



Taking the first step:
Workplace responses
to domestic and
family violence

December 2017

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If you or someone you know has experienced domestic or family violence, phone **1800 RESPECT**, or visit www.1800respect.org.au

Taking the first step: Workplace responses to domestic and family violence

Foreword

Violence against women is one of the most serious, life threatening and widespread violations of human rights globally. In Australia, 40.8% of women have experienced some form of violence since the age of 15.¹ Violence against women occurs in the home, in public spaces and also in the workplace. Across Asia, studies in Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea show that 30 to 40% of women suffer workplace sexual harassment.² Workplaces are affected by violence in the workplace and by family and domestic violence. In Australia, between 55% and 70% of women who have experienced or are currently experiencing family and domestic violence are in the paid workforce,³ and perpetrators are also part of the workforce.

Violence against women has devastating consequences for survivors, communities, businesses and society. Violence damages survivors' mental and physical health and undermines their educational, earning and employment opportunities, limiting women's ability to fulfil their true potential. Violence, both at home and at the workplace, diminishes women's participation and advancement in the

workplace and contributes to sex discrimination at work. Data show that women who are exposed to intimate partner violence are employed in higher numbers in casual and part-time work, and that their earnings from formal wage work are 60% lower, compared to women who do not experience such violence.⁴

Violence against women also carries with it significant costs, to individuals, businesses and societies. It results in loss of income and increased costs for women who experience violence, due to the cost of accessing services and days off work. For businesses, research has found significant costs in terms of decreased productivity due to violence against women, both in and outside of the workplace.⁵ It is estimated that domestic and family violence will cost Australian businesses \$609 million annually by 2021.⁶

Family and domestic violence is a complex issue, and needs to be addressed across the full spectrum of society. However, this problem is preventable, and everyone has a role to play in ending violence and creating safer communities for women and girls.



¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013). Personal Safety, Australia, 2012, Cat 4906.0. Available from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>

² UN Women, *Fast facts: statistics on violence against women and girls* at: <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/299-fast-facts-statistics-on-violence-against-women-and-girls-.html>, Retrieved November 1st 2017.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005). Personal Safety, Australia, 2005, Cat. No. 4906.0, 35. Available from: [www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Main+Features12005%20\(Reissue\)?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4906.0Main+Features12005%20(Reissue)?OpenDocument)

⁴ World Bank (2015). Women, Business and the Law 2016: Getting to Equal.

⁵ Smith H. (2015). *Private Sector Development Synthesis Note – Women's Economic Empowerment*, The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development.

⁶ The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (2009). *The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children*. KPMG.

Businesses in particular have a crucial role to play in responding to all forms of violence against women and supporting women experiencing violence. The workplace presents a unique opportunity to help women who may be living with violence at home, to identify the problem and assist with seeking help. Workplaces are influential social settings where many people spend the majority of their adult lives. A workplace can be a place away from the abuser, where women can find protection from domestic and intimate partner violence, through support, information and referral to services. When workplaces understand, recognise and respond to violence against women, women can remain working and access the support they need. Critically, for a woman who suffers from violence at home, earning an income and economic independence can give her the means to escape a violent relationship. Without earnings or economic resources, many women find it very difficult to leave abusive relationships.

It is also essential for businesses to deal with perpetrators of violence, who may be among their workforce. Remaining silent about known abusive behaviour is dangerous and sends a message of acceptance of violence. Taking a clear stance against violence, and in support

of anyone experiencing violence and abuse, is a strong message for employers to send. Doing so contributes to ending violence against women, which in turn supports women's economic advancement and empowerment in the workplace – opening the doors for more talented, diverse, and safe workplaces. Businesses can contribute to preventing violence against women by promoting gender equality and by changing social norms that condone, stay silent about, or tolerate such violence.⁷

In Australia, many companies are now taking important steps to address domestic and family violence as a workplace issue. The companies showing the greatest leadership in addressing violence against women are prepared to respond with information and support, and have policies in place to identify, inform, educate and support their staff to overcome domestic violence. Some companies are providing paid leave to employees experiencing domestic and family violence, as well as giving information about services, such as health care, counselling or legal aid for perpetrators and victims. These measures can provide life-altering support for people living in fear and in danger. Almost 35% of Australian organisations now have a domestic violence policy or strategy.⁸



⁷ Secretary-General of the United Nations (2016). Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-first session, Item 27 of the provisional agenda, Advancement of Women, A/71/219, 27 July 2016

⁸ Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2015). Australia's gender equality scorecard – Key findings from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's 2014–15 reporting data November 2015

Approaches that contribute to ending domestic and family violence in the workplace are smart investments that can result in strong financial benefits for companies.⁹ Supporting survivors of violence to stay working not only optimises productivity and profitability, but also reduces recruitment and training costs for employers.¹⁰

The Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs)¹¹ offer practical guidance to business and the private sector on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. These principles are designed to support companies in reviewing or establishing policies and practices to realise women’s empowerment. The WEPs call attention to the many positive roles that the private sector can play to address violence, establishing workplaces where violence against women are not tolerated. As of November 2017, more than 1663 business leaders around the world have committed to promote gender equality in the workplace through the Women’s Empowerment Principles.

Evidence shows that to prevent violence against women, we must bring everyone into a conversation that questions violence and explores new ways of being in relationships.

This means involving individuals, communities, organisations and businesses across all segments of society. Many companies are speaking with the experts – women’s organisations in particular – to understand the issue and how they can best support.

To sum up, businesses have a powerful role to play to prevent and respond to violence against women, contributing to a future where all women and their children live free from violence, where women are valued, safe and treated as equals. Together, it is possible to empower women to participate fully and safely in economic life, build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities.



Miwa Kato

Regional Director

UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

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⁹ Chung, D., Zufferey, C., & Powell, A. (2012). Preventing violence against women in the workplace. Australia: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

¹⁰ Day T., Mckenna K., and Bowlus A., (2005). The Economic Costs of Violence against Women: An Evaluation of the Literature, Expert brief compiled in preparation for the Secretary-General’s in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. United Nations and the University of Western Ontario.

¹¹ United Nations Global Impact and UN Women (2010). Women’s Empowerment Principles – Equality Means Business.



When an employee is living with domestic and family violence, there are often very real costs and negative impacts that flow to the workplace. At the same time, the workplace can often be one of the few places where employees can feel safe and seek the help they need to address the violence. At this critical time, maintaining a secure income is an important factor to recovery from violence and to enable women and their families to live an independent violence-free life.

In 2012, 62.3% of women who had experienced violence by an intimate partner in the last 12 months were in paid employment.

A significant number of Australian workplaces are therefore impacted by women's experiences of domestic and family violence.

Engaging workplaces in the response to domestic and family violence is an important part of a community-wide approach to this issue, to support those affected to stay safely in their homes, in their jobs and in their communities.

Kate Jenkins
Sex Discrimination Commissioner

Executive summary

The World Health Organisation estimates that around 35% of (or 1 in 3) women globally experience physical and/or sexual violence in her lifetime.¹² One in three Australian women has experienced physical violence, since the age of 15.¹³ Many of these women experience domestic and family violence. Domestic violence is currently the leading cause of death, disability and physical/mental illness for Australian women between the ages of 15 and 44 years.¹⁴

Of those Australian women experiencing domestic and family violence, two-thirds of them are employed.¹⁵ Domestic and family violence is a serious societal issue, and has an adverse impact on employees and workplaces, through reduced performance and productivity; absenteeism; employee turnover and the potential for a negative reputational impact.

For women working out of the home, who are experiencing violence at home, a job may provide

one of the only escapes from abuse. Workplaces with policies in place to protect and support their employees experiencing violence can provide a vital lifeline to safety.

In recent years, Australian organisations have increasingly recognised that domestic and family violence is a workplace issue, and that workplaces have an important role to play to keep employees safe. Australian businesses and unions have been commended as global leaders in addressing the impact of domestic and family violence at work.

This report highlights the significance of domestic and family violence as a workplace issue. It chronicles the efforts of Australian organisations, large and small, across diverse industries to formulate promising workplace practice, policies and responses to domestic and family violence, with the goal of helping other organisations take the first step to protect and support employees experiencing violence.



¹³ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>

¹⁴ Cox, P. (2015) Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012, Horizons Research Report, Issue 1, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), Sydney; and Woodlock, D., Healey, L., Howe, K., McGuire, M., Geddes, V. and Granek, S. (2014).

¹⁵ <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures>

Promising practice to support employees experiencing violence



- Listen to and learn from the experience of people affected by violence, to shape thinking, communications and approach
- Consult with organisations working in violence prevention/survivor support to develop immediate and longer-term responses for employee survivors
- Read about/contact peer organisations who have established policies, to understand what's working and lessons learned
- Align corporate support for employees experiencing domestic and family violence with relevant safety, gender equality and/or diversity and inclusion strategy, with both being visibly and integrally promoted and endorsed by senior leaders
- Provide flexible, paid domestic and family violence leave for affected employees
- Educate all employees regularly and through different platforms about organisational support and strategies to deal with domestic and family violence
- Make relevant workplace policies and procedures easy to locate and understand
- Establish and communicate referral mechanisms and resources available to managers and all employees
- Draw from experts to develop and deliver a blend of face-to-face and online training
- Organise temporary accommodation – or financial support to cover costs of temporary accommodation – for employees at risk
- Provide security escorts for employees at risk, protecting them as they arrive at and depart from work
- Offer flexible working arrangements, such as altered start or finish times, change in roster patterns, or a change in job location
- Ensure employee assistance programs are equipped to use referral pathways to external organisations
- Survey employees to gauge awareness of policy and support available, and gain feedback on the existing response, for continuous quality improvement
- Align the company's external response to customers with core business, to contribute to a whole of community response to domestic and family violence
- Ensure regional/global workforce and Australian workforce impacted by violence have the same access to resources and support
- Invest in organisations working to prevent violence and support survivors, to demonstrate holistic commitment to ending domestic and family violence.



Job security, employee assistance programs, temporary accommodation, legal or other direct support are vital facilitators to help people experiencing violence to feel comfortable taking the first step to seek safety. A comprehensive workplace response to domestic and family violence is both a moral and business imperative. For Australian-based organisations with offices around the world, the policy and practice response should apply to their offshore operations too.

Violence against women stems from gender inequality, and is entirely preventable. Organisations that wish to address the root causes of violence against women have an obligation to advance gender equality in the

workplace. In 2017, the Women's Empowerment Principles [Gender Gap Analysis Tool](#) was launched to assist organisations to assess progress and pinpoint key actions to accelerate gender equality within business. [Our Watch's Workplace Equality and Respect Standards](#) are due for public release in 2018, and will include a self-assessment, implementation guide and other resources to assist any workplace to accelerate their journey to a safer, more respectful and gender-equal workplace.

Every organisation has a role to play to support its people who are experiencing domestic and family violence, and create a culture that does not tolerate violence or discrimination and actively promotes gender equality.

If you or someone you know has experienced domestic or family violence, phone **1800 RESPECT**, or visit www.1800respect.org.au

Introduction

UN Women National Committee (NC) Australia is the fundraising and advocacy arm of [UN Women](#), the United Nations entity for gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2016, representatives of UN Women's Asia and the Pacific leadership team visited Australia, and they were struck by how Australian companies had recognised that domestic and family violence was a workplace issue, and how businesses had identified the role they could play to keep employees safe.

After further conversations and consultations over many months, this case study project was born. It follows extensive research and work undertaken by diverse stakeholders, in particular, the Male Champions of Change with its pioneering report, [Playing Our Part](#) and [subsequent lessons learned](#).

UN Women NC Australia, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Commonwealth Bank) and PwC, has collected case studies to profile promising Australian workplace responses to domestic and family violence, to complement existing research and showcase some new voices on this journey to keep people safe. This report highlights the significance of domestic and family violence as a workplace issue. It chronicles the efforts of Australian organisations, large and small, across diverse industries to formulate workplace practice, policies and responses to domestic and family violence. Each organisation's story is designed to stimulate thinking, exchange ideas and showcase lessons learned and promising practices.

The experiences of the organisations profiled may provide a useful guideline to workplaces in Australia and around the world that are willing to take the first step or already on this journey as they formulate their response to domestic and family violence.

Australian workplaces lead the global response to domestic and family violence

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) published the first edition of its report, *Violence at work* in 1998.¹⁶ Concerns about safety at work take many different shapes, one of which is ensuring people who experience violence at home, are safe at work. For women working out of the home, who are experiencing violence at home, a job may provide one of the only escapes from abuse. Workplaces with policies in place to protect and support their employees experiencing violence can provide a vital lifeline to safety.

Australian businesses and unions have been recognised as global leaders in addressing the impact of domestic and family violence at work. The fifty-seventh session of the United Nations Commission on the Status Women (CSW57) in 2013 highlighted the Australian domestic violence entitlements in industrial awards and agreements as good practice.¹⁷

The ILO continues to actively seek Australia's advice in developing international labour standards and its contributions to the ILO's publications on violence at work and workplace responses to domestic and family violence.

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¹⁶ http://www.ilo.org/safework/areasofwork/workplace-health-promotion-and-well-being/WCMS_108511/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁷ United Nations Secretary for the Commission on the Status of Women 57th Session CSW 57 2013, General Multi-Sectoral services and responses for women and girls subjected to violence, p 12.

*There is a whole world of gender-based violence... This includes family violence and how that spills over into the world of work and Australia leads the way in the world with respect to handling that very complex issue.*¹⁸

Ged Kearney President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), September 2016

Australian organisations have developed a sound understanding of how domestic and family violence affects workplaces on many fronts. This includes employee work performance and productivity; absenteeism; employee turnover and the potential for a negative reputational impact, to name a few.

Domestic and family violence as an international human rights issue

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women characterises violence against women as:

*...any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life...*¹⁹



¹⁸ <http://www.smh.com.au/business/workplace-relations/international-labour-organisation-seeks-australias-advice-on-violence-in-the-workplace-20160929-grrdmx.html>

¹⁹ United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) Article 1 <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>

²⁰ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>

²¹ Cox, P. (2015) Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012, Horizons Research Report, Issue 1, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), Sydney; and Woodlock, D., Healey, L., Howe, K., McGuire, M., Geddes, V. and Granek, S. (2014).

²² <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures>

²³ Ibid

The World Health Organisation estimates that around 35% of (or 1 in 3) women globally experience physical and/or sexual violence in her lifetime.²⁰ One in three Australian women has experienced physical violence, since the age of 15.²¹ Many of these women experience domestic and family violence.

Domestic and family violence is among the most common forms of gender-based violence, and is a grave problem in Australia and around the world. Domestic violence specifically 'refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic settings between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse.'²² Family violence is much broader, as it includes violence between diverse family members, such as adolescent violence against parents or elder abuse – not only violence between intimate partners. 'Family violence includes violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful.'²³

Under international law, domestic and family violence is a well-established violation of human rights, resulting in far-reaching and serious consequences for survivors, victims and their children. In a broad sense, the right to protection from violence and to security

and liberty, is recognised as an inherent human right. It encompasses various forms of violence including physical, mental, emotional, sexual or financial abuse, and manifests in a number of key international law instruments. These include relevant multinational conventions such as:

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights²⁴
- The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women²⁵
- Convention on the Rights of the Child²⁶
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)²⁷
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities²⁸

Additionally, domestic and family violence violates a number of fundamental human rights under international law. These include:

- The right to life
- The highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
- Freedom of expression and the right to hold opinions without interference
- A child or young person's right to leisure and play
- The right to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

- The right to education
- The right to decent work²⁹

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women obliges governments to take all appropriate measures to eradicate discrimination against women, including violence in all areas of life. This includes the workplace, to ensure women have access to healthy and safe working conditions. As a party to this convention, the Australian Government is expected to comply with these international standards.

Domestic and family violence as a workplace issue

Historically, domestic and family violence was not regarded as a workplace issue, but a growing body of evidence clearly points to the widespread impact and cost of domestic and family violence to organisations. Domestic and family violence can impact a person's safety, wellbeing, attendance and performance at work.

Research shows:

- Two-thirds of Australian women experiencing domestic and family violence are employed³⁰
- 1 in 5 Australian women says the violence continues at work³¹

²⁴ <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%20999/volume-999-i-14668-english.pdf>

²⁵ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>

²⁶ https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf

²⁷ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw27/tun3-4.pdf>

²⁸ <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/family-and-domestic-violence/why-domestic-violence-human-rights-issue>

³⁰ 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)

³¹ 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

1 in 3 Australian women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15

The World Health Organisation estimates that around 35% of (or 1 in 3) women globally experience physical and/or sexual violence in her lifetime^A

^A World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council (2013). Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence, p.2. For individual country information, see The World's Women 2015, Trends and Statistics, Chapter 6, Violence against Women, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015 and UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women. Sourced from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

- 25–50% of Australian women subjected to domestic and family violence report having lost a job, at least in part due to the violence.³²

Health

Domestic violence is currently the leading cause of death, disability and physical/mental illness for Australian women between the ages of 15 and 44 years.³³

Economic

Overall, it is estimated that the societal cost of violence against women is \$21.7 billion a year. People experiencing violence bear the biggest burden of this cost. Government bears the second biggest burden, estimated at \$7.8 billion per year, including health, social welfare and administration costs.³⁴

The estimated cost of domestic violence to Australian workplaces in 2002/3 was \$8.1 billion. This could rise to \$9.9 billion annually by 2021/2 if no action is taken by employers.³⁵

These costs will arise in the following ways:

- Lower employee performance and productivity leading to lower efficiency
- Decreased motivation and higher absenteeism

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³² 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

³³ <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures>

³⁴ PwC, A high price to pay: The economic case for preventing violence against women. p 4 <https://www.pwc.com.au/pdf/a-high-price-to-pay.pdf>

³⁵ National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children (2009). https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/vawc_economic_report.pdf AND <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/family-and-domestic-violence/publications/fact-sheet-domestic-and-family-violence-workplace#fn9>

³⁶ https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/vawc_economic_report.pdf AND <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/family-and-domestic-violence/publications/fact-sheet-domestic-and-family-violence-workplace#fn9>

- Physical and mental injuries and illness
- Lower employee retention rates
- Higher administrative costs relating to hiring and/or training replacements
- Paying overtime for other employees covering for survivors/perpetrators
- Grievance expenses relating to disciplinary actions and potential litigation
- Damage to an employer's reputation³⁶

Impact on employees

Violence has a dramatic impact on the work life of survivors of domestic and family violence.

People experiencing abuse at home are also more likely to have lower incomes and disrupted work histories. They often change jobs at short notice and take on irregular working arrangements, such as casual and part-time work.

Projected cost of domestic violence to workplaces

The estimated cost to workplaces of domestic violence in 2002/3 was \$8.1 billion. This could rise to \$9.1 billion annually by 2021/2 if no action is taken by employers.

Citation: National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children (2009).

2002 – 2003
8.1 Billion

2021 – 2022
9.1 Billion



Domestic and family violence experienced in the workplace

Often times people experiencing violence at home are not immune to that violence when at the workplace. People using violence may actively target the survivor in the workplace in the following ways:

- Email and phone call harassment, or appearing at the workplace
- Trying to force the survivor to resign or trying to get them fired
- Trying to control the survivor by making them financially dependent, by undermining their confidence or punishing them for trying to leave the abusive relationship.

Promising practice to support employees experiencing violence

Organisations can adopt recognised strategies to address domestic and family violence in the workplace and the community at large, such as:

- Listen to and learn from the experience of people affected by violence, to shape thinking, communications and approach
- Consult with organisations working in violence prevention/survivor support, including unions and government, to develop immediate and longer-term responses for employee survivors
- Read about/contact peer organisations who have established policies, to understand what's working and lessons learned
- Align corporate support for employees experiencing domestic and family violence with relevant safety, gender equality and/or diversity and inclusion strategy, with both being visibly and integrally promoted and endorsed by senior leaders

- Provide flexible, paid domestic and family violence leave for affected employees
- Educate all employees regularly and through different platforms (social media, events, and leader-led communication to name a few) about organisational support and strategies to deal with domestic and family violence
- Make relevant workplace policies and procedures easy to locate and understand
- Establish and communicate referral mechanisms and resources available to managers and all employees
- Draw from experts to develop and deliver a blend of face-to-face and online training. Training for people managers helps leaders deal with team members in domestic and family violence situations. Training for all employees helps build awareness about domestic and family violence, what supports are available and how gender equality is a lever to stop violence before it starts.
- Organise temporary accommodation – or financial support to cover costs of temporary accommodation – for employees at risk
- Provide security escorts for employees at risk, protecting them as they arrive at and depart from work
- Offer flexible working arrangements, such as altered start or finish times, change in roster patterns, or a change in job location
- Ensure employee assistance programs are equipped to use referral pathways to external organisations
- Survey employees to gauge awareness of policy and support available, and gain feedback on the existing response, for continuous quality improvement

Respondents to the 2011 National Domestic Violence Workplace Survey indicate how their work was affected by domestic violence

10%

said that they had to take time off

16%

reported it affected their work performance due to tiredness, feeling unwell or being distracted

48%

said it affected their ability to get to work

- Align the company’s external response to customers with core business, to contribute to a whole of community response to domestic and family violence. For example, Telstra donates mobile phones, Mirvac is donating property to a women’s refuge and Commonwealth Bank is providing financial assistance to customers experiencing violence
- Ensure regional/global workforce and Australian workforce impacted by violence have the same access to resources and support
- Invest in organisations working to prevent violence and support survivors, to demonstrate holistic commitment to ending domestic and family violence.

Commission that domestic violence leave should become a minimum standard for all Australian workers, with a proposal of ten days of paid leave for those experiencing this abuse. The Commission rejected the proposal. Deputy President Gooley and Commissioner Spencer expressed a preliminary view that: “All employees should have access to unpaid family and domestic violence leave and in addition we have formed the preliminary view that employees should be able to access personal/carer’s leave for the purpose of taking family and domestic violence leave.”³⁸ The Fair Work Commission invited submissions from interested parties on a draft model of unpaid family and domestic violence leave. At time of writing, a decision has not yet been taken. The Australian Council of Trade Unions and many domestic violence service providers, advocacy organisations and businesses would like paid domestic and family violence leave provisions to be revisited in the future.

The *Fair Work Act* gives eligible employees experiencing domestic and family violence or eligible employees providing care or support for a family or household member experiencing domestic violence the right to request flexible working arrangements.³⁹ However, many employees are reluctant to ask due to the stigma and potential discrimination they may face if they disclose this information.

History of Australian workplace policy response to domestic and family violence

Domestic and family violence workplace policies first emerged in Australia’s surf and beach culture. Australia’s first domestic violence clause included in an enterprise agreement was between the Victorian Surf Coast Shire Council and the Australian Services Union Victorian Authorities and Services Branch (Surf Coast Shire Council Enterprise Agreement 2010–2013).³⁷ Surf Life Saving Australia is the first documented Australian organisation to introduce a workplace policy specifically for domestic and family violence.

In 2016, the Australian Council of Trade Unions made an important submission to Fair Work



³⁷ <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/mcferran-domestic-violence-workplace-issue-australian-developments.pdf>

³⁸ <https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/decisionssigned/html/2017fwc3696.htm>

³⁹ <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/best-practice-guides/the-right-to-request-flexible-working-arrangements>

Australian case studies

Australian organisations are leading the way globally in supporting employees affected by domestic and family violence by developing integrated policies and practices.

In the pages that follow, a diverse set of different sized organisations operating in different industries and sectors share the steps they are taking to help keep their employees safe. By including a broad sample of organisations on this journey, the goal is that any organisation of any size and from any industry can find relatable suggestions to help take the first steps to respond to domestic and family violence.

The case studies were drafted as a result of a series of interviews or written exchanges between UN Women National Committee Australia and the organisations themselves. As they are self-reported, they have not been independently verified, but are expected to represent current practice in these organisations at time of writing.

Aurizon

As Australia's largest rail freight operator, Aurizon connects miners, primary producers and industry with international and domestic markets. Aurizon's workforce of 5,500 people, 80% of whom are men, operates in over 200 locations across the country in a wide range of roles and activities.

In 2010, Aurizon conducted Australia's largest initial public offering in more than a decade, resulting in the company's transition from a 150-year-old government railway to a top 30 ASX-listed company. As part of this transition

Aurizon embarked upon an organisational and cultural transformation. From early on, safety, culture, diversity and inclusion were recognised by the board as key transformational outcomes.

Whilst Aurizon had been active and visible on the issue of domestic and family violence at a community engagement level, it was in 2015 that it started to consider domestic and family violence from the perspective of employee safety and wellbeing. The need to take action on this issue was a logical extension of its commitment to both safety and inclusion.

Aurizon's senior leaders have collaborated with a number of organisations to better understand the impact of domestic and family violence on workplaces and the community, and to help the company develop its policies. These organisations include:

- [UN Women National Committee Australia](#)
- Queensland Premier's Domestic and Family Violence Implementation Council
- [White Ribbon Australia](#)⁴⁰
- The '[Not Now, Not Ever – Putting an end to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland'](#) special taskforce report (2015)

In Australia, two out of three women who report domestic and family violence are in paid employment⁴¹, which implies that in Aurizon, potentially 150 women have experienced or are dealing with domestic and family violence. Accordingly, Aurizon's focus has been to:

- Recognise and accept that domestic and family violence is a workplace issue

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⁴⁰ White Ribbon Australia aims to engage men to make women's safety a man's issue to create a nation that respects women, where women are safe and free from all forms of men's abuse

⁴¹ http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/13_10_31_DV_as_a_workplace_issue_factsheet_FINAL6.pdf

- Take action by implementing practical responses
- Educate leaders on when to step in and how best to support employees

Some practical responses include:

- Financial support, including up to 28 days of temporary accommodation, reimbursement of legal expenses (up to \$300) and salary advances to cover rental bonds
- Up to 10 days additional paid leave annually for absences related to domestic violence
- Uncapped employee assistance program (EAP) support
- Flexible work options

Flexible work arrangements are provided where practical to assist employees in accessing support and services, to minimise the risk of experiencing domestic and family violence, to address short term work performance issues, and may include changes such as:

- Changes to the employee's working hours or pattern of work
- Relocation to suitable employment in other locations
- Colleagues/supervisors fielding emails and phone calls and keeping a record of any approaches made by the alleged perpetrator
- Change of email address/telephone.

An online domestic and family violence awareness training module was introduced in 2017 and has made information more accessible and available to all employees. The training is explicit with the message of recognise, respond and refer.

One of the objectives is for employees to be able to feel confident in managing responses to domestic and family violence by following the very clear process. This has been complemented by face-to-face training for HR Business Partners and other specialist employees.

The Domestic and Family Violence Policy, along with online and face-to-face training, and White Ribbon Day events, aim to build confidence and competence to initiate conversations around domestic and family violence. The greatest success is that more people are comfortable talking about it.

Aurizon is aware that employees are using the domestic and family violence services and feel supported by the company: 19 employees have accessed domestic and family violence leave since it was introduced, for an average of 1.8 days. Leaders are demonstrating a real commitment and passion towards eliminating domestic and family violence by becoming more involved, visible and vocal in raising awareness, and encouraging employees to feel confident to ask *R U OK?*

Aurizon actively presents on the topic of domestic and family violence, in diverse forums, from the Australian HR Institute to the Catalyst Foundation. Aurizon is committed to ensuring that this topic is embedded in its internal approaches to safety, health and wellbeing.

Australia Post

Australia Post is a government-owned corporation delivering eCommerce services to Australia and beyond. In 2015, Australia Post launched its first Gender Action Plan, which included plans for a domestic and family violence policy.

Since then, several internal and external initiatives have been introduced to support employees and customers affected by domestic and family violence.

Kristy McKellar, a domestic violence survivor, spoke to members of Australia Post at a Male Champions of Change⁴² meeting in 2015 and inspired the organisation to engage her as a consultant to help with its domestic and family violence strategy.

Australia Post introduced domestic and family violence leave into its employment policies in 2015. In 2016, Australia Post surveyed members of its workforce on their experiences of domestic and family violence to gauge their awareness of and engagement with the domestic and family violence policy. Australia Post also asked how it could strengthen its organisation-wide stance against domestic and family violence. This survey was accompanied by a CEO-led campaign relating to the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence.

The survey, completed by 441 employees, found that there was good awareness of the domestic and family violence policy. Employees said that when they talked to managers about domestic and family violence, the discussions were largely positive. Australia Post would like to further increase awareness of the policy, and the reasons for needing a policy. Ongoing communications with the workforce will be delivered over the coming years.



⁴² The Male Champions of Change collaboration was established in 2010 by Elizabeth Broderick, then Sex Discrimination Commissioner, and aims to achieve a substantive increase in the representation of women in leadership in Australia. In 2014, the Male Champions of Change's listening and learning process strengthened understanding of domestic and family violence, and offered opportunities to hear and learn from experts about its nature and prevalence. <http://malechampionsofchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Playing-Our-Part-Male-Champions-of-Change-Letter.pdf>

In May 2017, Australia Post introduced a free mail redirection service for victims of domestic and family violence. This service is an extension of the free mail redirection service, which allows mail redirection for up to 12 months for special circumstances, including customers affected by natural disasters or those in charge of a deceased estate. Materials were distributed to post offices across Australia to advertise related support services such as 1800 RESPECT to support the initiative.

The free mail redirection service for victims of domestic and family violence has received 270 applications since launch in late May 2017, receiving an average of 18 applications per week. It is clearly meeting an important need.

Some Australia Post employees expressed concern about their ability to deal appropriately with victims. Since that time, Australia Post has improved the training and education for its retail staff and integrated it into the business as standard product training.

Australia Post is also aware that some people leaders across the business would benefit from further awareness training on dealing with employees reporting domestic and family violence. As part of a new inclusion strategy in development, which will replace and integrate its current Gender Action Plan, Australia Post will include training for leaders and employees on various topics, including domestic and family violence and appropriate responses.

There were a number of key success factors in Australia Post's response. Collaborating with Kristy McKellar as a survivor and advocate was incredibly useful in ensuring focus on the needs of victims and managing their assumptions. Ms McKellar was particularly helpful in reviewing the language used in the employee survey, ensuring the questions were respectful and sensitive to respondents' experiences.

Launching the survey during a campaign to raise awareness about domestic and family violence, with Australia Post's CEO at the forefront, signalled its importance to the organisation. Asking employees for their views demonstrated respect for their opinions, and it was in fact the employee survey responses that inspired the free mail redirection service.

Australia Post has identified areas for future focus. Firstly, it is looking at its responsibilities around cyberbullying and cyber safety in general. In collaboration with its Information Security Office, Australia Post will talk to employees and others about self-protection strategies and other aspects of online safety.

Australia Post will soon launch a new employee assistance program that will have a dedicated line for domestic and family violence to ensure that victims have suitable and tailored support.

The organisation is also launching a new campaign on psychological safety, mental health and wellbeing in 2018. It is hoped this will be a platform for further discussion around domestic and family violence. Equipping leaders and employees with more tools and skills

for recognising the signs of domestic and family violence will be a priority as part of this broader work.

Australian Public Service

The Australian Public Service (APS) was one of the first employers in Australia to develop a workplace response to domestic and family violence. Underpinning its work was understanding the complex drivers of domestic and family violence, with the most significant being gender inequality.

While men do experience domestic and family violence, and sexual assault, most victims are women. Both men and women are three times more likely to be assaulted by a man than a woman.⁴³

This understanding also informed development of the Australian Public Service's Balancing the Future: Gender Equality Strategy 2016–2019, which was launched by the Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash. The strategy contains various initiatives to address gender inequality in all facets of the APS. Each Australian Government department must recognise that both victims and perpetrators exist in their workplaces, and accordingly, they must develop a policy response.

The Australian Public Service Commission developed a customisable policy template to meet the individual needs of each workplace

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⁴³ <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/gender-equality-strategy>

and workforce. It refers to the support for staff in every location. The policy template is available online for any employer outside the public sector to use.

The APS is continuously improving its workplace response to domestic and family violence, with agency leaders recently committing to enhancing support for staff who are witnesses or bystanders at work or when dealing with clients. The Service is also committed to considering how to engage with staff who use or may use violence.

Autopia

Since 2014, specialist novated leasing company, Autopia has actively fostered a gender diverse workplace and participated in the gender equality conversation more broadly via its thought leadership program, stimulating important dialogue among employees and external stakeholders. These conversations have shed light on the many issues affecting gender equality, leading Autopia to implement a workplace response to the confronting issue of domestic and family violence.

As a business, we realised we needed to do more when it came to gender diversity in the workplace. We started to look at how we could create change [so we] spent a lot of time talking as a management team and with staff about the role of the workplace in creating gender equality. We didn't know it yet, but these discussions helped the team understand that the workplace also has a role in addressing family and domestic violence.

Greg Parkes

Executive General Manager of Autopia

Around the same time, members of Autopia's senior management attended a number of events where speakers shared their personal experiences with domestic violence. The impact of their stories was so significant that Autopia decided it had to take action.

Soon after, an educator at the child-care centre attended by Greg's two children, was killed. She was a victim of domestic violence. The news was such a shock. Greg realised that domestic violence could be happening to employees in his own business and he wouldn't even know about it. Autopia decided it had to address domestic violence.

First, the senior management team learned as much as it could about the issue from experts and listening to survivors of domestic violence.

Second, the management team led a company-wide briefing to implement its domestic violence policy in accordance with Queensland Government's Support for Employees Affected by Domestic and Family Violence Policy, considered best practice in Australia. Autopia's policy includes:

- Providing employees suffering domestic violence with a minimum of 10 days paid leave per year
- A flexible approach to working hours
- An employee assistance program with free and confidential counselling
- Job re-design to facilitate a change of duties if required
- A Workplace Safety Plan to support the employee with things like change of work patterns or location, facilitating safe travel and updating emergency contact details.

With 1 in 3 women experiencing physical violence by someone known to them, and 1 in 3 males experiencing family violence, statistically it's likely that one or more of Autopia's employees have or are experiencing family or domestic violence. However, to date, Autopia's senior management hasn't been formally approached by any member of staff.

However, one indication of the success of the program is that in the 14 months since implementation, Autopia employees have become increasingly open to talking about past experiences with family or domestic violence. The groundwork laid by the earlier training around gender equality being a workplace issue has helped to facilitate this open discussion. Furthermore, Autopia's parent company, ASX-listed Smartgroup Corporation, has taken Autopia's lead and is heightening the awareness of its Domestic Violence Policy across the group which encompasses almost 700 employees.

In the coming months, Autopia plans to gather feedback from employees to understand how the business can increase its support. Autopia also plans to incorporate the policy into the induction program, refresh the domestic violence training and run a training event with exposure to victims of domestic violence to help raise awareness. Autopia is also committed to continuing its support of the International Day to End Violence against Women and UN Women National Committee Australia initiatives to prevent violence against women.

Autopia has discovered that change can be slow, but it has also learnt that change is led from the top. While the journey continues for Autopia, the foundation it has laid is helping to ensure the organisation has the aptitude to change and accepts its role in addressing family and domestic violence.

Carlton Football Club

Carlton Football Club is an Australian Rules football club in Melbourne, Victoria. Established in 1897, it has long been known as a 'men's club', given the historically male-dominated nature of football's spectators and players.

However, in the past decade the 'sport for men' focus has changed. A refresh of senior leadership and its board, combined with consultation with the community, members and other key stakeholders, has spurred the Club to explore opportunities to engage women. An important component of this conscious outreach and engagement has included a focus on gender equality. With this focus came recognition that sporting organisations are influential when considering how gender inequality issues, including domestic and family violence, play out in everyday life.

In 2016, Carlton Football Club embarked on gender equality initiatives to change the club's culture, using standards set by [Our Watch](#)⁴⁴, an independent, not-for-profit organisation established to raise awareness about, and engage the community in, action to prevent violence against women and their children.

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⁴⁴ Our Watch drives nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children.

These initiatives led to the development of gender-neutral recruitment practices, gender-neutral language on the club's website and the establishment of a women's football team with its own facilities, coaching staff and medical staff. The club also introduced paid leave for employees experiencing domestic and family violence in February 2017. Employees do not have to explain why they need the time off to ensure that they are comfortable to apply for the leave, given the existing social stigma often associated with domestic and family violence.

Sporting organisations have the ear and eye of media, and Carlton Football Club has consciously taken advantage of its media platform alongside corporate networks to raise awareness about domestic and family violence.

In the 'Carlton Respects' campaign in 2015, players ran onto the pitch in orange socks, the colour of the [UN Secretary General's global UNiTE](#) campaign to prevent violence against women. The campaign was supported by [videos](#) played across its social media channels, [website](#) and on game day to demonstrate the commitment to fostering respect for women. The club's website [lists links](#) to, and information about, multilingual support services for victims of domestic and family violence.

Following the campaign launch, the club hosted educational sessions at not-for-profit organisations and schools to raise awareness about gender equality and respect, with the financial support of several corporate partners.

Initially, Carlton Football Club encountered some resistance from stakeholders who felt that the club's priority was to win games, and that speaking out on domestic and family violence was not the business of sport.

However, with the explicit, visible endorsement of these initiatives from the club's leadership, combined with significant education and awareness-raising campaigns about the impact of gender inequality and violence on the Australian community, the conversation has shifted. Overall, there is broader acceptance of the important role the club can play to create change as an advocate for gender equality and outspoken change agent to prevent domestic and family violence.

Looking ahead, Carlton Football Club plans to build on the foundation of 'Carlton Respects', by increasing visibility as an advocate of preventing domestic and family violence. It plans to take part each year in the UN's [16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women](#) from 25 November to 10 December by wearing orange and delivering educational campaigns about how everyone has a role to prevent violence against women.

The Carlton Football Club has set an objective to keep breaking stereotypes to advance gender equality, which is fundamental to ending domestic and family violence. With education, staff support and widespread public campaigns, Carlton Football Club has the potential to look after its own people affected by domestic and family violence, and influence public conversations about gender equality and respect for women. This will contribute to changing social norms to break cycles of violence.

Commonwealth Bank

Commonwealth Bank is Australia's leading provider of integrated financial services. In 2015, Commonwealth Bank developed a comprehensive strategy outlining its response to domestic and family violence. The Bank engaged experts from a range of community organisations, government agencies and frontline support bodies to inform the strategy and their feedback was clear – corporate Australia needs to focus on how it can contribute to the prevention of domestic and family violence and how each company can use its unique skills and expertise to be part of a truly community-wide response to the issue.

It quickly became clear that a holistic approach was essential. This informed Commonwealth Bank's strategic goal to create a movement to end domestic and family violence in a generation. This goal is underpinned by a holistic five pillared strategy being progressed through a series of community, government and corporate partnerships, specifically to:

- Provide a safe place to work
- Support customers in crisis
- Champion gender equality
- Promote financial independence
- Advocate for change.

The Commonwealth Bank sees its response as an evolution of the work it has been doing for some time in diversity and inclusion. The organisation acknowledges that domestic violence may come from gender inequity, and therefore gender equality is the basis from which change can be made. A focus on gender, and gender diversity in leadership, is a cornerstone of the Commonwealth Bank's Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

The initial focus of Commonwealth Bank's strategy was a review of its workplace response, and where necessary, enhancements to existing policies and support mechanisms. As one of the country's largest employers with over 41,000 employees, Commonwealth Bank recognised that like other large organisations, it has perpetrators, survivors and bystanders among its people. In the first year of the strategy, Commonwealth Bank increased domestic violence leave from 5 to 10 days, created domestic violence support toolkits for employees and managers and developed a Domestic Violence First Response Guide to assist leaders to support employees who are experiencing domestic violence.

Commonwealth Bank is also committed to having an internal discussion about domestic violence and regularly hosts forums and events on the topic. It trained over 600 employees in partnership with the UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network to increase awareness about how to support employees and customers and rolled out an e-learning module about domestic violence and the organisation's stance on the issue to all of its people.

While it can be an uncomfortable conversation, engaging and educating employees so that it is safe for people to speak up and safe for people to disclose is at the heart of a cultural change within the organisation – a change that the organisation hopes will flow back into the wider Australian community.

Commonwealth Bank knows that promoting women's financial independence and improving women's financial security are often crucial steps when leaving a violent relationship.

In August 2017, after more than a year of research and discussions with many internal and external stakeholders, Commonwealth Bank began piloting a Domestic and Family Violence Emergency Assistance Package. The package was developed by a team in Commonwealth Bank to provide customers and employees with expert counselling and financial support to ensure their immediate safety and assist those looking to leave an abuse situation. The package is being delivered in partnership with Telstra, WESNET and Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia. Already over 1000 customers have accessed the package.

In 2016, Commonwealth Bank engaged Our Watch to conduct a review of its award winning Start Smart financial literacy program to ensure it was promoting gender equality to young Australians to support financial independence and security for young women. The Bank is the first financial institution to apply [Our Watch's Change the story framework](#) to prevent violence against women to its financial education program. All recommendations of the review were adopted and have now been incorporated into the curriculum that is rolled out to over half a million children across the country each year.

Commonwealth Bank is also committed to publicly advocating for change and being part of the national discussion about the issue.

It has been an active participant in UN Women's UNiTE #orangetheworld campaign for a number of years, has participated in business roundtables on domestic violence and regularly contributes to the public discussion about the economic security of women.

Housing Plus

Based in Orange, NSW, Housing Plus is a social enterprise that re-invests all of its profits into improving social outcomes for individuals and communities in regional NSW. Housing Plus provides secure, affordable and long-term housing solutions.

In developing its domestic and family violence response, Housing Plus was inspired by the activities of the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in addressing the issue. Housing Plus decided to look for both a workplace and community-based response. In doing so it hoped to engage in activities that would infiltrate mainstream conversations, and address the problem from different angles. Its main objective was to help the communities where it operates.

Housing Plus assists diverse clients, some of whom are experiencing domestic and family violence, to obtain safe and secure housing solutions. As such, it provides an important community response to domestic and family violence. Housing Plus's [website](#) provides information and support for victims of domestic violence. Housing Plus currently helps women escape domestic violence by accommodating them in three properties in Orange and booking motel rooms in other towns. It is also actively fundraising to open a domestic violence crisis support centre to help local women and people of all ages escape violent situations.



Domestic and family violence is not just a private or personal issue. When an employee is living with domestic and family violence, there are often very real costs and negative impacts that flow to the workplace.

These include decreased staff performance and productivity, increased staff turnover and absenteeism and/or a negative impact on the organisation's reputation and image. Furthermore, people who experience domestic and family violence are also more likely to have lower personal incomes, a disrupted work history, often have to change jobs at short notice and are increasingly employed in casual or part time work.

The cost of domestic and family violence to the Australian economy is projected to rise to \$9.9 billion annually by 2021/22, with \$235 million of this figure being borne by employers and \$609 million borne in product-related losses (National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and Children).

Domestic and family violence remains a profound problem and addressing it is one of the greatest challenges for Australia. The biggest cost to any individual or workplace, is the cost of inaction!

Penelope Twemlow

Chief Executive Officer
Energy Skills Queensland

Housing Plus delivers workshops and information sessions under its Domestic Violence Project to help organisations identify the best internal approaches to domestic and family violence. Depending on the maturity of the organisations concerned, Housing Plus may suggest a three-tiered approach to responding to domestic and family violence.

The first tier aims to ensure that domestic and family violence information and policies are accessible to employees. The second tier involves aligning the organisation's values with the issue of domestic and family violence. And the third and final tier is aimed at organisations which are better prepared to respond to domestic and family violence. It comprises a full review and the development of organisational policy and practices, and provides managers with training similar to the UNSW model.⁴⁵

Housing Plus collaborated with UNSW on the Domestic Violence Project, and engaged its support to learn to teach other organisations how to deal with domestic and family violence. It is one of a handful of organisations that trains and supports other organisations wanting to develop a workplace response to domestic and family violence.

Housing Plus applies the same three-tiered approach to its own workplace response. It provides domestic and family violence training and information to new staff members and managers as part of its HR processes. It provides all employees with access to employee assistance program services and accommodates flexible working arrangements.

The biggest challenge for Housing Plus is that no two domestic and family violence situations are alike, so solutions need to be customised for each employee's circumstances.

Housing Plus will continue to evolve new ideas to prevent domestic and family violence. In future, it hopes to include domestic and family violence issues in staff surveys to better understand employee engagement and experiences. Housing Plus plans to continue the Domestic Violence Project with other organisations and will continue supporting those that have completed their program.



⁴⁵ UNSW's Gendered Violence & Work program offers advisory and training services for employers who want to address the effects of domestic, family and sexual violence on their employees and organisations.

Konica Minolta

Konica Minolta Business Solutions Australia is a market leading provider of integrated print hardware and software solutions. Konica Minolta's decision to introduce a policy to address domestic violence was a significant step. Historically, legal and regulatory aspects had driven company policy, and not the broader social issues affecting its employees. As the company took a stance on community issues such as human trafficking and ethical sourcing, it seemed out of step not to look inwards. Recognising that domestic and family violence was complex, Konica Minolta consulted the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and the [Women's Legal Service of Queensland \(WLSQ\)](#) to develop a more holistic understanding.

The result was a policy that proactively addresses the victim and perpetrator aspects of domestic and family violence. The policy provides comprehensive paid leave, flexible working arrangements and employee assistance programs for employees who are in or are seeking to leave a family or domestic violence situation. It caters for those employees actively supporting a person experiencing family and domestic violence, and it aims to support perpetrators who choose to come forward for assistance.

The policy was launched on 25 November 2015, the International Day to End Violence against Women. Konica Minolta actively engaged employees in the launch and asked for volunteers to be the 'go to' people under the policy. UNSW representatives trained Konica Minolta employees across Australia to be contact people to assist those needing help.

Konica Minolta had reached a milestone, and the policy launch was heralded as a success.

It was not until management applied the policy that the business began to wrestle with what it really meant and how to address the grey areas. For example, the policy clearly stated that using company assets in perpetrating violence would not be tolerated, but some assets were identified and others were not. This left managers wondering how they should treat personal use of a company car out of work hours. Was it within the policy or not?

In the traditional corporate environment, managers are well versed in having discussions and conducting investigations around performance management or breach of policy. This new policy was somehow different. As employees reported about their experiences under the domestic and family violence policy, managers reported feeling emotional, uncertain and even confused about how to respond. Others acknowledged they were struggling to deal with their own biases and were concerned how this would affect their discussions. This response was particularly evident regarding perpetrators.

To alleviate this reaction, managers have suggested that incidents involving perpetrators be reported to an independent group better equipped to address them. This will reduce the emotional toll and ensure fairness to all involved.

To date, there have been few reports of domestic and family violence, and as a result, Konica Minolta is preparing to introduce

further education to employees. Despite the comprehensive launch, some employees said they weren't aware of the policy or were unclear where to find it. Accordingly, the next step is to make the policy available in a more intuitive location on the intranet, to highlight its benefits and to provide a directory of contact people.

The role played by management is also critical. As managers become more comfortable in applying the policy, they will be more likely to encourage their team members to use it, and to help them, particularly if they ask support teams to help them work through the incident.

Konica Minolta plans to introduce baseline measurements of the attitude towards and application of the domestic and family violence policy, rather than policies in general. This in turn will inform where future education and support is required. As the company continues to work with its domestic and family violence policy, the approach will become more iterative than originally envisaged.

Mirvac Group

Mirvac Group is one of Australia's leading property groups. The company, which has a zero tolerance approach to any forms of violence or abuse, supports employees affected by domestic violence in a range of ways.

In late 2014, Mirvac laid out its current diversity and inclusion vision and strategy. The introduction of its domestic violence leave policy is part of its overall commitment to gender balance, with a focus on equality, which is one of the four focus areas of its diversity and inclusion strategy.

In June 2016 Mirvac's executive leadership team endorsed its domestic and family violence policy. It provides:

- Up to 10 days paid leave per instance to any employee personally experiencing domestic and family violence
- Up to \$5,000 financial support per instance to help with any personal expenses incurred such as medical, relocation/accommodation expenses and childcare
- Unpaid leave of up to one month per instance
- Temporary provision of a new phone and new email address if necessary
- Specialised counselling and/or other referral pathways. Victims of domestic abuse and their families can contact Mirvac's employee assistance program for specialised and independent counselling
- Flexible work arrangements.



Mirvac has integrated its investment in community responses to domestic and family violence into its own workplace response, which sends a strong message about how seriously the company regards the issue. Some of these investments include:

Partnership with YWCA In 2016, Mirvac announced a partnership with YWCA NSW creating a ‘profit-for-purpose’ café at Mirvac’s 200 George Street headquarters in Sydney. The café, The Song Kitchen, provides premium catering services to Mirvac and its external corporate guests, with 100% of the profits funding YWCA’s programs and services. YWCA offers, among other services, support to women and their families experiencing domestic and family violence.

Domestic Violence Refuge Mirvac has partnered with Domestic Violence Connect (a Queensland crisis response organisation) to provide a refuge for victims of domestic violence on the Gold Coast. Mirvac will donate the land and another organisation will construct the building free of charge. Construction is due to start in early 2018.



⁴⁶ The White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation Program recognises workplaces that are taking active steps to stop violence against women, accrediting them as a White Ribbon Workplace. White Ribbon Workplaces engender a whole of organisation commitment to stop violence against women, meeting 15 criteria under three standards to create a safer and more respectful workplace. <https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/stop-violence-against-women/get-workplace-involved/workplace-accreditation/>

Raising awareness of domestic and family violence has been a complex issue in the workplace. Mirvac uses company-wide communications from the executive leadership team to promote understanding of the issue and share information about the support for employees experiencing domestic and family violence. Company communications are also used to launch new policies, promote White Ribbon events, and to celebrate the partnership with the YWCA.

Mirvac organises education and awareness-raising events in state head offices. Senior leaders use these events to brief employees about the company’s support for White Ribbon and the resources available to employees experiencing domestic violence. Guest speakers, including police officers who work on domestic violence cases or representatives from domestic violence support organisations, have been invited to also share stories. The presentations have been well received and have been identified as a powerful tool to help employees to understand the complex issue of domestic violence.

As part of the White Ribbon accreditation process⁴⁶ Mirvac is providing face-to-face training for people managers, and will also ultimately deliver online training sessions for all employees to build awareness about domestic violence and help leaders deal with team members in domestic and family violence situations.

After embarking on the White Ribbon accreditation process late last year, Mirvac conducted a baseline survey to assess what employees understood about domestic and family violence. The same survey is taking place throughout November 2017, and it is hoped it will reveal an increase in awareness following the recently implemented initiatives.

It has been essential to align Mirvac's support for employees experiencing domestic and family violence with its diversity and inclusion strategy, with both being actively promoted and endorsed by the executive leadership team. The intersection between the two has helped contextualise the company's action on domestic and family violence. Other measures to help enhance the safety of its people include the Work Safe Guardian app, which ensures a rapid response in an emergency.

If Mirvac secures White Ribbon accreditation, the company will commit to three years of training, related communications and community support. It will also continue gender-based work risk assessments and update contracts with consultants to ensure the consistency of its zero tolerance policies relating to violence against women, bullying and harassment. These activities will ensure it remains focussed on addressing domestic and family violence.

PwC Australia

PwC is a professional services firm with around 7,000 employees in Australia. It recognises that employers have a role to play in supporting employees experiencing domestic and family violence, and in raising awareness of the issues and advocating change.

In 2015, PwC launched its Family and Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Support Policy, which received a positive response from employees, as reported by leadership, human resources and individuals.

PwC's policy was informed by consulting external experts, ranging from domestic violence service providers to the Sex Discrimination Commissioner. It provides compassionate, practical and confidential support with:

- Ten days paid leave each financial year to attend medical or support services, counselling appointments, police appointments, legal proceedings and to arrange relocation
- Further paid leave at the discretion of the company if more time is needed
- A discretionary payment of \$250 and salary advance to help an employee fund urgent needs
- Flexible working options
- Help in developing a safety plan with options for how, when and where the employee will work
- An employee assistance program offering confidential coaching and psychological well-being services for partners, employees and their immediate family members, with the crisis contact and emergency support available 24 hours a day, seven days a week

- Assistance with other logistics such as changing email addresses, phone numbers and bank account details
- An inclusive culture and strong support from leadership.

To date, the firm has received a small number of requests for domestic violence and sexual assault leave. Employees have also provided anonymous, positive feedback to the human resources and wellness teams about the services provided by the firm.

PwC's CEO, Luke Sayers, has provided leadership on a range of diversity and inclusion initiatives, such as gender and cultural diversity targets for partnership admission as a Male Champion of Change and a Workplace Gender Equality Agency Pay equity ambassador. PwC has trained approximately 70% of its Directors and Partners on inclusive leadership which will be expanded over the coming 18 months.

In 2015, PwC worked in partnership with Our Watch and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) to estimate the economic cost of violence against women. Together, they conducted extensive research estimating these costs and the benefits of preventing violence against women. This work informed PwC's submission to the Fair Work Commission case which considered including domestic and family violence leave to all modern awards in late 2016.

Additional support and training is offered to managers, conducted by experts trained in responding to confidential disclosures. To date, 70 Australian employees have been trained by Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia to develop a better understanding of how to respond to and support colleagues facing domestic and family violence. PwC recognises that gender inequality is central to domestic and family violence, so accordingly the firm views it in the wider context of its diversity and inclusion strategies. Although PwC recognises that domestic and family violence mainly affects women, the firm's policies apply to men and women.

Through its consulting practice, PwC has supported Victorian and Queensland governments on engagements such as advising on models for investment in prevention of domestic and family violence and holding a policy innovation hub on domestic and family violence.

PwC is committed to continuing its policy and building on the strong foundation of inclusion and support for employees as it aligns with its purpose: to build trust in society and solve important problems.

PwC does not record employee access to domestic violence and sexual assault leave to protect employee privacy. It does, however, track anonymous details relating to the assistance provided to understand whether the leave and other supports are actively used.

Queensland Government

The Queensland Government plays a significant role in supporting workplaces to challenge attitudes contributing to violence, support employees and influence cultural change.

The Queensland Government is partnering with business, local government and non-government organisations to deliver on workplace-related commitments in its [Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–26](#) and related action plans, following the Government’s acceptance of all recommendations in the [Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to domestic and family violence in Queensland](#) taskforce report. In addition, the Government’s workplace reforms are focused on supporting the growth, capacity and sustainability of the domestic and family violence non-government sector.



The Queensland Government has identified the following key areas as part of its organisational strategy for domestic and family violence.

- Policy – it is clear, effective, and communicated and promoted well
- 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.

All Queensland Government departments have a domestic and family violence workplace policy, and access to online training and support and referral resources. All Directors-General and their leadership teams have pledged to help end domestic and family violence in Queensland.

On 25 November (White Ribbon Day/International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women) 2015, the Queensland Premier released a [Workplace Package](#) that is publicly available to support all workplaces to implement programs responding to domestic and family violence. This package includes a directive regarding employee support; a workplace response model; templates for a workplace policy and leadership statements; an e-learning awareness-raising program; communications toolkits; risk assessment and safety planning tools, and supporting resources.

In October 2016, Queensland led discussions on organisational best practice and innovation at the *Council of Australian Governments' National Summit on Reducing Violence against Women and its Children*. Queensland's [background paper and roundtable synthesis](#) highlights Queensland's key issues, insights and other innovative developments regarding comprehensive workplace responses to domestic and family violence.

On 25 November 2016, the Premier released a workplace report, [Driving change to support Queensland Government employees affected by domestic and family violence](#). It covered the Queensland Government workplace package, and progress in the 12 months since its release.

The Queensland Government is driving continuous improvement with external accreditation programs and measuring Queensland Government employees' confidence in responding appropriately to domestic and family violence. For instance, three agencies are accredited White Ribbon Workplaces, and a further 13 are part of an innovative multi-agency approach to achieve White Ribbon Australia Workplace Accreditation in 2017. Announcements on accreditation are due to be made on 23 November 2017.

Queensland Government employees affected by domestic and family violence can access [support options](#), including a minimum of 10 days of paid leave, counselling from employee assistance programs, [flexible work arrangements](#), and workplace and role adjustments, where appropriate.

Queensland is the first Australian jurisdiction to include paid domestic and family violence dedicated leave entitlements in industrial relations legislation. These apply to state and local government employees, and extend to people caring for anyone experiencing domestic and family violence.

The Queensland Government does not record requests for domestic and family violence leave, but does evaluate the effectiveness of its workplace responses by participation in external accreditation programs, online and face to face awareness training programs and domestic and family violence related support provided by employee assistance programs. In addition, the public sector employee opinion survey measures increased employee awareness of workplace support policy and increased confidence in responding appropriately.

That said, measuring the impact of workplace responses to support employees affected by domestic and family violence is acknowledged by all workplaces as a challenge. This is the case in environments where disclosures are low, safety and confidentiality is paramount, system capabilities are not well integrated and data sources present trend analysis only.

Anecdotal feedback from employees who are receiving support tells us that we are making a positive difference in the lives of some of our employees and their families, confirming the importance of the investment that is being made.

Any Queensland Government employee who uses violence or abusive behaviour while at work may be subject to disciplinary action. The Government has invested in resources to support employees who use violence or abuse to seek help to change their behaviour. The Public Service Commission released [Workplace response to employees who use or may use violence and abuse](#), in collaboration with [Australia's CEO Challenge](#) (ACEOC), [DV Connect](#), and MinterEllison to help Queensland workplaces respond appropriately to employees who use violence or abuse.

While significant progress has been made in developing and rolling out a thorough domestic and family violence workplace strategy, the Queensland Government has identified next steps to advance it further, including:

- Supporting departments to lead by example by supporting employees affected by domestic and family violence including employees experiencing violence, carers, employees using violence, and bystanders
- Promoting a workplace package of available resources to workplaces
- Continuing to support multi-agency implementation of White Ribbon Australia workplace accreditation program
- Delivering workplace-related outcomes in Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026 and future action plans
- Supporting national collaboration, workplace partnerships and capability building on domestic and family violence workplace issues.

Rio Tinto

Rio Tinto is a global leader in the mining and metals sector, with Australia home to about half its global assets. Rio Tinto is committed to human rights standards, and the health and safety of its people and the community at large.

Rio Tinto's male to female workforce split is 81:19, and this – combined with its focus on zero harm and a strong safety culture – motivated leadership to provide support to employees affected by domestic and family violence. The company's involvement with organisations, such as Male Champions of Change and White Ribbon, has played a critical role in shaping its workplace response to domestic and family violence. Rio Tinto has been working to achieve White Ribbon workplace accreditation, taking inspiration from Commonwealth Bank of Australia, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and National Australia Bank in developing its policies.

Rio Tinto's safety culture provides the overarching framework for its workplace response to domestic and family violence. It recognises employees are happier and more productive at work when they are safe at home. More than a human resources initiative, Rio Tinto's workplace response to domestic and family violence has been identified as a business priority, signalling its importance to a broad group of company stakeholders.

Rio Tinto recognised the importance of enlisting the support of senior leadership to help overcome any resistance to including a response to domestic and family violence in the business priorities, establishing a steering committee of senior leaders to drive this work.



We have such incredible and dynamic leadership in workplaces that can play a critical role in influencing extraordinary change across the nation. Organisational leadership that embraces domestic and family violence as a workplace responsibility, leads to generating and delivering consistent, reliable and targeted workplace responses that support employees, their customers as well as those who may use violence in the workplace. Implementation of strong policy in organisations supports victim survivors when they are facing the unrelenting obstacles of family violence and the impact this human rights violation has on their health, safety, as well as productivity,

retention and re-integration. The workplace is where victim survivors spend the majority of their days, a place they are passionate about and a place where they are not silenced, encouraged to speak up and gain assistance. Being a committed workplace contributing to preventing and ending family violence importantly sends a clear message to the broader community and challenges poor community attitudes.

Kristy McKellar

Director, KM Consulting Services,
Family Violence and Social
Change Consultant

Rio Tinto provides up to 10 days a year of domestic and family violence leave and financial assistance to employees directly impacted by violence at home. Employees also have support to stay for a short time in temporary accommodation to give them time to organise a more permanent home. Flexible working arrangements, such as altered start or finish times, change in roster patterns, or a change in location are also available as additional support if required. All this happens in consultation with the affected employee, taking into account whether any of these options could cause more stress or harm to them.

Rio Tinto can provide security escorts for employees at risk, protecting them, as they arrive at and depart from work, and the employee assistance program has trained counsellors to help people deal with abuse at home. This is complemented by face-to-face and online training provided by independent experts, for leaders and the broader workforce to help them to recognise and respond to colleagues affected by domestic and family violence.

Rio Tinto acknowledges that the sensitive and personal nature of domestic and family violence has made it challenging at times to effectively engage employees. With this in mind, Rio Tinto implemented the following approach:

- Gender-neutral communications on domestic and family violence to reinforce the message that it affects everyone, and that the company's policies and procedures are available to all.
- Linking domestic and family violence to discussions about mental illness and health, recognising there are established connections between these issues and similar solutions to both, based on a recognise, respond and refer method.

- Open lines of communication between employees and leadership about why domestic and family violence is a priority area of focus for the business, aligned with the company's safety culture.

Another challenge Rio Tinto faced was allocating people and resources to implement its domestic and family violence policies. Rio Tinto adopted an opt-in approach rather than 'assign' this task to designated employees. This has been effective, as those eager to contribute have chosen to participate and demonstrate a commitment to making a meaningful difference.

The impact of implementing the new policies has been far reaching, extending beyond the workplace and out into the community through employee advocacy. For example, employees in Brisbane have proactively organised to support a local charity that provides domestic and family violence support and advocacy services. Since the initiative began last April, employees have donated 108 food hampers, four baby hampers, 73 toiletry bags and more than \$500 in gift cards.

Rio Tinto has been measuring the effectiveness and awareness of its policy using employee surveys conducted by White Ribbon.

Following the roll out in Australia, Rio Tinto is exploring opportunities to expand the program to its international sites.

Telstra

Telstra is Australia's leading telecommunications and technology company. Telstra is committed to making a difference by encouraging company and employee involvement in the community and in issues that matter, such as family and domestic violence.

Since 2009, Telstra has supported White Ribbon Australia to raise awareness and prevent violence against women. Telstra employees support the White Ribbon campaign by buying and selling ribbons, donating through payroll giving, and sharing information about why the company supports this important campaign. Telstra took part in the White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation program in 2013 and reaccreditation program in 2017, which is designed to help organisations raise awareness and take steps to stop violence against women.

Telstra's workplace response includes providing information, services and procedures to support employees. In 2014, Telstra introduced its Family and Domestic Violence Support Policy, designed to support Telstra employees experiencing the effects of family and domestic violence. It allows employees up to ten days paid leave each year in addition to other leave entitlements, and managers can approve more leave if required.

The leave gives employees time to manage aspects of domestic and family violence, such as relocation, attending medical and counselling appointments, and legal proceedings.

On International Women's Day 2016, Telstra launched an updated policy, now global. The policy now includes guidance relating to perpetrators for managers, including allowance to access existing leave (e.g. personal leave) and flexible working arrangements to attend commitments related to family and domestic violence. This is different to the leave offered to victims of family and domestic violence, who have access to additional paid leave (ten days+).

Telstra has established referral mechanisms and resources to ensure that employees are aware of the services available to them, such as 1800 RESPECT and Telstra's employee assistance program. If an incident takes place in the workplace, Telstra's Chief Risk Office supports people to ensure safety in the workplace, for example, change their phone numbers and emails or work location.

Telstra measures the effectiveness of its programs and practices designed to support people experiencing violence in a number of ways to make sure they are meeting the needs of employees.

- Monitoring the number of employees using domestic and family violence leave, and the employee assistance program.
- Continuing to measure progress against diversity and inclusion objectives through annual and sustainability reports.
- Measuring overall employee engagement through annual people surveys.

In addition to supporting White Ribbon's activities, Telstra donates free SIM cards and mobile phones to WESNET, a national women's peak advocacy body focused on women and children affected by domestic and family violence. In violent, abusive and controlling situations, these donations provide survivors with their own means of communication, which can be critical when leaving an abusive relationship. From 2016–2019, Telstra committed to providing 20,000 mobile phones to WESNET.

Furthermore, the company uses social media to promote key campaigns like White Ribbon Night in July and International Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November.

Telstra acknowledges the role everyone plays to end this insidious societal issue. Telstra launched its 'Men's Responsibility for Gender Equality' program in 2016 focussing on the positive role men can play to achieve gender equality, including supporting campaigns to end violence against women.

Telstra continues to support locally driven campaigns through their Business Unit Champions network in offices across the globe, including leveraging the support from senior leaders at Telstra.

Conclusion

The practical steps outlined in each of the organisation's stories above are fundamental to supporting employees who are experiencing violence at home, to access safety and support through the workplace. Job security, employee assistance programs, temporary accommodation, legal or other direct support are vital facilitators to help people experiencing violence to feel comfortable taking the first step to seek safety. Given two-thirds of Australian women experiencing domestic and family violence are employed, a comprehensive workplace response is both a moral and business imperative. For Australian-based organisations with offices around the world, the policy and practice response should apply to their offshore operations too.

Absent from this report is a detailed discussion of violence inside the workplace, given its focus on violence at home. Since the report was hatched, global attention has turned to sexual harassment and assault within the workplace. It's impossible to read the news without new allegations against celebrities from sport to government, the movies to music being brought to light. The #MeToo campaign has led ears all around the world to listen, more intently than ever before, to women's stories of assault and abuse, and it is starting to spur action.

What is important to remember is that fundamentally, violence against women is entirely preventable. Violence against women stems from gender inequality: it is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to discrimination against women by men, for centuries.⁴⁷

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⁴⁷ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>

Organisations that wish to address the root causes of violence against women have an obligation to advance gender equality in the workplace. This can be achieved by modelling gender equality through leaders' behaviour, internal and external communications, practice, research and investment – and clear policy that does not tolerate sexism, harassment, discrimination or violence of any kind in the workplace. Many organisations profiled in this report have done just that, and continue to measure, monitor and adapt their policies from recruitment and training to closing the gender pay gap and parental leave, all alongside their critical workplace response to domestic and family violence to keep their people safe.

The UN Global Compact and UN Women introduced the Women's Empowerment Principles in 2010 as a set of guidelines to assist business to advance gender equality at work. The Principles emphasise the business case for gender equality and are informed by real-life business practices and input gathered from across the globe. In 2017, the Women's Empowerment Principles Gender Gap Analysis Tool was launched to assist organisations to assess progress and pinpoint key actions to accelerate gender equality within business.

For further guidance, Our Watch's Workplace Equality and Respect Standards are due for public release in 2018. The Standards outline five guidelines to help workplaces recognise what is needed to secure leadership and employee commitment; reject sexist, discriminatory cultures; ensure workplace conditions support gender equality; support staff experiencing violence;

and integrate gender equality into core business. The Standards will include a self-assessment, implementation guide and other resources to assist any workplace to accelerate their journey to a safer, more respectful and gender-equal workplace.⁴⁸

Ending violence against women and advancing gender equality are central to the global agenda. The Sustainable Development Goals (or SDGs), agreed by 193 member states of the United Nations in 2015, include a standalone gender goal, #5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The SDGs apply to every person on the planet – to developed and developing nations – and are a shared responsibility of business, community and governments.

In sum, every organisation has a role to play to support its people who are experiencing domestic and family violence, and create a culture that does not tolerate violence or discrimination and actively promotes gender equality. Take the first step, listen and learn along the way, and together, Australian organisations will not only lead workplace responses to violence, but will also have the opportunity to model what gender equality looks like at work. By taking this integrated approach, together, as a society, it is possible to stop violence before it starts.



⁴⁸ <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do/%E2%80%8BVictorian-Workplace-Equality-and-Respect-Project>

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Thank you to all the organisations profiled in this report for your time, consideration and commitment to protecting and supporting your people impacted by domestic and family violence, and, for recognising the importance of advancing gender equality throughout your business as a lever of change, to stop violence before it starts.

If you or someone you know has experienced domestic or family violence, phone **1800 RESPECT**, or visit www.1800respect.org.au



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