

# Safe at Home

## About Family Violence

Sep 2015

### Family Violence in Australia

Family Violence can take many forms and is not limited to relationships defined by specific sexual, cultural or economic characteristics. It typically involves a wide range of controlling or other behaviours, commonly of a physical, sexual and/or psychological nature, which involves fear, harm, intimidation, emotional abuse or economic deprivation.

Research has identified a substantial level of FV is experienced by both men and women in Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012 Personal Safety Survey revealed<sup>1</sup>:

- Between 2008-10 89 women were killed in Australia by their current or former partner;
- 1 in 6 Australian women (post 15 years of age) have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner;
- 1 in 4 Australian women (post 15 years of age) had experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner;
- 1 in 19 Australian men (post 15 years of age) have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner;
- 1 in 7 Australian men had experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner;
- For 62% of women who had experienced physical assault, the most recent incident was in their home;
- For those women who had experienced violence, 73% had experienced more than one incident of violence;

- 58% of women have never contacted the police in relation to violence experienced.

FV is defined as a form of child abuse and is a crime in Tasmania under the *Children Young Persons and their Families Act 1997*.

Based on the statistics reported earlier in this document 61% of children were in the care of the victim when FV occurred with 48% of incidents reporting the child/ren as having witnessed the violence.<sup>2</sup> FV can result in children living in an atmosphere of fear, tension and confusion. Children from homes where family violence occurs are more vulnerable to being subject to physical and emotional abuse and neglect.

The economic cost of FV on the Australian society is estimated at \$13.6 billion annually. This figure is anticipated to rise to \$15.6 billion by 2021-22 if action is not taken<sup>3</sup>. The implementation of the Australian Government's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children aims to achieve a reduction in FV by 2021. Further information is available online at [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au).

### Family Violence Behaviours

A range of behaviours can be involved in family violence and can occur over a number of years, both before and after separation, including:

<sup>1</sup> Australian National Research Organisation for Womens Safety (ANROWS). (2014). *Violence against women: key statistics*. Retrieved from [www.anrows.org.au](http://www.anrows.org.au)

<sup>2</sup> Australian National Research Organisation for Womens Safety (ANROWS). (2014). *Violence against women: key statistics*. Retrieved from [www.anrows.org.au](http://www.anrows.org.au)

<sup>3</sup> The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. (2009). *The cost of violence against women and their children*. Retrieved from [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au)

- **Physical abuse** - including direct assaults on the body, strangulation, use of weapons, driving dangerously, destruction of property, assault of children, locking the victim up, or out of the house, and sleep deprivation.
- **Sexual abuse** - any form of forced sex or sexual degradation, such as sexual activity without consent, causing pain during sex, assaulting genitals, forced sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease, making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly, criticising, or using sexually degrading insults.
- **Emotional abuse** - blaming the victim for all the problems in the relationship, constantly comparing the victim with others to damage self esteem and self worth, periods of sulking or withdrawing all interest and engagement (e.g. weeks of silence).
- **Verbal abuse** - continual 'put downs' and humiliations, either privately or publicly, following clear themes that focus on the victim's intelligence, sexuality, body image and ability as a parent and spouse.
- **Social abuse** - isolating the victims from others by methods such as ongoing rudeness to family and friends, moving to locations where the victim knows nobody, and forbidding or physically preventing the victim from going out and meeting people.
- **Economic abuse** - complete control of all money, no access to bank accounts, only providing an "allowance" that is not enough, using any wages earned by the victim for household expenses.
- **Spiritual abuse** - denying access to ceremonies, land or family, preventing victim from practising their religion, forcing them to do things against their beliefs, criticising their cultural background, or using religious teachings or cultural tradition as a reason for violence.

## Leaving Family Violence

Many adult victims of family violence are unsure about seeking help and endure years of violence and abuse. The reasons for this may include fear, emotional dependence, strong feelings of love, loyalty, or hope, as well as the social pressure to be in a relationship.

In contemplating separation from an abusive partner, there are many complex issues to deal with. There may be fears for the safety of children or the social and financial impacts on the family of a separation. Some may want to remain in the family home, and see no way out of the abusive situation if they are not the one to leave. Some may wish to escape the situation by leaving the home, but have concerns about the act of leaving, or about how they would cope in adjusting to some form of alternative accommodation and lifestyle.

Fear of the consequences of leaving, or of ending the relationship, can be a powerful factor, and, statistically, the most dangerous time for victims is during attempts to leave the relationship.

For any person living with abuse, the first step is to tell someone about it. (See also the information sheet *Family Violence – Adult Victims*).

The decision to access a counselling and support service is a positive step towards:

- Experiencing increased confidence and improved self-esteem;
- Having freedom to make decisions and life choices;
- Finding ways of living beyond fear;
- Overcoming problems caused by being isolated from family and friends;

Safe at Home

Phone: (03) 6165 4988

Email: [safeathome@justice.tas.gov.au](mailto:safeathome@justice.tas.gov.au)

Web: [www.safeathome.tas.gov.au](http://www.safeathome.tas.gov.au)



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- Feeling more comfortable participating in the community;
- Overcoming the emotional and psychological effects of violence;
- Building the life wanted for oneself and family.

Organisation/Name	Services	Contact details or sites
<b>EMERGENCY</b>	<b>Ask for police</b>	<b>000</b>
<b>Safe at Home</b>	Information sheets	<a href="http://www.safeathome.tas.gov.au">www.safeathome.tas.gov.au</a>
<b>Safe at Home</b>	Family Violence Response and Referral Line	Ph: 1800 633 937

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