In today's world where gender stereotypes, everyday sexism and rape culture are commonplace, violence against women is still not receiving the attention it deserves or needs. Many see violence against women as a figure or a statistic, shocked by it but not believing it could happen to them or to people they know. It is, for the most part, a taboo subject. However, violence against women needs to be discussed, because at least one woman dies a week as a result of domestic violence and in the past decade gender-based violence has made up for more deaths, illnesses and injuries than cancer, traffic injuries and malaria in women collectively. The fact that 30%, that's 1 out of every 3 women in the world, have experienced sexual harassment at some point in their life is horrifying.

Gender inequality is the root cause of violence against women, if men feel that they are above women then that obviously grants them the ability to do what they please, even if that means physically or mentally harming another being. This mindset is detrimental not only to the individual or individuals suffering the abuse and those around them but to society as a whole. If people see violence against women as an accepted norm or unchangeable it will unfortunately remain so.

One strategy to diminish violence against women is to inform people about it. Understanding what is normal or abnormal in a relationship, regardless of the level of intimacy, is important. Children need to learn how to partake in healthy and respectful relationships. By watching their parents and others’ relationships children copy what they see and apply it in their own lives.

In addition, the media is one of the greatest influences in modern life. Unfortunately there are numerous representations of women that are unfavourable in a society where women are supposedly equal. By changing typical gender representations, women are more likely to be seen as human beings rather than as sexual objects. Ad campaigns, tv shows, leaders in positions of power and social media all have the ability to change perceptions surrounding women. The stigma surrounding violence against women needs to be lifted. Instead of blaming the victim, the focus should be more on teaching boys and men the right behaviours. Don’t ask women to avoid violence, educate men not to commit it in the first place. This can only be done by bringing the issue into the public’s view.

Another way to inform younger generations about violence against women would be to set up compulsory educational programs in schools about respectful relationships. These programs could discuss topics such as consensual sex, sexism and gender equality, forms of abuse, respect, healthy relationships and where you are able to get help if needed such as refuges or helplines. These programs would need to be introduced as early as kindergarten and continue through primary and secondary levels of education. This continuity would ensure that the values discussed would stick.

Directing a program specifically at boys would also be extremely beneficial as it is generally men who are the instigators of violence against women. Programs such as White Ribbon, which has been set up and run by men is one example of an organisation helping boys and young men to understand the implications and effects of abuse as well as how they can help prevent violence against women in their own lives. Educating boys is important because if they understand what constitutes a respectful, healthy relationship they are then able to treat girls and women properly.

Legislation and packages such as the Women’s Safety Package introduced by the Turnbull Government in September last year are steps in the right direction and make an
attempt to tackle the issue of violence against women at a national level. Passing laws regarding domestic violence, sexual harassment and abuse demonstrates how violence against women has moved into society’s frontal lobe. Providing ongoing funding for community legal centres that assist women escaping violence is also essential.

Despite the positive action occurring in Australia to combat violence against women, there are many places around the world where women continue to suffer daily. For example, a study conducted by UN Women showed that 92% of women in New Dehli reported that, in their lifetime, they had experienced a form of sexual violence in a public space.

As this example and many others show, gender violence is a global problem and is a significantly larger one in developing countries. However, there is some hope. The key to eliminating violence against women on a world wide scale is education. By educating people about respectful and healthy relationships, boys and men are less likely to abuse their partners, strangers or anyone else. Through education and legislation and bringing this issue to the forefront of the media and national policy we would be closer to eradicating violence against women.