training
attendees feel
their clients are
significantly safer

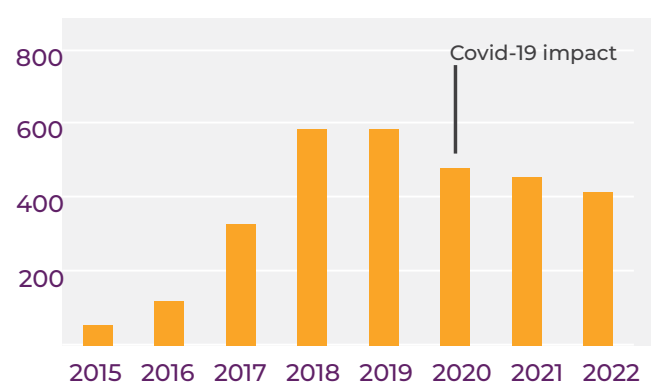
PHONES GIVEN BY STATE AND TERRITORY



PHONES PROVIDED PER 10,000 FEMALE POPULATION



AVERAGE NUMBER OF PHONES GIVEN PER MONTH



Member Survey

In May this year we carried out a member survey aimed at helping us understand our members better, as well as making sure that we focus on the things that matter most to them.

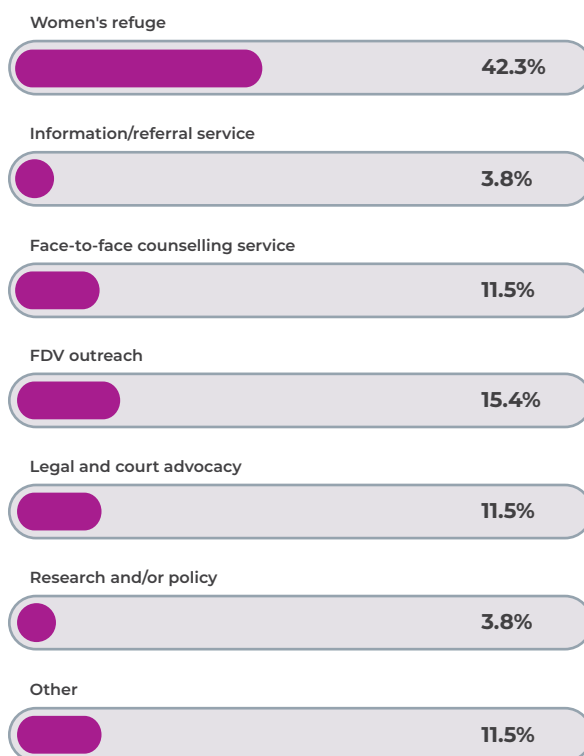
A snapshot of some of the key information gained is provided below. We also sought data on a range of other issues including funding, information holdings, standards and infrastructure which will be used to inform our services.

Who are Wesnet members?

Wesnet members cover a broad spectrum of organisations within the specialist family and domestic violence services sector. In our survey, organisations were asked to nominate their 'main' service. Women's refuge was the most common response (42 per cent), followed by family and domestic violence outreach services (15 per cent), legal and court advocacy services (12 per cent), and face-to-face counselling services (11 per cent). Other services represented as a 'main' service included research and policy, information and referral services, housing support, after-hours emergency response, and crisis response lines. [See Graph 1].

Wesnet members provide diverse services. In addition to their main service, organisations were asked what other services they provided. Information and referral services were the most common secondary service at 82 per cent, followed by general advocacy (63 per cent), outreach services (52 per cent),

Graph 1:
Please indicate your main service.



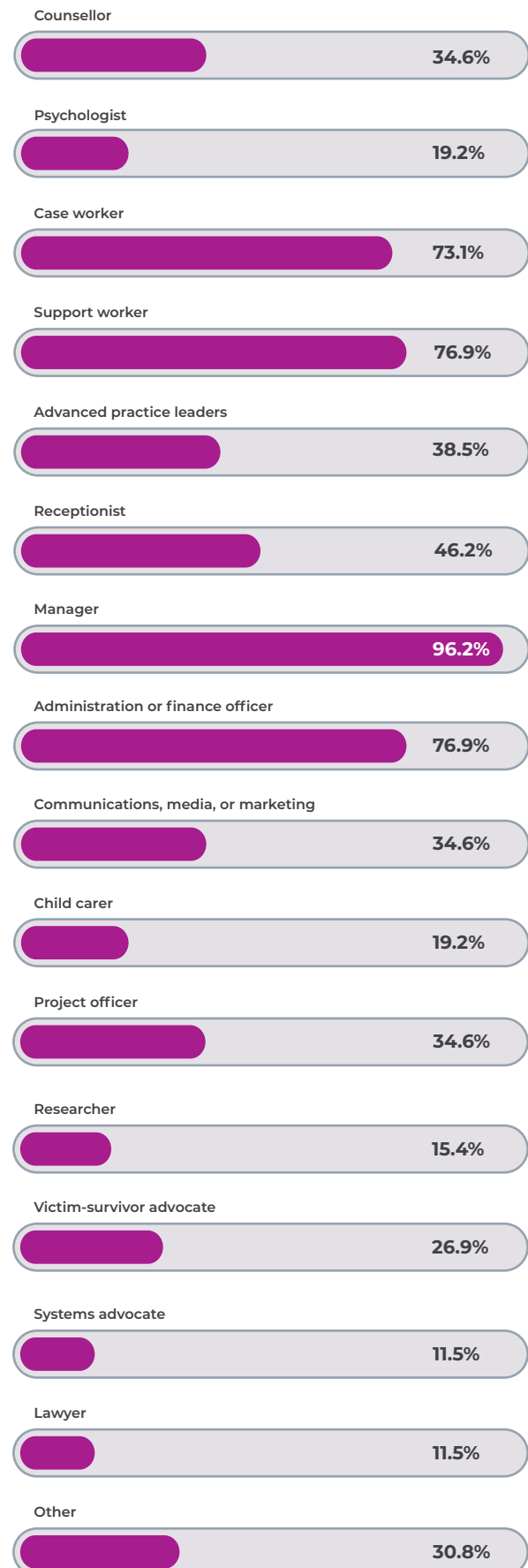
women's refuges (52 per cent), and legal and court advocacy services (48 per cent). Around one third of members undertake activities associated with primary prevention, face-to-face counselling, online or telephone counselling, and youth or children's services. Smaller numbers of members provide services relating to Indigenous, migrant or homeless women and children, other accommodation (shelters, safehouses and half-way houses), sexual assault services, men's behaviour change or perpetrator programs, group work, and research and/or policy.

Wesnet members vary significantly in size. Our smallest respondent agency had only two permanent staff, compared to our largest who employed 360 permanent staff. Twenty per cent of our members employed no casual staff, whereas one member employed fifty.

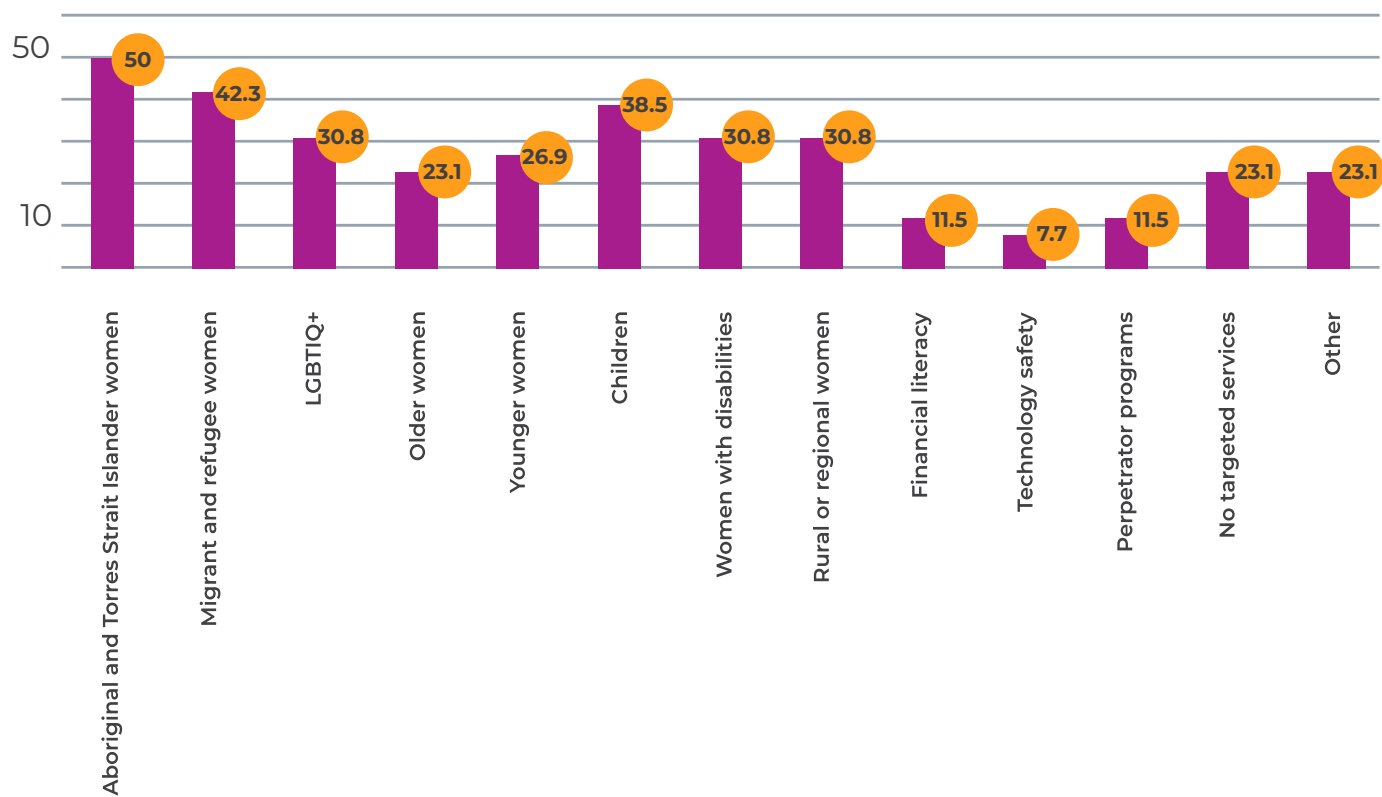
Wesnet members employ a range of occupations. Reflecting the varied services provided by Wesnet members, the reported types of occupations employed by members were similarly varied. Manager, administration or finance officer, support worker and case worker were the most prevalent, followed by receptionist, project officer, counsellor, psychologist, communications officer, advanced practice leader and systems advocate. Other occupations identified included child carer, researcher, lawyer, systems advocate, art therapist, housekeeper and tenancy support worker. [See Graph 2].

Most Wesnet members provide targeted services. Based on a range of factors, including location and unmet need, members provide services tailored to meet the particular needs of their clients. One half of respondents had services targeted to First Nations women and children, followed by services for migrants and refugees (42 per cent), and children (39 per cent). Over a quarter of Wesnet members offered specially designed services to LGBTQIA+ women, older and younger women, women with disabilities, and/or regional and rural women. Other specialised programs or services offered included perpetrator programs, technology safety, and financial literacy programs. [See Graph 3].

Graph 2:
What occupations do you employ?



Graph 3:
Do you provide targeted services?



What most concerns Wesnet members?

THE THREE BIGGEST FUNDING CONCERNS FOR WESNET MEMBERS WERE:

- Insufficient base funding
- Uncertainty of funding, and
- Insufficient indexation of funding.

THE THREE BIGGEST WORKFORCE CONCERNS FOR WESNET MEMBERS WERE:

- Attracting staff with the right skills
- Managing workloads, and
- Retaining staff.

Not one Wesnet member identified staff underperformance as a concern.

What do Wesnet members think about Wesnet?

WESNET'S MOST HIGHLY USED AND RATED ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES WERE:

- Wesnet/Telstra Safe Connections
- \$40 Telstra pre-paid top-up for victim-survivors
- Technology safety tools and resources
- Technology safety training and professional development
- Free webinars
- Newsletters, and
- Surveys and research projects.

THE PEAK BODY FUNCTIONS THAT WESNET MEMBERS WANTED US TO FOCUS ON MOST WERE:

- Promoting best practice and protocols
- Representing women's specialist services at the national level
- Technology safety training and sector capacity building
- Policy advocacy
- Research and policy development
- Workforce development
- Training and education
- Developing resources for frontline workers and victim-survivors
- National conferences.

WESNET WAS CONSIDERED MOST EFFECTIVE AT:

- Advocacy for women's specialist services
- Advocacy for victim-survivors
- National representation
- Training and development
- Evidence-based policy development, and
- Dissemination of information.

POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT INCLUDED:

- Member consultation and engagement
- Public profile
- Advice and assistance on funding issues
- Advice and assistance on workforce issues, and
- Networking opportunities within the sector.

Building the Evidence-Base

A key underpinning of good practice is ensuring that it is designed and built based on the best available evidence. Part of Wesnet's role as a national peak body is helping to build the evidence-base. As the backbone of improved practice, high quality evidence helps us, and helps our members, to succeed in supporting women and children escaping violence.

Because of our reputation, particularly in the field of technology abuse, Wesnet is regularly approached to partner in a range of research projects. Consistent with our commitment to quality, and restricted by our modest size, we carefully choose which projects we become involved in, based on potential usefulness of the subject to our members along with the standing of the research partners.

This year our research work included a focus on technology, looking particularly at CCTV, along with technology-facilitated coercive control and technology-facilitated sexual harassment.

In an Australian Institute of Criminology funded project *Can CCTV provide safety and security for victim-survivors of domestic and family*, we work alongside **Deakin University's Dr Diarmaid Harkin, Dr Mary Iliadis and Professor Marilyn McMahon**. This project represents a world-first, in-depth scholarly exploration of the impacts, risks and benefits of the use of

CCTV systems with victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. It is intended to drive development of national standards around the use of CCTV and provide clear guidance to Wesnet members and the sector generally on improving the safety and security of victim-survivors. This research will provide a roadmap for legal, policy and practice reform for the use of CCTV in Australia and elsewhere.

We partnered with **Monash University** on two important projects on technology abuse. Working with **Associate Professors Asher Flynn and Anastasia Powell**, along with researcher Lisa Wheildon, we are part of *Technology-facilitated coercive control: Mapping women's diverse pathways to safety and justice*, funded by the Australian Institute of Criminology. This project is looking at what help is available to women in response to technology-facilitated coercive control, with the core goal of identifying key gaps in achieving justice and safety.

In a different project with **Monash University**, this time funded by ANROWS, and working again with **Associate Professor Asher Flynn**, we are looking at *Technology-facilitated sexual harassment*. This project responds to the pressing policy and research gaps on technology-facilitated sexual harassment within and beyond the workplace, with a specific focus on young people and women, who we know to be disproportionately impacted by this form of abuse.

Wesnet takes its responsibilities in the region seriously. Gender equality and women's safety depend upon all women being equal and safe, not just those living within Australia.

To these ends, we again partnered with **Deakin University** on *Understanding technology-facilitated domestic violence in the Pacific and building support services for victim-survivors*. This project, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs as part of the Cyber and Critical Tech Cooperation Program (CCTCP), is building understanding of the prevalence, nature, and impacts of technology-facilitated domestic violence in Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu. The project will deploy a survey instrument, developed by **Dr Delanie Woodlock and Wesnet**, in these countries, and the results will inform direct engagement with domestic violence support workers, local law enforcement, and policy makers to provide training and knowledge-sharing around technology abuse and domestic violence. This should improve long-term support services for victim-survivors by addressing front-line responses, national policy frameworks, law enforcement strategy, and engagement with tech companies.

In another partnership opportunity, Wesnet worked with **Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)** and the **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA)**, to finalise and launch AWAVA's [Report on Young Women and Non-Binary People's Experiences of Gender-Based Violence across Australia](#). This ground breaking report explores a range of issues associated with gender-based violence and its impact on young women and non-binary people.

Wesnet looks forward to continuing to share the results of our research work with our members, and with the Australian public, and in progressing our contributions to world-class research aimed at improving responses to women and children experiencing and escaping from domestic and family violence.



Testimonials

ABOUT SAFE CONNECTIONS

"We provide these vital safe phones to the women we are assisting in our after hours family violence crisis response service all the time. They are so grateful to be provided with these as they are often fleeing their homes with only their clothes on their backs and their abusive partners are frequently tracking the devices they already own."

—Cheryl, Beryl Women Inc.

ABOUT KEYNOTE BY OUR CEO

"Please accept our deepest gratitude for the outstanding keynote speech you presented for the FY2021 NWECC Global Seminar. Your insightful and enlightened speech was no doubt invaluable for the participants, and they have learned a lot from the Women's Services Network. "

—Fusako Utsumi, President,
National Women's Education
Center, Japan

ABOUT AWAVA ROUND-UP

*"This is a wonderful document
—filled with so much excellent
material—I have passed it on."*

—Coordinator of International Relations,
Australian Graduate Women

ABOUT OUR TECH SAFETY BLOG

*"So important. Really looking
forward to reading and learning.
Thanks Wesnet."*

—Project Director, WWDA

Thank you!

FOR SUPPORTING US THIS YEAR

Our Donors

Major Donors

- Telstra donated phones and prepaid credit
- Uber donated free rides
- Kaspersky donated expert advice and technology in relation to the Tiny Check project.

Individual Donors

List of all financial donors that donated between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 in alphabetical order.

- Paul Bailey
- Nigel Burnet
- John Caley
- Joanne Donnelly
- David Findlay
- Bridget Harris
- HealthScope Staff
- Miguel Jacq
- National Rural Women's Coalition / Keli McDonald
- Sam Mitsios
- Tanika Purenti
- Kerrie-Anne Turner
- Jacalyn Twentymen
- Priyanka Sunder
- Victorian Magistrates Court (directed perpetrator donation)

Our Partners and Supporters

Key agencies and partners in 2021-22

- Department of Social Services
- Telstra
- Uber
- Match Group
- Kaspersky
- Australian Federal Police

Organisations we have worked with during 2021-22

- Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)
- ACON
- Apple
- Attorney General's Department
- Champions of Change
- Coalition Against Stalkerware
- Commonwealth Bank
- Comms Alliance
- Deakin University
- DV Alert
- Faculty of Law, UTS
- Forcibly Displaced Persons Network
- Future Women
- Harmony Alliance
- Interpol
- LGBTIQ DFV Interagency in New South Wales
- Medibank Health Solutions (1800Respect)
- Meta
- Microsoft
- Monash University
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance
- National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV - US)
- National Rural Women's Alliance
- Office for Women
- Our Watch
- Pacific Island Law Officer Network
- Queensland University of Technology
- Telco Together Foundation
- Telstra Health (1800Respect)
- Transport NSW
- Victorian Law Reform Council
- Victorian Sentencing Advisory Council
- WA Department of Transport
- WA Victims of Crime Commissioner
- Western Sydney University
- Westpac
- Women Canada
- Women's Centre for Safety and Wellbeing
- Women With Disabilities Australia

Treasurer's Report

The last financial year has seen a stable financial outlook for Wesnet, with revenue of \$1,193,356 compared to \$1,617,242 the previous financial year. This drop generally reflects the loss of funding for our contract manager role for the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance as the National Women's Alliance for Women's Safety which ceased on 20 August 2022. Most of our funding this year came from Commonwealth Government grants for our Safer Technology for Women Program. We continued to diversify our revenue streams with more sponsorship and other income sources.

Membership revenue, donations and other fees and charges remained steady. Wesnet ended the year with a small overall surplus of \$20,635.

Our assets at 30 June 2022 were \$1,493,842, with liabilities of \$578,277. Most of these liabilities relate to payments in advance for work to be carried out in next financial year and associated end of financial year liabilities. Our equity at 30 June 2022 was \$915,565. The 2021-22 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 Wendy Thomas for their work during the year and taking the finances through to audit.



Margaret Augerinos,
Treasurer



Financial Summary

Below is a summary of our audited financial statements. A full copy of the 2021-22 Financial Statements is available on request or from the ACNC website. The audit of our financial records was completed in November 2022 by RSD Audit Pty Ltd.

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS		
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Net cash provided by operating activities	112,611	243,647
Net increase in cash held	112,611	243,647
Cash on hand at the end of financial year	1,337,478	1,224,867
INCOME STATEMENT		
Revenue	1,192,729	1,617,242
Expenses	1,172,721	1,301,974
Net current year surplus	20,635	315,268
BALANCE SHEET		
ASSETS		
Current Assets	1,493,842	1,286,381
Non-Current Assets	0	0
Total Assets	1,493,842	1,286,381
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities	540,675	365,011
Non-current Liabilities	37,602	26,440
Total Liabilities	578,277	391,451
Net Assets	915,565	894,930
Total Equity	915,565	894,930



Wesnet (Women's Services Network)
GPO Box 1579 Canberra City, ACT, 2601, Australia
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