

# Older Women and the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children

In 2005, 26% of women aged 55 years and over had experienced violence from their current partner.

## WHAT IS THE NATIONAL PLAN TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN (THE NATIONAL PLAN)?

The *National Plan* is an agreement by all Australian governments to work together to reduce violence against women and their children.

The *National Plan's* vision is for Australian women and their children to live free from violence in safe communities.

## HOW WILL THE NATIONAL PLAN ASSIST OLDER WOMEN?

The diverse experience of women and the need to ensure that responses address their individual circumstances is recognised in all aspects of the *National Plan*.

Studies show that older women may be particularly vulnerable to violence from a family member, with some reports indicating a marked increase in the proportion of older women reporting physical abuse since 1996.<sup>1</sup> Older women are much more likely to experience violence and abuse than older males.<sup>2</sup>

Older women also report that the people perpetrating the violence include their children, grandchildren, and other relatives and carers.<sup>3</sup>

The *National Plan* recognises that many older women can face real barriers in reporting abuse and leaving abusive situations due to factors including:

- having too much invested in families or partners to leave;
- a perceived or actual lack of access to services;<sup>4</sup>
- being too old to re-enter the workforce;
- social alienation;
- some older people may suffer from diminished cognitive functioning and or a mental or physical disability;
- lack of awareness of what constitutes domestic violence or sexual assault.

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid*

<sup>2</sup> Morgan A. & Chadwick H. 2009. [Key issues in domestic violence](#). Research in Practice no. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Women's Health Victoria (WHV) 2009. [Women and violence](#). Women's Health Issue paper no 4.

<sup>4</sup> Bartels L. 2010 [Emerging issues in domestic/family violence research](#). Research in Practice. Report No 10.

## HOW IS THE *NATIONAL PLAN* DIFFERENT TO OTHER GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES?

For the first time all Australian governments will work together to reduce violence against women and their children. Governments have agreed to do the following:

- **Funding Community Action Grants** to support communities in reducing violence against women by working with community organisations and sporting codes to engage the community in a range of primary prevention activities.
- **Enhance older women's economic participation** and independence through superannuation reform and increasing pension rates.
- **Promote healthy and respectful relationships** in the younger generations, including relationships towards mothers and grandmothers.
- **Enhance access to services**, housing options and service delivery for older women who have experienced violence and abuse.
- **Improve the justice response** to those who have experienced violence.
- **Funding a new national telephone counselling service** for any Australian that has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault. 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) is a free and confidential 24 hour a day, 7 days a week professional counselling service that will give those in need access to immediate and ongoing assistance.
- The *National Plan* complements the **Charter of Rights and Responsibilities for Community Care**, which upholds the right of older Australians to be treated without exploitation, abuse, discrimination, harassment or neglect.

## HOW WILL THE *NATIONAL PLAN* MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE?

The *National Plan* aims to make a significant and lasting reduction in violence against older women. This will be achieved by drawing on research and experience, identifying and promoting what measures work well, improving how we work with perpetrators and enhancing the way services respond to victims.

## WOULD YOU LIKE A COPY OF THE *NATIONAL PLAN*?

The *National Plan* is available online at:

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/progserv/violence/nationalplan/Pages/default.aspx>

Or you can order hard copies by calling 1800 050 009

## IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE CALL:

- 1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732
- Local services in your state or territory
- Relationships Australia – 1300 364 277
- Mensline - 1300 789 978

**If you require urgent assistance contact the police on 000.**

