

# Media Release

## Playing Our Part on domestic and family violence: taking action in the workplace

9 November 2021

Champions of Change Coalition, in partnership with Challenge DV, No to Violence, Our Watch, The Full Stop Foundation, UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network and WESNET, today release a framework with practical actions and resources for organisations, to advance their approach to the prevention and response to domestic and family violence in the workplace.

*Playing Our Part: a Framework for Workplace Action on Domestic and family Violence* is the fourth collaborative report to be published by the Champions of Change Coalition over the last 6 years of experimentation and evolution of practices and actions for workplaces to contribute to the prevention and response to domestic and family violence.

"When we started this work, we didn't have the language or awareness to talk about domestic and family violence in our workplaces, it was difficult and uncomfortable. After 6 years of sharing, experimenting, and learning together - corporate and public sector leaders, domestic and family violence experts and advocates with lived experience - we are comfortable taking action on domestic and family violence in our workplaces. We recognise the inherent dignity of all and we will do whatever it takes to ensure all of our people are not only safe at work, but also safe at home," says Elizabeth Broderick AO, founder of the Champions of Change Coalition.

### **Domestic and family violence is endemic**

The most recent Australian data demonstrates the pervasive extent of the harm and economic cost to individuals and the community caused by domestic and family violence:

- ◆ One woman is killed every nine days by her current or former partner
- ◆ 13 women per day (on average) are hospitalised for assault injuries due to domestic and family violence
- ◆ Intimate partner violence is a leading preventable contributor to death and illness in women aged 25-44
- ◆ 42% of people assisted by specialist homelessness services had experienced domestic and family violence
- ◆ Australian police deal with a domestic violence incident every two minutes – yet 4 in 5 women experiencing violence from a current partner never contact the police
- ◆ Violence against women and their children was estimated in 2016 to cost Australia \$22billion annually
- ◆ The total business and productivity cost was estimated at \$1.9 billion (\$860m due to absenteeism of those experiencing violence, \$443m due to perpetrator absenteeism and \$96m in management costs)



## **Domestic and family violence is a workplace issue: it impacts employees and productivity**

The impact of domestic and family violence extends to workplaces and has a negative impact on employee well-being, workplace health and safety and workforce productivity:

- ◆ 62% of women who have experienced or are currently experiencing domestic and family violence are in the paid workforce
- ◆ 50% of women who disclosed that they had experienced domestic and family violence reported that it affected their capacity to get to work. Of these women:
  - 19% reported the violence followed them into the workplace either through phone calls or the perpetrator coming to the workplace
  - 16% reported being tired, distracted and 10% needed to take time off work
- ◆ Globally studies have found that up to 78% of people who use domestic violence have done so during work hours using workplace resources
- ◆ In the US 75% of perpetrators struggled to concentrate at work and 80% reported a negative impact on their job performance, with 19% having caused or nearly caused an accident due to being distracted by violence they had committed or were planning to commit

“Our workforce is a reflection of the broader community, so it is likely our people will experience some of the most challenging times in their lives when they are working for us. We need to prepare our leaders for these situations, not only because it’s the right thing to do but it helps us attract and retain the best people. Everyone has a right to feel safe at work and safe to speak up if something isn’t right or they need support,” Peter Allen CEO Scentre Group.

## **Workplaces play a part in identifying and responding to domestic and family violence - and make a difference**

In 2021 the role workplaces can play in preventing and responding to domestic and family violence is becoming clearer.

“Domestic and Family violence is a scourge on society and we all bear a responsibility, particularly as employers, to do all we can to ensure our workplaces operate as a refuge and place of safe harbour for all,” says Richard Enthoven Managing Director, Hollard Holdings Australia.

“By taking action to respond to domestic and family violence in your workplace you will be investing in the productivity and wellbeing of your staff, the positive reputation of your organisation and a safe future for all those affected by domestic and family violence,” says Jan Breckenridge, Co-Convenor UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network.

Effective processes and policies can enable employees experiencing domestic and family violence to seek support and receive assistance.

“It is highly likely that there are members of our team (both men and women) who are silently living with this activity taking place in their family home. Our workplace may be the safest place they have, and in that context we can all play an important role in providing support and getting the help they need to address the violence and recover their family’s safety,” says Scott Wyatt, CEO Viva Energy.

“I know it takes an enormous amount of courage to disclose due to shame, judgement and fear of unemployment. But I also know from experience that workplaces have a unique opportunity to provide lifechanging support and security. My workplace supported me to leave my abusive relationship and now I live a life free from violence,” says Jacque Lachmund, CEO, Challenge DV.

Workplaces play a role to support and encourage employees who use domestic and family violence to seek help to change their behaviour.



“In most workplaces across Australia, there are men who use domestic and family violence. We need to address this across our community and enable these people to change their behaviour,” says Jacqui Watt, CEO No to Violence.

Workplaces play an important role in raising awareness and challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

“We all have a role in creating a safe and inclusive workplace that includes speaking up when we see or hear something that undermines respect and equality for all. As a leader of a large and diverse workforce, I know our workplace can have a profound impact on creating a more gender equal society by promoting respectful and inclusive behaviours at work and in all aspects of our lives,” says David Larocca, Oceania CEO and Regional Managing Partner, EY.

“Workplace action on domestic and family violence is a critical step in creating gender equality and working towards eliminating domestic and family violence in our communities. The more workplaces that take appropriate action the better it will be for individuals, families, businesses and the community at large. We must all play our part,” says Julie Oberin AM, National Chair, WESNET.

### **Domestic and family violence - it's everyone's business to recognise, respond and refer**

Since 2015 Champions of Change Members have been working closely with the domestic and family violence expert community and advocates with lived experience, learning, trialling, and refining internal and referral programs to appropriately address domestic and family violence in their organisations.

In 2021 many Champions of Change Member organisations are modelling leading practice approaches to both employees who experience and those who use domestic violence:

- ◆ more than 85% of Champions of Change Members have initiatives in place to support employees experiencing domestic and family violence
- ◆ more than 70% of Champions of Change Member organisations have programs in place to respond to employees who use or may use domestic and family violence
- ◆ more than 45% of Champions of Change Members organisations have initiatives that have a positive impact on domestic and family violence in the community

“Leaders from business, government and community are not shying away from the work that needs to be done to end violence. Safe and supportive workplaces are productive workplaces,” says Hayley Foster, CEO Rape and Domestic Violence services Australia and Full Stop Foundation.

Developing and refining the framework for workplace action presented in *Playing our Part*, Members of the Champions of Change are taking action in four ways: supporting employees experiencing domestic and family violence; responding to employees who are or may be using domestic and family violence; contributing to the prevention of domestic and family violence by progressing gender and other forms of equality; extending the organisational responses to reach clients, customers and local communities.

“This important framework supports workplaces with responding to family and domestic violence directly but also to advance gender equality which is necessary to prevent violence against women from happening in the first place,” says Patty Kinnersly, CEO Our Watch.

“Domestic and family violence has serious long-term impacts for individuals and the community. We've been playing our part by working with domestic and family violence sector partners to inform our approach to support people impacted achieve long term financial independence through our Next Chapter program. We will continue to work with experts in the field to develop independent research, fill gaps in our knowledge and develop effective responses. We know there is much more to do to address the far-reaching impacts of domestic and family violence,” says Matt Comyn, CEO Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

**Ends**



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### **Champions of Change Coalition**

The Champions of Change Coalition includes CEOs, secretaries of government departments, non-executive directors and community leaders who believe gender equality is a major business, economic, societal and human rights issue. Established in 2010 by Elizabeth Broderick AO, our mission is to step up beside women to help achieve gender equality and a significant and sustainable increase in the representation of women in leadership.

[championsofchangecoalition.org](http://championsofchangecoalition.org)

**Challenge DV** (formerly Australia's CEO Challenge) has been partnering with workplaces to facilitate domestic and family violence prevention training since 2001. Challenge DV also creates change with a unique partnerships program that match businesses or government departments with front-line services, and hosting events designed to unite a community no longer able to accept domestic and family violence.

[www.challengedv.org](http://www.challengedv.org)

**No to Violence** (NTV) is the largest peak body in Australia representing organisations and individuals working with men to end family violence and operator of Men's Referral Service, which provides telephone counselling, information and referrals for men who use violence to help change their behaviour.

[ntv.org.au](http://ntv.org.au)

**Our Watch** is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.

[www.ourwatch.org.au](http://www.ourwatch.org.au)

**The Full Stop Foundation** supports the work of Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia, delivering: 24/7 trauma specialist counselling to people impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence; training and professional services to businesses, governments and community organisations to better prevent and respond to violence; and public advocacy for change.

[www.rape-dvservices.org.au](http://www.rape-dvservices.org.au)

**The UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network** (GVRN) offers a knowledge exchange stream (Gendered Violence & Organisations) which has successfully partnered with over 50 organisations including a range of private sector employers to design response strategies, advise on policy and deliver expert training in gendered violence prevention and response.

[www.unsw.edu.au/arts-design-architecture/our-research/research-centres-institutes/research-networks-clusters-labs/gendered-violence-research-network](http://www.unsw.edu.au/arts-design-architecture/our-research/research-centres-institutes/research-networks-clusters-labs/gendered-violence-research-network)

**WESNET** is the national peak body for specialist women's domestic and family violence services across Australia and the leading sector expert on the intersection of technology and violence against women. WESNET provides training and advice to frontline workers, governments, technology and other businesses to ensure women can access technology safely.

[wesnet.org.au](http://wesnet.org.au)