

## EDITORIAL

Violence is, unfortunately, an experience most people go through in the course of their lives.<sup>1</sup> This violence comes in many guises, so it should hardly come as a surprise that people do not all experience violence the same way or in the same form.

A fundamental objective of this Journal is to give voice to those who may be silenced, disenfranchised, or marginalised. Sadly, many people find themselves captured in this description at some point in their life, and so focusing on the violence facing vulnerable groups, and their unique experiences of violence, goes directly towards this goal. Often the very processes that lead to their inclusion in a vulnerable group, and even the processes that make these groups vulnerable in the first place, are in and of themselves violent.

It is with this in mind that the mission statement for this special issue is:

*Women & Violence* aims to empower women by giving voice to the issue of women and violence both domestically and internationally. It questions traditional perspectives on violence against women by exploring and critiquing patriarchy and will contain both personal narratives of women and academic articles on this issue.

When the idea for this special issue was first raised, the question arose: do we focus on women and violence, or have a more neutral and inclusive title of “gender-based violence”? Our decision turned on the nature of the violence.

While looking exclusively at statistics, men face more violence than women.<sup>2</sup> However, when we look beyond the raw data, at the relationship to the perpetrator, the types of violence experienced, and the manner in which victims are treated, a different story emerges. It is a story where women are overwhelmingly the victims of violence for no other reason than that they are women, and where the system fails to both protect and

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<sup>1</sup> The World Health Organisation views violence as an important global health issue, see Etienne Krug et al (eds), *World Report on Violence and Health* (World Health Organisation, 2002) 3–7. See also Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability, *Injuries and Violence: The Facts* (World Health Organisation, 2010) 2. In Australia alone, 4 148 000 men and 3 560 600 women (7 708 600 total) have experienced violence since the age of 15: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *4906.0 – Personal Safety, 2012: Prevalence of Violence* (11 December 2013) Australian Bureau of Statistics, [7] <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/12FE9E8891F24C7DCA257C3D000D8254?opendocument>>.

<sup>2</sup> See, eg, Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability, above n 1, 6; Australian Bureau of Statistics, above n 1, [5]–[7].

seek justice for them. Violence against women acts as an institutionalised bulwark against the 'destroying [of] the joint'.<sup>3</sup> Violence against men does not.

The issue opens with an article by Dr Adrian Howe, looking at the overwhelmingly intimate nature of the relationship between murdered women and their killers. The article makes use of statistics, court cases, and media and blog coverage (including the recent filicide case of Luke Batty) to show the gendered nature of intimate partner killings, the view of women as belonging to the men that have murdered them, and the misrecognition of family violence as an isolated tragic event.

This is followed by an anonymous narrative piece detailing the lived experience of one woman with domestic violence. The narrative not only reads true for many in that same position, but also highlights the general lack of social and wider institutional support for women in violent domestic situations.

Dr Bianca Fileborn's article on street harassment shows the way in which scenarios encountered on a daily basis can constitute gendered violence. For some, having their appearance commented on by strangers in the street is not a negative experience. However, for others, and in some situations, it is unwelcome, or can create an atmosphere of fear for personal safety. There is no redress, because it is a form of violence not recognised by wider society as being violent.

Jane Cullen's examination of one punch laws and domestic violence highlights the way laws not aimed at women can still affect them. Here, laws designed to stop one kind of violence have been repurposed to the advantage of perpetrators of domestic violence.

The issue finishes with Felicity Gerry's article on female genital mutilation, a practice demonstrating that physical violence to female bodies begins at childhood. While a long-known practice of international importance, it continues to remain outside the public discourse.

Though this special issue focuses on violence and women, it does not purport to cover all types of violence faced by women, nor the myriad and diverse experiences of women

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<sup>3</sup> This now infamous line from Alan Jones was widely reported at the time: see, eg, Malcolm Farr, 'Alan Jones: Women are 'destroying the joint'', *News.com.au* (online), 31 August 2012 <<http://www.news.com.au/national/alan-jones-women-are-destroying-the-joint/story-fndo4eg9-1226462326339>>. 'The joint' being the current political, societal, and cultural landscape arrived at through centuries of patriarchy.

experiencing that violence, nor the compounding violence experienced by those falling into numerous disenfranchised groups. Such a feat is beyond any single issue, volume, or series of publication. It is our hope that this issue will invite thought and discussion on the violence faced by women, and the unexpected, sometimes unnoticed, forms that violence can take.

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