Women's Health East presents:

WOMEN ONLINE

The intersection of technology, gender and sexism

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Women's Health East
Investing in Equality and Wellbeing for Women

Acknowledgments:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women online: The intersection of technology, gender and sexism examines the prevalence and impacts of cyber violence against women and girls, and presents recommendations for action to prevent this violence.

This paper describes the key drivers of violence and how these interact with the online environment to create 'cyber violence'. It identifies the various online spaces which make up today's online environment and explores the content and actions facilitated by online spaces which are harmful to women and girls. The ways that these online spaces can provide a valuable space for women and girls and assist feminist activism are also explored.

Using the primary prevention framework, Change the Story, the paper presents a case for action to prevent cyber violence against women and girls through recommendations for change at individual, organisational and societal levels.
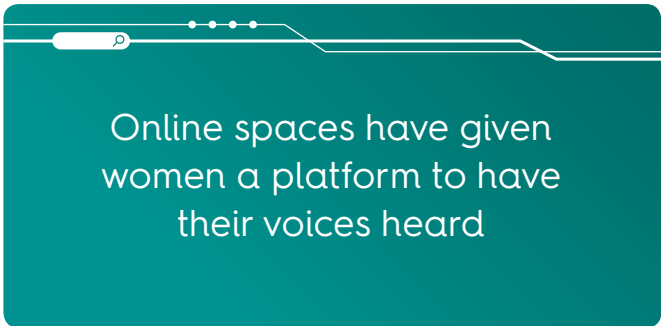
INTRODUCTION

The online environment

Technology plays an integral role in our daily lives. In the last two decades, new technology has changed the way in which we live, learn and interact, enabling behaviours and activities in our day-to-day lives that were not possible 20 years ago. In 2018, 88% of the Australian population are active Internet users (Statista, 2018). The number of Australian households with access to the Internet has increased dramatically since 2004-05 but remained constant between 2014-15 and 2016-17 at 86% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Households with children under the age of 15 are 15% more likely to have Internet access available at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

In 2016 the United Nations declared that access to the Internet is a human right (United Nations, 2016). This recognises the integral role the Internet plays in the facilitation of our day-to-day lives. The Internet creates a new space where people are able to contribute their voice and opinion, and explore different ways of connection and expression.

Online spaces have given women a platform to have their voices heard

Online spaces have provided women with a powerful platform to share their thoughts, concerns and ideas, and have their voices heard. This has supported and facilitated activism for gender equality; a key example being recent global social media movements such as #MeToo and #TimesUp. The Internet has increased the visibility of feminism, and enabled activism on a larger scale, strengthening women's ability to enact change (Wajcman, 2006). For women, the emergence of online spaces has provided new avenues for increasing social connection (LaRose et al., 2001). This connection is particularly important for Australian women who may be socially or geographically isolated from their family and friends.

The Internet has also increased the capacity for and incidence of abuse and negative behaviours and attitudes towards women. Hostile, anonymous and misogynistic cultures are facilitated through online spaces and content, putting women at risk of harassment and abuse when they use the Internet. In addition, the misuse of technological devices such as GPS trackers, spyware and smartphones for actions such as stalking and non-consensual sharing of images has provided new ways for men to harass, humiliate and control women.

It is critical that the Internet, and the online spaces and content it hosts, be a safe space for all women.
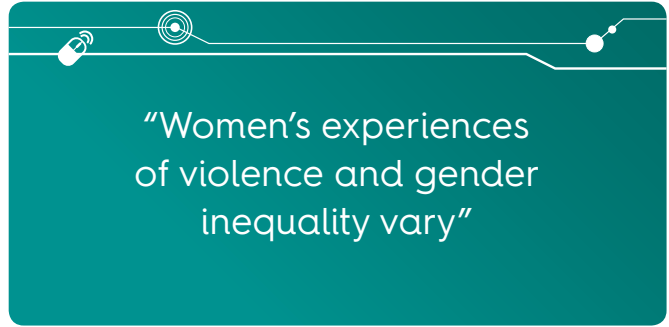
It is critical that the cyber environment be a safe space for women

Violence against women

Violence against women is a serious and prevalent issue in our community and one of the most widespread violations of human rights (VicHealth, 2008).

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as "…any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (United Nations, 1993).

In general, violence occurring within society is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men, including violence perpetrated against women. Types of men's violence against women include, but are not limited to; intimate partner violence, child abuse, sexual assault, and street harassment.

"Women's experiences of violence and gender inequality vary"

Women's experiences of violence and gender inequality vary. Women and girls who experience other forms of systemic, social, political and economic discrimination and disadvantage may experience increased frequency and severity of violence due to sexism intersecting with other aspects of their identity such as age, race and sexuality (Our Watch et al., 2015).

Drivers of violence against women

The United Nations (1993) stated that violence against women is a "manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men". It is now widely accepted that gender inequality is a key driver of violence against women with global evidence, such as Change the Story (Our Watch et al., 2015), stating that gender inequality sets the necessary social context for violence to occur.

The following expressions of gender inequality, as outlined in Change the Story (Our Watch et al., 2015), most consistently predict higher prevalence of men's violence against women:

- Condoning of violence against women
- Men's control of decision making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
- Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

These expressions of gender inequality can be observed in the online environment. These drivers are facilitated by online spaces, evident in online content and perpetrated through actions of online harassment and abuse. This framework highlights the need to implement mutually reinforcing strategies and actions across multiple settings and population groups to prevent violence against women before it occurs.

Cyber violence against women and girls

The Internet can be a vehicle for the perpetration of violence and for reinforcing behaviours and attitudes that promote and enable violence against women. Technology-facilitated abuse has been recognised by The Royal Commission into Family Violence as a key form of violence against women (State of Victoria, 2016), and was noted as an integral topic of exploration by the Council of Australian Governments Advisory Panel (The Council of Australian Governments, 2016).

Technology-facilitated abuse is a key form of violence against women

The perpetration of violence facilitated by the online environment is commonly referred to as Cyber Violence against Women and Girls (CVAWG) (UN Women, 2015). Cyber violence includes the use of technology and online spaces to intimidate, discriminate, harass, discredit, control, threaten, monitor and stalk women and girls.

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner (2018) states that cyber violence can include:

- abusive, intimidating or degrading comments;
- sexual harassment;
- non-consensual sharing of images;
- use of social media and other technological devices to monitor and stalk women;
- spreading malicious lies; and
- establishment of fake online accounts

Although women and men both experience cyber violence, women overwhelmingly experience online harassment and abuse from male perpetrators and are more likely to report experiencing sexual harassment (Powell and Henry, 2015). Furthermore, women of certain backgrounds and open feminist views are often targeted with abuse in the online environment. A survey of 3,000 Australian adults found that young women aged 18 to 24, women of diverse sexual or gender identities, and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were more likely to experience harassment and abuse online (Powell and Henry, 2015).

When considering experiences in the online environment, it is important to recognise the complexities of accountability in the virtual world. There is increasing debate about whether the online environment is separate to physical reality (Jurgenson, 2012), otherwise known as the offline environment. The view that behaviours and attitudes in the online environment are free from consequences in the offline environment is troubling, as it discounts the connection between online actions of abuse and the offline implications of such actions (Jurgenson, 2012). Actions of abuse perpetrated online have repercussions for the victim offline, and so should also have repercussions for perpetrators. Suggesting that online and offline environment

are not connected ignores the underlying causes of violence against women online. This minimises and trivialises the impacts of cyber violence, and contributes to a broader societal culture that promotes and enables gender inequality and violence against women. This in turn leads to a dangerous victim blaming rhetoric and unhelpful advice on how to deal with harassment and abuse online such as 'it is just a joke', 'turn off your computer', 'just ignore it' and 'don't read the comments'.

> There is an urgent need to build on the emerging research examining cyber violence against women and girls

There has been little research examining violence against women online – in particular, the inarguably gendered nature of violence that occurs online and how the drivers of violence against women unfold in the online environment. A culture that supports gender inequality and harmful gender roles has emerged online, mimicking and reinforcing the drivers of women in the offline environment and creating an intersection of technology, gender, sexism and violence against women.

Health impacts of cyber violence against women and girls

There are significant and pervasive expressions of abuse, harassment, ill-will and hatred towards women who have a voice online. Such abuse can have significant negative impacts for women's health and wellbeing, including feeling unsafe, social isolation, and experiencing shame, anxiety and loss of self-esteem (Australian Human Right Commission, n.d.).

> "Pervasive expressions of abuse [are directed]... towards women who have a voice online"

The way in which women are represented online contributes to a culture that sexualises and objectifies women. Smart phones, the Internet, and new technologies have increased exposure to stereotyped, sexualised depictions of women (VicHealth, 2015). Exposure to this type of content can have profound effects on the health and wellbeing of women and girls including low self-esteem, poor body image putting women and girls at risk of eating disorders, and psychological stress from social comparison (Poe, 2015). In addition, exposure to this content affects how men and boys treat women and girls in the offline world.

The objectification and sexualisation of women and girls in the online and offline world "... shapes societal expectations of what are acceptable roles and behaviours for men and women" (Women's Health Victoria, 2015). These societal roles and behaviours of men, contribute to the condoning of violence against women and encourage disrespectful male peer relations towards women in both online and offline environments (Our Watch et al., 2015).

The online environment can also be used to cause physical harm to women and girls through spyware, tracking and stalking facilitated by technological devices (Melton, 2007).

LIFE ONLINE: THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

Discussion on cyber violence against women and girls, and examples of expressions of inequality in the online environment, are categorised into three sections: spaces, content and actions.

Online spaces refer to the environments where content can be found and accessed such as social media, websites and blogs; content refers to the textual, visual, or aural content that is encountered when accessing online spaces; and actions are those which are facilitated by online spaces such as stalking and trolling.

The gendered harassment and abuse women experience online is facilitated by spaces and expressed through content, but is ultimately perpetrated by the actions of an individual.

Online Spaces

Within online spaces information is presented and users can engage in social interactions. Social media, technological devices, dating applications, websites, blogs, forums and chatrooms are the online spaces which will be explored within this section.

Social media

Social media refers to online "communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by both sharing and consuming information" (Nations, 2018). Online spaces that facilitate this social connection, are coined social networking spaces. Platforms used for social networking include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat.

A representative Australian study, found that, in 2017, 79% of Internet users were using social networking sites (Sensis, 2017). The number of people using social media and the frequency of use has continuously increased over the past seven years. Females use these sites slightly more than males with 60% of females using social networking sites at least once a day compared to 58% of males (Sensis, 2017). Additional Australian studies have found that 67% of 12 to 13 year olds, 85% of 14 to 15 year olds, and 92% of 16 to 17 year olds use social media (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2013).

> Social media plays a central role in our relationships

Social media has revolutionised the way that people engage in online spaces, offering opportunities to interact and connect with others, express opinions, be notified of current events, and share information (Nations, 2018). Given social media is freely accessible to all those who have access to the Internet and a technological device, engaging with these sites has become increasingly easy. However, these online spaces may present a source of hostility and isolation for many users.

Aboriginal and rural Australians reported that social media is a valuable tool to connect with others across the country (Carlson, 2013). For Aboriginal people in particular, this connection with family is integral for maintaining intergenerational connections and enables young Aboriginal people to express their identity in the online environment (Carlson, 2013). Regrettably, many young Aboriginal people report experiencing racism online and it is common to see other Australians, particularly woman, harassed and victimised for expressing their opinions via social media. Allen et al (2014) labels this the 'paradox of social connectedness', whereby social media can enhance belonging and identity whilst also exposing people to negative outcomes. Furthermore, social media sites can reinforce harmful gender stereotypes through textual and visual content, and can be used to conduct technology-facilitated violence including stalking, locating, and blackmail through threats to release private images into the online space.

> "Many social media platforms are now taking responsibility for online abuse"

Many social media spaces are now taking responsibility for online abuse and for what content is acceptable on their sites. Most sites have mechanisms which allow users to report inappropriate material. However, this is merely a responsive measure and by the time such mechanisms can be implemented the damage to the individual has already occurred. These responsive measures also assume that the victim of online abuse is aware of the content; this is not always the case. More accountability needs to be taken by social media organisations to monitor posts and online behaviour to stop the facilitation of this type of abuse.

Facebook

Facebook's self-proclaimed mission is to "give people the power to build community and bring the world together" (Facebook Australia, 2018). To this day the social networking site has over 2.13 billion users worldwide (Zephoria Digital Marketing, 2018), and 15 million active users per month in Australia (Social Media News, 2018).

A representative Australian study found that, of survey respondents, 97% of females and 91% of males were Facebook users (Sensis, 2017). This platform continues to be the most popular social media platform across all age groups. Consistent with previous findings, the Sensis Social Media Report found that approximately nine in ten social media users in Australia are using platforms such as Facebook for social interactions such as keeping in touch with family and friends (Sensis, 2017).

Although Facebook is a useful platform for maintaining social connections, it can also be used by perpetrators of violence against women to bring abuse into the online environment. Forty-nine percent of women surveyed in Victorian SmartSafe research, reported receiving contact from their abuser via Facebook (SmartSafe, 2015). This highlights a concerning lack of safety for women who have experienced intimate partner violence who use Facebook. Although users are able to choose their own privacy settings this is not fail safe as the functions of such settings are not always well understood by Facebook users.

Instagram

Instagram is a social media space which allows users to share videos and images with others. Of those surveyed in the Sensis Social Media Report 2017, 81% of Instagram users in Australia were aged 18 to 29 and 41% identified as female (Sensis, 2017). Since its launch in 2010, this platform has continued to be most popular amongst a younger audience (Smith, 2013).

On this social media platform the quality of images is prioritised over quantity, with functions such as 'filters' available to enable users to enhance images. These filters have a range of capabilities, for example the 'Reyes' filter is designed to remove blemishes from skin for magazine quality self-portraits (Messieh, 2015). These functions have made Instagram a popular space to share self-taken self-portraits, otherwise known as the 'selfie'. While a self-portrait may not seem harmful, the types of photos being posted by young women are often sexualised and reinforce harmful gender stereotypes of femininity. There appears to be a correlation between the types of 'selfies' uploaded and the number of likes, this being: selfies that conform to stereotypical notions of sexuality generate more likes and the more popular the young woman is seen to be. The use of 'selfies' and subsequent likes, to rate attractiveness and popularity has implications for young women's self-esteem, body image and can contribute to psychological stress from constant social comparison (Poe, 2015). Furthermore, these body-centric images reinforce the societal norm that a women's worth is based on how she looks and how attractive she is to others (Aubrey, 2006). This platform can also reinforce gender stereotypes for men with masculine images typically popular, thus reinforcing men's self-worth as related to his masculinity.

Twitter

Twitter is a social media space that is focused on sharing information and ideas instantaneously and allowing users to connect with people and express opinions (Twitter, 2018). Twitter allows users to send 280 character 'tweets', and, like many social media sites, allows these tweets to feature hashtags which enable users to find like content. Globally there are 310 million active users per month, with 5.4 million Australian users (Social Media News, 2018). Use of this social media platform declines with age, and more males use Twitter than females (30% compared to 26%) (Levine, 2016).

Amnesty International (2018) outline in their report 'Toxic Twitter' that there is a gendered nature to the abuse received by Twitter users. The fact that this platform is dominated by men and used to share opinions has revealed a particular subset of users who seek to abuse women who speak out about women's rights regardless of who the woman is or what content she posts. It is recognised that, on Twitter, severe abuse disproportionately affects women and other minority groups (Pew Research Centre, 2014). On this platform it is common to observe women who share content with a focus on women's rights experience targeted abuse as a form of intimidation for challenging societal norms (Amnesty International, 2018). In addition, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may be seen as an easy target for abuse given that fewer women from such communities have visible public profiles, and thus experience even more harassment and abuse within this space (Amnesty International, 2018).

Snapchat

Snapchat is a social media application which allows users to send pictures or videos to friends which are only available to be viewed for a short period of time before becoming inaccessible. The temporary nature of the space is intended to encourage a flow of interaction similar to that of a messaging application. Snapchat also has additional social options such as direct chat, and a newsfeed like option 'Discovery'. This application has filters similar to Instagram which raises similar concerns regarding implications for young women's sense of worth and reinforcing gender stereotypes.

In 2017, Snapchat had 166 million active daily users (Betters, 2018), and 4 million Australian active daily users (Bennett, 2016). A recent study by Aslam (2018) found that 71% of Snapchat users are under 34, with females making up 70% of users.

Although the nature of Snapchat's temporary image sharing initially raised concerns about encouraging activities such as sexting, it is now recognised that this platform is more likely to be used to share funny rather than sensitive or sexually

explicit content (Roesner et al., 2014). However, individuals with a lack of understanding about the limitations of the platform, for example that a screenshot of a 'snap' can be easily taken and kept, may be more likely to send sensitive content and thus are at increased risk of having sensitive images or videos shared more broadly (Roesner et al., 2014).

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business and employment orientated social media network, used predominately by working professionals. LinkedIn can be used to search for jobs, to recruit or 'poach' perspective employees, to connect with like professionals and share news-related information in a Facebook style 'feed'. In Australia, LinkedIn has 4.4 million monthly active users, with a total of 8 million registered users (Social Media News, 2018). More men (57%) than women (43%) are using this platform (Social Media Perth, 2017).

Although LinkedIn is a professional platform, gendered harassment is still prevalent. Recently a CEO of a major company changed her name from Andrea to Andrew, and her identity from Chinese to Caucasian, on LinkedIn to avoid the persistent racial and gendered abuse she had been experiencing (MacLellan, 2018). This type of harassment on LinkedIn often takes the form of inappropriate inbox messages from men towards women, this is purposefully done "in the corners where no one else can see, where the guy's boss and colleagues can't view their comments" (MacLellan, 2018).

While LinkedIn is predominately used as a professional and career building platform, it is also an online space which enables online harassment towards women.

Dating applications

Online dating has risen in popularity in the past decade, indicating the changing role online spaces and new technology play in relationships and day-to-day social interactions. Online dating includes paid and unpaid sites which can be hosted as websites, for example RSVP, or as applications which can be downloaded onto devices, for example Tinder. Relationships Australia (2017) reported that 4.5 million Australians engage in online dating each year, with 62% of women and 57% of men reporting using these types of applications to meet new partners. Of these people, more men than women reported they were looking for a fun and casual partner rather than a long-term relationship (10% compared to 7%) (Relationships Australia, 2017). Online dating sites have been identified as the most common way for adults over the age of 50 to meet new partners (McWilliams and Barrett, 2014).

Harassment in online dating is known to be both prevalent and gendered. A survey conducted by Relationships Australia (2017) highlighted that men were significantly more likely than women (60% compared to 37%) to consider online dating safe. According to an American study conducted by the Pew Research Centre, 42% of women who sign up for online dating sites have received messages that made them feel harassed or uncomfortable compared to 17% of men (Smith and Duggan, 2013).

> "Harassment in online dating is known to be both prevalent and gendered"

Thompson (2018) and Shaw (2016) reviewed content posted on the popular Instagram account 'Bye Felipe' which draws attention to the hostility and abuse faced by women who engage in online dating. Analysis of common discourse within posts on this account revealed themes of hostile environments for women and reactive abuse from males towards females (Shaw (2016). The main types of abuse women receive on dating platforms are: verbal attacks on appearance (i.e. 'you're too fat anyway'), sexual slurs (i.e. 'you whore') and threats of violence (i.e. 'I will find you and hurt you') (Thompson, 2018). These themes, derived from content analysis, are observed responses from men who have received passive rejection to sexual advances from a woman (i.e. 'no thanks' or 'sorry not interested'). These responses indicate there is an alignment between interactions on modern dating platforms and traditional heterosexual gender norms which depict women as objects who are naturally resistant to sexual advances and enjoy being convinced or overpowered (Thompson, 2018).

Harmful gender norms are also evident in the experiences of older Australians who engage with online dating platforms. McWilliams and Barrett (2014) identified that older men seek partners on online dating sites who are younger than themselves; creating an environment which pressures older women to prioritise youthfulness and beauty. Women who are dating online, place high value on male partners who are intellectual and of high socio economic status (McWilliams and Barrett, 2014), thus reflecting the gender stereotype of men being the breadwinner.

Online dating sites and applications contribute to a misogynistic and sexist heterosexual dating culture which reinforces traditional gender norms and expectations. This online space will continue to be an unsafe environment for women until legal repercussions for men who harass and abuse women through dating sites and applications are strengthened.

Websites

Websites host a wealth of information which can be accessed via the Internet, and are increasingly being used by Australians for knowledge-seeking purposes. Websites are differentiated from other online spaces such as blogs, as they are not interactive and only offer one-way communication. Interactive online spaces such as blogs, chatrooms and forums will be discussed in the following section.

The influence of websites on the broader online environment is dependent on the website's content. Websites have the capacity to be empowering tools for advocacy such as Feminist Frequency and Women's Agenda. Websites also have the capacity to be negative spaces with the intention for wrongdoing such as men's rights groups who slander feminist movements and sites where non-consensual image sharing occurs, some of which will be further explored within this paper.

Blogs/forums/chatrooms

Blogs, forums and chatrooms are loosely defined as websites which offer opportunities to comment on content. Blogs are a space where people are able and encouraged to comment on posted content, whereas forums are spaces which are created to host discussion about a specific topic. For these two spaces discussion is not required to be instant, and can continue over the course of months or sometimes even years. Alternatively chatrooms are spaces which are designed for instant discussion which occurs between parties who are online at the same time.

These online spaces are particularly popular within the online gaming community; for example, there are blogs which offer instructional and informational content about certain games and forums which host discussion around game challenges and 'hacks'. In addition, chatrooms can feature discussion between gamers both during and outside of the game. These chatrooms can offer options for verbal communication, instant messaging and video sharing. Games and consoles which have chatroom capabilities refer to this option as 'Social Entertainment Network' which adds a social component to gaming. As the online gaming community has continued to grow this has created opportunities for gamers to socialise and connect with each other to share ideas, tips and reviews about games via these three online spaces (Vasilcovschi 2015). This social component of gaming has the ability to strengthen existing relationships and enable users to meet new people by encouraging social interaction (Domahidi 2014). However,

these online spaces can also foster negative attitudes and behaviours, particularly towards female gamers.

> ## Some female gamers use avatars to disguise their gender to escape online abuse

Female's make up 47% of the gaming population, with this percentage increasing steadily in the past 10 years from 37% in 2005 (Brand and Todhunter, 2015). Studies show that, whilst women make up nearly half of the global gaming population, they are largely shunned from the online gaming community (Ipos MediaCT, 2013). In a study of women's experiences in online first person shooter games, McDaniel (2016) found that 75.9% of women experienced forms of verbal harassment and discrimination whilst playing. In addition, 45.4% of female online gamers tried to hide their sex and/or gender while playing online (McDaniel, 2016), presumably to avoid such experiences. These experiences which are facilitated by game chatroom functions, and associated forums and blogs, sadly make the online community a hostile environment for many female gamers.

Online content

Online content refers to the textual, visual, or aural content that is encountered when accessing online spaces. The online content explored within this section includes that in gaming, advertising, pornography, and sexual and reproductive health information.

Gaming

As noted throughout this paper, gaming content can be found not only in the games themselves but is associated with blogs, forums and chatrooms, as well as promotional material shared on online spaces such as social media.

Most online games are thought to have a positive influence on the gamer by encouraging them to demonstrate patience and motivation, exercise analytic capabilities, display consideration in decision-making, and problem-solve to complete tasks to progress a storyline or achieve a goal (Sande et al. 2014; Vasilcovschi 2015). In addition, as online gaming allows people to immerse themselves in a new environment, it has been associated with helping people escape the stressors of everyday life to increase overall wellbeing (Griffiths 2010). Some games also include positive role models which help to break down gender

stereotypes. A critical review of women's portrayal in video games identified positive representations of women in video games, including characters such as Jade from Beyond Good and Evil (2003) and The Scythian from Sword and Sorcery (2011). In these games the female characters are portrayed as active, non-sexualised, multi-skilled and central to the plotline (Sarkeesian, 2017)

Conversely, there are many games which present stereotypical and harmful representations of female and male characters. Research shows that there is a significant difference in how women and men are portrayed in video games. An analysis of images of video game characters in best-selling American games, show that 83% of male characters were portrayed as aggressive compared to 62% of female characters (Dill and Thrill, 2007). Furthermore, 60% of female characters were overwhelmingly more likely to be sexualised compared to 1% of male characters, and 39% of females were scantily clad compared to 8% of males (Dill and Thrill, 2007).

A recent study found that there is a direct correlation between the use of sexualised avatars and increased self-objectification by both male and female gamers (Vandenbosch et al., 2017). This raises significant concern for the mental health of gamers in online and offline environments. The sexualised nature of avatars and characters in video games, including female characters dressed in ways that bring attention to their bodies, has implications for the attitudes of the young men who commonly play these games (Beasley and Standley, 2002). Beasley and Standley (2002) explain that social learning theory and gender schema theory highlight that young people exposed to gender stereotyping in the media, including in video games, are at risk of developing these attitudes themselves; in this case, the attitude that objectifying women is acceptable.

> ## Teenagers, including non-gamers, thought of male characters as aggressive and female characters as sexualised

In addition, a number of popular video games glorify violence towards women (Rodenberg, 2013). Games such as Grand Theft Auto mostly portray women as sex workers who 'like it rough' with gamers given the option to pay for sex, and then kill the woman to get their money back (Rodenberg, 2013). In the promotional poster of the popular video game Hitman, a woman is seen lying dead with a
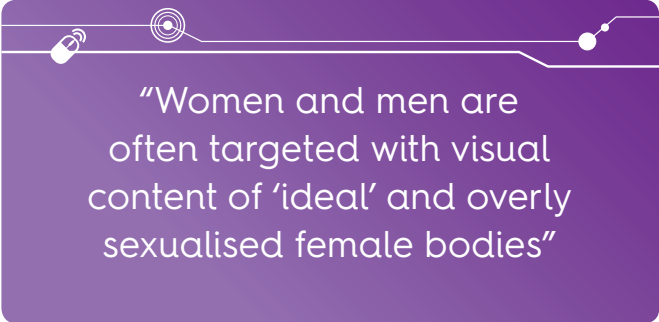
bullet hole in her forehead dressed in lacy lingerie next to the text 'Beautifully executed' (Narcisse, 2014). Other video games which glorify violence against women include, but are not limited to, *Assassin's Creed II , Far Cry 3, The Witcher* and *Red Dead Redemption* (Narcisse, 2014).

The discussed content negatively impacts men's mental wellbeing, and has a substantial impact on their attitudes and behaviours in offline environments. As outlined by Feminist Frequency founder Anita Sarkeesian, game designers must be responsible as to how they depict women, and people of different cultures, as these game scenarios affect viewers understanding of what constitutes normal behaviour in the offline world (Sarkeesian, 2015).

Sexist advertising

Advertising is visible across all online spaces. Social media advertising in particular is becoming increasingly prevalent. According to research by Microsoft, online consumers can see up to 600 advertisements per day (B&T Magazine, 2016).

Through advertising, women and men are often targeted with visual content of 'ideal' and overly sexualised female bodies, reinforcing the stereotype that a woman's self-worth is directly related to beauty and sexuality. Visual content that objectifies and sexualises women may have harmful effects on the self-esteem of all women. As advertising content largely depicts thin, young and white women (Redmond, 2003), these harmful effects may be amplified for older women, women of different body sizes and women of colour who do not see themselves represented in advertising content.

> "Women and men are often targeted with visual content of 'ideal' and overly sexualised female bodies"

In recent years there has an increase in a type of advertising coined 'shockvertising', which is often used in social media campaign advertising (Sis International Research, n.d.). Shockvertising advertisements commonly feature sex and violence (Lauren et al., 2016). A visual analysis of the representation of women in shockvertising advertisements conducted by Lauren et al. (2016) found that these advertisements normalised violence against women through showing women in three distinct positions:

- The 'tease', where the woman held a promise of sexual intimacy despite the potentially violent background to the advertisement;
- The 'piece of meat', where the woman was positioned in a dehumanising way; and
- The 'subject' which positioned the woman as subservient and dominated by a man or men, an object to be used.

The implications of this type of representation of women in advertising are explained by cultivation theory. Cultivation theory of advertising, indicates that individuals believe that what they see in the media represents a form of reality, therefore the media is able to influence cultural values (So, 2004, University of Twente, 2017). As such, this type of advertising encourages societal attitudes and behaviours that objectify and dehumanise women; ultimately, fostering rape culture (Lauren et al., 2016).

Sexualised and violence-promoting images of women, are not only utilised in advertising of beauty products and clothes, but are evident across all other types of advertising including food (Patrick, 2018) and gaming (Narcisse, 2014). Patrick (2018) highlights that "patriarchy is engrained into society and prevalent themes within food advertising perpetuate a male dominated world" (p. 4). Advertising does not only exploit women through sexualisation and objectification, but also exploits harmful ideas of masculinity which contribute to condoning of violence against women and male peer relations which emphasise aggression.

There are a number of prominent campaigns which aim to re-direct the shockvertising discourse. One such campaign developed by advertising agency Badgers and Winters is #Womenarenotobjects (Gurrieri et al., 2016). This campaign seeks to call out and take a stand against objectification of women in advertising.

Sexual education

A core part of respectful relationships for young people is sexual education. The World Health Organisation (2017) highlight that "comprehensive sexuality education curricula taught to young people" is a critical action to the prevention of violence against women in our society.

The Internet plays a positive role in sexual education, with 44% of students reporting that they consult the Internet for information about sexual health (Mitchell et al., 2014). Of these students, 47% of those accessing sexual health information on Internet websites identified as female compared to 39% of males (Mitchell et al., 2014). Sexual education can be found in a number of online spaces, including websites, blogs, forum/chatroom discussions, as well as via online pornography.

The National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health (2014) concluded that online spaces can support young people to engage in critical enquiry, access reliable information, and engage in conversations that may be too difficult or uncomfortable face-to-face (Mitchell et al., 2014). Young people in this study noted that they particularly value the anonymity and privacy online spaces offer (Mitchell et al., 2014). Having access to information in a space that is free of judgement is especially crucial to groups such as LGBTIQ young people to support them to feel comfortable and safe to navigate their sexuality (Magee et al., 2012).

It is important to consider that analysis of sexual health information has revealed the overall quality of content was below average quality, and websites with information on complex and/or controversial topics contained the most inaccuracies (Buhi et al., 2010). In addition, many young people access pornography as a form of sexual education. As will be discussed in the following section, the majority of content in mainstream pornography does not represent equal and respectful sexual relationships. Not all sexual health content in online spaces is credible, creating a risk that young people in particular may form unrealistic expectations about what constitutes a healthy relationship or sexual experience if accessing poor quality online resources about sexual health (Pogson, 2013).

Pornography

Accessing and watching pornography online has become increasingly normalised, with 30% of all Internet traffic being porn related (Crabbe, 2015). A study regarding online pornography conducted with 11 to 16 year olds in the United Kingdom found more young males than females had viewed pornography online; a similar gender divide is also seen amongst adults (Martellozzo et al., 2016). Of the young men surveyed as part of this study, 58.7% has actively searched for pornography online compared to 25.2% of young women (Martellozzo et al., 2016).

With the reality of increased exposure to pornography, particularly amongst young people, it is important to consider the content of pornography available online. The link between gender inequality, power, sexism and violence is demonstrated clearly in contemporary pornography content. While it is acknowledged that there is work to be done in order to "make adult cinema that's smart, sex-positive and respectful towards women" (Crabbe, 2015), this paper focuses on mainstream heterosexual pornography which often lacks such characteristics.

Pornography increasingly features content where men act aggressive, rough and violent toward female co-stars. In their documentary 'Reality and Risk: pornography, young people and sexuality', Crabbe and Corlette (2015) interviewed porn industry professionals. These professionals noted that there had been a shift towards extreme sex scenes, with producers requesting scenes where 'you have to be very rough with a girl and take charge'.

In an analysis of popular heterosexual pornography videos Bridges et al. (2010) found that 90% of scenes featured physical aggression such as slapping, choking and gagging and 46% featured verbal aggression. The perpetrators of the aggression were predominately male with 94% of the targets being female. In these scenes female targets were required to show pleasure, erotising the degradation of women whilst promoting male aggression and brutality and female subservience (Hald et al., 2010). These types of pornography foster rape culture where violence towards women is sexualised and presented as a pleasurable experience for women, contributing to a violent view of sexuality.

A meta-analysis of nine studies, including 2,309 participants, found a significant positive association between pornography use, and attitudes supporting violence against women (Hald et al., 2010). Such attitudes have a significantly higher correlation for men watching sexually violent pornography (Hald et al., 2010). Exposure to pornography impacts perceptions and understanding of sex and sexuality, as well as individual's expectations related to sex and gender roles (Crabbe, 2015). Modelling sexual behaviour based on pornography has implications for equal and respectful intimate relationships.

Actions facilitated online

This section discusses the actions that are facilitated in online spaces. It includes exploration of positive actions such as advocacy for women's rights, as well as negative actions including stalking and harassment, trolling, and sexualisation and objectification of women.

Advocacy for women's rights

In recent times, advocacy for women's rights through online spaces such as social media has been making global headlines, and has been gaining momentum for much longer. The online environment has revolutionised advocacy for women's rights as the reach of online spaces enables women to create networks and connect with other women beyond geographical boundaries. Online spaces provide a platform for women and girls to connect through conversations, share stories and knowledge, offer support, share information and opinions on key issues, and formulate ideas for action to challenge cultures that disadvantage women (Keller, 2012, Jackson, 2018).

A key example of such online feminist activism, coined 'hashtag activism', has utilised social media spaces such as Twitter and Instagram to highlight key issues for women and bring discussion and action on these issues into the offline world (Stache, 2015). It is important to note that this type of activism is somewhat limited and does not necessarily encourage action beyond sharing content. However, there have been cases where this type of activism has resulted in significant movements for change such as the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements on social media which have extended to other online spaces such as websites, blogs and chatrooms to spread messages. These messages seek to bring attention to the prevalence of sexual assault across industries and the need for greater social and legal sanctions for perpetrators of gendered violence.

"[Online spaces can be used] to highlight key issues for women and bring... action on these issues into the offline world"

Another example of such activism is the 2014 petition launched by a group of women demanding Grant Theft Auto V be removed from Target Australia stores due to the promotion of violence against women in its content (Serrels, 2014). This petition was shared through numerous online spaces thus enabling these women to share their concerns about sexist and derogatory representation of women in video games. Support gained ultimately affected change in the offline environment with the eventual withdrawal of the game from Target Australia stores (Serrels, 2014). These movements have user intent to promote positive change in the offline world and enable women's voices to be heard in a united manner on a national and global scale (Gilmore, 2017b).

Given mainstream feminism has traditionally been adult-centric and lacked strong representation of diverse and marginalised women, online spaces also enable women and girls to engage in feminist debate in ways that best relate to them (Keller, 2012). Women and girls are able to utilise online spaces to set the agenda and highlight issues and ideas that align with the intersecting aspects of their female identity including age, race and sexuality (Keller, 2012).

Technology-facilitated abuse

Technology misuse can play a direct role in intimate partner violence. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) recognises that technology has opened avenues for new forms of harassment and abuse experienced by women; this is known as technology-facilitated violence (Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, 2015).

"Technology misuse plays a direct role in intimate partner violence"

A device refers to technology which has the capacity to access the Internet and as such can be used to facilitate activities including stalking, harassment, and blackmail. Devices include, but are not limited to, smartphones, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), tracking software, and drones. These devices allow perpetrators to secretly monitor their victim's texts, calls, photos, emails and web browsing. Male perpetrators are increasingly using these types of technology as a tool of abuse in intimate partner relationships to stalk, harass and control women.

A Victorian SmartSafe study (SmartSafe, 2015) reported that victims of domestic violence felt that technology, such as smartphones, provide perpetrators with 24 hour access to contact, track or threaten them. According to the study, 80% of women received text messages that made them feel afraid, 65% received calls that made them feel afraid and 63% believed they were being followed or tracked (SmartSafe, 2015). The use of text message, Facebook and GPS tracking on smartphones to faciliate this type of harassment and stalking appears to be popular amongst perpetrators (Woodlock, 2015). This type of behaviour can be used as a tactic to scare women in order to exercise control and make women feel that they have to remain in an abusive relationship (Melton, 2007).

Woodlock (2015) found that women from particular backgrounds experienced increased vulnerability to technology-facilitated abuse due to exploitation of social isolation, language barriers and/or reliance on technology for communication. Non-English speaking women and women with disabilities were identified as at risk as the use of technology alleviates social isolation and enables contact with friends and family overseas. This can be exploited as a form of intimate partner violence, for example having these devices taken away means communication with others is limited for these women.

Actions such as the ones discussed within this section are outlined by the Women's Legal Service Victoria as a violation of a Family Violence Intervention order (if one is in place). In addition, these actions are monitored by individual site reporting mechanisms, however, these do not always hold perpetrators to account or delete private information shared by perpetrators in reasonable timeframes.

Non-consensual sharing of information

Image-based abuse, or non-consensual sharing of information, often described as 'revenge porn', is a perpetrator action facilitated by online spaces. The image could have been shared willingly through actions such as sexting, as well as taken without the knowledge of the individual in the image. Image-based abuse is the act of broadly sharing or threatening to share a sexually explicit image without the knowledge and/or consent of the individual in the image, regardless of whether the individual shared the image willingly to the perpetrator originally. This can be used as a form of blackmail to coerce victims of abuse into staying in a relationship. The act seeks to shame, humiliate or punish the victim by sharing images with employers, friends, family, children and/or the general public (Powell, 2009).

Image-based abuse can be used as a form of blackmail to shame, humiliate or punish

An Australian study of more than 4,200 people aged 16 to 49 revealed the gendered nature of image-based abuse, with women more likely than men to be threatened with or experience the distribution of a sexually explicit image from a current or ex-partner (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). Of these women, young women, women with disabilities and lesbian and bisexual females experience the highest rates of image-based abuse (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018).

Sadly it is a common occurrence that sexually explicit images, often taken and shared without consent, are distributed through online spaces such as websites, blogs, and social media accounts as well as via smartphones. Numerous Australian cases of such actions exist. In 2016 a website was established which promoted non-consensual sharing of graphic sexual images and information about Australian school girls. Seventy one Australian schools, including some in the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne were affected by this site. The site was created by school aged boys, which allowed them to 'trade' and post images of girls without their consent. The site was described as "… reducing girls to objects and trophies to be traded like nothing more than swap-cards in the playground" (Funnell, 2016). Incidences of boys and men objectifying women and

girls for their own pleasure and ignoring consent is also evident in the case of the Brighton Grammar Instagram account (now deleted) which was created by two students and featured images of young women asking viewers to vote for 'slut of the year' (Cook, 2016).

The website actively encourages young men to ignore and violate consent

In addition, a disturbing new trend is the capture and distribution of images and video of sexual assault of girls and young women which, if distributed, causes additional harm to victims of sexual assault (Powell, 2009). In her article, Powell (2009) indicates that "…there may be a need for reform in the Australian context to create new criminal offences in order to address this gap in the existing legislation and to reflect the significantly increased harm caused by the widespread distribution of unauthorised visual images of a sexual assault" (p. 7).

Although legislation introduced in Victoria in 2014 made it illegal to share explicit images without consent (Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2018a), the reality for many women is that finding and removing these images often still falls through the cracks of this legislative reform.

Trolling

The Australian Government e-Safety Commission defines trolls as anonymous users who abuse or harass others online for fun and deliberately post comments that will upset others in order to gain a reaction (Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2018b). Trolling can encompass the act of targeted abuse towards one person, or a group of people, from anonymous users online. Trolling is prevalent across online spaces such as social media, blogs and websites, but is highly prevalent on Twitter (Amnesty International, 2018). Twitter accounts can be anonymous, created under pseudonyms, or run by an automated 'Twitterbot' which may explain why acts of trolling are so prevalent in this space. However, these gendered and targeted trolling attacks are not only limited to Twitter.

The gendered nature of attacks on women bloggers is prominent and vicious

There are countless instances of online trolling, including some high profile cases where women have been the target of severe abuse. On Facebook last year an Australian woman Yassmin Abdel-Magied received so much abusive and persistent trolling on one of her Facebook posts that it received international media attention. As stated by Gilmore (2017a) "it is impossible to separate reactions to Yassmin's post from her public identify as a young women of colour, a Muslim, and a combination of those selves in a person". The harassment and abuse experienced by Yassmin was not only a reflection on her post content, but was compounded by her intersecting identifies as a young, black, Muslim woman.

Trolling attacks are also common against women who speak out about rape culture, patriarchy, or women's rights. Anita Sarkeesian, the founder of Feminist Frequency, a website which examines pop culture from a feminist perspective, was the victim of an online hate campaign. Due to this hate campaign she received vicious online trolling, following the launch of her video series Tropes vs Women in video games, which explored female character stereotypes throughout the history of the gaming industry (Kickstarter, 2017). The trolling included threats of rape, violence, sexual assault and death, vulgar manipulation of images of Sarkeesian, as well as, harassment via YouTube and Wikipedia. Harassment also included the creation of an online game which invited users to 'beat up' Anita (Kickstarter, 2017).

These online attacks have a clear link to cultures and male peer relations which perpetuate violence against women, and there is increasing pressure to ensure perpetrators of these vicious attacks are held to account (Fileborn, 2018). The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) have a complaint process to investigate instances of trolling where trolling behaviour includes prohibited material (Find Law Australia, 2018); this is a positive step towards ensuring trolls are held accountable offline for their actions.

Sexualisation and objectification of women

Sexualisation is defined as the valuation of a person based on their sexual appeal to the exclusion of other characteristics (Women's Health Victoria, 2009). Similarly, objectification occurs when women and girls are seen as an object of desire for another's use, rather than as an independent person with decision-making capacity (Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2014). The sexualisation and objectification of women is strongly linked to gender stereotyping and sexist attitudes that are consistently reinforced through depictions of women in online and offline spaces. It is now widely recognised that these attitudes are linked to gender inequality and are key determinants of violence against women (Women's Health East, 2016).

Sexualisation and objectification of women occur across various online spaces. It is facilitated via online advertising, through sharing and liking self-portraits on social media, through actions of image-based abuse and by mainstream pornography. Sexting is one action which contributes to the sexualisation and objectification of women and girls.

> "Young people [say] sexting is a normal and common experience"

Sexting is the action of sending or receiving sexually explicit texts, photos and videos using a mobile phone or via online spaces such as social media. Findings from the National Survey of Australian Secondary School Students Sexual Health (Mitchell et al., 2014) revealed that nearly 50% of 16 to 18 year olds had received a sexually explicit photo and 26% had shared one themselves. A survey of Australian girls aged 15 to 19 years undertaken by Plan International Australia and Our Watch (2016) found that 51% of respondents agreed that they were often pressured to take and share 'sexy' photos of themselves. Survey and focus group discussion with young Australians found that young people felt sexting is a normal and common experience as part of sexual development (Yeung et al., 2014). Young women in this study expressed that their prime motivation for sexting was to receive positive feedback in order to increase self-esteem. By comparison, young men reported sexting was a joke or used to receive a 'sext' in return (Yeung

et al., 2014). Young men reported collecting sexts from girls as a 'trophy' and viewed these images as 'achievements' to share with their friends (Yeung et al., 2014). A sext sent by a girl was also considered more 'taboo' or shameful than those sent by young men, reflecting gendered ideas of shame (Yeung et al., 2014).

The perception that physical attractiveness is linked to self-worth and young men labelling sexually explicit images of their female peers as 'trophies' or 'achievements' reflects the wider culture of male entitlement, and the objectification of women in modern attitudes and behaviours. As discussed in previous sections, objectification of women is perpetuated by environments such as the media where women are commonly portrayed in advertising as highly sexualised commodities designed to fulfil male desires (Perez, 2013).

> Society needs to challenge the oversexualised representation of women in popular culture

Summary of online spaces, content and actions

Although the online environment has the potential to promote women's voices, the drivers of violence against women are being perpetuated in the online environment. This is enabled by online spaces with limited accountability, monitoring and sanctions.

The examination of online spaces, content and actions demonstrates:

↗ Male power and control is exercised through the use of spy applications, GPS tracking devices, blackmail and targeted abuse aimed at controlling women's voices.

↗ The culture of male backlash following passive rejection of sexual advances, as well as rigid gender stereotypes on heterosexual dating sites and applications.

↗ The clear dominance of men in online gaming spaces and the male peer relations which emphasise aggression making it a hostile space for women.

↗ The glorification and condoning of violence against women through gaming and advertising content.

↗ The sexualisation and objectification of women and girls across numerous online spaces and content, reinforcing the gender stereotypes and role of women as subservient objects for male pleasure.

↗ The prevalence of targeted harassment and abuse of women speaking out online compounded by other aspects of their identity such as race, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation.

↗ The overall view of online spaces as unsafe for women limiting their freedom, voice and independence in modern society.

This demonstrates the inequality that is prevalent and pervasive in the online environment. These behaviours and actions generate and encourage a culture where women are seen to be less important than men creating a power imbalance not only in the online environment but also in the offline world.

These cultural norms
support and reinforce
gender inequality

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING CYBER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Gender equality is the necessary social context to prevent all violence against women, including cyber violence against women and girls.

Promoting and normalising gender equality in public and private life is key

The online environment must be recognised as a key area of focus for prevention activities. When describing settings for action for preventing violence against women, Change the Story (Our Watch et al., 2015) acknowledges that "… digital technologies and online environments [are] settings and channels that can advance prevention goals… recognising that digital technologies play a role in every aspect of daily life and that the online environment is considered in every setting" (p. 38).

Prevention strategies which promote gender equality by addressing structural barriers and challenging social and cultural norms are essential to making the online environment a safe place for all women. These strategies should be implemented across societal, organisational and individual levels for a multifaceted approach to preventing cyber violence against women. These strategies should also make sure to acknowledge racism, ethnocentrism, ableism, classism, ageism, and hetero-sexism in addition to sexism in order to ensure no women are left behind.

Our Watch et al. (2015) outline the following essential actions that will prevent violence against women and promote gender equality:

- ➤ Challenge condoning of violence against women
- ➤ Promote women's independence and decision making
- ➤ Challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- ➤ Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships

Additional actions to create opportunities and support for women entering or working in technology related fields, is also integral to ending cyber violence against women and girls. Having women heard, valued and contributing to the development of online spaces and content will have a positive influence on creating safer spaces for women online

Possible actions to prevent cyber violence against women and girls at individual, organisational and societal levels are discussed in the following section.

Examples of action to prevent cyber violence against women and girls

INDIVIDUAL ACTION

- Familiarise yourself and others with the rules and regulations of online spaces you use.
- If you witness cyber violence against women and girls report it to the site administrators, for example online harassment or sexist advertising.
- Encourage or petition relevant online bodies or organisations for strict guidelines on acceptable online behaviour that encourages gender equality and a healthy representation of women.
- Boycott media, products and companies that discriminate, sexualise and objectify women, and encourage others to do the same.
- Use your voice in blogs and online discussions about issues that advocate for gender equality and preventing violence against women.
- Contribute to broader feminist activism for collective action to promote gender equality.
- Learn how to safely call out sexism, harassment and inequality online.

ORGANISATIONAL ACTION

- Join your regional PVAW partnership led by your local women's health service to work collectively to end cyber violence against women and girls.
- Boycott companies, venues and products which engage in sexism, discrimination, sexualisation and objectification of women, for example in their advertising.
- Ensure your organisation has policies and procedures which create safe spaces for both staff and the wider community engaging in organisational online spaces such as websites and social media platforms.
- Participate in campaigns for change such as 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence.
- Provide organisational training for gender equity.
- Actively work with partners and community to prevent VAW through programs and services.

SOCIETAL CHANGE

- Society-wide advocacy for policy and legislative changes to address cyber violence against women and girls, including legal sanctions for perpetrators of harassment.
- Society-wide advocacy for positive representation of women in media including advertising online.
- Increased opportunities and support for women entering technology field, and contributing to development of future online spaces.

CONCLUSION

The health and wellbeing of women and girls is significantly impacted when violence, including cyber violence, is perpetrated. Gender inequality in both public and private life is the underlying driver of violence against women and girls.

This paper has highlighted the ways in which online spaces have given women a platform to share their thoughts, concerns and ideas, and have their voices heard. It has also revealed the numerous ways in which the online environment and new technologies intersect with the drivers of violence to contribute to a wider culture of gender inequality and violence against women.

It is important to note that online spaces have largely been constructed by men. Providing greater opportunities for women to enter the field of technology may be a key enabler for creating safe and enjoyable online spaces for women.

In order to achieve sustained change, preventative action must be taken to address the underlying drivers of violence against women and girls. Whilst many current programs enable women to protect themselves online, action moving forward needs to focus on prevention. We need action at societal, organisational and individual levels that can break down rigid gender stereotypes and reduce the imbalance between men and women to ultimately end violence against women.

Harassment is often experienced by women because online spaces have been socially constructed as men's
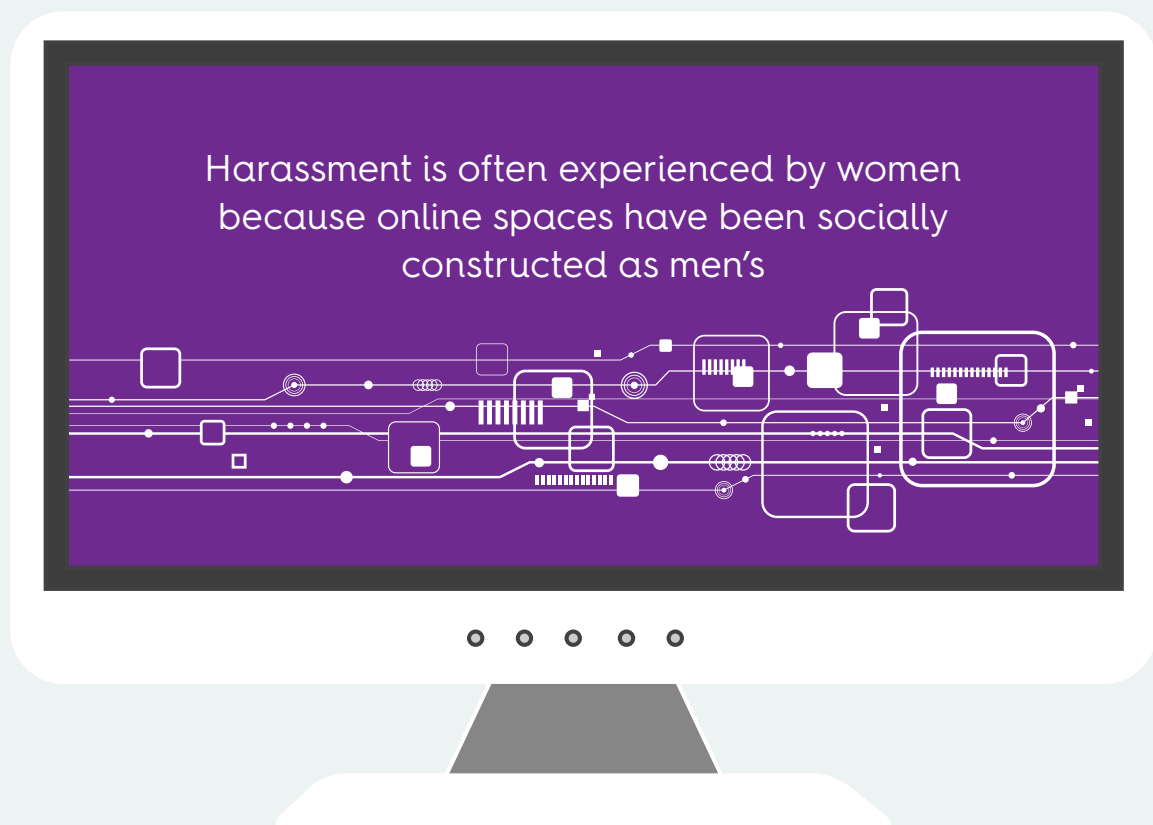
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APPENDIX: RESOURCES

Take Back The Tech

Take back the tech is a collaborative campaign that advocates for women to reclaim technology and the online space to prevent violence against women. The campaign encourages women and girls to take 'control' of technology, and to use it to actively advocate against gender based violence. Started in 2006, *Take back the tech* has now been taken up across the globe.

The Line

The Line is a primary prevention behaviour change campaign targeting young people aged 12 to 20 years old. This campaign encourages healthy and respectful relationships among young people by challenging attitudes and behaviours that support violence.

Girl Geek Academy

Girl Geek Academy is made up of women who are digital professionals who want to increase the number of women with successful STEM careers. Girl Geek work to see an increase of women in tech and games, and women developers, designers and founders.

Women Influencing Tech Spaces

Women Influencing Tech Spaces uses women's voices to raise awareness about the impacts of cyber abuse using the stories of high profile women to role model using online spaces with impact and confidence.

WAM!

WAM! (Women, Action and the Media) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to building a robust, effective, inclusive movement for gender justice in media.

WAM! recently teamed up with Twitter to address gender based online harassment. The partnership will respond to, report and track reported cases of gendered harassment and abuse to better understand how gendered harassment intersects with other types of harassment, how those attacks function on Twitter, and to improve Twitter's responses to it.

In 2014, WAM worked with the Everyday Sexism Project to produce the hashtag #FBrape that forced Facebook to admit that it has failed to remove content that promotes gender-based violence.

Collective Shout

Collective shout is a not-for-profit movement that advocates against the objectification and sexualisation of women and girls in popular culture, the media and advertising. Collective Shout was part of the campaign petitioning Australian retailers to withdraw Grand Theft Auto 5 from their stores on the basis that it promotes and encourages violence against women.

E-Safety Women

The eSafety Commissioner's website eSafety provides information to women experiencing image-based-abuse. It includes other women's stores, step-by-step advice on how to get images taken down, and contact details for support.

Screen Smart

Cybersmart is an Australian government initiative aimed at children and young people, their parents, teachers and library staff. The website provides resources and practical advice on cybersafety issues and how to be safe online.

Stay Smart Online

Stay Smart Online is a government initiative designed to help all Australians understand the risks and the simple steps they can take to protect personal and financial information online. The website has a section specifically focused on socialising online, giving guidance on using social media safely and protecting yourself online.

Thinkuknow

A partnership between the Australian Federal Police, Microsoft Australia, ninemsn and Datacom, *Thinkuknow* aims to raise awareness among parents, carers and teachers of the issues that young people face online. *Thinkuknow Youth* is a partner website for young people aged 11-17 which provides useful information and advice, 'how-to guides' on popular technologies and applications and a button/widget for reporting online sexual abuse.

SmartSafe - Technology Abuse and Your Safety

Developed by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, SmartSafe is a website that provides advice, tools and information for women who are experiencing technology-facilitated stalking in the context of domestic violence.

Women's Health West and the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria have also developed a fact sheets and information on staying safe online specifically for women whose safety is at risk.

WESNET Safety Net Australia Project

WESNET Safety Net Australia was established in 2011 to examine the intersection of technology and violence against women. The project provides technology safety training and resources for agencies working with women who have experienced or are experiencing technology-facilitated abuse. The project also provides policy and advice on technology abuse.

Online Active Bystander Project

Keep an eye out for this project being led by Gender Equity Victoria in the 2018-2019 year. This action based research project will develop resources to support individuals and organisations engaged in social media, and moderators of online forums, to safely address sexism and prevent online based abuse.