

Victorian Community Council Against Violence
(VCCA)

prevention
assistance
family violence is a workplace issue

Workplace Models to
Prevent Family Violence

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Family Violence IS a Workplace Issue: Workplace Models to Prevent Family Violence

ISBN 0-9752002-0-8

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Workplace Models to Prevent Family Violence

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Family Violence IS a Workplace Issue:

Workplace Models to Prevent Family Violence is based on a report written by Anastasia Powell while on a University of Melbourne field placement with the Victorian Community Council Against Violence and which was informed by the previous work of Suellen Murray and Ché Stockley; Suellen Murray and Claire McNamara contributed to the further development of the research and writing of this publication.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Family violence affects all sectors of the community and all members of the community can work towards ending family violence. The workplace is emerging as a site where this can occur.

According to the 1996 Australian Bureau of Statistics' Women's Safety Survey, 23 per cent of women who have ever been married or in a relationship, have experienced violence by a partner at some stage during the relationship¹. However, many women do not report this violence or seek assistance from services with some research suggesting that is as high as 80 per cent of women affected who do not do so.² In 2002-2003, Victoria Police received over 28,400 reports of family violence.³

Annually, family violence costs the Australian corporate and business sectors over \$1.5 billion through direct costs such as reduced productivity, lost work days through sick leave and absences, staff attrition and abuse of workplace resources by perpetrators to harass their partner or ex-partner during work hours. Indirect costs to business and corporations include tax share in the range of public services needed to respond to family violence in the community.⁴

In this report the term 'activities' is used to describe individual tasks that a workplace may introduce as part of a family violence prevention strategy such as displaying information or having special leave arrangements. The term 'models' refers to the framework within which activities are located in workplaces. The size, location or industry of the workplace may shape the activities it implements. The model may also be informed by who has initiated the strategy and the target group.

There is a range of workplace stakeholders affected by family violence and these too can inform the workplace model adopted. They include victims and perpetrators of family violence, managers and supervisors, human resources and employee assistance staff, union representatives and co-workers.

Much of the work currently being done in the area of family violence prevention in the workplace has been in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US)

mainly through union and corporate groups. However, there are also some key developments in Australia. Based on a review of international and Australian literature this report details seven discrete models of family violence prevention through the workplace. These are characterised as 'big business', brokerage, partnerships, health promotion, union-based, armed services and employee-driven.

The 'big business' model involves the incorporation of family violence information and referral into existing human resources (HR) and employee assistance programs (EAP). The brokerage model refers to philanthropic activities that corporations may undertake to support the prevention of family violence in the wider community such as financial contributions to a local family violence service.

The partnerships model refers to a relationship between a workplace and a local family violence or other support service. The family violence service may conduct outreach on an ongoing basis to provide on-site information and referral. A health promotion model involves service worker visits as part of a short-term, highly structured program, delivering family violence information within a broader health promotion package.

Union-based models include the provision of training for union representatives to ensure they are attuned to how issues of family violence might be relevant to an employee's job. For example, consistent absences due to legal appointments or to hide injuries may put an employee's job at risk. If union members are aware of these issues they may more effectively represent an employee in negotiating work issues with employers.

Due to the availability of firearms, the families of members of the armed services, such as police and defence personnel, may potentially be at increased risk in family violence situations.⁵ Further, there are issues in relation to police attending incidents of family violence when those call-outs involve a work colleague.

An employee-driven model refers to activities undertaken by an individual employee, such as negotiating a safety plan with the employer. Individual employees may also try to drive the issue for the systemic benefit of others in the workplace.

8 Victorian Community Council Against Violence (VCCAV)

The key factors in the success of family violence prevention through the workplace which have emerged through a review of the literature and of case studies of existing Australian polices and programs include:

- Commitment to the program/policy from all levels of management.
- Support from other workplace stakeholders such as unions, HR, and EAP.
- Availability and accessibility of information regarding family violence, such as brochures with referral details, which can be distributed to all staff including those who may not feel that family violence applies to them or are embarrassed to come forward to receive the brochure.
- Presentation of family violence information in a non-threatening and systemic way such as incorporating it into other anti-violence, workplace bullying or harassment information and training campaigns.
- Partnerships between business and local services which allow for the development of rapport between service workers and employees.
- Anti-violence messages promoted through a high profile campaign, the display of family violence posters and publication of articles in employee newsletters, emails and on intranet sites.
- Genuine commitment to preventing family violence in the community by corporate leaders which may also enhance a company's image as a socially responsible and caring employer.
- 'Prevention is better than cure': investment in family violence prevention through the distribution of information and assistance referral, workplaces can be pro-active in stopping family violence from affecting their employees' working and family lives.

To date, there has been little evaluation of family violence prevention through the workplace. It is important for employers, unions and other change drivers to evaluate whether their interventions are effective in reducing family violence.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Family violence is a community issue with economic, social and personal consequences. Family violence is also a workplace issue. Although family violence usually happens in the home, the effects of family violence carry over into all spheres, including into workplaces. The community spends money providing medical attention, legal protections, welfare and support services to victims of family violence, predominantly women and children. More recently, resources have also been committed to behaviour-change programs for perpetrators and community education programs. Indirectly, the community and workplaces contribute to these costs through taxation. Family violence impacts on many people in the workplace because they have experienced or perpetrated it or have witnessed the devastating effect it can have on individuals, families and the community.

The workplace is an emerging site for family violence prevention activities. However, little research has been done in Australia that documents the frameworks in which this work occurs. This report attempts to address this gap in the literature by identifying and documenting models of family violence prevention through the workplace through a review of the literature and resources developed both within Australia and internationally. This is complemented by case studies of existing family violence prevention through the workplace programs based on interviews with employers and community agencies.

1.1 Organisation of the report

Section two provides background to the project, defines family violence and highlights its extent in the community. In section three, the implications of family violence for various groups within the workplace are considered and section four identifies some of the work that is currently being done in the area. Models of family violence prevention with illustrative case studies are presented in section five and in section six the main findings of the report are summarised and implications for the future considered.

This report does not provide a detailed guide to workplaces on how to implement family violence prevention programs, however, it is anticipated that employers, employees, unions and community

agencies will be able to build upon the information in this report to develop and implement their own workplace strategies.

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

2.1 Victorian Community Council Against Violence (VCCAV)

The VCCAV is located within the Victorian Government's Justice portfolio and consists of community representatives appointed by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for their expertise in violence prevention. The VCCAV was established in 1989 and since then has been a link between the Victorian community and the government on issues of violence. It is supported in this work by staff who are formally attached and report to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

The VCCAV has undertaken a number of major public inquiries into violence-related issues and has produced a range of reports containing recommendations for change. Where appropriate, the VCCAV ensures that issues relating to violence are considered as part of government decision-making. The VCCAV also contributes to the reduction of violence through the production of community education materials.

2.2 Safer Streets and Homes

The VCCAV is undertaking the implementation of the family violence theme of *Safer Streets and Homes: A Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy for Victoria 2002-2005*, in partnership with Crime Prevention Victoria and in collaboration with key Government and external agencies, involving five projects:

- two coordinated family violence prevention projects to run over a two-year period in Brimbank and Shepparton;
- a state-wide project to promote family violence prevention through the workplace;
- a state-wide project to develop family violence prevention resources for health professionals; and
- a literature review of evaluated prevention programs with potential to prevent family violence.

This report is a part of the project that is promoting family violence prevention through the workplace. The specific objectives of the project are to:

- raise awareness of family violence and its impact on workplaces;
- identify models of family violence prevention through the workplace;
- provide workplaces with information about family violence and specialist family violence services;
- facilitate partnerships between specialist family violence services and workplaces to prevent family violence; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of these activities in preventing family violence.

2.3 Family violence

Family violence is defined as violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour in current or past familial, domestic or intimate relationships. This encompasses not only physical injury but direct or indirect threats, sexual assault, emotional and psychological torment, economic control, property damage, social isolation and behaviour which causes a person to live in fear. Family violence is committed primarily although not exclusively by men against women.⁶

Signs an employee may be a victim of family violence:

- changes in behaviour and work performance
- lack of concentration or other stress-related behaviours
- repeated or unexplained absences
- signs that phone calls are disturbing
- bruises or injuries that are unexplained or with unlikely explanations

While many recognise physical violence including pushing, hitting, throwing objects, or threats of such acts, and sexual assault, as constituting family violence, others find forms of family violence such as emotional, social or economic abuse, less clear. Emotional abuse includes behaviour where a partner may constantly criticise, make threats using emotional blackmail, for example, 'do this or you won't see the

children', or even threatening to commit suicide if the partner leaves the relationship. Social abuse includes preventing a partner from visiting friends or socialising. Economic or financial abuse refers to situations where one partner takes control of the other's money and/or allocating small or unrealistic amounts of money for groceries and bills.⁷

2.4 The extent of family violence

The 1996 Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Women's Safety Survey* found that 23 per cent or approximately 1.1 million Australian women who have ever been married or in a relationship have experienced violence by a partner at some stage during the relationship.⁸ Yet we know that many women do not contact services or speak out about their experience of violence at home. Research indicates that around 80 per cent of women experiencing family violence in the last twenty years did not seek help from any services.⁹ This may be due to feelings of shame, experiences of negative community attitudes towards victims of family violence and fear of retribution from the perpetrator.¹⁰ Women may also feel that they will not be believed if they confide in someone about the abuse or that in some way it is their fault.

In 2002-2003 the Victorian Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service answered 25,390 calls from women seeking support, emergency accommodation or information referral in relation to family violence. In the same year, Victoria Police received over 28,400 reports of family violence.¹¹ Of these reports to Victoria Police, 76 per cent of victims were women, while men made up 78 per cent of perpetrators.¹²

Given the extent of family violence, it is to be expected that it impacts significantly upon working women. The workplace then offers the potential for intervention, support and prevention. Indeed the workplace may be the only place where a woman experiencing family violence can be away from her abuser.¹³

WORKPLACE IMPLICATIONS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

3.0 WORKPLACE IMPLICATIONS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence can affect all groups within workplaces including employees and employers, workers and co-workers, union representatives, human relations staff and managers, supervisors and executive officers. Staff members may be victims or perpetrators.

3.1 Implications for victims of family violence

Victims of family violence may experience poor concentration, depression, anxiety and low self-esteem, all of which can impact upon their work. Days may need to be taken off work to conceal injuries, to seek medical attention or to attend solicitor's appointments, or to throw the violent person off track. Victims may feel they have no choice but to leave their job because they cannot risk being found by their ex-partner. Sometimes, a victim of family violence may work in the same workplace as their abuser causing them to be at risk of direct threats, harassment and physical assault while at work.

Employees who are experiencing family violence may be disciplined by management for problems such as absenteeism and deteriorating job performance. They may lose opportunities for promotion and indirectly place their co-workers under undue stress as they witness their colleague's deteriorating situation but feel powerless to help. In some industries, particularly where the operation of machinery is involved, poor concentration or anxiety may put them or their co-workers at risk. Victims of family violence who have left their partner may be at risk of escalating violence from their ex-partner at a time when it is important to maintain their financial independence. Their job may be jeopardised if they need additional time off work to arrange for new accommodation, child-care or means of transport.

3.2 Implications for perpetrators of family violence

A perpetrator may use work resources such as phone and email to harass their partner or ex-partner during work hours or be physically absent from work to engage in stalking or harassing their partner or ex-

partner. They may also be absent from the workplace because they need to attend legal appointments and court hearings or behaviour change programs. Even if present they may be more focussed on harassing their partner or ex-partner than meeting their work responsibilities.

3.3 Implications of family violence for employers

Although physical violence rarely occurs at the workplace, harassment from abusers does occur.¹⁴ Whatever the nature of the family violence victims may experience a range of physical, emotional and psychological consequences, all of which can adversely influence employee productivity. Research indicates that the economic costs of family violence to Australian businesses and corporations are over \$1.5 billion annually.¹⁵ These costs include direct ones such as lost productivity, absenteeism, and staff turnover as well as indirect costs such as the tax share of public sector costs of family violence contributed by employers.

The Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) implications of family violence for employers include the risk of being in breach of OH&S principles and in some cases OH&S law. Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985 (Vic)* there is a duty on employers to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health (s.21) and also a duty on employees to take reasonable care for their own safety and for the health and safety of anyone else who may be affected by their acts or omissions (s.25).¹⁶

An employer may have a duty of care to ensure that an employee's abusive partner or ex-partner does not enter the workplace and potentially threaten, harass or assault them. Training regarding these sorts of family violence issues could be included in the OH&S training programs. Where the perpetrator and the victim of family violence work in the same workplace, as may be the case in large employing organisations and those in rural and regional locations, there is an elevated risk of family violence occurring at the workplace. Both employers and violent employees may be held responsible under OH&S law for violence that occurs at the workplace.¹⁷

Many employers recognise the benefits of a workforce which is committed to being 'family friendly', maintaining a work-life balance and striving to be an employer of choice. These strategies and policies encourage employee loyalty and in turn productivity. It can also have a positive influence on a company's image, thereby improving consumer-confidence.

3.4 Implications of family violence for unions

Workplace violence can impact on an employee's ability to function in their workplace and they may elect to leave. Similarly, employees experiencing family violence may struggle to continue their employment. Employees who are experiencing abuse at home may need their union representative to help them feel supported to stay at work and to take action to protect themselves from the abuser at the workplace. They may also need an advocate who understands and is sensitive to the issues of family violence and to help them negotiate with employers if their job comes under threat. They may need union support to assist them with notifying employers about any potential risks that the employee's situation of family violence may have for their work and for their co-workers.

As well as support that could occur at the individual level, systemic change could be introduced that provides support at a more collective level. For example, as an alternative to a workplace policy that provides for special arrangements for leave to be undertaken to seek legal advice, medical assistance or other support agencies, leave entitlements could be introduced into awards or enterprise bargaining agreements.

4.0 FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION THROUGH THE WORKPLACE: CURRENT WORK

The development of family violence prevention through workplaces has taken place internationally across various industries and in different ways. Some local level family violence services have developed resources or training kits for workplaces in order to facilitate the implementation of workplace strategies

and the training of key staff.¹⁸ Some governments are undertaking their own research and resource development activities, both independent of and in collaboration with such services.¹⁹ Union groups and employers have also taken up the issue of family violence and its relevance to the workplace and developed their own policies and strategies around this. To date, these developments have been mostly in the US and the UK with some work in Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

4.1 International developments

Unions have encouraged the development of family violence workplace policies that are sensitive to the needs of employees who may be experiencing violence at home. In the UK, publications from various union groups detail what workplaces should consider when putting these policies into place. These activities include providing a point of contact for employees such as their human relations manager who can provide confidential information and referral to local family violence services or special leave arrangements for employees who need time off to see their solicitor, the police or their general practitioner and ensuring safety in the workplace through revision of security measures, such as location of the employee's office or their shift hours.²⁰

Some employers, particularly in the US, have taken up similar policies, and include a range of other activities in their workplace family violence prevention plan.²¹ These activities include the distribution of information about services and the display of posters in the workplace, articles about family violence and available local services in the staff newsletter, printing anti-violence messages on staff payslips, training of key human resources or employee assistance staff in issues around family violence, and providing counselling services to employee perpetrators or victims of family violence.²²

Larger companies are well positioned to integrate strategies into their human resources or employee assistance program. However, smaller businesses may also implement activities such as the provision of service referral information or sensitive leave provisions. They may benefit from the assistance or support of a local family violence or other service

provider to do this. Partnerships between smaller workplaces and local domestic violence services have enabled the provision by these services of training for management and other staff regarding family violence issues.

The Retail Council of Canada has encouraged employers to be aware of and deal sensitively with issues around family violence that can impact upon their staff.²³ The Bullying Institute Canada has conducted research that draws links between bullying in the workplace and violence between intimates in the home.²⁴ Auckland City Council, in New Zealand, in partnership with the Auckland City District Police, the Justice Department, and Ngati Whatua O Orakei, the local Maori tribe, has developed the DVFREE Program. DVFREE aims to support and help managers and staff to deal with family violence as it relates to the workplace as part of the overall Safer Auckland City crime prevention strategy.²⁵

4.2 Australian initiatives

In Australia, the Commonwealth *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence: A Business Approach* initiative is working to encourage businesses to take an interest in family violence as a community issue and play a stronger role in its prevention.²⁶ In February 2003 the Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women held a conference on work and family conflict which was tailored specifically for executive and human relations staff to learn more about the impact that family violence can have on workplaces and to help them to support their staff who may be experiencing violence at home.²⁷

Several Australian States and Territories have been involved in work in the prevention of family violence through the workplace. The Western Australian government is undertaking a community education campaign part of which targets workplaces as sites for family violence prevention.²⁸ Barriers to workplaces addressing domestic violence have been identified and include the belief that domestic violence is a private issue (and not a workplace issue) and that management does not have the skills to deal with it. As victims of violence feared that they may not be believed or could lose their job if they sought help, it was unlikely to come to the attention of managers and other human resources personnel.²⁹

In Queensland, the Brisbane City Council established 'Australia's CEO Challenge', an Australian adaptation of a US initiative that promotes partnerships between the community and business sectors to respond to family violence.³⁰ Also in Queensland, the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Service has developed a training manual 'Domestic Violence in the Workplace' to assist in the provision of training of workplace supervisors and human resources staff as well as the development of workplace policies addressing family violence issues as they relate to the workplace.³¹ In 2004, this training manual was updated as a *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence: A Business Approach* initiative.³²

The Northern Territory Government Domestic Violence Strategy, commenced in 1994, is a broad-ranging strategy aimed predominantly at criminal justice responses to perpetrators of family violence and strengthening victim support. Part of the strategy is the provision of information about family violence aimed at employers, including the costs and impacts on workplaces. It offers specific advice about detecting family violence and actions employers can take to assist workers experiencing family violence.³³

4.3 Victorian initiatives

In addition to the work being undertaken under the 'Preventing Family Violence - Safety in the Home' theme of *Safer Streets and Homes*, there are other examples of workplace strategies to prevent family violence operating in Victoria. These include partnerships between local community services with businesses, especially in male-dominated industries which provide an opportunity for men to be referred to support services, and workplace visits by health services to female-dominated industries providing information and referral for women who may be experiencing family violence. Case studies of some of these Victorian initiatives are presented in the following section.

4.4 Evaluation

To date there has been little evaluation of family violence prevention through the workplace initiatives in Australia. A culture of evaluation needs to be encouraged so that what works can be identified and replicated.

5.0 MODELS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Differing models are evident in the work currently being done in the area of family violence prevention through workplaces. In this report the term 'activities' is used to describe individual tasks or strategies that a workplace may introduce such as displaying information or having special leave arrangements. The term 'models' refers to the framework within which activities are located in workplaces. In some cases the model may be determined by the nature of the workplace itself, for example its size, location, or industry, which sets it apart and shapes the activities it might implement. In others, it may be the way family violence prevention has been introduced to the workplace, who has initiated it and to whom it is targeted.

This research has identified seven models of family violence prevention through the workplace. Firstly, 'big business' or other large employing organisations have the capacity to implement activities within their existing HR services with links to their EAP. Another form of family violence prevention that could be undertaken by large employing organisations is the brokerage model where they make financial or other contributions to family violence prevention programs or services within the community as part of its corporate philanthropic work.

Other models include a partnership with a local service provider or health services conducting workplace visits and the implementation of family violence prevention activities through union groups.

Armed personnel such as police, defence and security forces present unique issues. There may be elevated risk to their families due to access to firearms. There may also be intersection of their personal and private lives. For example, police may attend a family violence incident when family violence is an issue in their own lives or they may have to attend an incident where a fellow officer is involved.³⁴

The final model detailed in this report is where an individual employee experiencing family violence instigates workplace measures to increase their own or others safety.

The seven models identified in this paper are not an exhaustive representation of the possibilities for family violence prevention that might occur in workplaces. Industries and workplaces may need to develop their own approach to meet their own unique needs. For example, industries which involve work taking place in a client's home, such as home help services or visiting nurses, need to consider how to manage an employee's exposure to family violence and their relationship with their clients in such circumstances. Similarly, workplaces such as hospitals and schools would have particular issues to consider in terms of the various relationships between students, patients, families and employees.

Employees engaged in customer service industries, such as hairdressing, may be in a position to learn of a client's experience of family violence due to the rapport they develop with their clients. In this case, a model of family violence prevention could focus on both employee relations and also the external customer focus.³⁵ The potential for workplace strategies of family violence prevention in other settings is an area that could be further explored in future research.

5.1 'Big business' model

Large organisations are likely to have highly structured human resources systems and access to employee assistance or welfare programs to which staff can be referred for assistance. Family violence prevention strategies could be readily integrated into the infrastructure of anti-discrimination, harassment and occupational health and safety policies and protocols. Large organisations could develop their own family violence prevention strategies that complement their workplace values and support their existing policies and procedures. These human resources policies could include provisions that are sensitive to employees that may be experiencing violence at home. Flexible leave provisions, increased security measures, flexible shifts, referral information from local services, and access to an EAP are just some examples of what might be included.

One of the strengths of this model of family violence prevention through the workplace is its sustainability,

provided there is ongoing commitment to information provision and training of identified personnel such as managers, human resources staff or the EAP. This, in turn, relies on the people the organisation employs in these roles being approachable, sensitive, accessible and informed about family violence and its implications for the workplace. Even though policies and procedures may be in place, without the support from all levels of management, staff will not be made aware of, nor feel, that they can access these measures.

Case Study: Australia Post³⁶

The Organisation

As the nation's oldest continuously running commercial organisation, Australia Post has a long history of serving the Australian community. Today, Australia Post is a progressive and commercial government business enterprise that is committed to providing an accessible, reliable and affordable postal service for all Australians. The corporation employs 35,427 full-time and part-time staff, operates 4,493 post offices, serves 1.09 million customers in its outlets every business day and delivers mail to 9.4 million addresses. The size of workplaces varies from up to 1,400 people in the largest mail sorting centres to fewer than 10 in the small retail outlets. Approximately 38 per cent of the workforce are women with differences in gender composition at the various worksites. About 20 per cent of the Australia Post workforce comes from non-English speaking backgrounds, from 120 different countries and with more than 70 languages spoken within the organisation. The average age for Australia Post employees is 42 years.

The program

Australia Post has made a commitment to family violence prevention throughout its workplaces and is a member of the Commonwealth Government's *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence - A Business Approach National Working Group*. Under development are a number of initiatives including the preparation of national policies and procedures on family violence that will complement Australia Post's

existing Code of Ethics and the production of information sheets about family violence for employees which draw on those produced by community and government agencies.

Australia Post is also piloting several workplace programs that have implications for family relationship harmony. Since 2002 Australia Post has been a financial supporter to Mensline Australia and in 2003-2004 it increased its contribution and is piloting a dedicated line for male staff. A major campaign has been run within Australia Post promoting the service and since 1 July 2003, 5 per cent of the calls into that line have been about domestic violence. With the Child Support Agency, Australia Post is running a pilot program, Staying Connected, for separated fathers looking at how they value themselves, their self-worth, how they interact with their ex-partner and how they interact with their children. Feedback has been very positive about this initiative with requests for additional sessions and resources.

A Health Resource Centre service managed by an independent provider offers information, support, referrals and a listening ear for all staff through a Free call number. It also puts them in touch with services in their local area.

Implementation of the program

As noted, the work being done at Australia Post around family violence complements the Corporation's Code of Ethics. The Code reflects the value Australia Post places on high performance and behavioural standards and a healthy and secure work environment. Inflicting family violence on another person while on duty as an Australia Post employee and/or using Australia Post resources, whether at the workplace or elsewhere, to do so are breaches of the Code. Such actions are addressed through the application of Australia Post's Employee Counselling and Discipline Process.

In developing the family violence policy, human resources staff worked with facility managers raising awareness of family violence and its impact on the workplaces.

When it is first raised, sometimes the reaction is, 'it's private. It's nothing to do with business. Why

would we want a policy around that? That's taboo. It's probably their own fault. They've probably asked for it in some way.'

But these views are challenged and engaging managers along the way has also been critical. They have been asked: 'Is this an issue for you?'

Their response is that yes, family violence is a workplace issue; yes, they have had that experience. They didn't quite know how to handle it and they would like some guidance. They've done the best they could with what they've got available.

Engagement with managers has entailed presenting material about attitudes to domestic violence and how they have changed and talking to managers about what could be done from the workplace. The policy and its protocols are being framed to assist them in their job, not to give them more work, but to make it easier for them when they are confronted by the issue, and it is being written as simply and briefly as possible. When a manager becomes aware of family violence, their role will be to provide an employee with support and information about referrals to relevant local services and to Post's EAP but not to take on the role of counsellor.

Family violence-related programs and initiatives are underpinned by a business case that provides evidence of the significance of this work:

Family violence has costs associated with it for the business as well as costs for the individuals and we value our staff. It impacts on their ability to give of their best in the workplace and enjoy their work and their life. It impacts on attendance, productivity, concentration and ability to observe safe work practices.

Key Points

- When developing a workplace policy, share your thoughts and intentions up front so that you get key stakeholders engaged.
- It's very important to present a business case to support the family violence prevention work that you are doing.
- Position family violence prevention alongside or within other workplace strategies such as the Code of Ethics or organisational harassment and equity policies.

5.2 Brokerage model

Business is a part of the wider community and potentially has a role to play in assisting in the development and implementation of solutions to social problems. The brokerage model of family violence prevention is about business getting involved in the community's efforts to 'end partner violence'.³⁷ This can be done in a variety of ways such as supporting family violence services directly through sponsorship or donated resources, promoting awareness of family violence within the community generally and within their own organisation, and forming partnerships with local services. This latter model of family violence prevention will be discussed further in the next section.

Support for a local family violence service or agency could be demonstrated by a food, clothing and homewares drive within a workplace and promoted by senior executives. Community awareness of family violence may be raised by media releases regarding an organisation's involvement with local family violence services. This can also be of promotional value for the business involved. The organisation can also distribute information such as fliers from a local family violence agency in order to raise awareness among staff.

The benefits for business in acting on the issue of family violence prevention range from enhancing the company's public image through to improved staff morale. There are also direct economic benefits such as reducing the company's lost productivity from family violence related absences and staff turnover. As family violence in the general community decreases so does the corporate sector's tax share of community services needed to respond to family violence.³⁸

Case Study: Australia's CEO Challenge³⁹

The organisation and background to the program

Australia's CEO Challenge is an initiative of The Brisbane Lord Mayor's Women's Advisory Committee and is based on a successful US model adapted for the Australian context. The aim of CEO Challenge is to raise awareness of family violence as a social issue in the business sector in a way which also benefits family violence services.

The program

CEO Challenge encourages business to support domestic violence services and promote awareness of domestic violence in their organisation and the wider community through the brokering of partnerships with community agencies. The program supports businesses and community agencies in the development of these partnerships such that each party benefits from the relationship:

Refuges and services get support such as through goods drives, or fundraising, or computer training, to support both their staff and their clients. And businesses get awareness training and support, and assistance with the development of policies around domestic violence in the workplace.

The benefits to business in forming such partnerships range from receiving direct services and the associated economic and other benefits such as those to staff but also improving the company's image in the wider community as sharing in the response to a social issue that potentially affects us all. CEO Challenge has supported the development of partnerships between community domestic violence agencies and businesses including construction companies, legal firms, hardware stores and other retailers, and some government agencies.

One of the unique features of the CEO Challenge brokerage model of family violence prevention through the workplace is that businesses and community agencies decide together on the nature of the partnership and what support will be provided so that both parties not only benefit but also are able to negotiate a partnership that suits them and their organisational practices.

Implementation of the program

CEO Challenge found that it is not easy to negotiate access to the workplace and it helps to be armed with information for business regarding the costs of domestic violence and how it impacts them.

Domestic violence is a hard sell in business. They really don't want to know about it, most of them don't know anything about it, particularly the impact on them, it's not on their horizon at all. They see it

as a private matter - not something that's a workplace issue... We started by doing the research into the costs of domestic violence to business in Australia... to demonstrate that it is a workplace issue.

Also often access to workplaces depends largely on an individual within the business who is willing to promote the idea of domestic violence as a workplace issue and to help negotiate an involvement.

There were lots of barriers to business being interested in talking about it. And even now, we still find that you have to have a champion or a person who knows someone in the business, you still have to have a personal 'in'. Whether it is a high profile person, or someone to get you an appointment, or who organises for you to meet with somebody; cold calling to companies is still a very ineffective way of getting started.

Further to negotiating partnerships between business and community agencies, CEO Challenge found that there was a need for information about domestic violence targeted at the business sector. CEO Challenge developed a kit with information about the costs of domestic violence to business together with ideas about what they can do to contribute to solutions.

It can take up to six months to negotiate a partnership between a business and a community agency, and even then, the partnership needs to be continually worked on to be effective. This time and energy though is worth it and CEO Challenge have had some promising results.

Businesses are actually talking about domestic violence, they have got it on their intranet sites and businesses are starting to do awareness sessions with their staff. They are talking about it in their boardrooms, and they are talking about it with their families. The other [signs of success] that the evaluation showed, was that the program has leveraged something like \$250,000 dollars worth of resources for the refuge sector.

Key points

- Partnerships need to have a 'champion' in business.
- It helps to be armed with information about why family violence is a workplace issue and how business can benefit.
- Partnerships take time and need maintenance.

5.3 Partnerships model

For some workplaces, family violence prevention strategies may be better managed through a partnership with local family support services or family violence services. Partnerships may take the form of formal training sessions run by the local service for supervisors and other staff regarding family violence issues as they relate to the workplace, or ongoing informal visits to the workplace by an outreach worker. In this instance, a worker from the local service makes regular workplace visits when staff have the opportunity to speak to the worker on an informal basis, discussing issues of concern and receiving referral information.

A feature of the partnership model is the nature of the relationship formed between the workplace and the local service so that even when the outreach worker is not present, if family violence issues are raised or suspected, staff can be referred to the local service directly. A visiting outreach worker may also engage in activities such as displaying posters about family violence, distributing referral information and writing articles for the organisation's newsletter or intranet site. In building such a partnership, employers demonstrate their commitment to the issue of family violence prevention, in turn enabling staff to feel comfortable about seeking help and encouraging a workplace culture where staff feel supported both personally and professionally.

The form of a partnership model of family violence prevention through the workplace will be informed by the nature of the organisation itself. For example, a partnership approach within a male-dominated workplace may differ in its approach and style from that in a female-dominated workplace. Other factors influencing the type of partnership developed include

the location of the workplace. For example, on-site construction industries or businesses in rural areas may have different needs to those that are medium-sized and metropolitan-based. Generally, the partnerships approach may be difficult for rural organisations as there are fewer family violence services in rural areas and possibly greater travelling distances to access services. It may be that only one or two local services are available to undertake partnerships with several businesses in the one area.

Case Study: Child and Family Services Ballarat⁴⁰

The organisation

Child and Family Services Ballarat has grown from its predecessors including Ballarat Orphanage, established in 1865, and Ballarat Children's Homes. Currently, it assists about 4,000 families each year through centres in Ballarat, Daylesford, Bacchus Marsh and Ararat, providing a range of support services and programs including out of home care programs, parenting programs, home based family support programs, family counselling, a men's behaviour change program and the Men and Family Relationships program.

Background to the program

The Men and Family Relationships program is a Commonwealth funded program which has been operating for four years and has recently received a further four years funding. The program offers men services to help enhance their family relationships whether as partners or fathers. These services include counselling, group work, skills training and community education, and aim to engage men to look at and address relationship issues. Child and Family Services Ballarat recognising that men historically have been reluctant to access services, has developed a unique way of engaging men by taking the services to them. Ballarat has a number of major factories and a large population of men work within the factory setting. These workplaces have emerged as a useful site for accessing and engaging men for the provision of information and support for them and their relationships.

The program

Child and Family Services Ballarat operate two differing models of the workplace program. One model is a 'roving counselling' service where a worker goes into a particular workplace at the same time every week. Two service workers alternate for the weekly visits with a particular workplace providing a level of consistency which enable a rapport to be built between the workplace and the service workers. This stability in service workers was particularly important to the workplaces.

One of the things the industry wanted was the same faces... they didn't want a service where there was ten people who were providing the service, and once a week any one of them comes along. I guess one of the things that we found was that men make links and workplaces make links with individuals.

The Men and Family Relationships service workers have been visiting one workplace in particular for two and a half years. There are approximately 140 men on the factory floor, and at the same time each week a service worker walks around the workplace and talks to men at their workstations.

We'll talk to anyone. There'll be days when we'll go up there and we'll talk about the cricket, the footy, the golf... and other men might be looking and thinking 'I wonder what they're talking about?' for all they know all we're doing is talking about the footy or the cricket. So for us that builds up the relationships so that when we do get the guy who comes over and says 'well my relationship has broken down, my wife's saying these are the things I'm doing, what can I do?' Then they have the space to do that and feel safe to speak without feeling like the workplace is looking at him.

The program also maintains a display board in the workplace which Men and Family Relationships service workers update regularly with information about the various services available for men such as programs and contact details.

The second workplace model that Child and Family Services Ballarat is involved in is a partnership with the Division of General Practice in Ballarat where nurses,

doctors and Men and Family Relationships workers go into the workplace offering men a 'health and well-being check'. Men and Family Relationships provides the well-being check with a survey tool, asking men about how they balance their work and family life, how they perceive their relationship with their partner and their children, and if there is any information that they might like in terms of parenting or relationship issues.

In the past two years, ten workplaces have been involved with this project. Ongoing involvement by Men and Family Relationships with a number of these workplaces has continued. These two differing approaches to the provision of relationship information including family violence information being distributed within the workplace has led to a number of men either seeking individual counselling on family violence issues or attending the men's behaviour change program. Workplaces are able to negotiate with the Men and Family Relationships service for a style and frequency of program that would best suit their individual workplace.

Implementation of the program

The Men and Family Relationships program workers found that negotiating the initial access to the workplace for the implementation of the program can be a delicate process and it helps to have some pre-established links in workplaces.

We had some links with organisations where the majority of the people who worked in those places were men. So I guess we picked out a couple of workplaces to approach and we have also formed some partnerships along the way with other organisations to offer service to men in their workplaces... When we went in, it was about identifying who we needed to have onside, as opposed to who wanted to be. So people like unions - the union representatives or delegates - they needed to be a part of it, because they really introduced the service to the men on the floor. So that is one really important area. The other one is management - the office staff or other managers - they all need to be supportive of us being there as well. If you don't have these sorts of combinations it won't work.

Further to negotiating access to workplaces, service providers need to be clear about what the program offers the workplace as a whole- what benefits are there for employers to support the program or service.

You really need to convince an array of people that it is a good idea. Managers for example will want to know what is in it for them; whether that is increased productivity, less time off work, less accidents- a whole array of things.... Men, it gives them access to a service so that they do not have to actually leave during work hours. And I guess for us, the safety issue is also important- knowing where men are at if there is a crisis in their lives; having reduced ability to concentrate and to do their job, while at the same time they are trying to deal with the separation or whatever is going on.

The use of the display board, including posters and also brochures that men can take away with them, is seen as a really useful way to deliver a positive anti-violence message to the workplace without people feeling threatened. The careful use of language is also an important element of the workplace program.

Things like 'anger management' still get thrown around in the family violence arena and we do struggle with that language in the work that we do but in the workplace, people will say 'I need to do an anger management course' and it will actually be family violence work that they will need to do. So I think it's a matter of being flexible enough to pick up on that. And the language that you use in a very open or broad sense will either attract or not attract people, so as soon as you use the word 'family violence' and if you haven't already built up that relationship with people, well then you risk losing them. That's not about minimising family violence, it's about engaging men. You can't work with men if they are not coming to see you.

Thus, rather than immediately confronting men with 'family violence' per se, the workplace program and brochures use a number of relationship 'trigger' points, to draw men into the service.

Our brochure has things on it like 'do you feel like you fight all the time with your partner?', 'do you feel like you're always arguing?', some of those really common things that men have come to us and said this is what is happening in their relationship.

Also, if possible, it is beneficial for a service to be able to offer men assistance, should they enquire after it, with minimal delay. This may be seen as both taking advantage of the state of mind which may lead to change, and also validating his decision as an individual, to seek help.

Child and Family Services Ballarat has received a number of referrals into their other service areas, such as financial counselling, consumer services and their men's behaviour change program. Child and Family Services Ballarat has nearly 30 services available to the community so this workplace model is a link into other support services available to men and their families.

We have also had referrals from men who were told about us from their mates who work at the industries that we have been to. So, for us, that supports our networking theory - using workplaces as a link to men.

The program also enables men to see support services and welfare workers in a new light:

We're out there selling it to them that counsellors are normal people. You know, they're not people with two heads... debunking some of those myths about 'only weak people go and see counsellors'.

Key points

- Support from management and other relevant workplace groups such as unions is essential.
- Provide consistency in the program (regular visits, at the same times, by the same workers) so that a relationship can be built up between the workplace and the service, as well as the employees and the service worker.
- Use of display boards with non-threatening language and information about available services in the form of posters and brochures that people can take away with them, are useful ways to get the family violence prevention messages into the workplace.

Case Study: Southern Family Life⁴¹

The organisation

Southern Family Life is a community-based organisation formed by the local community 33 years ago to assist families in distress. The organisation offers a range of direct services, community development and advocacy, including counselling and support for families, children and youths, and nationally accredited professional training.

Background to the program

Southern Family Life has a long history of providing family violence services to the local community and taking a 'whole of family' approach in dealing with and preventing family violence. This inclusive perspective led the agency to question how they could engage families to recognise conflict and abuse that may be happening and to stop that from becoming violence.

The agency recognised the importance of being more inclusive of men in their services to help men to work on their relationships and the workplace emerged as a setting to do this. Southern Family Life have been strongly involved in the Commonwealth *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence – A Business Approach* initiative, and were asked to develop a local pilot model of family violence prevention through the workplace. This led to the formation of partnerships with predominantly male workplaces within their local community, one of which is a major transport provider, Gregory's Transport.

The program

The workplace partnership model developed by Southern Family Life involves negotiating a protocol agreement between the business and the community agency which outlines the mutual objectives and strategy for the partnership. Southern Family Life also aims to engage workplaces across three layers of interface:

between myself as CEO with the leadership of Gregory's - the managing director, at manager level within this organisation, with manager/supervisor level at Gregory's, and then counsellor/workers with the employees.

In this way Southern Family Life has opened up the opportunity to provide different levels of service such as education and awareness forums for managers and supervisors as well as the general workforce, direct support for employees at the workplace and for the workplace to be able to make referrals for individuals who may need additional counselling or support.

It can be that the workers from here have gone out to meet the truck drivers for instance and driven around in the truck with them to offer counselling and support in that way.

At the time of interview, the partnership was still in early stages, however the individualised support for employees by counsellors from Southern Family Life is happening.

Implementation of the program

The process of negotiating access to the workplace was facilitated through Southern Family Life's existing connections within their local community, as well an information package developed with the Commonwealth Government. This assisted the agency to present 'the business case', that is, why family violence was a workplace issue. It also provided a level of validation, that the notion of family violence prevention through the workplace was based on research and had received government support. However the validation of family violence as a community issue at a broader social level is still seen as one barrier to the workplace that community services need to deal with.

The successes of Southern Family Life's partnerships with business, although in its early stages, are emerging.

Gregory's were prepared to very publicly talk about it. I think that was a major success, that they didn't see that it meant that they had a problem workforce, they actually saw it as a positive message about them as an employer... The success from that has flowed on for us in the local community. We held a local business breakfast here and Gregory's brought a number of their suppliers and customers together - that idea has actually been picked up by local government now, and they have now formed a business breakfast association.

Part of this success results from being able to show business that family violence is a community issue, it affects their bottom-line and that the community agencies are available to help.

It is important to present the message that this [family violence prevention] is about solving a problem for the workplace, not giving them an extra problem to deal with... I think first of all community organisations need to educate themselves about how to work with business and make sure that we go in attending to business' needs not our own - because if we don't present a business case we look like just another charitable organisation looking for a donation or a handout.

Key points

- 'The transition from individual interest to organisational commitment is quite fragile', community services may have secured interest from key individuals within an organisation, however, it can take time before the business as a whole is committed to family violence prevention.
- Family violence prevention is about solving a problem for the workplace, not giving business an extra problem to deal with.
- Community services need to be familiar with the language and culture of business and be able to present the 'business case' for family violence prevention.
- A 'multi-layered approach' across business leadership, managerial and workforce levels, is helpful in negotiating and maintaining access to workplaces.

5.4 Health promotion model

A health promotion model of family violence prevention through the workplace involves a local health or community service approaching employers and seeking to implement workplace health information sessions. These services may approach specific industries, targeting particular groups of employees. For example, a health service that approaches textile industries as a way of accessing a predominantly female and culturally and linguistically diverse workforce, as described below in the case study.

Within the context of general or gender specific health concerns, the issue of family violence is one that could be raised and referral information provided.

Another example of a health model program is 'Men At Work'⁴² where men have been accessed at the workplace in industries including retail, oil, finance, construction and mining. 'Men At Work' is a group-style program, targeted at men in a range of management positions, to help them address health and wellbeing issues that may affect them and the staff they supervise.⁴³ These issues are determined by the group and can include a range of both work-related and home-related concerns. While family violence may not be expressly identified by the program facilitators or the group itself, issues of conflict at home and how it impacts on men at the workplace could be raised, and this model provides an opportunity for men to be referred to other services should violence-related issues come up.

The 'Men At Work' program identifies itself as operating from a preventative focus rather than a treatment perspective and presents an opportunity for men to explore family, relationship and other issues in new ways and in a supportive environment which may trigger a violent or potentially violent man to question their own behaviour and thus instigate change.⁴⁴

A limitation of the health promotion model is that it is a short term program and there may not be an opportunity to put in place structural and ongoing methods of intervention. However, it is possible that an ongoing partnership might arise from the program or some other ongoing supports could be developed to meet the particular needs of the workplace.

Case Study: Working Women's Health⁴⁵

The organisation

Working Women's Health is an immigrant women's health organisation which conducts health promotion both within the community and within industries, particularly for women from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Background to the program

The Industry Visits program has been running since 1977, conducting health education sessions for women in the workplace. In 2001-2002, Working Women's Health made contacts with over 1300 women, conducting 367 health promotion sessions in factories in nine languages. Factories visited included Beba Knitwear, Kookai, Travellers Apparel, Candy, Melba Industries, Homy Ped and Filigree Textiles. Currently, the service has 20 community health educators who between them speak 23 languages. The program developed out of recognition that many women, particularly in the factory-based industries, did not get the chance to explore health issues and often did not seek assistance until a problem was very severe. The Industry Visits program is based on a health promotion and therefore preventative model, whereby information regarding a range of health issues is provided for women to enable them to make educated choices and to raise their awareness of issues affecting them and services available. Domestic or family violence is just one section of the overall program.

The reason that we are going to industries is that many women do not have a chance to access information. They are either working long hours or they are working over-time or different shifts, they get home and they look after the children, the households, the husbands- so they don't get a chance to actually go to a doctor. Our main focus is to provide information to prevent, so it is very much a preventative model, to prevent the health concern, the problem, from happening.

The program

The Industry Visits program comprises six modules which are usually run over eight weeks with each module covering between five to eight topics. Modules and topics include issues such as women's reproductive health, mental health, occupational health and safety, safe use of medicine and domestic violence. Once the program has been arranged at a particular workplace, a community health educator is matched to the languages spoken by the women at the factory.

The program deals predominantly with women from non-English speaking backgrounds and Working Women's Health has built up a resource centre with health information in a range of community languages. This includes written information that is distributed in the program sessions relating to every topic in the program, regardless as to whether the women had actually selected that topic. In this way, for example, even if women at a particular factory do not expressly want an information session of domestic violence, they will all receive the written information in their own language to take away with them.

Implementation of the program

Negotiating access to the workplace can be difficult, even though the program sessions are run during lunchtime to minimise any disruption to production.

Businesses will say 'well what's in it for me?' As a result, we have a list of all the benefits - for the owners of factories as well as for the women - but it is very difficult to convince them... the real difficulty is I guess the trust - factories not knowing who we are and what we do.

Often it seems, that getting the program started with a particular workplace, depends on an individual manager's willingness to give it a try.

To get access to the workplace, it very much depends on the factory itself. Out of, let's say, 100 contacts I make, maybe we get three or four who say 'yes we are interested'. No, they actually don't say that... they say 'ok I will give you five minutes of my time'. My job is to convince them in five minutes.... in a non-threatening way, so for them to understand that we are not a union, we are not the government, we're not there to disrupt production, we're just there to focus on women from non-English speaking backgrounds and to provide health information.

Once access to the workplace has been arranged, the Industry Visits program leaves the topic of domestic violence until the last module so that a rapport has been built between the women and the community educator before broaching the issue. Also, particular attention is paid to the language used by the program. 'Domestic violence' is included in a wider range of issues such as legal and illegal drugs, sexual assault and legal aid.

Domestic violence has got a stigma attached to it and no one wants to say 'well I'm in a domestic violence situation' so therefore there is a lot of other words that the educators can use to actually relate that to the women as such.... If you go in and you talk about domestic violence straight off- it's very threatening. It's a very unsafe environment for them to actually talk about it, 1) because everybody else may hear, 2) is that maybe they don't want to talk about it.

The program sessions are also backed up by additional one-to-one information, which can be arranged outside of work hours, if necessary.

Women approach the educator at the end of the session by saying 'well I need to talk to you'. Also, women can just contact us and we'll make sure that the educator will call her back. We invite the women to visit our centre if it's during working hours. Outside business working hours, we actually make sure that we are still around, open, for them to come in after work hours. The educator will be available to speak with the woman in her own language. Meanwhile, we get the information together and inform the woman that 'these are your options, this is the information, this is the legal information in your language, you read it, and it's your decision'.

In line with the preventative model, the program provides information and referral. It is not a crisis support service and the community educators are not counsellors. The program simply informs women about their bodies, their rights and services available to them. This enables women to recognise early warning signs whether that be regarding a health or violence issue, and to make informed choices.

Key points

- Service providers need to be able to provide businesses with information about the benefits for them.
- It is useful to provide information in a written package that can be taken away and looked over, even if employees do not initially feel that information on 'family violence' relates to them.

- Broaching the topic in a non-threatening way, such as incorporated in a wider program of information, makes it more accessible. In this case it is health information, but family violence could also be included in general 'anti-violence' information and workplace safety.

5.5 Union-led model

Unions have a long history of campaigning for social and economic justice, and implementing practices to improve workers' lives.⁴⁶ Family issues, work/life balance, occupational health and safety, workplace bullying and harassment are some of the issues which unions have taken up, many of which recognise that people's home life can impact upon their work life and their home life on their work life.

Unions have informed their representatives and employers about the issue of family violence as it relates to the workplace as well as what they can do to help prevent it. This has included encouraging employers to adopt workplace policies in relation to family violence which address the additional health, safety and security issues that employees experiencing family violence may face and also provides employees with the opportunity to negotiate flexible leave and shift arrangements.

From a union perspective, the issue of family violence is related to issues of health, safety, bullying and harassment. The latter of these are especially relevant where a perpetrator of family violence is working in the same workplace as the person they are abusing. This may be more prevalent in large employing organisations especially those in regional areas, as the one organisation may employ a number of people from the one small local area. In situations such as this, both the safety of the abused person and the safety of other employees can be at increased risk and employers should ensure their harassment or bullying policy are implemented effectively.

Many unions have adopted specialised training of their union representatives. This may be done specifically in relation to family violence, or incorporated into other occupational health and safety or employee advocacy training sessions. This is to ensure representatives

recognise the signs of family violence, are aware of any appropriate policies, are able to provide referral information, and assist employees in negotiating flexible leave or shift arrangements when family violence interferes directly with their work to help minimise the risk of job loss.

A union-led model of family violence prevention through the workplace differs from other models in several ways. Firstly, although not unlike the 'health promotion' or 'partnership' model, it is external to employers. However, while health or local family violence services may have difficulty negotiating access to some workplaces, in many industries there is already a strong union presence. Family violence prevention that is incorporated into overall union practice has the potential to inform ongoing awareness and change.

Unions have the capacity to advocate for family violence prevention strategies in workplaces where the employer is unlikely to take the initiative. The limitation of this model is in industries or workplaces where there is not strong union involvement or where the union is struggling to have health, safety, bullying and harassment issues addressed in the workplace, then family violence may not make it onto the immediate agenda.

5.6 Armed personnel model

The situation of armed personnel in relation to family violence presents some unique issues that could negatively impact upon both an employee's work and family life. Defence forces, police forces and security services are some of the workforces in which some staff may be armed some of the time. Research from the US indicates that family violence within law enforcement families is an ongoing and significant problem.⁴⁷ Access to weapons can place the families of law enforcement personnel at greater risk, experiencing violence at home can adversely affect an individual officer's response to family violence incidents on the job and attending family violence scenes during work hours may impact on an officer's own family life.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has developed and implemented a model of family violence prevention through the workplace that

incorporates training for civilian and sworn personnel, making assistance available for law enforcement personnel and their families and linking in with existing programs. They have also developed information products that could be used by other law enforcement agencies thereby contributing to family violence prevention in other similar workplaces in the community.⁴⁸

The Australian Commonwealth *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative released a report on domestic violence in regional Australia, which noted the particular risk of family violence to families of defence force personnel posted in remote locations.⁴⁹ The needs and issues of this particular group and therefore possible family violence prevention strategies for the workplace is an area that is in need of further exploration.

Case Study: Victoria Police⁵⁰

The organisation

Victoria Police employs over 12,800 people, including police officers, public servants and protective security officers. With over 300 police stations and other facilities, Victoria Police provides support to the community 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Victoria Police is largely a male-dominated workforce with approximately 17 per cent female police officers and 25 per cent female staff in total. However, recruitment of 50 per cent female police officers is planned for the coming years.

Background to the policy

Victoria Police has a direct role to play in responding to family violence in the community as part of its law enforcement responsibilities. With the introduction of the Victorian Government's *Women's Safety Strategy*, Victoria Police established its own Violence against Women project to critically examine the police response to family violence. A focus on family violence in the general community led to a number of improvements such as specialised training for officers in family violence issues and the appointment of family violence liaison officers.

Victoria Police also recognised that the way it deals with family violence within its own police community, or workplace, required attention. Examination of their internal records including those regarding complaints, intervention orders taken out against police members, workdays lost through suspension from operational duties, sick and annual leave taken immediately after a family violence matter, resignations and dismissals, found losses to Victoria Police in relation to family violence. These included twelve months of operational duties lost through the transfer of members to non-operational duties, work days lost through sick leave and funds lost in salaries.

Victoria Police does have a set procedure for attendance at family violence incidents involving police employees, however, these figures combined with focus group discussions, indicated that something more is needed, and attention was turned to more preventative measures.

The policy

At the time of interview, Victoria Police was in the process of finalising the implementation of a series of recommendations that came about from an internal investigation review of this issue. The overall focus is on a series of strategies for both early detection and intervention to help prevent family violence within the police community, as well as tightening procedures around recording and responding to incidents involving police members when they occur. Some of the recommendations being considered at the time of interview included:

that we have a focus on prevention, education, and training, that we identify and implement suitable strategies to increase the organisational awareness of the employees of family violence and to improve our response to incidents of this nature. Some of the things we're looking at are through our employee support services unit are that we have proper partnerships set up with domestic violence outreach agencies and that we develop and disseminate information packages to employees.

The idea behind the preventative focus of these recommendations is that by providing employees with information on what family violence is and the services that are available, employees are able to seek

assistance before family violence interrupts their work life. This has the mutual benefit of preventing lost productivity to the workplace and, in the case of Victoria Police, also improving its response within the general community, as well as preventing harm to the employee and their family outside of the workplace. These preventative measures are not intended to stand alone but rather as part of an overall policy regarding police responses to family violence.⁵¹

Implementation of the policy

While Victoria Police is still in the process of implementing their family violence prevention procedures and policy, there is a clear sense that it is the commitment from the Chief Commissioner which has supported the investigation and recommendation process. This commitment is viewed as crucial to the implementation of family violence prevention in Victoria Police.

Key points

- Family violence is costing workplaces, in terms of lost productivity, sick and annual leave, and training of replacement staff.
- Prevention is better than cure: providing information and help referral within the workplace can prevent family violence from impacting both an employees' work and family life.
- 'You've got to have commitment from the top', managers and supervisors need to have an understanding of the issue and support family violence prevention through the workplace, for it to be implemented effectively.

5.7 Employee-driven model

An individual employee may take on the issue of family violence at their workplace and become responsible for the implementation of family violence prevention activities. This could be due to their interest in raising awareness of family violence within the organisation. Alternately, it may be that an individual employee is experiencing family violence and wishes to implement their own workplace safety plan. A workplace safety plan for an individual employee may also be implemented within other models.

A range of activities or strategies may be included in an individual employee's workplace safety plan such as changes at their workplace and in commuting arrangements to and from work. Changes may include moving to an alternative office location, altering contact details and providing advice to security or management about the relevant conditions of an intervention order. Commuting changes may involve travelling with a co-worker, varying the time of and route taken to work and having security escort them to their car or the train station.⁵¹

An employee-driven model of family violence prevention through the workplace would work best in an environment where an employer is known to be sensitive to family violence issues and the manager is approachable to discuss their workplace safety plan. While this may not be necessary, and an individual employee experiencing family violence could still implement some changes for their own safety, issues around improved security measures or shift changes would need to be approved by their employer, thus it is important that at the very least managers are aware of family violence and willing to be flexible around the issue.

An alternate employee-driven model of family violence prevention through the workplace may be that an individual employee has taken an interest in the issue and is committed to work towards the implementation of changes themselves. Again, this would need to occur with some level of employer support, even if this was simply allowing the individual to put referral and workplace safety plan information on display within the workplace or contacting a local agency to set up an information session. However, an employee may gain support from management, resulting in the implementation of other strategies over time.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The development of family violence prevention through the workplace is grounded in the understanding that family violence is a social issue that potentially affects all sectors of the community. The costs of family violence to employers are clear, and include lost productivity, costs of staff turnover, absenteeism, sick and annual leave, and the misuse of workplace resources. However, the literature reviewed and interviews conducted indicate that education regarding these costs alone may not be enough to draw much of the business sector to support the issue of family violence prevention through the workplace.

Barriers preventing workplaces from getting involved include the sensitivity of family violence as an issue, fear by those experiencing family violence in seeking help and lack of support from workplace management. The most consistent barrier referred to by interview participants was the difficulties in convincing many employers that family violence is a workplace issue and that business could benefit themselves and the wider community by establishing preventative programs or policies. This barrier may be overcome through increasing awareness in the community about family violence issues. Information regarding occupational health and safety has educated employers and the community that ignoring workplace safety is not acceptable and similarly information campaigns could raise community awareness about family violence and the ways that workplaces can help.

A further method for overcoming workplace reluctance to take on family violence prevention is its integration into other workplace training and information campaigns such as those around workplace bullying and harassment. Incorporating a family violence module in training for HR and EAP staff, supervisors, managers and general employee induction, could raise awareness of the issue, its impacts on the workplace and where to go for assistance, as well as providing a more permanent workplace structure for discussion and information provision. Incorporating family violence prevention as a permanent feature of workplace policy and procedure could be a major contributor to its on-going success.

In addition to a level of permanency, other factors for success of family violence prevention through the workplace which have been observed by interview participants in their experience were a strong commitment by management, co-operation with other workplace stakeholders such as unions, consistency in partnership visits, and in the development and implementation of policies and procedures developed, and the complementing of prevention strategies with written information regarding family violence and where to get help, so that all employees have access to that information regardless of whether or not they feel that it applies to them.

The seven models of family violence prevention through the workplace identified and described in this report represent different methods or styles of family violence prevention that may be suited to particular workplaces. For example, the union model would have the best level of success in workplaces with strong union presence or where employees have a good rapport with their union representative. The brokerage model, meanwhile, may be most appropriate for 'big businesses' that have a larger pool of resources to draw upon. The partnerships and health promotion models may work best for businesses with existing ties, or a desire to develop stronger ties, with their local community. Each of the models provide a basis upon which individual businesses can adopt family violence prevention programs, policies, or other activities, to their own employee needs and wider objectives.

As previously noted, evaluative information about the effectiveness of family violence prevention through workplaces is lacking and is an important area for future research to ensure that these programs are effective and do not cause harm.

The strongest message by far from both interviewees and the literature reviewed is the importance of educating business, and indeed the community at large, that family violence is an issue requiring attention. Preventing family violence through the workplace is not just about reducing economic costs and improving productivity. It is also about demonstrating social responsibility and being an 'employer of choice'. It is about believing that 'a violence free community is **not** wishful thinking'⁵² and that by working together we can make our community free of family violence.

REFERRALS AND RESOURCES

7.0 REFERRALS AND RESOURCES

Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre,

Victoria, phone (03) 9486 9866, www.dvirc.org.au

Men's Referral Service – NTV (No To Violence)

Male Family Violence Prevention Association, Victoria,
phone (03) 9428 2899 or 1800 065 973,
www.ntv.net.au/index.html

Centre Against Sexual Assault, Victoria, helpline (03)

9344 2210, administration line (03) 9347 3066,
www.casahouse.casa.org.au

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service,

Victoria, helpline (03) 9373 0123 or 1800 015 188

Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Victoria, helpline, (03) 9898 3145**Women's Information and Referral Exchange**

(WIRE), Victoria, helpline 1300 134 130,
administration line (03) 9206 0870, www.wire.org.au

Commonwealth Partnerships Against Domestic Violence: A Business Approach,

http://www.padv.dpmc.gov.au/dv_workplace.html

Australia's CEO Challenge,

<http://www.ceochallengeaustralia.org>: contains
information on corporate partnerships and why family
violence is a workplace issue.

Gold Coast Domestic Violence Service, 'Domestic

Violence in the Workplace: Information and Training
Manual' and other workplace resources available to
purchase online at

<http://www.domesticviolence.com.au/resources.htm>

Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence,

www.caepv.org: contains information about
developing workplace policies and examples, articles
on various workplace and family violence related
issues which could be adapted for staff newsletters.

8.0 ENDNOTES

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- 12 Victoria Police, *Victoria Police Crime Statistics 2002/2003*.
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- 17 Oonagh Barron, updated by Vera Smiljanic, *Workplace Violence and Bullying: Your Rights, What to do and where to go for help*, 2nd ed., Job Watch and Worksafe Victoria, Melbourne, 2003.
- 18 For example, Family Violence Prevention Fund, *Work to End Domestic Violence*, Organiser's Kit, and *Domestic Violence in the Workplace Information and Training Manual*, Gold Coast Domestic Violence Service.
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- 21 <http://www.caepv.org/about/members.asp>
- 22 A. Honig and S. Sultan, *Family Violence Prevention and Recovery Project*, Final Report, Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles, 2000.
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- 25 Auckland City Council, <http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/auckland/introduction/safer/dvfree.asp>
- 26 *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence: A Business Approach*, http://www.padv.dpmc.gov.au/dv_workplace.html
- 27 *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence: A Business Approach* http://www.padv.dpmc.gov.au/dv_workplace.html
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