



Playing our part

Workplace Responses to
Domestic and Family Violence

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM TOOLKIT

November 2020

Contents

The purpose of these materials is to support leaders' participation in the 16 Days of Activism from 25 November to 10 December.

16 Days of Activism toolkit	3
Domestic and family violence in the context of COVID-19	3
Why is domestic and family violence a workplace issue?	4
What is the '16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence' campaign?	5
How can leaders join the campaign?	6
Case studies	7
Examples	13
What are practical everyday actions everyone can take?	17
Frequently asked questions	18
Resources	21
Organisations who can help	22

16 Days of Activism Toolkit

Domestic and family violence is a pervasive issue in our community and it impacts our workplace.

In November 2015, Male Champions of Change released the first edition of [Playing Our Part](#) – a three-phase model for addressing domestic and family violence as a workplace issue.

Underpinning this work is an acceleration of our efforts to ensure workplace culture, policies and processes support those impacted by violence, that we take appropriate action to respond to employees who use domestic and family violence, and that we address the underlying cause of domestic and family violence – gender inequality.

Recognition that all Australians, and all workplaces, can act to reduce the prevalence and impact of domestic and family violence is growing.

Male Champions of Change collaborates closely with the many organisations leading and championing change in this area, including Our Watch, No to Violence, Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia, Australia's CEO Challenge, and the UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network.

This toolkit aims to support our members to participate in the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence Campaign to raise awareness about domestic and family violence and the support on offer for those impacted by domestic and family violence.

Domestic and family violence in the context of COVID-19

During COVID-19, incidents of domestic and family violence have increased in frequency and severity. This is due to a range of factors including:

- Increased exposure to the abuser as a result of a shift to mandated working from home, job-losses, and self-isolation due to COVID-19 lock-down / quarantine / diagnosis
- Escalation of the use of violence by abusers as they experience stress/pressure, uncertainty and changes in routine including with children being at home
- COVID-19 being used by abusers as a form of coercive control to instil fear, isolate and manipulate (e.g. threatening to expose the victim and/or children to the virus, withholding protective items, withholding medical or health care, or using COVID-19 as an excuse to not return children after visitation).

In addition, COVID-19 is also reducing opportunities for victims to access support due to:

- Decreased opportunities for victims to access unmonitored technology and to seek help safely given their abuser may be home with them
- Fewer opportunities to engage with others outside the home due to COVID-19 restrictions and increased caring responsibilities (including as a result of many children being home from school/childcare).

It is important to note that the increased stress, family disruption, social isolation and increased financial pressures do not in themselves 'cause' or drive violence against women. They can however exacerbate the underlying driver of violence against women – gender inequality – and increase the severity and frequency of this violence, as we have seen in countries at the forefront of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as in Australia.

Why is domestic and family violence a workplace issue?

The global picture

- Violence against women is one of the world's most prevalent human rights abuses.
 - One in three women globally will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.¹
 - Gender-based violence is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality.²
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The Australian story

- On average, one woman a week is killed by her intimate partner.³
 - It is estimated that 74 women were murdered in 2019. As of October 2020, over 40 women have been murdered by men. Most of these women were killed by an intimate partner or someone known to them.⁴ These murders account for one-quarter of homicide incidents in Australia.⁵
 - More than 1 in 50 women have experienced violence by a current partner.⁶ One in six women (1.4 million) have experienced physical violence from a partner in their lifetime.⁷ One in four women have experienced emotional abuse by a partner in their lifetime.⁸
 - Australian women are nearly three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner.⁹
 - On average, eight women are hospitalised a day, after being assaulted by a spouse or partner. Australian women are almost four times more likely than men to be hospitalised after being assaulted by their spouse or partner.¹⁰
 - Women are more than twice as likely as men to have experienced fear or anxiety due to violence from a former partner.¹¹
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The workplace

- In Australia, between 55% and 70% of women who have experienced or are currently experiencing family and domestic violence are in the paid workforce.¹²
 - Nearly 50% of women who disclosed that they had experienced domestic violence reported that it affected their capacity to get to work. Of these women:
 - most of them (67%) indicated that they couldn't get to work because of a physical injury or because they had been restrained.¹³
 - nearly one in five reported that the domestic violence followed them into the workplace with, for example, abusive calls or emails or the partner physically coming to work.¹⁴
 - Between 25% and 50% of Australian women subjected to domestic and family violence report having lost a job, at least in part due to the violence.¹⁵
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Costs of violence

- In 2016, the cost of violence against women and their children to the Australian economy was estimated at \$22 billion.¹⁶
 - Victims and survivors bear 52% of the total costs (\$11.3 billion); costs are attributable to all cost categories, including the impacts of pain/suffering and premature mortality.¹⁷
 - It is estimated that domestic and family violence will cost Australian businesses \$609 million annually by 2021.¹⁸
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In the context of COVID-19

- A survey conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology in May 2020 found that two-thirds of women who had experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former cohabiting partner since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic said the violence had started or escalated in the three months prior to the survey. Similarly, more than half the women who experienced coercive control reported the onset or escalation of emotionally abusive, harassing or controlling behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁹
- During March and April 2020, 1800RESPECT received record numbers of requests for assistance from people experiencing domestic and family violence, including a 38% increase in webchats.²⁰
- A survey conducted by Monash University found more than 50% of domestic and family violence frontline practitioners in Victoria reported an increase in the frequency and severity of domestic violence. These findings were mirrored in Queensland, with 70% of practitioners observing an escalation in the violence experienced by women in May.²¹
- Police in some parts of Australia reported a 40% drop in crime overall, but a 5% increase in domestic abuse call-outs.²²
- In March 2020, Google reported a 75% increase in Internet searches relating to support for domestic abuse during COVID-19.²³

What is the '16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence' campaign?

- The worldwide '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence' campaign originated from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute, coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership in 1991.
- The campaign was established to build awareness about gender-based violence and facilitate networking and information sharing among individuals and organisations working on this issue around the globe.
- Symbolically, the 16 Days of Activism runs from International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November to International Human Rights Day on 10 December.
- For more information, visit <https://16dayscwgj.rutgers.edu>

In the context of COVID19, the 16 Days of Activism campaign is an opportunity to promote the support available for employees who may be experiencing domestic and family violence and continue to help prevent domestic and family violence from occurring or escalating by:

- Reassuring employees regarding their job security and invest in their well-being
- Ensuring there are options available for employees who do not feel safe working from home
- Communicating workplace policies and support available
- Regularly and sensitively checking-in with employees to provide openings for disclosure (where/when safe to do so), and supporting employees who may be experiencing domestic and family violence including referral to appropriate support services.

See Male Champions of Change '[Workplace Responses to Domestic and Family Violence During COVID-19](#)' for further information and examples of practical action taken by Male Champions of Change member organisations to support employees experiencing domestic and family violence during COVID-19.

How can leaders join the campaign?

Participating in the 16 Days of Activism can act as a powerful statement of support for those experiencing violence. There are a number of suggestions for how leaders can participate in the campaign from 25 November to 10 December.

These include:

- Beginning speeches by sharing information about domestic and family violence as a workplace and women's human rights issue.
- Adding the topic to the beginning of each meeting's agenda – with 5 to 10 minutes dedicated to the topic.
- Leveraging external and internal communications to raise awareness (e.g. enterprise-wide newsletters and social media).
- Holding workshops and events to raise awareness and build capacity to respond to domestic and family violence.
- Supporting community-based organisations that support survivors of domestic and family violence or that seek to prevent violence or change perpetrators' behaviours.
- CEOs and others publicly committing or recommitting to their visible role in this work, as well as launching or expanding relevant policies.
- Leaders sharing stories of impact of their organisations' work, for example, in implementing additional paid leave for those affected by domestic and family violence.

Please note, publicly shared materials should include information about referrals, for example, *"If you or someone you know needs support, please call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au."*

CASE STUDIES

The Founding Male Champions of Change

CONTEXT

- When the Founding MCC commenced work on this issue in 2015, senior leaders in Australia rarely discussed domestic and family violence, or articulated the important role of the workplace in shaping a culture that reduces the prevalence and impact of it.
- The Founding MCCs agreed to deepen their understanding of the issue. In November 2014, the group met with the courageous advocates Rosie Batty and Kristy McKellar.
- From this dialogue, the men learned that domestic and family violence is a hidden issue that attracts significant stigma and that the workplace has a critical role to play in supporting employees experiencing domestic and family violence.

ACTION TAKEN

The Founding MCCs integrated International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women into their corporate calendars including:

- Personal messages about their lessons from the meeting.

- Acknowledgement that domestic and family violence is a workplace issue.
- Confirmation of support available and referral pathways.

IMPACT

- In its first year, the Founding MCCs reached more than 400,000 employees across 17 organisations, with further reach to suppliers and customers.
- Responses received indicated support for the MCCs' engagement with the issue – many experiences were shared.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Hearing the lived experiences of survivors can shape and influence change.
- A first step to active engagement with the issue is leadership communication.
- There is interest from employees in hearing from leaders on this topic.

CASE STUDIES

Rio Tinto: getting started

CONTEXT

- Rio Tinto committed in 2014 to globally start using the topic of violence against women and family and domestic violence as a 'safety share' to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. A safety share is a brief safety talk about a specific subject at the beginning of a meeting or shift. In Rio Tinto, it is a business-wide practice which reaches all employees.
- Since then, this has been extended and used widely throughout the year to embed cultural change through multiple existing channels.

ACTION TAKEN

- Secured buy-in with senior leaders across the business and endorsement of the safety share message and approach.
- Employed the existing system of safety shares to raise awareness.
- Prepared materials on the facts, talking points and a reference to the company policy, support and leadership actions to ensure consistent discussion across geographies.

IMPACT

- Reached a large proportion of Rio Tinto's workforce of over 50,000 people across 40 countries.
- Led to some employees candidly sharing their experiences and insights and others expressing pride in a workplace that is openly tackling complex social issues.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Communication about domestic and family violence will have the most impact when it follows organisational and cultural norms, led from the top and tailored to the geography.
 - It is critical that those leading communication activities:
 - Care and are authentic with the content.
 - Are equipped with facts.
 - Understand the issues and impacts.
 - Most importantly, are aware of support from the company and referral pathways.
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CASE STUDIES

Stockland

CONTEXT

- In 2017, Stockland looked at how it could better support employees impacted by domestic and family violence through a formalised approach including resources, training and policy. In 2019 Stockland further enhanced the policy and ran a 16 Days of Activism to end Gender-Based Violence leadership-led campaign to raise awareness of domestic and family violence and to promote the support Stockland provides its employees.

ACTION TAKEN

- In 2017, launched a Domestic and Family Violence Policy including an outline of resources available internally (including the Employee Assistance Program, IT and telephone options to reduce avenues of harassment, and paid leave) and externally (key contacts, State and Federal Government hotlines, and more – all in one spot).
- Leveraged the new policy as an opportunity to communicate with employees on domestic and family violence on White Ribbon Day, including the commitment of the Managing Director/CEO along with his personal reflections on the issue
- Continued an awareness campaign with a briefing to the Stockland Leadership Team (Executive Committee and General Managers) with an expert speaker who provided more clarity on what domestic and family violence is and is not. Leadership expectations were also articulated.
- In 2019, Stockland updated the policy to include uncapped leave for employees who are experiencing domestic and family violence or who are supporting a family member impacted. Stockland also trained a group of employees from across the country as First Responders to domestic and family violence.
- Stockland used the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence in 2019, to raise awareness of the impact of domestic and family violence, the new policy to support employees and their family members, and how employees can support people impacted by domestic and family violence.
- During the 16 Days of Activism campaign, Stockland asked employees to stand together against domestic and family violence. The leadership team led a range of employee communications across the 16 days as well as external communications on social media channels sharing their personal commitment to this important issue.
- The communications program also included a personal story of an employee who was impacted by DFV and shared how the policy and support provided by Stockland assisted her.

IMPACT

- Increased awareness of the impact of domestic and family violence on the workplace and policy and resources available.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Leadership led approach was critical to ensuring the right response is provided, given that research shows a victim may only ask once for help or not at all.
- Personal stories from those impacted created an increased understanding amongst employees that this is a workplace issue.

CASE STUDIES

CSIRO

CONTEXT

- CSIRO officially launched its workplace response to domestic family violence and abuse (DFVA) in May 2020 in the middle of the global COVID-19 pandemic.
- While CSIRO had significant support available to employees already, with paid domestic family violence leave (since 2017), flexible work arrangements (since 2018) and an employee assistance program (EAP), these options had not been promoted as part of a package of support for those impacted by domestic family violence and abuse.
- Understanding that working from home put our people at increased risk of both the severity and frequency of DFVA due to social isolation, our launch focused on establishing DFVA as a workplace issue and how to improve the safety and support of all of our impacted people.

ACTION TAKEN

- Chief Executive, Dr Larry Marshall communicated the importance of addressing domestic family violence and abuse in his all staff blog, and through engagement with his senior executive team.
- CSIRO implemented a comprehensive suite of resources and referral pathways to support employees impacted by domestic family violence and abuse including:
 - Trained a peer support network of DFVA contact officers to listen, discuss safety, and provide and share resources to employees who choose to disclose.
 - Prioritised the voices of those with lived experience by using *Follow my lead*, an awareness-raising resource for any person who may be responding to their friends, family members, colleagues and peers, who are experiencing DFVA and My Safety Kit for those impacted by DFVA.
- In a safe and supported process with *Follow my lead*, shared the de-identified stories of employees with lived experience with 80 senior leaders to raise awareness of DFVA as a workplace issue.
- Increased our EAP service offering to include a specialist phone helpline for DFVA.
- Provided specific guidance for leaders on supporting employees impacted by DFVA in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Continue to raise awareness of DFVA as a workplace issue via regular communication and promotion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and 16 Days of Activism.

IMPACT

- Staff members with past lived experience contacted the implementation team and expressed that they wished this support had been available years ago when they needed it.
- Staff have expressed pride that CSIRO is raising awareness of DFVA and providing support to its employees.
- Improved ability of leaders to identify, support and refer impacted CSIRO people.

LESSONS LEARNED

- How we respond matters. Every time. Every person.
- Hearing the lived experiences of employees has had a powerful impact on leaders.
- Working from home exposes employees experiencing DFVA to greater risk of an increase in frequency and severity of DFVA and it has therefore been more important than ever that the organisation has support available and trained teams able to respond sensitively and appropriately.
- Despite increased media attention on DFVA during the pandemic, many people didn't believe that DFVA would be impacting our highly educated workplace.
- Most people choose not to disclose their situation in their workplace as their experience has taught them it is unlikely to be safe or helpful to do so. How we communicate DFVA and the language we use are critical in changing the organisational culture so if a person chooses to disclose, they feel safe, supported and in control.

CASE STUDIES

WEHI

CONTEXT

- After launching WEHI's Workplace Response to Family Violence Policy and Procedure in 2016, the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence presented an

opportunity to increase awareness among staff and students of the policy, and of domestic and family violence in the community more broadly.

ACTION TAKEN

- International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women was added to WEHI's calendar .
- A range of communication activities were carried out including internal staff messages, social media and lighting orange the Illuminarium light installation (extends seven storeys from top to bottom of building visible from Royal Parade) for the duration of the 16 days of activism campaign to increase visibility of the issue.

- Held an all staff and student launch event for the Workplace Response to Family Violence Policy and Procedure to raise awareness of the issue and highlight support available to staff and students. Kristy McKellar (survivor advocate) was invited to share her story.

IMPACT

- The solid foundation built internally through policy and communication activities has helped WEHI to develop a maturing external presence on the issue. A strong internal position has provided a platform to take a public stance and continue to grow this voice. For example, the symbolic action

of turning the Illuminarium light installation orange for the duration of the campaign will be amplified by exploring joint activities with other health and medical research partners in the local area in future.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Experts and advocates play a vital role in setting the scene when raising awareness of societal issues. Following Kristy McKellar's powerful speech at the launch event, advocates in other areas (such as experiences and issues faced by the LGBTIQ+ community) have been invited to WEHI to share their stories to provide staff and students with their personal perspectives of the issues.

- It is important to ensure activities are not seen as tokenistic. Actions must be consistent and be aligned to internal messaging, and grow as the organisation gains greater awareness and sophistication on the issue.

CASE STUDIES

Medibank

CONTEXT

- As the provider of 1800RESPECT – a confidential online and telephone counselling, information and referral service available 24 hours, 7 days a week – Medibank has unique insight into the extent and impact of domestic and family violence. In FY20, 1800RESPECT expanded its partnerships with not-for-profit specialist counsellor providers, to help support the 267,869* contacts answered.
- International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is used to promote Medibank's Domestic and Family Violence Support Policy as well as highlight the broader inequality issues facing women in the community.

ACTION TAKEN

- Medibank CEO Craig Drummond participated in a panel event to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the 16 Days of Activism, featuring panellists from 1800RESPECT, Rio Tinto and refuge advocate Libby Lloyd. Craig is also a Muslim Women Association Linking Hearts Ambassador, and was a panellist for the MCC launch of the 'Employees who use family and domestic violence: a workplace response' resource.
- Medibank engaged experts to train and build capacity of key frontline personnel to respond to victims of domestic and family violence, and review its employee policies and internal systems that support members who are victims of violence.
- Medibank partnered with Our Watch to conduct an organisation-wide review of our alignment and performance against the Workplace Equality & Respect standards.
- 1800RESPECT launched new initiatives to support Australians impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence. These included a financial abuse toolkit, a Disability Pathways project and an escape bag checklist for those planning on leaving a relationship. 1800RESPECT was also awarded the Scope Communication Access Symbol for its work in making the service accessible for those people with communication difficulties.

IMPACT

- Increased awareness and understanding within Medibank of the prevalence of domestic and family violence, and the issues faced by victims of this violence.
- Received very positive and grateful responses from employees who have used the uncapped domestic violence leave policy, as well as taken advantage of Medibank's FlexBetter arrangements.
- Better ability by frontline employees to identify and assist victims of domestic and family violence, as well as use appropriate referral pathways.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Even with increased media coverage and corporate involvement, there is still relatively poor awareness and understanding in the community around the issues victims of domestic and family Violence face.
- An increase in contacts to 1800RESPECT throughout COVID-19 was both alarming and encouraging: it reflected an unacceptable rate of violence experienced but conversely a positive trend towards an increase in disclosure and seeking help.

*Note – this figure includes all contacts to the 1800RESPECT service including pranks, nuisance and disconnections

EXAMPLES

Speeches and comments

Here are some examples you can use in your organisation to take action:

The most effective words are reflections of our personal experiences and create a dialogue with other people. The comments below are intended to get you thinking about the kinds of effective comments you might want to make. They can be used in conjunction with the factsheet and practical actions provided in the previous pages.

“ *I want to start by acknowledging those impacted by domestic and family violence. Domestic and family violence is a significant issue in our nation, one that we cannot ignore. So far this year, there have been more than 40 women murdered, most of whom have been murdered by an intimate partner or someone known to them. More than 800,000 women in paid work have been impacted by family violence. We have perpetrators too in paid work. I believe that domestic and family violence is a workplace issue, and that we need to do something about it. That's why I decided to participate in what's called the 16 Days of Activism. It's a way for me to learn about the topic and to start a conversation with you about what we might do together to ensure our workplace supports those impacted.*

“ *Today, I want to start by asking you about what you know about domestic and family violence. I am keen to understand what we can be doing to support those impacted and to address employees who may be using domestic and family violence at home. I've got a factsheet here, which I thought might be worth discussing. I would like to know what you know about the topic and your ideas about how we might take action together.*

“ *Today, I want to talk about domestic and family violence, which impacts more than 800,000 women in the workforce. I want to acknowledge the strength and courage of those who bear that violence, who are disproportionately women. The prevalence of violence across our nation means that in our company, there are people impacted. We know that violence is a gender equality issue, and that's where many of the solutions to this complex challenge lie. That's why it's so important for us to work together to ensure that our workplaces are inclusive, promote gender equality and can support those impacted by violence.*

EXAMPLES

Email to staff

The best emails are again based on personal experience, and highlight specific practical actions that leaders are taking and employees can take to play their part in decreasing the impact and prevalence of domestic and family violence. To get you started, here are a few examples that might assist. Attaching a video can be particularly effective.

Example 1:

Colleagues,

Today marks the start of the 16 Days of Activism – a global campaign to end violence against women. I am proud to support this campaign which runs from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day)

Domestic and family violence is one of the most prevalent human rights abuses in our nation. 1.4 million Australian women are living in an abusive relationship or have done so in the past. Most of these women are in paid employment. This impacts on our community, individuals and the workplace.

I am still early in my own journey of learning about domestic and family violence. However, one thing I know is that it will take every single one of us to create a more gender-equal world that is free from such violence. Over the next few weeks, you may notice that I will be sharing information at key forums and in meetings about what I am learning about domestic and family violence. I hope you might take the opportunity to do the same.

We want (INSERT ORG NAME) to be a workplace where all our employees feel safe, supported and able to bring their whole selves to work. We are committed to supporting employees impacted by domestic and family violence.

If you or someone you know needs support, please call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au. Our employee assistance program (EAP) is also available.

Together, we can make a real difference. I welcome your thoughts and feedback.

EXAMPLES

Email to staff

Example 2:

Team,

I very rarely send emails to everyone in the firm, but I feel a topic as important as domestic and family violence warrants this.

Today is International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and marks the start of 16 Days of Activism – a global campaign to end violence against women. [INSERT] is proud to support this campaign which runs from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day.)

Domestic and family violence is one of the most common forms of abuse in our nation. 1.4 million Australian women are living in an abusive relationship or have done so in the past. This impacts on our community, individuals and the workplace. Research shows that violence against women costs \$21.7 billion a year, with victims and government bearing the majority of the cost.

I'm a member of the Male Champions of Change and we know we can't champion gender equality without addressing domestic and family violence, whose victims are overwhelmingly women. I would like to see every one of us at [ORGANISATION] take action to reduce the prevalence and impact of domestic and family violence.

Here are three ideas of how we can help:

- We want [ORGANISATION] to be a workplace where all our employees feel safe, supported and able to bring their whole selves to work. In recognition of the important role employers can play in preventing abuse, we launched the organisation's first ever Family and Domestic Violence Policy. If you or someone you know needs support, please contact [INSERT DETAILS], call 1800RESPECT or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au. You can also contact [INSERT EAP PROVIDER].
- You may wonder how you can support someone else who may be impacted by violence. 1800RESPECT – Australia's national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service has recently launched a toolkit to support frontline workers in our community who work with those experiencing violence. You can learn more about this at <https://www.1800respect.org.au>.
- Today is International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women – a great opportunity to show your personal support by talking about the issue with people in your lives.

Domestic violence is a community problem – not a private problem for victims to solve. Together, we can make a real difference.

EXAMPLES

Videos

We have found videos can be a useful alternative or addition to written comments. Here are a few videos that you might find useful:

Step Up Together: Domestic and Family Violence, Male Champions of Change

<http://malechampionsofchange.com/domestic-violence-is-a-workplace-issue/>

Taking Action on Domestic and Family Violence

<http://malechampionsofchange.com/take-practical-action/take-action-on-domestic-and-family-violence/>

Change the Story: Our Watch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLUVWZvVZXw>

Doing Nothing Does Harm: Our Watch

<https://doingnothingdoesharm.org.au/DoingNothingDoesHarm/Home>

Vic Health Community Attitudes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8E7RGjk69T4>

Dear Daddy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dP7OXDWof30>

What are practical everyday actions everyone can take?

Provided by OurWatch (www.ourwatch.org.au)

We all have a major role to play in challenging gender stereotypes and championing gender equality. Practical everyday actions that anyone (particularly men) can take include:

→ **Never letting anyone blame a victim** because of what they were wearing, how much they'd had to drink, were behaving in a 'suggestive' manner, or for any other reason

→ **Checking in** with a woman and asking her if she's OK if you think she is being treated in a controlling manner.

→ **Considering whether your own attitudes** and behaviours towards women and men, girls and boys, might be reinforcing gender stereotypes or unconsciously condoning disrespect for women.

→ **Never letting anyone make excuses for a perpetrator** (because he was angry, drunk or has money problems, for example) because this contributes to a society that excuses violence against women.

→ **Speaking out** if someone makes a sexist joke or catcalls at women on the street. These things might seem unimportant, but they are based in disrespect for women, and chances are you're not the only one who thinks this kind of behaviour is wrong.

Frequently asked questions

This section draws on material produced by Our Watch. For more information see *Change the Story* and the various resources on the Our Watch website: www.ourwatch.org.au

1 What causes violence against women?

There is no single cause of violence against women. But current international evidence tells us that it is more likely to happen where gender inequality is ingrained in social, cultural and organisational structures and practices.

According to this evidence, the particular expressions of gender inequality associated with higher levels of violence against women are:

- Social norms (attitudes and beliefs) and institutional practices that excuse, justify or tolerate violence against women
- Men's control of decision-making in relationships and public life, and limits to women's economic and social independence
- Rigid and stereotypical gender roles and identities
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

Gender inequality is always influential as a driver of violence against women, but is not experienced in the same way by every woman. Other forms of social, political and economic inequalities can affect how gender inequality is expressed.

In some cases, the severity or frequency of violence can be increased by other factors that reinforce gender inequality, although none of these factors predict or drive violence against women on their own.

2 What is the evidence that gender inequality drives violence against women?

There is a strong and consistent association in the international evidence between gender inequality and levels of violence against women.

Most recently, a 2015 study in medical journal *The Lancet* found factors relating to gender inequality predict the prevalence of intimate partner violence across 44 countries.²⁴ A United Nations review found significantly and consistently higher rates of violence against women in countries where women's economic, social and political rights are poorly protected, and where power and resources are unequally distributed between men and women.²⁵ This is true on the broad social scale, but also within intimate relationships, where male dominance and control of wealth is a significant predictor of higher levels of violence against women.²⁶

Gender inequality isn't only expressed through imbalances in economic or political power and rights – it's also found in individual and community beliefs about what men and women are like, and how they are 'supposed' to behave. World Health Organization research has found individuals, both men and women, who don't believe that men and women are equal, and/or see them as having specific roles or characteristics, were also more likely to condone, tolerate or excuse violence against women.

Australian research has confirmed the most consistent predictor for support of violence against women by men is a person's agreement with sexist, patriarchal and/or sexually hostile attitudes.²⁷

Frequently asked questions

3 What role does alcohol, socio-economic status, mental health and drugs play?

These are a number of **reinforcing factors** that **don't predict or drive violence on their own**; however, they **may increase the likelihood of violence against women** among people who already have low support for gender equality and have violence-supportive attitudes.

The harmful use of alcohol is one reinforcing factor for violence against women, but it does not drive violence against women on its own. Not all people who drink are violent, and many people who do not drink are violent. However, in conjunction with social and cultural norms based on harmful gender stereotypes – such as male conquest and aggression – alcohol can contribute to the increased occurrence or severity of violence against women.

Research is limited on the impact of other drugs on violence against women, however it's possible certain drugs could have a similar effect to alcohol.

Socio-economic factors themselves do not drive violence against women. However, if these factors reinforce or worsen existing gender inequalities, they can increase the probability of violence against women. For example, women who are particularly limited in access to wealth and resources may find themselves financially dependent on their partner and therefore restricted when making choices about if or when to leave an abusive partner.

4 What about violence against men?

All violence is wrong, regardless of the sex of the victim or perpetrator.

However, both sexes are more likely to experience violence at the hands of men.²⁹ Men are more likely to experience violence by other men in public places; women are more likely to experience violence from men they know, often in the home.²⁹

Women are far more likely than men to experience sexual violence and violence from an intimate partner, and with more severe impacts. Women are more likely to be afraid of, hospitalised by, or killed by an intimate partner than men.³⁰ This doesn't negate the experiences of male victims. But it means that the different approaches to preventing violence must take into account the different ways that men and women experience it.

Frequently asked questions

5 What role can men play in this change?

Men have a major role to play in challenging gender stereotypes and championing gender equality to prevent violence against women. As individuals, our everyday words and actions matter – they are what help to build a society where women are respected as equals and violence against women is not tolerated.

As discussed above under 'What are practical everyday actions that everyone can take?', men in particular can act in the following positive and proactive ways:

- Never letting anyone blame a victim because of what they were wearing, how much they'd had to drink, were behaving in a 'suggestive' manner, or for any other reason.
- Never letting anyone make excuses for a perpetrator (because he was angry, drunk or had money problems, for example) because this contributes to a society that excuses violence against women.
- Speaking out if someone makes a sexist joke or catcalls a woman on the street. These things might seem unimportant, but they are based in disrespect for women, and chances are you're not the only one who thinks this kind of behaviour is wrong.
- Checking in with a woman and asking her if she's OK if you think she is being treated in a controlling manner.
- Considering whether your own attitudes and behaviours towards women and men, girls and boys, might be reinforcing gender stereotypes or unconsciously condoning disrespect for women.

Men in positions of leadership can also use their role and influence to drive change by:

- Role modelling respect for women.
- Ensuring that women are part of decision-making processes.
- Implementing initiatives, policies and practices that promote gender equality.

RESOURCES

General resources on violence against women

Our Watch, Understanding Violence Against Women: Facts and Figures

www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures

Our Watch, Men in Focus: unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women

www.ourwatch.org.au/resource/men-in-focus-unpacking-masculinities-and-engaging-men-in-the-prevention-of-violence-against-women

White Ribbon Australia's 'What Can Men Do' Fact Sheet

www.whiteribbon.org.au/awcontent/whiteribbon/documents/WR_WhatMenCanDoFactSheet-v1.pdf

Resources on domestic and family violence as a workplace issue

Australian Human Rights Commission, Factsheet on 'Domestic and Family Violence: a workplace issue, a discrimination issue'

www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/family-and-domestic-violence/publications/fact-sheet-domestic-and-family-violence-workplace

Our Watch, Workplace Equality and Respect Project

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

University of New South Wales, Gendered Violence Research Network

www.arts.unsw.edu.au/our-research/research-centres-institutes/gendered-violence-research-network

The VicHealth Violence against Women Equal Footing toolkit

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/search/equal-footing-toolkit

White Ribbon

www.whiteribbon.org.au/understand-domestic-violence/facts-violence-women/domestic-violence-statistics/

CommBank Next Chapter (Community Wellbeing team and the Financial Independence Hub)

www.commbank.com.au/support/next-chapter.html

Recognise and Recover

www.commbank.com.au/support/recognise-and-recover.html

Organisations who can help

Male Champions of Change has learnt from and collaborated with excellent organisations focused on ending domestic and family violence. A number of these are detailed below.

ORGANISATION	ABOUT
<p>OUR WATCH www.ourwatch.org.au www.workplace.ourwatch.org.au/</p>	<p>Our Watch partners with organisations and government to drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children. Their website has a host of resources and information on family and domestic violence and related issues.</p>
<p>NO TO VIOLENCE www.ntv.org.au</p>	<p>No to Violence (NTV) is the peak body for organisations and individuals working with men to end family violence in Victoria and New South Wales. NTV also provides telephone counselling, information and referrals for men in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania.</p>
<p>RAPE & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES AUSTRALIA www.rape-dvservices.org.au</p>	<p>Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia has established a dedicated unit to deliver services for organisations and professionals who work with those who have experienced trauma. The organisation provides clinical and non-clinical services to a wide range of organisations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with policy development and review • Domestic and Family Violence Training for workplace point-of-contact staff and HR managers • Organisational management of vicarious trauma <p>The organisation's work is evidence-based and best practice. All clinical staff employed by Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia are tertiary qualified and experienced psychologists or social workers. All income from training and consultancy work directly supports the organisation's counselling service for those who have experienced sexual domestic and family violence.</p>
<p>UNSW GENDERED VIOLENCE RESEARCH NETWORK (GVRN) www.arts.unsw.edu.au/our-research/research-centres-institutes/gendered-violence-research-network</p>	<p>Leveraging research excellence and extensive practice experience, the UNSW GVRN provides evidence-based, tailored training and advisory services to multiple government, private and third sector organisations for employers wanting to address the significant effects of domestic, family and sexual violence on their employees and organisation.</p> <p>The GVRN also developed the first Draft Policy on Organisational Responses to Perpetrators and to date have provided tailored training for two private sector organisations on Responses to Perpetrators.</p>
<p>AUSTRALIA'S CEO CHALLENGE www.australiasceochallenge.org</p>	<p>Their Workplace Prevention Program empowers and educates businesses to recognise the signs of domestic violence, respond appropriately and refer employees affected to professionals who can help.</p>
<p>DV WORK AWARE www.dvworkaware.org/</p>	<p>DV Work Aware is a program of the National Working Women's Centres that has been developed to raise awareness and promote best practice responses to issues of domestic and family violence in the workplace. They have a range of resources and information for workplaces available on their website.</p> <p>They also provide training services to support management and employees to take actions towards the prevention of domestic and family violence.</p>
<p>WHITE RIBBON AUSTRALIA www.whiteribbon.org.au</p>	<p>White Ribbon Australia is a national organisation working to change attitudes and behaviours that perpetrate men's violence against women by engaging men and boys to lead social change. It offers a Workplace Accreditation Program.</p>

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