

One in three Australian women experience domestic violence in their lifetime and, tragically, a woman dies at the hands of a domestic violence perpetrator almost every week.

Additionally, there are one million Australian children growing up in violent homes.

You can help Open Support to continue to help these women and children, who are forced to flee such life-threatening situations, through your generous donation today.



Dear Valued Donor,

The latest figures on the number of women and children who are victims of domestic violence are shocking. The statistics, as revealed by Domestic Violence NSW CEO, Moo Baulch, indicate that one in three Australian women will be subjected to violence from someone they know in one form or another during their lives. **That's a third of our over-12 million female population!**

Ms Baulch revealed this and other grave domestic violence data while discussing the vital domestic and family violence services Open Support (previously Sisters of Charity Outreach) provides via our long-running Safe Haven crisis accommodation and support service.

Yet the reality gets even more frightening. The latest data from the Australian government shows that one woman is killed by a partner or ex-partner in Australia nearly every week. **"And we know there are one million children in Australia growing up in violent households,"** Moo Baulch says.

As I'm sure you will agree, these numbers are truly horrific. It's why I hope you will open your heart and join Open Support in being part of the solution to this major community issue through your most generous donation today.

Reducing the impact of domestic and family violence in our community is one of Open Support's key goals. We have been providing crisis accommodation for women and children fleeing the trauma of domestic violence situations in their family home since May 1995 - assisting over 1,800 families to get their lives back on track since then. Our domestic violence crisis accommodation service Safe Haven is open 24 hours-a-day, seven days a week, every day of the year.

"We take them in at a moment's notice, no matter the time of day or night; give them and their children a safe place to stay; feed, house, counsel and support them; and assist them

"They feel alone, don't know how to get out, or who and where to turn to. That's why it's critical that we are here for them."

with finding suitable accommodation. And, as so many of them have no income or access to government services, we help them to get back on their financial feet,” Safe Haven’s Coordinator, Sharon Sutherland says.

“For many of them, English is their second language, which further traps them in the cycle of domestic violence. **They feel alone, don’t know how to get out, or who and where to turn to. That’s why it’s critical that we are here for them.”**

Yet Safe Haven is much more than a safe house for women: over the past 24 years, we’ve grown from a basic 24-hour crisis accommodation facility to a holistic support service. However, with increased community awareness of this issue, the demand for our domestic and family violence services continues to increase every year.

It’s why I’m writing to you today. I’m seeking your help, to assist Open Support to be able to do all we need to do as part of our domestic violence services this coming year.

Your generous gift of whatever you can afford, whether it be a one-off or regular monthly donation, will help these often physically and psychologically battered and bruised women and children to get their lives back on track.

You may not realise it, but our community-based service is provided with no government funding - other than the provision of the Safe Haven property itself by NSW Family and Community Services. **It’s why I’m seeking your help to raise much-needed funds for the in-demand services we must continue to provide.**

Importantly, this includes funding for key team members - a child support worker and social work consultant - who will implement our innovative Child Wellbeing Program, currently in pilot mode, throughout the coming year.

Open Support is currently one of only a handful of domestic violence support services in NSW to offer a program which recognises that child victims of domestic violence, of all ages, require age-specific, child-focussed trauma counselling and support.

“The ramifications of children being in a family where domestic violence has been the norm is that these children are so affected by what has happened that they miss their usual milestones at school and in their day-to-day lives. Many are traumatised by what they’ve seen and heard.” Sharon says. “This is why funding for Open Support’s Child Wellbeing Program is really important. It allows these children, who are also victims of domestic violence, to be appropriately supported and get to have a voice too.”

However, domestic violence impacts not only the victims within the immediate family, it also impacts their extended family, their friends, their workplaces and our already over-crowded health care system. The financial cost of this blight on our community is estimated to be a staggering \$22 billion a year. At Open Support, we see this impact on a physical, psychological, emotional and financial level every day of the year.

“Importantly, we help all our clients to find their voice and to feel empowered; sometimes for the first time in their lives,” says Sharon. *“All our team here really care about what happens to these fractured families: empowering them to be able to get on with their lives is so much more than ‘just a job’ for us.*

*“As one of the ladies who left our service recently said: ‘I feel like a butterfly’. And it’s true. **When the women arrive at Safe Haven they are like butterflies with their wings tightly wound around them. When they leave, they have their head held high, have opened their wings, and are ready to take flight.”***

Sharon and her team are often contacted by these women months and even years, in some cases, after their stay at Safe Haven as it can take five to 10 years for some of these women and children to recover from the trauma.

At Open Support, we have no desire to leave these women and children stranded, with no roof over

their heads and without caring, considered and current best practice support. They each deserve all we can do to help them through what is one of the most traumatic and frightening periods of their lives.

But without your gift today, Open Support won't be able to do everything that they need from us this coming year.

I trust you will be able to help Open Support to continue to address this important unmet social need by being there for these women and children. Your compassionate donation will make a real difference to how we can best provide a safe and secure place for these women and their families to escape to and recover from the suffering they've endured.

For their sake, I ask you to give as generously as you can to Open Support today.

Yours Sincerely,

Gary Sillett - General Manager, Open Support

P.S. In addition to the frightening statistics revealed above, Domestic Violence NSW tells me that an astonishing 70,000 incidences of domestic violence are reported to the police and other agencies each year. Yet it's estimated only 30-40% of such incidences are officially reported. Your generous gift to Open Support today, whether it be a one-off or regular monthly donation, will allow us to continue to be there for those women and their children who desperately seek our services and support at any time of the day or night, each and every day of the year.



Yes, I'd like to help Open Support's services for women and children fleeing traumatic domestic violence situations

I would like to make a donation of: \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other: _____
I would like to donate: Once Monthly

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