Everyone Knows Someone

Centre for Non-Violence Board Statement: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2026.

25 November 2026

Family violence is happening in every community, every day. It affects people from all walks of life, yet so often remains hidden behind closed doors, concealed by shame, stigma and the belief that it is someone else's problem. Yet, the reality is that violence against women and girls affects 1 in 3 women globally. Most often perpetrated by someone they know, most often a man known to them. This violence is costing a woman's life every 10 minutes. Behind every statistic is someone we know.

In Australia, women and children are experiencing increased rates of family and sexual violence. 1 in 4 women report experiencing intimate partner violence since the age of 15, and 1 in 5 children (1 in 4 girls) experience family violence before the age of 15.

Today on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the first day of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, the Board, on behalf of the Centre for Non-Violence marks today with a simple message: **everyone knows someone**.

The reality is that everyone knows someone who has been impacted by family violence. Family violence does not discriminate. They may be our friends, family members, colleagues, neighbours or people we see every day.

We join the global call that all women, children and people in all their diversity experiencing violence deserve access to specialist supports and safety. Importantly, family violence is not a private matter. It is a whole-of-community issue that requires a whole-of-community response. Every person, workplace, school, sporting club, community organisation and institution has a role to play in prevention, and that includes governments, funders and boards like ours.

Everyone knows someone. Everyone has a role to play. Family violence prevention starts with all of us.

In the last year alone, the Centre for Non-Violence provided nearly 100,000 hours of specialist family violence support to victim survivors, including children, and adults using violence. We are just one service, in a regional, rural location in Central Victoria. Every one of those hours was spent with someone who is known and loved by someone in our community. Family violence is prevalent, it is costing lives and it is harming families and communities.

In parallel, family and sexual violence organisations right across the globe are facing funding cuts or funding that is no longer able to meet demand and, in some cases life-saving programs and services face closure. Without funding, we are reducing access to critical services help victim survivors navigate immediate safety, justice systems, obtain legal support, and rebuild their lives. For women in rural and regional areas, and women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination and violence, the path to justice is even more challenging. When a front-line service has to close a program, or reduce support times, it is someone we know who may be turned away from a life-saving service they were counting on.

While we often hear the need for stronger criminal legislation in response to family violence, we do urge caution in seeing this as the solution to 'fixing the problem'. Yes, strong laws matter, but laws alone are not enough. Victim survivors also need safe ways to report violence, as well as access to specialist support services, and justice systems that respond effectively.

This means holding perpetrators accountable and ensuring that systems answer for failures that allow violence to continue. We also must prioritise the investment into prevention and early intervention models: to stop the violence before it occurs.

Safety for everyone we know, wherever they live

Access to specialist family violence services must be available to all women and girls in all their diversity, including First Nations women, women with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ people, and it must be there when people need it most. Services must be funded to respond to the place-based needs of their community, including the unique challenges and opportunities of regional and rural experiences. This includes removing the barriers that prevent people from seeking help, including financial, physical and systemic barriers. The reality for those living in regional and rural Victoria is that distance from services, including limited transportation options, part-time police presence and social isolation all impact on a victim survivors ability to access help and support. For far too many victim survivors access to a timely, safe and accessible service is dependent on their postcode, and it's just not good enough.

Victim survivors, no matter where they live must be able to safely and equitably report abuse and access specialist supports.

It's time to take family violence out of hiding: to stop pretending that it's not happening in our communities or to people we know. Because everyone knows someone.

It's time to challenge the shame and stigma that silence victim survivors, challenge the attitudes and behaviours that enable violence, and build communities where speaking up is met with belief, compassion and support. The Board calls on governments, funders and communities alike to ensure that every victim survivor experiencing violence is believed and supported. No matter who they are, or where they live.