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## Human Rights Day an opportunity to campaign and advocate for gender equality

The Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) is challenging decision-makers, leaders, community service organisations, and individuals to stand up for human rights, and protect people experiencing disadvantage and hardship in this state, ahead of International Human Rights Day.

International Human Rights Day, Monday 10 December, promotes the global need to take action on issues related to fundamental human rights, and to ensure every person's rights are protected. International Human Rights Day falls on the final day of 16 Days in WA campaign.

"Domestic violence is a violation of women's human rights. Over the last 16 days we have heard many women's stories. Too many women are living in compromising or violent situations without sufficient options to leave safely. We need to do more," said Louise Giolitto, Chief Executive Officer, WACOSS.

"This year alone, 72 women and 20 children have been killed, and too many of them at the hands of their current or former partners. Studies show that males represent 21 per cent of all victims killed through family at domestic violence.

"WA has the second highest level of family and domestic violence in Australia, we need to work much harder to eliminate gender inequality if we are to make a real difference to the lives of women across this state."

A survey in 2017 by Safer Venues WA found that 80 per cent of female respondents had experienced harassment at Perth entertainment venues. A recent study of workplace harassment showed that of 71 per cent of Australians sexually harassed in the workplace, 85 per cent are likely to be female.

"This treatment of women is appalling. There is something seriously wrong when violence and harassment is overwhelmingly experienced by women.

"We must challenge the systems and behaviours that lead to this attack on women's human rights. Women have the right to freely participate in life, women have the right to feel safe, and should be empowered to seek help and speak out about injustices they face.

"There needs to be funding for essential family and domestic support services that assist women leaving unsafe situations, funding for programs that educate and prevent violence against women along with the continued rollout of Respectful Relationships in schools, and greater accountability for perpetrators and mandatory behaviour change programs for offenders.

"We all have a responsibility to speak out about inappropriate and sexist behaviour when we see it," Louise said.

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