

# Organisational Best Practice and Innovation

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## Background

There is a growing understanding that domestic and family violence (DFV) is a workplace issue. DFV can impact a person's safety, wellbeing, attendance and performance at work. Research shows:

- [1 in 5 Australian women say the violence continues at work](#)<sup>1</sup>
- [two-thirds of Australian women experiencing DFV are employed](#)<sup>2</sup>
- [between 25 - 50 per cent of Australian women subjected to DFV report having lost a job, at least in part due to the violence](#)<sup>3</sup>
- [DFV costs employers across Australia at least \\$175 million annually.](#)<sup>4</sup>

Organisations across all sectors, including government, business, and non-government can play a significant role in creating cultural change to ensure the safety of women and children and end domestic and family violence. Over one third of all organisations participating in the [Workplace Gender Equality Agency's 2014-15 survey report](#) have a formal policy or strategy in place to support employees experiencing domestic or family violence<sup>5</sup>. Some organisations have led by example by delivering comprehensive and innovative workplace responses, targeting internal employees and external customers. Many organisations face similar challenges and opportunities in addressing this type of violence. This roundtable will focus on the sharing of effective strategies, insights, and

innovative developments in addressing DFV in a workplace context.

## Issues

Comprehensive workplace responses aim to prevent violence, support affected employees, and promote respectful workplace cultures and gender equality. Key action areas that are visible in leading organisational strategies include:

- Policy – these are clear, impactful, accessible and well-promoted
- Leadership – there is visible commitment to champion cultural change
- Capability – employees recognise signs of violence, respond and refer appropriately
- Awareness and engagement – employees make violence prevention a workplace issue
- Partnerships – targeted programs promote accountability and drive long-term change
- Monitoring and evaluation – success of responses are measured and shared.

It is common for organisations to have DFV policies or strategies<sup>6</sup>, however better practice suggests that more is required including:

- *A sustainable DFV workplace agenda* – Workplaces need to integrate responses with respectful workplace culture, inclusion and diversity, and health, wellbeing and safety.
- *A comprehensive responses covering all employees* – Many workplace support initiatives focus on victims only. Offering all affected employees (victims, perpetrators seeking behaviour change, bystanders, carers or those assisting) appropriate support options can achieve better outcomes.
- *One size won't fit all* – Unique needs, culture and authorising environment should be considered. Innovation approaches, such as design thinking, can assist organisations to

focus on employee and client behaviour and translate insights into improved products, services and processes.

- *Target responses to improve impact* – Address groups with immediate need (including women and their children experiencing violence) and complement with initiatives that acknowledge impacts of violence on other groups (for example, men, LGBTQI, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds).
- *Access to Workplace capability training and assistance in implementing DFV* – The demand for services to assist organisations implementing DFV initiatives is not being met by the market. The national demand for employee capability development training outweighs current supply.
- *Measuring success is challenging* – Confidentiality restricts data collection (for example, DFV leave is not reported for safety reasons, Employee Assistance Provider usage and employee opinion surveys may only provide trend data). Evaluation is therefore complex and demonstrating impact of policy is difficult.

In terms of recent best practice developments, various organisations have introduced innovative responses targeting internal and external stakeholders, moving beyond paid leave policies and capability-development training. These examples have potential application across sectors and include:

- predictive analytics – for example, red flag systems identifying customer financial abuse

- technology-based support tools – for example, virtual counselling or information via text message or online
- financial support and cash advances for critical services – for example, cash advances for housing or legal and financial advice
- driving continuous improvement of workplace initiatives through external accreditation partnership programs – for example, [White Ribbon Australia](#) workplace accreditation.

Other emerging developments with the potential to have national influence include:

- The Victorian Government has funded [Our Watch](#) to develop workplace standards and tools for the prevention of violence against women. This package will be tested in different workplaces and made available publicly. It focuses on leadership, safe work environments, challenging gender stereotypes and norms, non-discriminatory work conditions, support for staff that experience violence, and engaging stakeholders.
- The [Industrial Relations Bill 2016](#), before Queensland Parliament, proposes leave provisions, the right to request flexible work arrangements (and appeal if request is declined), and to extend carer's leave to care for any person affected by DFV in Queensland's Employment Standards. If the Bill is approved, Queensland will be the first state with legislated DFV leave arrangements. The Bill also proposes to apply general protections and adverse action provisions to victims of DFV.

*Authored by Queensland in preparation for COAG National Summit*

### Discussion questions

- How can organisations make a difference through a well-designed DFV workplace response?
- What is required to effectively implement nationally consistent workplace standards and tools for responding to DFV?
- What are some of the most successful examples of workplace responses to DFV in different jurisdictions?

### More information

Queensland Government 2016, *Domestic and Family Violence*, [www.qld.gov.au/gov/domestic-and-family-violence](http://www.qld.gov.au/gov/domestic-and-family-violence)

<sup>1</sup> Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Micromex, and University of New South Wales 2011, *Gendered Violence and Work: Key findings - Safe at Home, Safe at Work? National Domestic Violence and the Workplace Survey 2011*, [https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/media/FASSFile/Key\\_Findings\\_National\\_Domestic\\_Violence\\_and\\_the\\_Workplace\\_Survey\\_2011.pdf](https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/media/FASSFile/Key_Findings_National_Domestic_Violence_and_the_Workplace_Survey_2011.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, 4906.0 - *Personal Safety, Australia, 2005 (Reissue)*, [http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4906.02005%20\(Reissue\)?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4906.02005%20(Reissue)?OpenDocument)

<sup>3</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission 2011, *Domestic Violence and the Workplace: Employee, Employer and Union Resources*, [https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/Annex%20A%20policies\\_and\\_procedures.pdf](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/Annex%20A%20policies_and_procedures.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Department of Social Services 2004, *The Cost of Domestic Violence to the Australian Economy*, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/publications-articles/reducing-violence/the-cost-of-domestic-violence-to-the-australian-economy>

<sup>5</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2015, *Family and Domestic Violence Policies and Practices in Australian Workplaces*, <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Family-and-domestic-violence-policies-and-practices-in-Australian-workplaces.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2015, *Family and Domestic Violence Policies and Practices in Australian Workplaces*, <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Family-and-domestic-violence-policies-and-practices-in-Australian-workplaces.pdf>