

Family Violence Statement

Violence in family relationships is a serious problem affecting large numbers of Australians. In its most extreme physical form, it can result in death, but in any form, family violence can result in life-long emotional and psychological damage.

Relationships Australia believes that violence, coercion, control and inequality are unacceptable in family relationships. We believe in social justice and inclusion, and respect the rights of all people, in all their diversity, to live with dignity and safety, and to enjoy healthy relationships.

We also believe that people have the capacity to change their behavior and how they relate to others.

Relationships Australia has been a provider of family relationships support services for more than 60 years. In the course of that work we have developed a considerable body of knowledge and expertise in family and domestic violence and are able to contribute to public debate and the development of public policy in these areas.

Relationships Australia supports:

- The National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children;
- The Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Bill that gives effect to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child and further prioritises the right of children to be safe; and
- Australian state and territory human rights legislation enshrining the rights of all to live in safety.

Violence in the family is a human rights issue and Relationships Australia supports a legal framework to respond to inequality, coercion and control, and the use of violence in families.

Relationships Australia is committed to:

- Transparency with clients. Violence is named for what it is and there are no excuses for it. Our practitioners make reports of concern to child protection agencies. Unless there is a safety concern, clients are informed about what is happening, encouraged to self-report, given explanations and supported through the reporting process.
- Supporting children affected by family and domestic violence, recognizing the harm it does to them, regardless of whether they are the direct or indirect victims.
- Working with people who have experienced violence to ensure their safety is paramount and to support them to take control of their lives.
- Working with people who have been violent in their family relationships to keep their family members safe and with the belief that they can change existing patterns of behavior.
- Respecting cultural differences, but not accepting them as an excuse for family violence.

- Working in rural and remote areas, recognizing that there are fewer resources available to people in these areas, and that they live with pressures, complexities and uncertainties not experienced by those living in cities and regional centres.
- Collaboration. Often a range of agencies (for example, drug and alcohol services, family support programs, mental health services and public housing) are needed by people affected by family violence who are experiencing other complex problems.
- Enriching family relationships and encouraging good and respectful communication.
- Ensuring that social and financial disadvantage are not barriers to accessing services;

Contributing its practice evidence and skills to research projects, to the development of public policy and to the provision of effective programs.