

# fact sheet #1. WHAT IS IT?



## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REFERS TO:

...any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women.

### The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993)

Violence against women does not only include physical and sexual violence, it refers to a range of different violent and abusive behaviours as shown below.



This toolkit focuses on domestic and family violence and sexual assault, as these are the most common forms of violence against women in Australia.

## HOW COMMON IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

About 1 in 3 Australian women experience physical violence and almost 1 in 5 women experience sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

In 2005, over 350,000 women experienced physical violence (about the population of Canberra) and over 125,000 women experienced sexual violence (about the population of Toowoomba).<sup>2</sup>

Violence can happen to anyone, but some groups of women are at higher risk of experiencing violence, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, young women, women with disabilities, and immigrant and refugee women.

## WHY FOCUS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

Although both women and men can be perpetrators or victims of domestic and family violence and sexual assault, research shows that the majority of violence is perpetrated against women by men.<sup>3</sup>

This toolkit focuses on violence against women because of the scale and complexity of the problem and the unique strategies and approaches required to effectively reduce and prevent it. These strategies must start by acknowledging and addressing the fundamental link between violence against women and gender inequality. This relationship is discussed in more detail throughout the toolkit.

<sup>1 2 3</sup> Australia Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey, 2006



**1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)**

A free 24 hour national domestic and family violence and sexual assault counselling service for people who have experienced violence, and for workers supporting them.

# THE NATIONAL PLAN TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

In February 2011 a long-term strategy of all Australian governments to reduce violence against women, the National Plan, was released. Over 2,000 Australians were consulted and 350 written submissions reviewed in its development. The release of the National Plan was a huge step in Australia's efforts to reduce violence against women and their children. The National Plan is a must-read for anyone working to reduce violence against women. Details of how to obtain a free copy are included in your recommended reading list.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What was your first reaction when you read these facts about violence against women?
- 2 What are some of the attitudes that your community has towards violence against women? Are these different among certain groups?
- 3 Are there any statistics or information on rates of violence against women in your local community? If so, how do they compare with the statistics in this toolkit?
- 4 Why does violence against women require a different approach than others types of violence, such as violence against men?

## RECOMMENDED READING



**Title** The National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.  
**Author** Council of Australian Governments (COAG)  
**Link** [www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence)



**Title** National Council Panel Discussion DVD (1 hour 40 mins).  
**Author** QLD Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research, CQUniversity  
**Link** [www.noviolence.com.au/seminarvideos.html](http://www.noviolence.com.au/seminarvideos.html)



**Title** Background Paper to 'A Time For Action'.  
**Author** The National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children  
**Link** [www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence)



**Title** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Violence: Facts and Figures  
**Author** QLD Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research, CQUniversity  
**Link** [www.noviolence.com.au/factsheets.html](http://www.noviolence.com.au/factsheets.html)



**Title** The Duluth Model Power and Control Wheels  
**Author** Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs  
**Link** [www.theduluthmodel.org/training/wheels.html](http://www.theduluthmodel.org/training/wheels.html)



This is 1 in a series of 15 fact sheets to help communities stop violence against women before it happens. Download the full set at [www.nrwn.org.au](http://www.nrwn.org.au)