



**STEPS YOU CAN TAKE  
TO HELP END  
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**



## STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP

**Violence against women is endemic, and it affects women of every class, age, sexuality, race, ability/disability, religion or other background.**

**The main driver of violence against women is gender inequality, which operates on many levels from social and cultural norms to economic and structural injustices.**

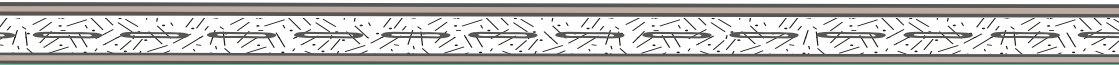
In Australia, we live in a society where one in three women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15 and one in five women has experienced sexual violence<sup>1</sup>. This makes the commitment to end violence against women a responsibility for everyone.

Whether you are female or male, young or senior, a parent or a person who has friends with kids, simply a colleague or a boss, if you work professionally in the area of ending violence against women or are just a concerned individual ready to act, we all can take steps that will help to eliminate violence against women.

**The aim of this fact sheet is to equip you with some practical steps and knowledge so your actions to eliminate violence against women will make a positive difference.**

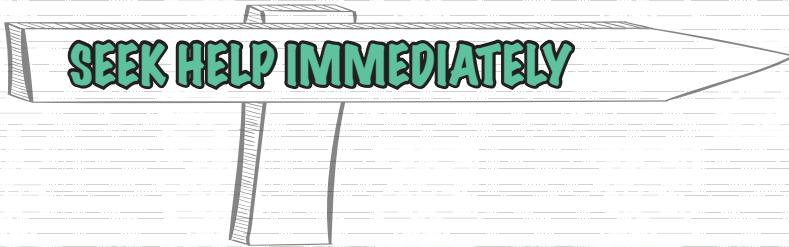
**Start taking steps to end violence against women today.**

<sup>1</sup> Cox, P. (2015) Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012, Horizons Research Report, Issue 1, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), Sydney; and Woodlock, D., Healey, L., Howe, K., McGuire, M., Geddes, V. and Granek, S. (2014) Voices against violence paper one: Summary report and recommendations, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Office of the Public Advocate and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.



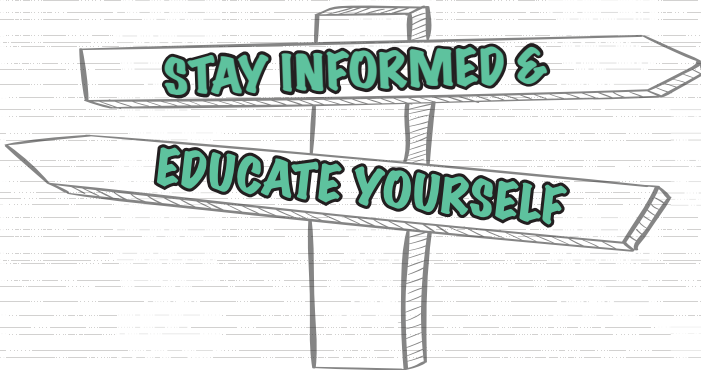


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If you are feeling in danger, you should ring the Police on **000 immediately**. If you are not in immediate danger but need support, call **1800 RESPECT** for counselling, referral and information (ph: 1800 737 732). **1800 RESPECT** also provides support to friends and family of a woman experiencing violence.

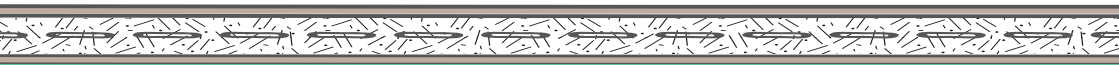
If you hear or see a violent or abusive situation happening, don't turn your back. If it is safe you could try to defuse the situation by intervening. But if you feel that may be dangerous, or if you think a person is being hurt or about to be hurt, you should ring the Police on **000 immediately**.



**Educate yourself about the causes, drivers and consequences of violence against women.** Learn more about domestic and family violence and sexual violence and help spread that knowledge.

It is important to understand violence against women in terms of power dynamics and social structures, rather than just as purely individual experiences.

Violence against women and children occurs within a within a patriarchal





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society where male dominance and privilege are normalised. Violence is used as a means of coercion and control over a woman or a partner and has nothing to do with one's personal traits.

Sexual violence is an abuse of power too. Men rape women not because of uncontrollable sexual desire but because they believe women are possessions, not equals, and that they have a right to women's bodies. Myths about uncontrollable sexual desire place responsibility on women and encourage more victim-blaming.

Violence is more common in families and relationships in which men control decision making, and less so in those relationships where women have a greater degree of independence.

But violence can occur even in the relationship of same-sex attracted people or people who do not identify as gender-binary. It is all about abuse and control. We should not let this be [Another Closet](#) for people to be confined in, so let's bust our myths about that.

Learn more:

- Read Our Watch [Practical How-to Guide for Preventing Violence against Women](#)
- Watch a VicHealth video on [Attitudes to gender equality and violence against women](#)
- Get information on sexual assault myths and facts, impacts of sexual assault, tactics used by perpetrators, and responding to children and adults who have experienced sexual assault from Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia [fact sheets on sexual violence](#)
- Take White Ribbon's [Free eLearning courses](#) on Understanding and preventing violence against women

In our technology-saturated world, women are subjected to violence through their phone and online too. This includes stalking, control, threats, bullying and image-based abuse both in the context of domestic and family violence and more generally. It is important to know how to use technology carefully to help find safety for yourself and other people who may be subjected to technology-facilitated abuse.

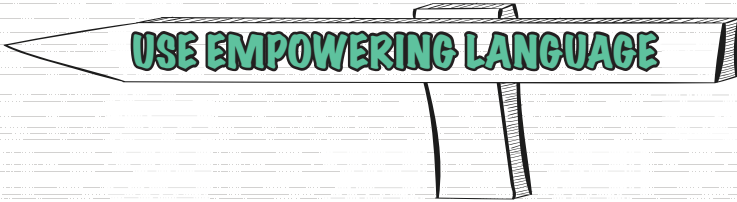
Learn more from the [toolkit](#) prepared by WESNET's Safety Net Australia project or on the website of the [e-Safety Commissioner](#).

<sup>2</sup>For more Myth and Facts about Violence against Women visit Our Watch <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Myths-about-violence>





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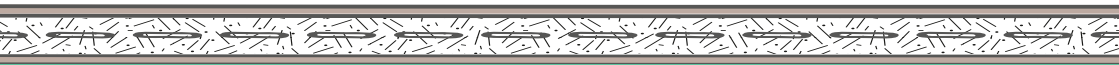
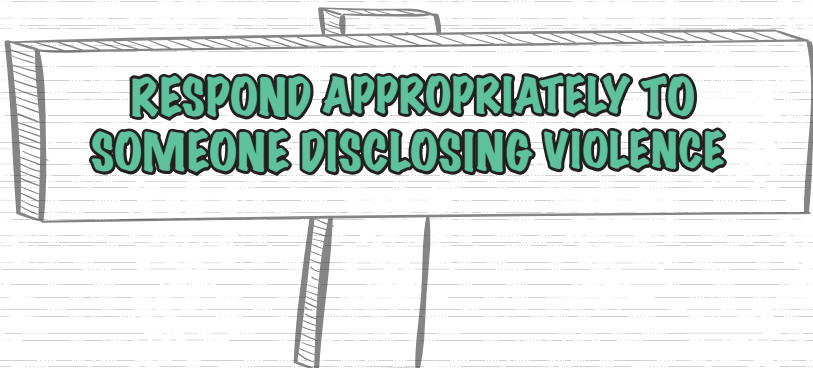
**Language matters.** We perceive the world around us through words but words can have different meanings and interpretations. Language frames not only how we understand the problem but also how effectively we will respond to it.

Whether you are speaking in a group about the problem of violence against women in the community, talking to a friend or with someone who's been affected by violence, language can do justice or cause harm.

If you are a supporter speaking in public or at a community event, avoid referring to women who had violence inflicted on them as 'victims' as that term may not reflect a woman's full identity, but instead define her in terms of something that is only part of her experience. A better choice would be using 'victim/survivor' terminology as it acknowledges the crime committed against a woman while at the same time recognising her agency and life beyond violence.

Women's Health West has produced a comprehensive resource about [Speaking publicly about preventing men's violence against women](#); Curly questions and language considerations.

Our Watch has produced [a comprehensive resource for journalists](#) writing about women who have survived violence.





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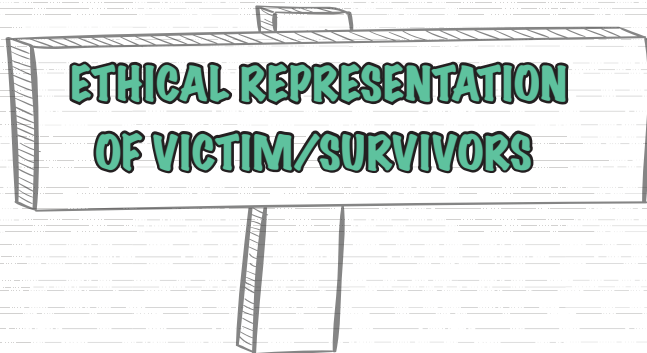
If you need to support someone who has disclosed to you the violence inflicted on them, or who has asked you for help, language matters immensely.

Whoever it may be, your friend, colleague or family member, **respond appropriately and make sure that she feels supported and encouraged to talk to you and seek help.** Listen and believe. Never dismiss family violence as a just ‘a domestic’ or suggest that sexual violence might have been a ‘misunderstanding’. Provide support. Sometimes practical assistance such as assisting with shopping or picking children up from school (with proper authorisation) can be of great help. Never judge or blame a woman about the violence, regardless of the circumstances or her background.

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria has developed a great resource for family and community members on [how your support can make a difference](#).

Continuously reflect on the language you are using, information that you are spreading and support you are offering. Encourage others to do the same. Reflection helps learning and enables improvement.

Get more tips on [learning through reflective practice](#) with this resource developed by Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.



No matter what you do, you should always **treat a woman who has experienced violence in a dignified, respectful and ethical way.** In practice this means accepting an experience without judgement and treating a woman as an individual and not through the prism of your stereotypes about her cultural, religious, economic or social background or affiliations.

This encompasses both the language you are using and the kinds of support you are offering. Be aware that if you make inappropriate comments about a woman’s social position, this may reinforce the power dynamics that contribute to the violence and result in victim-blaming.





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## Violence is never okay.

Challenge practices that condone violence against women and encourage others to speak up. Sexist jokes are never okay no matter the circumstances they are told in or the position of the teller. As a 'bystander', someone who observes an act of violence, discrimination or other unacceptable or offensive behaviour, you can play a powerful role in preventing and responding to violence against women. Speak out about or seek to engage others in responding to specific incidents of sexism, discrimination or violence against women.

If you are a manager, make sure that everyone in the office is treated fairly and has the chance to reach their potential. Don't let your perception of their gender distort your decisions. Check out [Equal Footing](#), a toolkit for workplaces to promote gender equality and respectful relationships, or [get your workplace accredited](#) by White Ribbon as one taking active steps to stop violence against women.

If you are a graphic designer or working in advertising, avoid using women's bodies to advertise unrelated products. Women's bodies of all shapes and colours are beautiful, but women are people first, not decorations.

If you are involved in sport as a player, coach or official, challenge others who use sexist sledging on the sports field, and work to [increase women's and girls' access to your sport](#). Sport is about playing according to the rules, and this should be one of them. If you are coach of boys, get a [Coaching Boys into Men toolkit](#), which is focused on building respect, integrity and non-violence.

Read more about other things you can do at [your workplace](#), as [a friend](#) or [a community member](#) in [this resource](#) prepared by the ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council, the Women's Centre for Health Matters, Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Women's Legal Centre (ACT and Region).

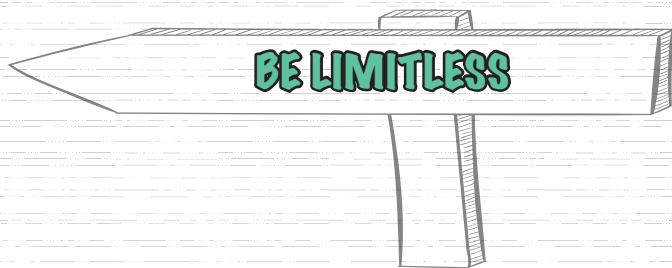
Get other useful resources on essential and supporting actions from the resource [Putting the Prevention of Violence against Women into Practice: How to Change the Story](#) by Our Watch (pages 81-93).





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If you don't know what to say in instances of sexual violence, <http://www.whattosay.org.au> can provide you with helpful tips. What To Say gives information about safe ways to intervene when you witness sexual violence, and also provides advice on how to support someone who tells you they've been subjected to sexual violence.



**Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.**

**If you are a parent**, bring your kids up with the idea that they are limitless in their potential. Their gender should **Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.**

**If you are a parent**, bring your kids up with the idea that they are limitless in their potential. Their gender should not determine their future. If you have friends with kids, buy them books that challenge rigid, imposed gender roles and stereotypes. Learn more about the issues by reading the [Power of Parents](#) snapshot report by Our Watch.

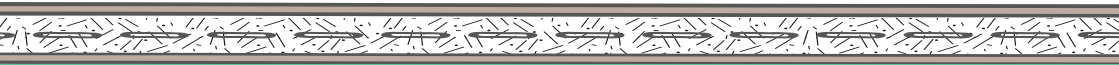
**As a relative or friend**, [re-think whether children's toys need to be divided into 'boys' toys' and 'girls' toys'](#). More flexible ideas of gender, instead of rigid stereotypes, will help to create better foundations for safety and respect.

Speak about equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys, women and women, men and men, whatever the consenting combinations are. Be the role model yourself.

Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships.

Think about how you treat other people.

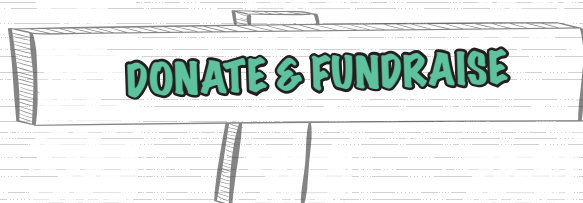
**Are you dealing with them through the prism of strict, stereotypical gender roles or do you let people express themselves to their full potential?**







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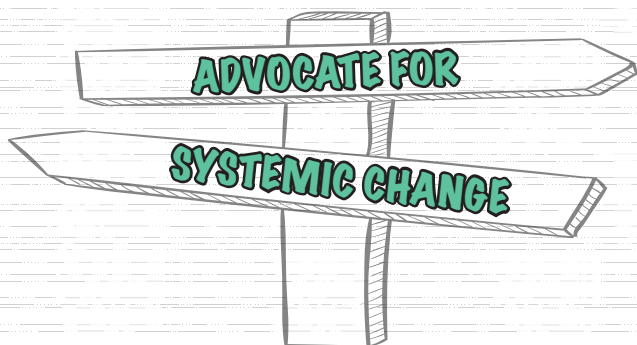


As an individual, **donate money to organisations working with victims/survivors** of family, domestic or sexual violence. Look at the list of AWAVA's Advisory Group members to find contact details for peak bodies in different States and Territories, as well as other organisations working in this area. Consider also supporting organisations working to advance gender equality, economic and political participation of women or providing free legal advice or health-related services and representation to women.

**If you are a business owner**, donate your money and/or your services or provide other in-kind support to organisations working to eliminate violence against women.

You can also attend public awareness events in your community or organise one. Get your friends and colleagues to do the same. Just make sure that if you are organising an event, you are speaking appropriately and proving the support that is needed. Check with your local organisations about what kind of support they really need.

[Putting the Prevention of Violence against Women into Practice: How to Change the Story](#) by OurWatch (pages 130-138) outlines key considerations and tips in developing communications and organising events.



To achieve systemic and long-lasting change, become a member of your local, state or national organisation working to end violence against women.





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[Become a Friend and Supporter of AWAVA](#) to receive regular updates about policy and service delivery relating to violence against women, as well as to hear about opportunities to support efforts to prevent gender-based violence.

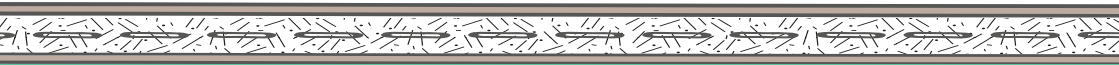
Learn more and [get involved with other organisations across Australia](#) that are striving to end violence against women. Sign their petitions, respond to their surveys, endorse their submissions.

You can write your own letter to your local members asking them to lobby for appropriate reforms and to increase funding for specialist women's services and community legal centres. Some tips to help get your voices heard by your local MP include: make it relevant to the local context; handwritten letters gain more attention; ask them to do something specific; and keep following up on their progress.

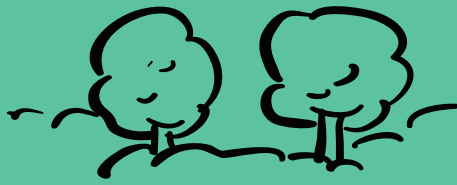
If you are thinking of setting up a new initiative, think strategically, check who else might already be doing what you plan to do, and consider teaming up with them. It's always a good idea to check with your local specialist women's services about your idea. Remember, all efforts count, but to bring real change to the lives of all women, **we must advocate for systemic change.**



For some people, ending violence against women starts from a personal survival story, or the story of a loved one. For others, it's more a matter of justice and equality. As you get more involved in helping others or yourself, do not forget to care for your own mental health and wellbeing. You might find it useful to look at some of the [resources collected by VAWNet on self-care and vicarious trauma](#).







## Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) is one of the six National Women's Alliances funded by the Australian Government to bring together women's organisations and individuals across Australia to share information, identify issues and contribute to solutions.

AWAVA's focus is on responding to and preventing violence against women and their children. AWAVA's role is to ensure that women's voices and particularly marginalised women's voices are heard by Government, and to amplify the work of its member organisations and Friends and Supporters.

AWAVA's members include organisations from every State and Territory in Australia, representing domestic and family violence services, sexual assault services, and women's legal services, as well as organisations representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, young women, women educators, women in the sex industry and other groups. AWAVA's lead agency is the Women's Services Network (WESNET).



[www.awava.org.au](http://www.awava.org.au)



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