

# Keeping Girls and Women Safe from Violence

## GGA Position Statement

### Our Vision

Girl Guides Australia believe that all girls and women deserve to be safe from all forms of violence. We should all be safe in our schools, homes, workplaces, and communities – both in person and online.

### Statement

Girls and women in Australia and around the world experience violence at a higher rate than their male counterparts. Violence can be perpetrated by both strangers and people that are known. Often this violence happens because of their gender. Violence can also be exacerbated due to other intersections of identity, including race, sexuality, disability, and more.

We believe there is no excuse for any form of violence, including street harassment, bullying, online abuse, image-based abuse, sexual harassment and violence, emotional violence, financial abuse, domestic and family violence, and intimate partner violence. Girl Guides also condemn disrespectful attitudes and behaviours that underpin and make space for violence.

There are many opportunities to make our community safer for everyone, and we believe that a safer world is a better world.

### Girls Say

At the 2023 Australian Jamboree, girls told us that violence and safety were key concerns in their communities. This focus is consistent with other research, such as the 2023 Mission Australia Youth Survey, where nearly 20% of girls said safety violence and crime was the most important issue in Australia today.\*

Girl Guides tell us they wanted a world where they felt safer, there was no violence, no bullying, more kindness and more respect. Young people regularly share that they, their friends, and their family members have experienced gender-based violence and it causes them distress.

*"I personally know at least three girls (including myself) who have been sexually harassed by a close (male) friend. I think it would be great if schools not only just talked about consent when it came to sex but also any touching or catcalling which young teenage girls face every day."*

*- 15yr old Guide*

---

\* McHale, R., Brennan, N., Freeburn, T., Rossetto, A., Richardson, E., Boon, B., & Christie, R. (2023). Youth Survey Report 2023. Sydney, NSW: Mission Australia.

<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey/3019-youth-survey-report-2023/download>

*The culture around domestic violence against women needs to change.*

*- Natalie, 15*

### Why is GGA commenting?

Violence has massive impacts on girls and women. Experiencing and witnessing violence, particularly gender-based violence, makes it harder for girls and women to discover their potential. Even the fear of such violence creates barriers to their opportunities.

Girl Guides in Australia want to end violence in their communities and help protect people around the world from gender-based violence. Girl Guides are showing leadership every day in their communities: pushing for safety, respect, compassion, and kindness. Girl Guides Australia is committed to help develop and support this leadership.

### What are Girl Guides Doing?

**In our Girl Guide Units**  
Through the Australian Guide Program, we create safe spaces for girls and young women to be themselves.

The program empowers girls with experiences, skills, and confidence to challenge the limits of social norms stereotypes, and to speak up for themselves and others.

#### **In Our Organisation**

Girl Guides Australia's Child Safe Child Friendly Framework takes a proactive approach to provide girls and women with an environment where they are safe, protected, and respected, and where they can discover their potential as leaders of their world. The Framework embeds the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and serves as an example of good practice for community organisations.

#### **Around the World**

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts has been leading the "Stop the Violence" Campaign since 2011. This campaign supports Girl Guides and Girl Scouts around the world to tackle violence against girls and women in their communities through advocacy, education, awareness raising, community action and research. As part of this campaign, Girl Guides speak up about gender-based violence at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women every year.

### Call to action

#### **Girl Guides Australia calls on Decision Makers to:**

- End gender-based violence in one generation by fully implementing the recommendations of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children<sup>†</sup>
- Design, resource and implement laws, policies, and programs that reduce gender-based violence and the drivers of violence
- Listen to girls and young women (and the organisations that support them) when making decisions about gender-based violence and its impacts
- Have plans and processes in place to address disrespectful attitudes and behaviours before it escalates to violence, and to address violence when it does occur.

---

<sup>†</sup> [Commonwealth of Australia \(2022\), National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032. Department of Social Services : Canberra](#)

### **Girl Guides Australia will:**

- Follow Child Safe, Child Friendly practices to make our meetings and community as safe as possible
- Continue constantly learn and improve our policies and practices to keep Guiding spaces and groups free from gender-based violence
- Provide an environment where girls and young women feel supported to talk to an appropriate person about violence and/or concerns about gender-based violence
- Deliver the Voices Against Violence primary prevention program.
- Support and amplify the voices of Girl Guides who want to speak out about violence

### **Girl Guides should:**

- Live by the Girl Guide Promise and Law
- Respect and be kind to ourselves and others, especially when we are experiencing the negative effects of violence
- Let trusted adults know about violence and give them a chance to help
- Continue to advocate to end the violence.

### **Everyone should:**

- Speak up about prejudice and disrespect, including before it escalates to violence
- Reflect on our own understanding of respect, gender equality and the pressures to conform to social norms and stereotypes.<sup>‡</sup>
- Be more aware of the excuses we make, and how our behaviour sets an example for our young people that can have a lasting impact.<sup>§</sup>
- Model respect by being aware of what we do and say, and the impacts this can have on others.<sup>\*\*</sup>
- Take steps to understand the type of information young people are engaging with online and the disrespectful words and statements they may be exposed to.<sup>††</sup>
- Have conversations with other adults about raising a respectful generation of young people.<sup>††</sup>
- Have conversations about respect with our young people as they grow up – discuss the impact of values, attitudes and behaviours.

### Supporting Research

[Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(2024\), Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence](#)

---

<sup>‡</sup> [Commonwealth of Australia \(2024\), Stop it at the Start Campaign: The Issue Explained.](#)

<sup>§</sup> [Commonwealth of Australia \(2024\), Stop it at the Start Campaign: The Issue Explained.](#)

<sup>\*\*</sup> [Commonwealth of Australia \(2024\), Stop it at the Start Campaign: The Issue Explained.](#)

<sup>††</sup> [Commonwealth of Australia \(2024\), Stop it at the Start Campaign: The Issue Explained.](#)

<sup>††</sup> [Commonwealth of Australia \(2024\), Stop it at the Start Campaign: The Issue Explained.](#)

[Commonwealth of Australia \(2024\), \*Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality\*. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet: Canberra](#)

[Commonwealth of Australia \(2024\), \*Stop it at the Start Campaign\*](#).

[Commonwealth of Australia \(2022\), \*National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032\*. Department of Social Services : Canberra](#)

[Office of the eSafety Commissioner \(2024\) \*Gendered Violence\*](#)

[Our Watch. \(2021\). \*Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia\* \(2nd ed.\). Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.](#)

[Our Watch \(2024\) \*Quick Facts about Violence Against Women\*](#).

[World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts \(n.d.\) \*Stop the Violence\*](#).

[Wharf, H., Barran, C., Briones, C., Francis, G., Rudra, u., & Wilson, A., \(2013\) \*Voices Against Violence: Handbook for Group Leaders\*. World Association of Girl Guides & Girl Scouts: London](#)