

## Telstra launches new program to help women impacted by domestic violence stay safely connected

**Monday, November 24:** Telstra is launching a new program in partnership with the Women's Services Network (WESNET) to provide women impacted by domestic violence with access to a new smartphone, pre-paid credit and information on the safe use of technology.

One in three women in Australia will experience physical or sexual violence during their lifetime and the impact of violence against women in Australia is widespread, having profound personal, social and economic costs for individuals, communities and the nation.

WESNET Chair, Julie Oberin, says technological advancements are presenting a whole new set of issues for women impacted by domestic violence and refuge workers to navigate.

"With technology now a major part of everyday life, stalkers increasingly use a variety of telephone, surveillance and computer technologies to monitor and harass their victims," says Ms Oberin.

"Women impacted by domestic violence need access to safe and secure communications to ensure they can remain connected with family, friends, essential services and vital information.

"We're pleased to be partnering with Telstra to provide practical support in terms of new phones along with educational materials to support agencies helping women impacted by domestic violence to understand new technologies and how to increase their safety."

Through the Safe Connections program, Telstra will be providing 5,000 smartphones annually, \$30 pre-paid recharge cards and technology safety tips to WESNET for distribution through partner agencies.

This is in addition to the \$1 million in mobile pre-paid recharge cards Telstra has made available each year to help people impacted by domestic violence remain connected.

"Your mobile phone helps keep you connected with friends and loved ones and is an essential part of your everyday life," says Nancie-Lee Robinson, Telstra General Manager of Digital Inclusion.

"If you are impacted by domestic violence it can also become a lifeline to search for and find help, create safety plans and find pathways to a new life.

"Telstra's purpose – *to create a brilliant connected future for everyone* – guides our social and community investment to focus on digital inclusion and ensuring everyone has access to the benefits digital technology can bring.

"The Safe Connections program is our way of showing we care by helping people experiencing domestic violence in a time of need."

Safe Connections is a new initiative under Telstra's 'Everyone Connected' program, which includes our work with community organisations to address the communications needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians.

Telstra is also a proud supporter of White Ribbon, a male-led campaign to end men's violence against women. As a White Ribbon accredited workplace, we will continue to take active steps to stop violence against women including advocating on the issue.

**If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence:**

- In an emergency call the police on 000
- Call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) to speak with a trained counsellor from the National Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence Counselling Service
- Access online counselling at [1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)

**5 Tips to Protect Yourself and Your Mobile Phone**

1. Lock your mobile with a new password. Don't share your password with others.
2. Turn location/GPS and Bluetooth off when not required. Some Apps may request access to your location when you first download them, decline wherever possible or if you do not need to access the location service of the App.
3. Install security software and run antivirus updates. Regularly review the Apps on your phone and delete those not in use.
4. Be careful about what you post on social media, don't post anything that reveals your location.
5. Before discarding your old handset, save all harassing/threatening texts and voicemail messages as evidence. Print screen shots and text messages.

**For resources:**

- **WESNET:** [wesnet.org.au/safetynet/technology-safety](http://wesnet.org.au/safetynet/technology-safety)
- **Telstra:** [telstra.com.au/cyber-safety](http://telstra.com.au/cyber-safety)

**About WESNET**

WESNET are Australia's peak women's organisation working to eliminate domestic and family violence. WESNET represents a range of organisations and individuals including women's refuges, shelters, safe houses and information and referral services.

**About Telstra's 'Everyone Connected' Program**

Telstra has been working with community organisations for more than 12 years to address the communications needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians through our Everyone Connected program. Every month Telstra works in partnership with 2000 community organisations to assist more than 1.2million low-income Australians to stay connected. In the last financial year Telstra provided assistance to the value of \$145 million to help people on low incomes or facing financial hardship stay connected.

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