



International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

25 November 2021

“Orange the World: END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!”

is a call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

It calls on people everywhere to wear the colour orange and take action to end violence against women and girls in every community, at home, in public spaces, in schools and workplaces, during conflict and in times of peace.

The United Nations' (UN) International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is an occasion for governments, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations to raise public awareness of violence against women. It has been observed on 25 November each year since 2000.

The 2021 CONTEXT

Violence against women and girls is among the most widespread and devastating human rights' violations we face. A third of all women and girls experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, and half of all women who are killed worldwide are murdered by their partner, former partner or family member. Violence against women is as common a cause of death and incapacity for women of reproductive age as cancer.

Across Australia, violence against women is estimated to cost the country of \$21.7 billion a year. The social and emotional cost to women, children and men in our families and communities is immeasurable, as we live every day with the traumatic fallout of this largely invisible pandemic.

We acknowledge the global evidence that the root cause of violence against women is gender inequality and how it intersects with sexism, racism, colonialism, disablism, ageism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

In Australia, at least 45 women have lost their lives to violence against women since January this year. Thousands more women and children live daily with the legacies of violence and abuse, often exacerbated by experiences of discrimination and disadvantage. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women nationally, for example, are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised for family violence and 10 times more likely to die from a violent assault than other women in this country.

If we want to ensure that no woman or girl is left behind, we need comprehensive and inclusive approaches that can be adapted to rapidly changing contexts, preventing and responding to all forms of gendered violence.

IEU women have shown that they are adaptable and the fact that they continue to meet the various challenges that have occurred in schools: to firstly operate under a pandemic, then to manage transitions to remote education, to conduct that remote education and then to resume operations under a COVID 19 safe environment – all the while balancing home and work demands is nothing short of remarkable.

The story behind the scenes of lockdown is also one that sadly demands courage. The impact of COVID 19 has seen an increase in the incidences of gendered violence. The pandemic is placing greater financial, health, and domestic pressures on households and at the same time increasing women's isolation and reducing their financial and job security.

The social distancing and forced isolation requirements have changed home arrangements. For many, the home is now the workplace. For people experiencing domestic or family violence, attending work provides a safe-haven and a means of accessing vital support. Large numbers of workers are now being required to work from home, regardless of whether it is a safe environment to do so. Women have not been able to seek the support of friends and family due to social distancing and isolation measures.

At the workplace, women in front line work in education, care and service industries are facing increased risks of violence and harassment from anxious and stressed customers, patients, parents and clients.

WE WON'T WAIT – 10 Days of Paid Family and Domestic Violence leave

Family and domestic violence is a national crisis, and no less so in education. We know the tragic numbers: on average a woman is killed each week by a partner, ex-partner or family member in Australia. Hundreds of thousands report facing violence at home – figures that have surged during the pandemic, as many more women found themselves in abusive relationships. The true picture is likely to be even worse.

It's an unacceptable situation that requires urgent action.

Australian Unions are renewing their call for a minimum of ten days of paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave to be included in national workplace laws to help women escape violent situations.

The Federal Government must act to give every worker access to paid family and domestic violence leave. There is a Federal election on our horizon and it must be in our sights. Let's take on the courage of our sisters before us, walk in their shoes, have the necessary conversations and organise a vote for change.



IEU – representing 75000 teachers, principals and ancillary staff in faith based, community and independent schools, pre-schools and early childhood centres and post-secondary centres across Australia.
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