

News Release

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ANZ helps women confronting domestic violence establish financial independence

ANZ is working with Women's Refuge to help women achieve financial independence and escape domestic violence.

Women fleeing domestic violence often find it hard to access money and open their own bank accounts because of the paperwork required. In some situations this is a deterrent to leaving violent relationships.

As a response, ANZ's has worked with Women's Refuge to make it more flexible for women to open accounts.

Women's Refuge provides support services to prevent and stop violence and keep women and children safe. One in three New Zealand women will experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime¹.

"Finances can be a barrier to women leaving abusive relationships and then after they've left, accessing money can continue to be a massive hurdle," ANZ Managing Director Retail and Business Banking Antonia Watson said.

"ANZ is the first bank to make account opening procedures more flexible, allowing women referred by the Women's Refuge to set up an account if there's a missing ID or have no permanent address.

"We need this documentation by law, but by being more flexible about when we require the documents, we're helping women set themselves up faster and keep them safe.

"Anything we can do to help someone in a dangerous relationship push towards independence and feel confident about how they'll move forward is important.

"ANZ believes financial inclusion and wellbeing is critical to functioning communities. We all need to address our appalling rates of domestic violence so we hope this will make a positive contribution."

ANZ has rolled out the new process and training to all branches nationwide following a trial earlier this year in Wellington.

Women's Refuge Chief Executive Dr Ang Jury said ANZ's policy change will make a difference.

¹ <http://areyouok.org.nz/family-violence/statistics/>

“Domestic violence is incredibly complex, but we know financial abuse and control is a major issue,” said Dr Jury.

“Often a partner will run up debt in the women’s name, take the Eftpos and credit cards and control what money can be spent, leaving them feeling helpless.

“When they leave a relationship in a hurry they often don’t have necessary IDs and without access to a bank account a woman can’t access get into a house, receive a benefit or have any sort of financial freedom.

“ANZ changing their account opening processes is a step towards keeping women safe when escaping violent relationships.”

The ANZ Staff Foundation provides support to organisations focused on domestic violence prevention and victim support. ANZ also offers domestic violence leave and support to staff.

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