



What is family violence?

Family Violence is not just physical abuse. It is much broader and also includes emotional abuse and financial control.

Financial – being controlled about how they can spend money, not being able to have bank accounts or access to a joint account and not being allowed to work.

Emotional – regular taunts which erode self-confidence.

Physical – hitting, slapping, assault, rape, being locked up in confined spaces (laundry is often given as an example) whilst the perpetrator is out.

Why don't women just leave?

This is a common question. There are many reasons. Leaving an abusive relationship is reported as the most dangerous time for a woman.

For example, Lisa Harnum, who was thrown from her balcony in Sydney, was preparing to leave.

Fiona Warzywoda, was stabbed to death in Sunshine after gaining an intervention order.

When women leave or show signs of leaving, it means a lack of control for the perpetrator.

If a woman does not have any money and does not work then where can she go? To leave would mean taking the children out of their schools and social circles.

Many women feel they won't be believed, even by family and friends and become extremely isolated and don't know where to start.

Why do they leave?

There are a few reasons why women do not stay in the family home. These include:

The perpetrator has threatened to kill her, her children, and her animals (very common) if she leaves.

Even with an intervention order in place, the breach rate is high. Melbourne University evidence shows that it can be as high as 96%.

To stay would be unsafe.

What about children?

One in 4 children experience or witness family violence.

It's traumatic and can impact on their physical and mental health

What happens to women if McAuley Care is full?

If we are unable to admit any more clients to McAuley Care, women and children are referred to motels for the night by the statewide referral service

Our evidence suggests that motels are not necessarily safe for women and can't provide the practical support that we provide – in some cases some women have even been propositioned by the owners or managers of the motels.

Where do the women go after their stay at McAuley Care?

Women and their children tend to stay at McAuley Care for seven days. They are either go to longer-term refuge, couch surf at family and friends' houses, or sleep in cars. Increasingly women are returning home because they have nowhere else to go.