

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
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Dear Secretary

Issues related to menopause and perimenopause

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry.

Wesnet is Australia's national peak body for specialist women's domestic and family violence services, with almost 350 eligible members across Australia. Wesnet represents a range of organisations and individuals including women's refuges, shelters, safe houses, and information/referral services.

Wesnet would like to provide brief comment relevant to the term of reference:

d. the impact of menopause and perimenopause on caregiving responsibilities, family dynamics, and relationships.

While violence can unfortunately be experienced at any time in life, regardless of age or background, data and studies have provided interesting findings that may indicate some relationships between menopause and domestic and family violence.

On the basis of Australian homicide statistics, for example, the most common age group of family and domestic violence (FDV) related homicide victims is between 35 and 54 years ([Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023](#)), whereas the likelihood of being a victim of non-fatal FDV decreases with age ([Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, undated](#)) with younger women (18-34) more likely than other age groups to experience physical or sexual violence. This anomaly may be for a number of reasons, including the escalation of violence over time, but appears to indicate a particular propensity for men to kill former and current partners in women's later reproductive and immediate post-reproductive years.

Other studies have linked early menopause and/or worse menopause symptoms with a history of abuse. [Faleschini et al \(2022\)](#), for example, found that a history of physical abuse was associated with worse menopausal symptoms. A [New Zealand study \(2022\)](#) revealed a link between early menopause and a history of sexual abuse, and a [Californian study \(2019\)](#) found that a lifetime history of intimate partner violence or sexual assault and current

clinically significant symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder are common and are associated with menopause symptoms.

Given the Australian Government's recently released *National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality*, along with the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-32*, and the governments' much welcomed commitment to addressing FDV, Wesnet recommends that more research be undertaken to further establish the extent of links between menopause and FDV. This would help to ensure that prevention, early intervention, response and recovery efforts are tailored to most effectively drive change and to improve and protect the lives of women of all ages and life circumstances.

Yours faithfully

Signed



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WESNET acknowledges and pays respects to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of all the lands on which we live and work.