Challenging governments - workplace laws, rights and entitlements

Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum Program

Seeking security: promoting women’s economic wellbeing following domestic violence

www.noviolence.com.au
Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children1 was launched by the Minister for the Status of Women, Kate Ellis, and the Attorney-General, Robert McClelland in Sydney on February 15, almost immediately following the Council of Australian Government’s meeting, and endorsement by all State and Territory Premiers and Chief Ministers. The National Plan is built from the work of the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, represented in Time for Action (2009). The National Plan incorporates six key outcomes necessary to achieve the vision that “Australian women and their children live free from violence”, and includes national initiatives towards the first of four consecutive three-year action plans, concluding in 2022. State and Territory Governments have been given four months to complete their individual action plans responding to the strategies identified in the National Plan.

Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, has described the National Plan as “a landmark moment in Australia.”2 It is the first time a national plan has placed primary prevention front and centre, a feature that was noted and commended at the beginning of the UN Convention on the Status of Women in New York on February 25. UN Women Human Rights Advisor, Janette Amer, “praised the National Plan as an important step towards addressing the causes of violence against women, as well as providing support to victims”.3 To ensure “communities are free and safe from violence” the National Plan commits to three key strategies: 1) involving the broader community; 2) focussing on primary prevention; and 3) advancing gender equality.

These strategies are to be actioned through a number of initiatives including, respectively, the following examples: 1) social marketing and the development of media codes of practice for reporting sexual assault and domestic violence; 2) the development of best practice benchmarks for work in primary prevention of violence against women and the continued implementation and evaluation of the national respectful relationships program; and 3) the development and implementation of measures to increase women’s economic security and leadership opportunities, consultation with employer and employee groups to improve workplace support for women affected by domestic violence and sexual assault, and funding the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse project (Domestic Violence – Workplace Rights and Entitlements project, which is discussed by project leader Ludo McFerran on page 3 of this edition of the Re@der).

This edition of the Re@der is devoted almost entirely to discussion of initiatives aimed at improving workplace responses to domestic and family violence to ensure women’s job security is not compromised by domestic and family violence, and its consequences. The articles highlight what has already been achieved globally in regards to legislative-based entitlements for workers affected by domestic and family violence, and emerging efforts towards employer initiated benefits for workers, as well as the work needing to be done. Given the time and resources available for the production of the articles, the information in them about relevant efforts is not exhaustive (and it is a relatively dynamic area so recent developments may not be documented here).

Efforts to improve workplace responses to domestic violence within Australia date back to the mid-1990s with the development in Queensland of a workplace information kit, followed by the establishment of the CEO Challenge in Brisbane, through the Lord Mayor’s Women’s Advisory Council, in 1999 and then a range of initiatives, including a Domestic Violence and the Workplace Training Manual, produced by Betty Taylor for the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Initiative and published in 2004. The range of previous and current efforts in Australia can be broadly classified as awareness and training for employers; the development of policies and protocols similar to anti-bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace initiatives; the development of employer-initiated benefits; and most recently, the development of entitlements through enterprise agreements.

We believe that it is ultimately in the interests of employers and employees to institute entitlements, through legislation and enterprise agreements, to support women affected by domestic and family violence. We also believe that in the short-term, employer-initiated benefits should be encouraged and we have developed a resource for employers, “Domestic violence goes to work”, included in this edition.

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2 Kate Ellis Media Release International Praise for Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

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Centre News

Sue and Terese join the team

Sue Atto has worked as a registrar and administration officer for Queensland Education for over twenty years. Since then she has worked for engineering firms and in human resources management. Sue is committed to excellence and we welcome her to CDFVR as our administration officer.

Terese Kingston began work at CDFVR mid-February as a research assistant. A Mackay resident for over 24 years, she recently completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at CQUniversity as a mature age student, majoring in Sociology and Australian history. As well as working at the Centre, Terese is also commencing study in the CQUniversity Honours Program with ‘Critical discourse analysis of domestic violence research and policy’ as a thesis topic.

Leda Barnett, previously research officer at CDFVR, is now the Indigenous Health Projects Coordinator at the Regional Indigenous Operations Policy Management Unit, Mackay Health Service District. We wish Leda well in her new position working to identify service gaps for the Indigenous community and addressing those gaps in partnership with the community, service providers and government departments.

CDFVR Director at launch of National Plan

CDFVR Director, Heather Nancarrow, attended the launch of Safe and Free from Violence: The National Plan to Reduce Violence against women and their children in Sydney on February 15. The National Plan, an initiative of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), follows Time for Action (2009), the report of the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, of which Heather was the Deputy Chair. The National Plan was launched by Minister for the Status of Women, Kate Ellis and the Attorney-General, Robert McClelland.


From left to right: Karen Willis, Annie Parkinson, Elizabeth Broderick, Kate Ellis, Libby Lloyd (Chair of the Violence against Women Advisory Group and Chair of the former National Council to Reduce violence against Women and their Children), Heather Nancarrow and Andrew O’Keefe at the launch of the National Plan.
Safe at home and safe at work: minimising the impact of violence

by Ludo McFerran, guest contributor

Being in employment is a key pathway for women to leaving a violent relationship (Patton 2003). The financial security that employment affords women can allow them to escape becoming trapped and isolated in violent and abusive relationships, and to maintain, as far as possible, their home and standard of living. With the introduction of some world’s best practice domestic violence paid leave, the family violence sector now has the opportunity to engage in productive partnerships with unions and employers to secure domestic violence workplace rights in enterprise agreements and industrial law.

Internationally, the links between economic independence, being in paid employment and the impact of domestic violence have been steadily developing. The evidence is that women with a history of domestic violence have a more disrupted work history, are consequently on lower personal incomes, have had to change jobs more often and are employed at higher levels in casual and part time work than women with no experience of violence (Family Violence Prevention Fund 1998). The work of American companies such as Liz Claibourne, the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence and the British trade union UNISON have for the past decade pioneered better workplace policies and practices to reduce the impact of domestic violence on work performance and security.

Australia has not kept pace with these developments. Murray and Powell (2008) writing for the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse (ADFVC) on domestic violence and the workplace found that a number of Australian initiatives to address the issue of domestic violence and the workplace had been valuable but had relied on the commitment of a senior, influential individual within the organisation. The challenge for Australian remained to introduce sustainable and widespread change.

As a result, the ADFVC began discussions with the NSW Public Service Association (PSA) in 2009 which led to the development of a set of model domestic violence clauses. These were logged by the union as part of bargaining for an enterprise agreement in the university sector in April 2010. The ADFVC was also meeting with the Victorian Trades Hall Council, and the first Australian family violence clauses were incorporated into the enterprise agreement between the Surf Coast Shire Council (Victoria) and the Australian Services Union (September 2010). These provide world’s best practice with up to twenty days’ extra paid leave for reasons of family violence.

The ADFVC is now funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations until the end of 2011 to promote the domestic violence clauses nationally by:

- Briefing a broad range of unions and employers on the issue of domestic violence as a workplace issue, the adoption of domestic violence provisions in enterprise agreements and other workplace instruments
- Developing with unions and employers a set of model workplace information and training resources for general staff, human resources personnel, union delegates and supervisors.
- Producing model policies and safety plans to assist in the informed introduction of domestic and family violence clauses.
- Surveying union members to provide essential information on the impact of domestic/family violence, and enabling future monitoring of the outcomes of introducing domestic violence clauses and other instruments.

The ADFVC is now involved in a range of discussions with a broad range of unions and employer bodies across Australia. In recent developments, the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) national executive approved insertion of dv clauses into MUA enterprise bargaining agreement templates and a number of NSW local government councils have adopted the clauses as policy pending agreement. The NSW PSA has asked the NSW Government to vary the Crown Employees Award 2009 to include the PSA model domestic violence clauses. This support would match the Premier’s own commitment in her Stop the Violence End the Silence: NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan to work with the PSA on such measures.

Not all workers are covered by enterprise agreements, so in consultation with the working women’s centres, the ADFVC is advocating law reform to include domestic violence clauses in employment legislation such as the Fair Work Act. Employment legislation has been included in the terms of reference for the Australian Law Reform Commission’s second stage inquiry into domestic and family violence, and the ADFVC hopes that this will encourage a national discussion on the appropriate legal reposes to issues such as unfair dismissal as result of domestic violence.

A central part of the ADFVC work will be to improve Australian data on domestic violence and work performance by surveying union members. We know from the results of the Personal Safety Survey that nearly two thirds of Australian women who report violence by a current partner
are in paid employment, but we have limited understanding of the effects (ABS 2006). A recent American study found that 10% of both female and male employees reported some experience with violence from their partner within the past twelve months, but that women reported both more frequent abuse and more severe forms of violence (O’Leary-Kelly, Reeves & Lean 2008). While an often cited impact is absenteeism, further study by the researchers’ study found that, on the contrary, women kept going to work (whether they may feel safer than at home) and absenteeism actually decreased as the domestic violence at work increased. However, women reported negative impacts on their performances while at work, with implications for job security and productivity (O’Leary-Kelly, Liou & Reeves 2010).

We could be developing our understanding of domestic violence risk factors if we had better workplace data. Stalking is one of the risk factors identified by the Victorian Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework that can lead to the victim being killed. In a study of partner stalking 95% of women with violent partners who stalked them experienced harassment at their place of work (Logan, Shannon, Cole & Swanberg 2007). Twenty-four percent of employed female domestic violence victims reported an incident of domestic violence had occurred in the workplace in the previous 12 months (O’Leary-Kelly et al. 2010). When the violence enters the workplace, alarm bells should be ringing.

The clear messages from the ADFVC to unions and employers when considering domestic violence workplace entitlements are that we are seeking to:

- support women to stay safely in their jobs, their homes and their communities
- create supportive workplaces where women feel safe to disclose
- provide a link between workplaces and domestic and family violence services

We hope this last link will be a fruitful collaboration, with positive outcomes for women and children. The work with unions may be relatively new, but this is part of a larger project. It began in 1974, when feminists in the early refuges undertook to make this a community issue, to reduce and eventually stop the violence. Better policing, better laws, better awareness and better services have all contributed, but ultimately a woman’s economic independence is her best bet to avoiding the trap.

References
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006, Personal safety survey, Australia (reissue), cat.no. 4906.0, Australian Government Printing Services, Canberra, 2006, p. 34
O’Leary-Kelly A, Liou R & Reeves C 2010, When the personal is professional: intimate partner violence and the workplace, University of Arkansas, p. 27.

For all updates on the domestic violence and the workplace project, see:
http://www.adfv.unsw.edu.au/dv_workplace_rights_entitlements_project.htm

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Stop Press

- Recently, the NSW Government negotiated a set of domestic violence clauses for the public service with the NSW PSA that resulted in five paid days for domestic violence related matters (February 2011).
The statistics regarding domestic violence around the world are staggering. Australian research reveals that 34 percent of women, who have had an intimate partner, have experienced at least one form of violence by them (Mouzos & Makkai 2004). According to the Bureau of Labor and Industries, every nine seconds in the United States, a man beats a woman, and one in three women experience violence by an intimate or ex-intimate partner in their lifetimes (Leachman 2010). Aside from the tragic personal implications, the problem spills over into the workplace and 64 percent of employees who are victims of domestic violence have indicated that their ability to work is affected by the violence (Shyer & Donovan 2010).

A domestic violence victim’s capacity to escape an abusive relationship is often dependent on economic factors such as finding and keeping a job and gaining financial security and independence. Employees affected by domestic violence may need time away from their workplace to meet with solicitors or counselors, attend court hearings, arrange for alternative housing or recover from injuries.

In recent years, steps have been taken throughout the world to respond to the issues associated with domestic violence in the workplace by implementing specific legislative protection to support those affected by domestic violence and to support them to repair their lives and begin to achieve financial independence from their abusers. The aim of this article is to shed some light on responses around the globe and for employers to recognise the impact of domestic violence in the workplace.

**United States of America**

**H.R. 739: Security and Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Act** The SAFE Act, currently being considered but not yet passed, represents a turning point in legislative protection of the economic and employment security rights of women affected by domestic and dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. Provisions of the bill include up to 30 days of leave in one year to address violence; protection from employer discrimination, such as the refusal or termination of employment, harassment or other discrimination; and ensuring compensation for victims of violence who are unable to maintain their employment as a result of the abuse. It also seeks to protect women affected by domestic violence from discrimination by insurance providers.

In California, the California Labor Code 230-230.1 amended by Cal. Stat. 487 protects employees affected by domestic violence against discharge/discrimination for taking time off to secure their own or their children’s safety or welfare. Similarly, in Illinois, provision in legislation is made by prohibiting discrimination against a person affected by domestic or sexual violence; and requires the employer to make reasonable accommodations related to the violence.

In Oregon, the Domestic Violence Victims Leave Law applies to employers of six employees or more and the Oregon Senate Bill 928 applies to employers with one or more employees and provides employees unpaid time off to deal with issues arising from being affected by domestic abuse, rape or stalking. Employers have an additional responsibility in that they are prohibited from refusing to hire or discriminate against a victim of domestic violence because of this status. Employers must also provide reasonable safety accommodation to these victims unless doing so would create an undue hardship on the operation of the business.

The N.Y. Exec. Law § 292 and § 296 New York’s Human Rights Law prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of age, race, creed, colour, national origin, sex, sexual orientation disability, genetic predisposition or carrier status, or marital status. This law has been amended to include “domestic violence victims” in the category of those persons protected from employment discrimination. This DV Amendment protects people affected by domestic violence from all forms of employment discrimination so they may have the ability to deal with the unique circumstances of their lives and achieve financial independence from their abuser. It is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against victims of domestic violence in hiring, requests for leave, job advancement, compensation or other employment practices. Failing to comply with the requirements of the New York’s Human Rights Law may result in civil penalties if the conduct was wilful, wanton or malicious.

**Spain**

**Organic Act 1/2004 of 28 December on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence (2004)** The Act aims to protect women against all forms of violence and discrimination in the public and private spheres, including in the home, education and training facilities, the justice system, advertising and the workplace. It includes provisions for employed women experiencing gender-based violence to request a reduction/reorganisation of working hours, change of workplace, suspension of employment with their post reserved and termination of their employment contract.

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**Challenging governments - workplace laws, rights and entitlements around the globe**

*by Renette Viljoen, CDFVR*

5 CDFVRe@der March 2011
In Australia, individual states and territories have laws that offer specific protection to those affected by domestic and family violence which criminalise specific domestic violence behaviours, but there is no specific legislation protecting those affected by domestic violence in the workplace. Legislation to specifically address domestic violence in the workplace has the value of establishing protection and compensation for victims in all workplaces and raises awareness across employers and the broader community. Not only does it acknowledge workers affected by domestic violence, it also leads to addressing discriminatory outcomes and greater opportunities for women to participate in employment and the economy (Hamilton & Braaf 2009).

As in other parts of the world, unions have a key role to play in dealing with the workplace effects of violence by educating and assisting members, employers and policymakers (Urban & Wagner 2000). Unions have a history of advocacy for employee rights and protections, and have had important successes in bringing about legislative change for worker safety.

### Philippines

**Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004** The Act provides for the protection of women and children against all forms of domestic violence and serves to enhance women’s financial security by prohibiting employers from discriminating against employees who experience domestic violence. It includes specific entitlements to paid leave of up to ten days, in addition to other paid leave, for women employees to address domestic violence issues.

These efforts will go a long way to improving the lives of many, but also dictate the Australian government’s support in tackling family violence in the workplace. According to the Association of Women’s Rights in Development (AWID 2010) it has to be emphasised that ongoing monitoring, enforcement and sanctions for failure to comply are critical to the successful implementation of any legislation designed to protect people affected by domestic violence in the workplace. (continues at bottom of page 18)
How much does it cost the employer?
by Renette Viljoen, CDFVR

Across the world, an estimated 15-17% of Australian women are affected by domestic violence over the course of their lifetime (ABS 2006). With women being significant contributors to the Australian economy and a driver in Australia’s increased labour force participation rates over the past fifteen years (ABS 2007), domestic violence is not only a prevalent health and social issue, but also considered to be a workplace issue.

In the early 2000s, the economic costs of domestic violence to businesses and corporations in Australia were estimated at over $1.5 billion annually and included factors such as impaired job performance that lead to loss productivity, misuse of resources, absenteeism and staff turnover, as well as indirect costs such as the tax share of public sector costs of domestic violence (Henderson 2000; Laing & Bobic 2002). The real cost to employers was likely to be much higher due to inflation and under-reporting of incidents of violence by both victims and perpetrators.

Production-related costs include costs mostly associated with lost production (wages plus profit) from absenteeism. Employee absence from work can include people affected by domestic violence taking time off work due to injury, emotional distress or attending court, and perpetrator absenteeism due to criminal justice processes. Costs incurred by employers due to employee absence include search and hire (recruitment) and training costs; on site costs, loss of productivity of victim, perpetrator, management, co-worker, friends and family; lost unpaid work; costs of replacing lost output through overtime premiums paid to other workers; and permanent loss of labour capacity (Access Economics 2004, Deakin 2008).

A number of indirect social and health consequences of domestic violence that contributes to the production-related costs include social and psychological consequences like anxiety, depression and other emotional distress, physical stress symptoms, suicide attempts, alcohol and drug abuse, sleep disturbances, reduced coping and problem solving skills, loss of self esteem and confidence, social isolation, fear of starting new relationships, living in fear, and other major impacts on quality of life (Henderson 2000).

A report published in 2000, Impacts and Costs of Domestic Violence on the Australian Business/Corporate Sector, found that staff absenteeism and replacement costs alone were estimated to cost employers over $30 million annually, whilst the total annual cost (including direct and indirect costs) to the corporate/business sector was estimated to be approximately $1 billion (Henderson 2000). In 2004, a detailed study by Access Economics, The cost of domestic violence to the Australian economy, estimated that the total cost of domestic violence was $8.1 billion in 2002-03. This estimate includes the costs of pain and suffering, health costs and long-term productivity costs. The latter cost was estimated at $484 million for the period. In the most recently published, The cost of violence against women and their children (2009), the total cost to the Australian economy was estimated in the order of $13.6 billion in 2008/09 alone and predicted to reach $15.6 billion in 2021-22.

Without appropriate action to address domestic and family violence, total production-related costs could be as high as $609 million per annum and include the costs of short-term and long-term productivity losses associated with domestic violence. This relates to six percent of the total domestic violence cost of $9.883 billion (63% of total $15.6 billion production-related cost) estimated for 2021-22. Victims or survivors’ absenteeism from work relates to approximately 29 percent of the $609 million in costs that will be borne primarily by employers at $235 million (39 percent).

As more women enter and leave the Australian workforce, employers have an opportunity and duty of care to help minimise and even prevent the devastating effects of domestic violence in the workplace. Through support programs, such as the CEO Challenge program, employers can play an active role in creating awareness and providing support to cut the costs of the effects of domestic violence as a workplace issue.

References
Henderson M 2000, Impacts and costs of domestic violence on the Australian business/corporate sector, Lord Mayor’s Advisory Committee, Brisbane.

1 Short-term productivity losses include temporary absenteeism from paid and unpaid work and employer administrative costs.
2 Long-term productivity losses reflect a permanent loss of the worker (homicide and premature death).
3 Since its inception in 1999, Australia’s CEO Challenge has provided, and supported training for businesses partnered with community-based domestic violence support services. The training has been built upon the work of Betty Taylor which led to the development of a Domestic Violence and the Workplace Training Manual, produced under the national Partnerships Against Domestic Violence initiative and published in 2004.
Registration for CDFVR’s annual Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum is now open and available at www.noviolence.com.au. This year’s forum *Let’s unite – stop the fight!* will resume its Queensland focus after a very successful national forum in 2010.

Last year’s forum had 209 participants from all over Australia. This year’s Queensland forum will have a maximum of 130 places available, 95 of which are designated for Indigenous participants.

Speakers for *Let’s unite – stop the fight!* have been chosen by CDFVR’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group from 32 applicants who submitted an expression of interest. Topics reflect themes identified by participants at the 2010 forum. These topics are:

- Working with men and young people who perpetrate domestic and family violence;
- The impact of domestic and family violence on children; and
- Primary prevention – working with children and young people to prevent violence happening.

An additional benefit for up to 25 Indigenous participants this year is the inclusion of a free two and a half day training opportunity to be held on the three days immediately after the forum (June 1, 2 & 3).

The training is the first unit of CDFVR’s nationally accredited *Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence – Recognise and Respond Appropriately to Domestic and Family Violence* (valued at approximately $500 per participant and resulting in a qualification). The venue for the training will be CQUniversity, Boundary Road, Mackay.

Further details and applications for one of these limited places can be found on the bottom of the forum registration form at [www.noviolence.com](http://www.noviolence.com).

Registration fees for this year’s event are $350 for Indigenous Australian participants and $450 for all others. This fee includes a screen printed forum shirt, your meals whilst at the forum and the formal 3-course forum dinner and karaoke which will be held on Monday, May 30 at 7 pm at the Mackay Entertainment & Convention Centre.

Unlike previous years, places at this year’s forum will only be secured after registration fees have been received. The cut-off date for registration is Friday May 13 and cancellations must be received by May 20 to obtain a refund.

**If you have any queries about the forum or have difficulties accessing the registration form, please contact Annie Webster on (07) 49407838 or a.webster@cqu.edu.au.**

As places are limited this year, especially for non-Indigenous participants, we advise you to book early to avoid missing out.
Day 1 – Monday May 30
Primary prevention – working with children and young people to prevent violence happening

8.00 am Registration
8.45 am Welcome to Country
8.55 am Aboriginal dancers
9.05 am Torres Strait Islander dancers
9.15 am Opening address - Heather Nancarrow, Director, CDFVR
9.25 am Keynote speaker - Charles Passi - Thursday Island
  - Reclaiming the warmor
10.00 am Plenary panel
  Chair: Shirley Slann
  Leanne Smith & Terri-Anne Goodreid, Qld - Future Parenting
  Program - increasing children’s skills and knowledge
  Laurel Blow, Qld - Change and growth
  - Trauma informed practice
  TBA
10.45 am Questions
11.00 am MORNING TEA
11.30 am Yarning circles
  Leanne Smith & Terri-Anne Goodreid - Future Parents Program
  Selena Miller, Qld Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service
  - The BROC program
  Laurel Blow - Mudjimba Women’s Safe House - S.A.F.E.L.Y Tool
12.30 pm Feedback from yarning circle presenters
12.45 pm LUNCH

Day 1 afternoon
Impacts of domestic violence

1.45 pm Plenary Panel
  Chair: Pat Cora
  Kerry Thompson, Vic
  Simone Jackson, MLT
  space as a result of... outcomes
  TBA
2.30 pm Questions
2.45 pm Yarning circles
  Fiona Mawson & Kerry
  - The ‘Violence is Not
  Denise Johnson, Qld
  - the high impact of fa...
  Tracey Morris, Qld - Family Violence prev
  Fay Gee-Hoy & Jose
  awareness on the im
3.45 pm AFTERNOON TEA
4.05 pm Feedback from yarning
4.20 pm Close - Dr Jackie H
7.00 pm - 12.00 pm “Let’s Unite...
Day 2 – Tuesday May 31

**Working with men and young people who perpetrate domestic and family violence**

8.45 am **Keynote speaker** - Bruce Simpson, Qld.  
- The SOS program - helping our young people address domestic and family violence

9.30 am **Plenary Panel**
Chair: Harold Fatnowna  
Jason Jarro, Qld - Understanding family violence  
Gil Thomsen, Qld - Restoring cultural health and harmony  
TBA

10.15 am **Questions**

10.30 am **MORNING TEA**

11.00 am **Yarning Circles**
Bruce Simpson and Charles Passi  
- What's working in our communities  
Jason Jarro - The Understanding Violence program  
Cameron Barwick - The Watchhouse DVD project  
Gil Thomsen & Matthew Quaife-Ryan - The NOW program

12.00 pm Feedback from yarning circle presenters

12.15 pm 10 minute bites – Six participants have the opportunity to speak for 10 minutes about the good work being done in their community.

1.15 pm Close - Heather Nancarrow

1.30 pm **LUNCH**
Seeking security: promoting women’s economic wellbeing following domestic violence

Rochelle Braaf & Isobelle Barrett Meyering, ADFVC summarised by Renette Viljoen, CDFVR

Escaping domestic violence poses many challenges for women, but one of the most significant is a lack of financial security. Poverty or financial dependence undermines women’s capacity and willingness to leave violent relationships, forcing many to remain in or return to dangerous situations (Braaf 2009). In 2009, the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, a project of the Centre for Gender-Related Violence Studies at the University of New South Wales, conducted a study that examined the barriers and avenues to financial security for women affected by domestic violence.

The research explored the ways in which domestic violence creates complex economic issues for women and their children and how it disrupts their lives over the short and long term. The research also paid attention to personal strategies and service initiatives that support those who have left violence to break free from financial uncertainty. Importantly, the study also demonstrated how significantly men’s violence towards their female partners contributes to women’s social exclusion. The efforts to prevent and mitigate the economic effects of domestic violence on victims, and the 2008 Federal Government’s national agenda, are central to promoting women’s social inclusion.1

In the past, research has been undertaken to investigate the impact of domestic violence on women’s lives in terms of employment, use of welfare, property and financial settlements, homelessness, and on the financial abuse of women. Limited attention has been to drawing these issues together. This research specifically aimed to (i) investigate ways in which domestic violence undermines women’s financial circumstances and, in turn, how poverty affects their efforts to gain safety; (ii) investigate strategies that support positive economic outcomes for women; and (iii) develop and promote the implementation of these strategies, to support women’s financial security and pathways to safety.

About the research

Four methods of data collection were employed in this study – literature review; in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups; dissemination of a survey instrument; and a service forum. A review of Australian and international literature was conducted and nine key areas were identified where domestic violence directly affects women’s financial security: debts, bills and banking; accommodation; legal issues; health; transport; migration; employment; social security; and child support. The literature review canvassed ways in which violent men affect economic outcomes for the female partners and where system barriers and failures have been cited as contributing to poor economic outcomes for women affected by domestic violence. The review also sought out reports of initiatives designed to support women’s financial independence and to build capacity.

Researchers worked with eight diverse services from three different Australian states who recruited female clients and workers to participate in the study. Unfortunately, despite the diversity, the study was unable to attract adequate participation of Indigenous people.2 The interviews and focus groups explored barriers to participant’s financial security pre and post violent relationship and the strategies and responses that assisted them to be more financially secure. The research specifically explored the behaviours and actions of the abusive partners that contributed to the women’s financial insecurity and what role the services, agencies, utilities and other organisations played in assisting or hindering women’s efforts to become financially secure. Workers completed a survey concerning their perception of the usefulness of different strategies to assist their clients’ financial security. In March 2010, a worker’s forum was held to discuss the study findings and to identify and share strategies and responses that services could use to better support women’s financial circumstances. Discussion within the forum contributed to the formulation of the research recommendations.

Findings and recommendations

The findings are consistent with national and international research studies that point to numerous ways in which domestic violence impacts on women’s financial outcomes. This study also highlights that for women experiencing domestic violence, financial security does not only support their efforts towards freedom from abuse, but it also helps them in their recovery and capacity to repair their lives. This financial security involves not only being able to meet daily and future needs, but ultimately, it represents empowerment and is critical to women’s ability to heal from abuse and move on with their lives.

“Financial security represents empowerment and a means for women to regain their sense of self and agency” (Braaf & Barrett Meyering 2011, p.33)

The research identified key messages that underpin a sound understanding of women’s economic needs.

1 In February 2008, then Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, defined social inclusion as the capacity for people to find employment; access services; maintain social networks through family, friends, work, personal interests and their local community; deal with personal crises such as ill health, bereavement or the loss of a job; and have their voice heard (Gillard 2008).

2 Two clients and one worker identified as Indigenous.
Seven key messages from the research:

1. Finances as an impetus to leave or an obstacle to leaving. Some women indicated their lack of financial security within the relationship prompted them to leave; while other women indicated their concerns about their future financial security prevented them from leaving or kept them dependent on their ex-partner even after leaving.

2. Ongoing financial dependence. Financial assistance is required in different forms at different stages of a violent relationship, i.e. before leaving, immediately after leaving, and to support longer term recovery. The lack of financial security prevents women from taking steps to completely end the abusive relationship.

3. The experience of domestic violence contributes to poverty, financial risk and financial insecurity for women, sometimes long after they have left the relationship.

4. Significant lack of perpetrator accountability for actions that undermine women’s financial security. Some of the women indicated that they were left financially ruined after leaving the violent relationship, being accountable for the debt incurred during the relationship.

5. Financial insecurity hinders women’s recovery from the trauma of the violence in that they are unable to access the support they need for themselves or their children, and/or the ongoing financial implications of domestic violence are an extension of the abuse and can be prolonged by perpetrators’ actions.

6. Women’s access to services that alleviates poverty is hindered by lack of knowledge and an inconsistent and complex service system. Workers’ responses can cause further trauma and disempowerment.

7. Advocacy to navigate legal and other service systems and claim entitlements is critical to assist women to achieve financial security.

The research identified critical areas where women’s financial security is significantly affected (barriers) and where intervention can have optimum effect (strategies). Recommendations to the critical areas for intervention directly relate to situations where disclosure of domestic violence has occurred and the service system is urged to tailor a specific response to acknowledge the past and current effects of violence.

Critical areas for intervention:

- Debts, bills and banking

Barriers: Financial abuse by ex-partners ranged from being excluded from having anything to do with the household finances during the relationship to having their assets or money appropriated by their partners, or being forced to carry debts (mortgages, credit card bills, business debts) incurred by their partner during and after the relationship. Consequences for some women included a poor credit rating, insolvency or bankruptcy and related institutions imposing fees or penalties on the woman when ex-partners failed to make payments on joint loans, debts or bills.

Strategies: Some women had directly approached financial institutions for assistance in preventing their partner’s financial abuse, whilst other women had been successful in taking up special financial products for low income earners.

Recommendations: Governments could fund special financial products for domestic violence victims (e.g. no or low interest loans and matched saving accounts) and directly fund domestic violence services to provide in-house financial counselling. Financial institutions could introduce policies to address financial abuse (e.g. loan or bill splitting where debts are generated jointly; greater flexibility in relation to loan criteria). Education departments could review the school curriculum to include a gender analysis in financial literacy education.

- Accommodation

Barriers: When separating from a violent partner, many women in the study were forced to leave the family home, resulting in them becoming homeless. Finding safe, affordable, appropriate accommodation post separation was the single biggest concern for the women as costs associated with leaving were substantial. A lack of suitable emergency accommodation and public housing was a major issue raised, leaving women at risk of having to return to the abusive relationship. Both women and workers in the study discussed the high costs of private rental, lack of suitable, available rentals, discrimination in this market against single mothers, mothers with more than two children, Indigenous women and women who have experienced domestic violence.

Strategies: Two avenues of assistance were identified that had benefited women across different housing scenarios: (i) housing advocacy (organising crisis accommodation, assistance for public housing applications, references for real estate agents, and information about and access to financial and material assistance provided by governments and charities); and (ii) financial assistance (access to financial support services like Centrelink Rent Assistance, bond assistance through state government schemes and other financial and material assistance offered through charities and services).

Recommendations: State governments could strengthen policies enabling victims of violence to remain in the family home (e.g. access to integrated services, risk assessment and safety upgrades) and provide assistance to secure accommodation (e.g. a separation payment for women leaving violence; rental subsidies; mortgage assistance for low income earners; more targeted funding for crisis accommodation and transitional housing, and review policies that require women to leave their home when leaving. March 2011 CDFVRe@der 12
jobs in order to gain access to refuges).

- Legal issues

**Barriers:** Many of the women in the study had engaged with the legal system. Although legal matters involving ex-partners can offer women one way to gain financial security, it can also be a dire source of financial stress and hardship. Changes to the legislation in 2006 gave greater emphasis to shared parental responsibility that had implications for women’s financial settlements, including child support, property and spousal maintenance arrangements.

**Strategies:** Women in the study highly valued legal advocacy in terms of providing clients with legal information; referrals to local and specialised legal services; explaining legal documents in plain English; gathering and preparing documents for court; and accompanying women to court. Some women educated themselves to understand their case more effectively and successfully sought compensation for their experience of domestic violence through state-based victim compensation schemes.

**Recommendations:** Government could amend the Family Law Act 1975 to give greater consideration to domestic violence and family law cases to promote more equitable financial settlements and reduce victim court costs. Legal Aid could review its policies with the aim of improving service to domestic violence clients and legal bodies could develop specialised domestic violence training and information for the judiciary, court and legal officers, to be promoted by Attorneys General and organisations with judicial oversight. Attorneys General could in turn implement more integrated specialist domestic violence courts.

- Health

**Barriers:** Physical and mental health issues were quite common for participants and their children. The cost of medical treatment was a major source of financial pressure that forced women to compromise or delay health care for themselves and their children.

**Strategies:** Women spoke positively about the support they had received from health professionals. Medicare, the Health Care Card scheme, the GP Mental Health Care Plan scheme, and the Medicare chronic disease dental scheme were cited as being very helpful. Identified charities, like the Red Cross, provided some migration advocacy and financial and material assistance. The Community Assistance Support (CAS) Program and Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASA), both government programs administered through the Red Cross, were seen to be of significant help.

**Recommendations:** Governments could provide targeted information about domestic violence and financial or legal support to migrant women through workshops, English classes, embassies and electronic media.

- Employment

**Barriers:** Women encountered barriers to their employment that were directly attributable to the abusive ex-partner. Some women had not been allowed to work while in the relationship and were finding it difficult to enter or re-enter the workforce post separation. Others had to give up their jobs when they fled due to moving away or being harassed at work by their ex-partner. Panic attacks, ...

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3 In the case of women migrating to Australia where the relationship has broken down because of domestic violence, those on some forms of temporary resident visa can apply for residency status in their own right.
depression, insomnia and suicidal thoughts were not uncommon and prevented some women from maintaining employment, whilst others had little time available to work, being fully occupied with attending to health, accommodation, legal and other matters related to the abuse. System barriers that limited women’s employment opportunities was a lack of affordable childcare options and potential loss of social security benefits. Culturally and linguistically diverse women, as well as older women and women with disabilities, faced challenges of language barriers, lack of recognition of their prior qualifications and limited social support networks and felt they were actively discriminated against by employers.

**Strategies**: Some women had disclosed the violence to their employer to gain support and approval for leave to attend to matters associated with the abuse, whilst others made use of flexible work arrangements to deal with these matters. For more traumatised women, counselling or other medical support helped with their recovery in preparation for returning to work, and some women had found that volunteering offered a valuable stepping stone to more formalised, regular and demanding paid work.

**Recommendations**: Employers could establish supportive workplace arrangements for employees affected by domestic violence (e.g. paid leave, safety provisions, training for managers). Governments could expand the capacity for women affected by domestic violence to (re)-enter the workforce (e.g. increase support to access education, training, affordable childcare options; greater financial incentives to take up employment for those receiving entitlements through raised thresholds for payment cut-offs or tax and child care credits).

**Social security**

**Barriers**: Although most of the women in the study were accessing some form of social security entitlements, serious administrative barriers were identified in accessing the entitlements. Women were mostly distressed about being asked to explain their domestic violence situation to a different officer every time they went to Centrelink and felt undermined by negative encounters with staff. They also identified policy areas of concern that related to their perceptions of the inadequate level of payments, welfare to work requirements and welfare fraud investigations that fail to recognise the impact of domestic violence.

**Strategies**: Women and workers sought out Centrelink officers who were known to be more knowledgeable about domestic violence and women’s entitlements. Service workers acted as advocates for clients by providing them with information about Centrelink entitlements, explaining forms and policies and assisting with paperwork.

**Recommendations**: Centrelink should institute a domestic violence policy to better assist clients who are affected by domestic violence.

**Child support**

**Barriers**: Most women in the study had children under the age of 16 years and those who claimed child support were dissatisfied with the arrangement as they found payments inadequate to meet even basic needs. Women received less in social security entitlements because they were assessed as receiving child support, even when these payments had been missed, were late or were under paid. Retaliation or continued abuse by ex-partners resulted in many women preferring not to seek child support and requesting an exemption. Women and workers were frustrated with the Child Support Agency’s (CSAs) lack of investigative powers to make ex-partners accountable for their obligation to financially support their children.

**Strategies**: Some women provided evidence of avoidance practices to CSA and frustrated by the lack of action by CSA had taken matters to court, but most services were able to provide advocacy.

**Recommendations**: CSA could institute a domestic violence policy to better assist clients and provide officers with domestic violence awareness training; provide an information package about entitlements and processes; and ensure adequate child support is paid, on time and in full.

**Service capacity**

**Barriers**: Workers identified funding issues as directly affecting their service’s capacity to support clients to gain financial security. In addition to funding limitations, a general lack of knowledge amongst women about domestic violence, their rights and supports available was a concern.

**Strategies**: Workers were devoted to securing and maintaining funding streams through negotiation with funding bodies; applying for grants; collaborating with other organisations to provide services or sharing resources. Service workers attended general training events and conferences, and participated in joint meetings to build and maintain contacts with external organisations, agencies, religious and cultural leaders and community-based organisations.

**Recommendations**: Governments could review the funding model and amount provided to domestic violence services to enable adequate advocacy and support for clients through sustained, long-term funding. Governments could also increase funding and availability for domestic violence training for mainstream agencies and services, including cultural awareness training. Mainstream organisations should recognise the authority of domestic violence workers to assess cases in order to validate women’s status as victims.

**Conclusion**

This study, conducted in 2010 by Rochelle Braaf and Isobelle Barrett Meyering for the ADFVC, has shown that through economic empowerment,
Domestic violence victim status: a new discrimination attribute?
by Alana Heffernan and Lee Matahaere, guest contributors

Societies around the world are developing legal strategies to address the social and economic impacts of domestic violence. In doing so, the ways in which the workplace may play a key role in supporting the economic independence of victims/survivors to minimise the effects of domestic violence on both individuals and the workplace have been examined.

The effects of domestic violence on workplaces are multi-faceted: co-workers of victims/survivors of domestic violence may be affected by the imposition of additional workloads resulting from victim/survivor absenteeism or distraction. They may have to deal with harassing calls or disruption in the workplace, or they may be put at risk by the perpetrator of domestic violence. Failing to address issues arising from domestic violence, or to mitigate such impacts, may result in costs to employers from lost productivity, misuse of resources, absenteeism and staff turnover.

Employees who have experienced domestic violence are more likely to have a disrupted work history and more likely to work in casual and part-time work than women with no experience of domestic violence. It is clear that victims/survivors of domestic violence share many of the same vulnerabilities as persons with family responsibilities, persons with impairments and other persons with attributes that attract protection under state and federal anti-discrimination laws.

Our paper, “Domestic violence discrimination in the workplace: Is statutory protection necessary?”, was written for and presented at the Our Work, Our Lives conference held in Darwin in 2010. As Industrial Officers with the Queensland Working Women’s Service Inc (QWWS), we share a common passion for advancing human rights in Australia and assisting women experiencing unfavourable treatment in the workplace in both the anti-discrimination and industrial relations arenas. Through providing advice and assistance at QWWS, we have encountered a number of women who have been treated adversely by their employers on the basis of being a victim/survivor of domestic violence. The lack of statutory protection for these women has meant that many of them cannot access legal remedies for their less favourable treatment, and those who can do not have high prospects of success.

This paper explores three specific QWWS case studies, “Jane”, “Anne” and “Holly”. Key issues arising from these case studies include duty of care, workplace health and safety, the impact of inappropriate workplace policies and procedures and termination of employment. These case studies demonstrate that victims/survivors of domestic violence often require the same adjustments as those with attributes currently protected by anti-discrimination laws. The paper details how, if these women did not have access to unfair dismissal, their only avenue for addressing unfavourable treatment was through anti-discrimination law. It explains that using alternative attributes (such as temporary impairment or family responsibilities) to form a case for discrimination results in an inherently weak argument and a heavy reliance on out-of-court settlements. As such, the fact that a complainant is a victim/survivor of domestic violence, and was subsequently treated unfairly, is treated as irrelevant. This process and lack of protection serves to perpetuate the stigma and discrimination that the victim/survivor is already facing.

Through researching the measures being undertaken to address such treatment in countries such as Spain, the Philippines and the USA, we were able to identify various effective approaches to ensuring victims/survivors of domestic violence are protected in the workplace. Our paper particularly focuses on the current measures found in New York’s human rights legislation. The New York State Executive Law, at Article 15, provides a list of attributes upon which it is unlawful for employers to discriminate; domestic violence victim status is one of these attributes. This legislation is mirrored in New York City’s human rights legislation as well as in legislation enacted in Illinois and Oregon.

While other States provide varying degrees of protection, in this paper we assert that anti-discrimination law reform is the most appropriate (and the simplest) for laying down the foundations of protecting the employment relationship, and reducing the effects of domestic violence, for victims/survivors. There would be a natural flow on to provide protection under the General Protections/Unlawful Dismissal provisions of the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) and state industrial relations laws, as all provide that dismissals in contravention of anti-discrimination legislation are deemed unlawful. It should also be noted that while we recognise that male-to-female violence is the most prevalent, treating domestic violence as a gendered issue may result in the exclusion of same-sex-couples, as evidenced by the approaches of South Carolina and Montana.

In the absence of any statutory protections in Australia, the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, in conjunction with unions, has been fighting for “domestic violence” clauses to be inserted into enterprise bargaining agreements. Notably, some universities, local councils and state public services have agreed to clauses that provide the employer will not discriminate against an employee who is a victim of domestic violence. A number of these enterprise agreements
also provide access to domestic violence leave and other related entitlements. While these achievements have been groundbreaking, relying solely on enterprise bargaining agreement clauses means relying on a number of contingencies. These include union sympathy with the issue, union density in a workplace, priorities in the negotiations and employers voluntarily opting not to treat victims/survivors less favourably. It will also prove to be a slow process as it means addressing the issue one workplace at a time, and it is likely to fail to impact non-agreement-reliant workplaces (the vast majority).

If domestic violence victim status was to be entrenched in anti-discrimination law, agreements could still actively provide for leave and other extended protections. The current model clauses provided by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse provide excellent examples of the evidentiary requirements that would accompany the attribute in anti-discrimination law. Without a commitment from governments to provide such anti-discrimination protection, the enterprise agreement negotiations have been the only way forward with this issue to date.

Since presenting this paper, we have been asked why unfair dismissal laws are inadequate as remedies for employees who have been terminated for reasons including domestic violence victim status. Unfair dismissal laws require the worker to be an employee and will not protect an independent contractor (a common status for a number of workers). Anti-discrimination laws do not have such requirements. Unfair dismissal laws require an employee to have fulfilled a qualification period, which is either six months or a year, while anti-discrimination law doesn’t. Unfair dismissal laws require the complaint to be lodged within 14 days of the termination, while anti-discrimination laws allow for a year. Unfair dismissal will only address termination, not just unfavourable treatment (as one of the case studies demonstrates).

With respect to remedies, unfair dismissal complaints will only address lost earnings, and the maximum capable of being awarded is six months pay. The anti-discrimination jurisdiction is uncapped, with applicants being able to request damages, which can include both compensatory damages and general damages for hurt and humiliation. Finally, unfair dismissal laws do not provide automatic protection like anti-discrimination laws do. Once a complaint is made, the Tribunal member must decide whether the termination was harsh, unjust or unreasonable. This is a largely discretionary decision, with no specific statutory definitions that must be considered.

As authors of this paper, we were fortunate enough to be invited to join the Equal Rights Alliance Round Table discussions to develop proposals for changes to the Australian human rights laws held in Canberra in late 2010. Recommendations have been presented to the Attorney-General’s Department, which is currently undertaking a review of Australian human rights laws with a view to consolidating the current piecemeal approach to human rights. This provides a great opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to adopt the innovations adopted by other nations aimed at providing workplace protection for victims/survivors of domestic violence. QWWS is also initiating talks with the Queensland Government with respect to inserting domestic violence victim status into the Anti-discrimination Act 1991 (Qld).

This article is printed with permission from the authors and QWWS. The Queensland Working Women’s Service Inc (QWWS) is a free, confidential and supportive service for women on work-related matters.

The full paper, Domestic Violence Discrimination in the Workplace: Is statutory protection necessary? can be viewed at: http://www.qwws.org.au/

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(continues from page 14)

women can find ways to survive and leave violent relationships and enable themselves and their children to recover from abuse. For the women in the study, financial security amounts to more than a healthy bank balance. It also means economic independence, freedom of choice and control over their own finances. This research also informs the Federal Government’s social inclusion agenda and provides some clear directions for initiating strategies that will promote abused women’s economic participation and prosperity, and which recognise their value to our communities.

The full research report was launched on March 7, 2011 at the University of New South Wales and can be accessed at http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/Seeking%20Security%20Report%20WEB.pdf.

References


The global theme for International Women’s Day this year is *Equal access to education, training and science and technology: Pathway to decent work for women*. A 2007 analysis of skill levels in Australia cites women and men as being equally employed in the top two skills levels (Certificate 2, 3, Bachelor degree or higher). The third skill level, (trade qualification) is still strongly dominated by men and the two bottom levels, four and five (year 12 qualification or less) still the most likely area for women to be employed (46%, n=3 193) compared to men (36%, n=3 240) (Van Wanrooy 2009).

The pathway to decent work for women has been long and hard-fought. Women, like Zelda D’Aprano who in 1969 chained herself to a building as a last resort to bring attention to the Equal Pay Campaign, led the way toward the attainment of equal pay and heightened awareness of other forms of sexual discrimination toward women. Changes in the workforce have continued over three generations of women who have evolved from being predominantly homemakers (1950s) to the most highly educated cohort Australia has seen (ABS 2008).

The shortage of labour in the war years gave women the opportunity to pursue occupations other than those deemed ‘suitable’ in the pre-war years. A newsreel in 1942 appealed to listeners to understand that women doing male jobs during wartime was necessary to winning the war “no matter how our social structure must suffer in its winning” (McMurchy et al 1983 p.110).

After the war, as predicted, women returned to gender-assigned roles. This suited some women who were pleased to leave the long work hours under often sub standard conditions, but others lamented “…it was back to what we had before, nothing had changed, and yet we had changed so much” (Reekie 1996). However, the post-war government was also short of labour and by 1961 women formed a quarter of the workforce. Although these positions were mainly segregated to ‘women’s occupations’ (stenographers, shop assistants, nurses etc.) the increased numbers of women in the workforce was leading to a change in social attitudes (Lake 1999).

By the 1970s the daughters of post-war women were entering the workforce with expanded workforce opportunities. In response to labour market shortages the marriage bar was lifted in public service jobs in NSW and Victoria in 1947 and 1956 respectively. However, despite labour shortages in the public services and strong activism by women, it wasn’t until 1966 that the federal public service and other states agreed to let women continue to work after marriage. The rationale for retaining the bar was ‘the loss of opportunities for men, prevention of child delinquency, defence of the ideals of marriage and the interest of the Australian nation’ (Collery 2004 p.80).

The strengthening women’s movement increased women in the workforce and in 1972 the equal pay case awarded women equal pay for work of equal value, however assessment of ‘equal value’ was largely left to employers and unions, whose members were predominantly male, to negotiate. The Federal Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act 1986 took the anti-discrimination legislation of the 1970s further and was designed to eliminate barriers in the workplace that restricted employment and promotion opportunities for women. There was much discussion on work and family and the ability of women to combine caring responsibilities and paid employment. The then Labour Treasurer, Ralph Willis, asserted that ‘smart employers are ones who recognise, understand and respond to the fact that working women and working men have family responsibilities’ (Crowley & Willis 1993, cited in Strachan 2010).

Pay gaps continued as most women still needed to make adjustments to their work lives due to family responsibilities; subsequently women spend less time in the workforce and are more likely to work either casually or part-time. The earning gap not only impacts on weekly income, but on women’s superannuation, which in 2008 was recorded as being approximately half of men’s (Office for Women 2008).

In 2010, gender and industry segregation were still prominent in work roles with two thirds of all women employed in clerical or sales and service positions; and women comprising 70 percent of health and education employees. Vertical segregation is also problematic, with women still grossly under-represented in management and senior management positions with no increase in women in senior positions in publicly listed companies in the past six years (Strachan 2010).

Equality for women in the workforce has come a long way since the 1950s with opportunities for increased education levels and employment diversity. However, our lowest and highest levels of employment still need to be addressed – less skilled women require greater opportunities to improve their education and training levels, and subsequently their employment opportunities; and organisations need to make a cultural shift to enable and support women to attain their rightful share of executive managerial positions in Australia.

References:
Implementing and enforcing legislation to protect victims of domestic violence in the workplace significantly impacts the manner in which employers and employee victims will deal with the repercussions of domestic violence in the future. For employee victims, legislation provides legal protections to support their efforts to repair their lives and begin to achieve financial independence from their abusers. For employers, legislation provides a reason to pay careful attention to the special needs of employees who are affected by domestic violence and increased attention to safety issues in the workplace as a whole.

References


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The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR) is located within the Institute for Health and Social Science Research, in the Academic and Research Division at CQUniversity. It is physically located at CQUniversity’s Mackay Campus.

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