

## 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.<sup>12</sup> One in three Australian women has experienced physical violence, since the age of 15.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

Of those Australian women experiencing domestic and family violence, two-thirds of them are employed.<sup>15</sup> 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.



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

<sup>14</sup> 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).

<sup>15</sup> <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](http://www.1800respect.org.au)