

ISSUES PAPER

DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE



SNAPSHOT ILLAWARRA SHOALHAVEN

- In 2019 there were 923 reports of 'Recorded criminal incidents of Assault – (domestic violence related) in the Wollongong/Shellharbour area.⁴
- Domestic Assault Rates by LGA in 2019 (per 100,000):⁵

• Wollongong	318
• Shellharbour	328
• Shoalhaven	370
• NSW	390
- One in two presenting women to the SAHSSI Program were victims of domestic abuse in the Illawarra Shoalhaven area.⁶
- Illawarra Women's Health Centre provided more than 900 DFV related client contacts in 2019.⁷
- KPMG research found the cost to the Australian economy of domestic and family violence in 2015-16 was \$22 billion per year. This equates to approximately \$279 million per year in the Illawarra.

Domestic & Family Violence

One in three women experience violence in their lifetime.¹

Income Inequality and Homelessness

Income inequality is a strong contributory factor to the prevalence of relationship violence, as women often have to stay in destructive relationships simply because they cannot afford to live on their own income. Domestic and family violence (DFV) is often the most significant driver of homelessness.

Women with Disability

Women with disability, especially those with intellectual disability, are at increased risk of violence in their relationships. These women are already vulnerable and the perception that they are helpless and powerless can mean that they are manipulated and subjected to violence and abuse.

¹ 2017 WHO

² 2020 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

³ 2019 Law and Justice Foundation of NSW

⁴ NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2020

⁵ NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2020

⁶ SAHSSI Annual Report 2018/19

⁷ IWH Annual Report 2018/19



Children

Children are being exposed to domestic and family violence, both as victims and witnesses. 68% of women who had children in their care when they experienced violence, reported that the children had seen or heard the violence.² This exposure can impact on children's health, wellbeing, education, and relationships; and can have significant impacts on employment, relationships and housing outcomes in the future.

Mental Health

The long-term impact of domestic and family on women's health includes mental health problems, suicide, reproductive health problems, an increased risk of chronic illness and pain, and a higher likelihood of drug and alcohol use and smoking.

Legal & Economic impact

Domestic and family violence victims are 10 times more likely than others to experience legal problems, including a wide range of family, civil and criminal law issues.³ The cost to the economy resulting from DFV is increasing annually due to greater demand on health and mental health services, justice and policing, housing, and social security.

Perpetrators

Perpetrators of domestic and family violence are at a high risk of reoffending. Even when victims leave, perpetrators often reoffend after forming relationships with new partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in programs that promote the development of healthy, respectful relationships, including programs to combat the impact of pornography.
- Invest in perpetrator programs which are aimed at long-term, sustained behaviour change.
- Greater support so that women and children can stay safe in their own home.
- Increase investment in crisis accommodation and support services for women and families escaping violence where staying home is not an option.
- Invest in specialist, trauma-informed and trauma specialist responses to sexual assault and domestic and family violence including specialist community legal assistance.
- Investigate the use of restorative justice measures in cases of domestic violence.
- Continue to lobby and advocate around domestic violence initiatives e.g. Domestic Violence Leave, Family Court Judges and the 1800 RESPECT telephone line.