

# 5 Reasons Your Workplace Should Address Domestic and Family Violence

## 1. Domestic and family violence affects employees

Research shows that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 13 men in Australia will experience some form of domestic and family violence (DFV) in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Of the women experiencing DFV, we know that two thirds are employed. We can also reasonably assume a similar percentage of people using DFV would also be in the workforce.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Domestic and family violence is a workplace issue

1 in 5 Australian women say the violence continues at work.<sup>3</sup> Between 25–50% of Australian women subjected to DFV report having lost a job, at least in part due to the violence.<sup>3</sup>

Women who have experienced DFV say this can happen via abusive calls and emails, or even their abusive partner turning up to their workplace.<sup>4</sup> This not only poses significant risk or harm to the person experiencing but also to other colleagues.

DFV reduces work performance and productivity. Survey data shows the main reported impact is on work performance with 16% of victims reported being distracted, tired or unwell; 10% needing to take time off and 7% being late for work.<sup>2</sup>

Data suggests that only 48% of those who experienced DFV disclosed the occurrence with their manager or supervisor. Of those that did, only 10% found their responses helpful.<sup>4</sup> We can do more for our staff to increase their safety and wellbeing at work and at home.

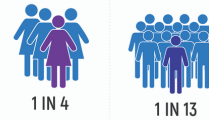
It is estimated that DFV costs the Australian economy \$22 billion annually.<sup>5</sup> Other studies have found that it impacts directly on Australian businesses to the sum of \$1.9 billion in areas such as: lost opportunity costs, errors, poor service, stress, performance management, search and hiring costs, retaining costs and permanent loss of labour capacity.<sup>2</sup>

## 3. New legislation requires workplaces to be informed and provide support to their staff

The Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) has been amended to provide the right for workers to request flexible work arrangements if they are experiencing DFV. For staff at risk of injury, threats or harm from a current or ex-partner who may be stalking, threatening or harassing; flexible work may be lifesaving. Different states and territories across Australia are implementing public service policies to address this significant issue. A change to work patterns and hours, potential transfers, paid leave, a different desk or office location, and a change to email address and phone number are a few practical steps a business can take to better ensure the safety of an affected staff member.

In response to the Not Now, Not Ever report, the Queensland public service broadly adopted the 2016 Industrial Relations Act which set-up a standard number of provisions for all those affected by DFV. This includes (but was not limited to) provisions for flexible work arrangements, transfers, paid leave and anti-discrimination. More information on what the Queensland Government has done can be found here. We would recommend all organisations familiarise themselves with these provisions when implementing a workplace response to DFV.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE (ALL FORMS) EXPERIENCED



**RATES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & MEN**  
SINCE THE AGE OF 15  
Source: ABS (2017)

PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE



EMOTIONAL ABUSE



**RATES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & MEN**  
SINCE THE AGE OF 15  
Source: ABS (2017)

## Economic Costs of Domestic and Family Violence



**\$1.9 BILLION**  
TO EMPLOYERS



**\$22 BILLION**  
to the AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY  
Source: KPMG 2016



# 5 Reasons Your Workplace Should Address Domestic and Family Violence

## 4. Domestic and family violence is a healthcare concern

DFV has significant physical, psychological and social impacts for those affected. For those experiencing, their injuries may result in death or permanent disability.

Those experiencing DFV, and their children, experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, stress related symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep difficulties, eating disorders, emotional distress, suicide ideation or attempts, substance abuse and other negative health consequences. Employers may only observe some of the less severe impacts such as: headaches, back pain, abdominal pain, and poor overall health results.

The earlier workplaces can recognise, respond and refer, the better the outcomes for those affected.



**CHILDREN**  
ARE PRESENT IN

**1 OUT OF 3**

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY  
VIOLENCE CASES  
REPORTED TO POLICE

Source: 2011

## 5. Taking workplace action in response to domestic and family violence

The Australian Human Rights Commission research has found that employers may not have the knowledge, resources and tools to support staff affected by DFV.

However, an effective workplace DFV policy can help workplaces to be prepared and responsive to incidences of DFV. A policy should distribute up to date information and resources and train staff in how to recognise, respond and refer. This means the workplace can appropriately support the affected employee to change their circumstances whilst remaining employed and increases safety for all. For more information on how your workplace can effectively respond to DFV, please contact Australia's CEO Challenge.

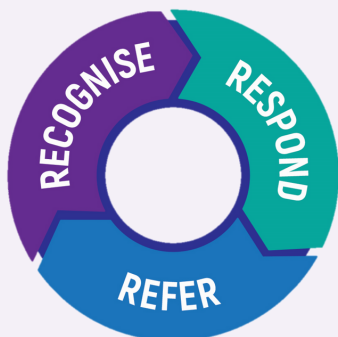
### Employers **CAN** make a difference

Whether you know it or not, it is highly likely that a proportion of your staff and colleagues are affected by domestic and family violence.

- Become informed
- Become aware
- Become prepared

## So what can you do?

Learn about the issue of DFV and how you can support your staff who are affected through our workplace training sessions. Our training is based on three key principles:



### Recognise

How to recognise the signs of domestic and family violence within individuals and workplaces

### Respond

Responding appropriately to changes in work performance, behaviours or appearance as well as how to respond to disclosures

### Refer

Where to refer people affected by domestic and family violence and how to encourage seeking help safely

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. (2016). Personal Safety Survey. Retrieved from, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@nsf/mf/4906.0>

<sup>2</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission [AHRC]. (2014). Fact sheet: Domestic and family violence - a workplace issue, a discrimination issue. Retrieved from, <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/family-and-domestic-violence/publications/fact-sheet-domestic-and-family-violence-workplace>

<sup>3</sup> Public Service Commission [PSC]. (2017). Support for employees affected by domestic and family violence. Retrieved from <https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/file/16161/download?token=SB16mwa6>

<sup>4</sup> McFerren, L [The Gendered Violence Research Network, GVRN]. (2011). National Domestic Violence and the Workplace Survey. Retrieved from, [https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/media/FASSFile/National\\_Domestic\\_Violence\\_and\\_the\\_Workplace\\_Survey\\_2011\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/media/FASSFile/National_Domestic_Violence_and_the_Workplace_Survey_2011_Full_Report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> KPMG. (2016). The Cost of Violence Against Women and their Children in Australia: Final report prepared for the Department of Social Services. Retrieved from, [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08\\_2016/the\\_cost\\_of\\_violence\\_against\\_women\\_and\\_their\\_children\\_in\\_australia\\_-\\_summary\\_report\\_may\\_2016.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_-_summary_report_may_2016.pdf)

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