

3. A Workplace Response to DFV

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A study by Deloitte in 2015 found: DFV at work could be typified by:

- Reduced productivity of the person experiencing the violence due to reduced workforce participation and/or 'presenteeism' where the person remains at work for longer than necessary;
- Absenteeism of the survivor, perpetrator and family members;
- Reduced productivity of the survivor's and perpetrator's co-workers and friends and family; and
- Additional administrative and staff turn over costs of employers.

While a Price Waterhouse Coopers study in 2015 noted the significant financial impact of violence against women on business and on the economy estimating the costs to be \$21.7 billion per year.

It is important to address these issues while understanding the impact of the violence on those who experience it and safety risks for employees and for others in the workplace if DFV comes to work. Being aware of potential signs of DFV can assist workplaces to take appropriate measures to prevent it from escalating in your organisation.

By making a commitment at the leadership and strategic level and following through with documenting and implanting a DFV Policy, risk management practices, as well as safety enhancing operational procedures and responses, workplaces can mitigate the economic, legal and business productivity risks related to DFV and importantly help to keep employees safer. Some useful initiatives can include:

- Raising awareness about DFV and its impact at work.
- Fostering a culture of gender equality and respect.
- Upholding legal protections for employees.
- Creating a supportive environment where it is demonstrated that work is a safe place to request support if DFV is occurring.
- Being alert to the possible warning signs of DFV when it is impacting at work (see info sheet #7).
- Committing to provide support for staff who experience family and domestic violence.
- Understanding that DFV may impact on performance and attendance at work and communicating to employees that their job is safe while making reasonable adjustments to support them.
- Implementing paid DFV leave as an entitlement to support time away from work for employees to address DFV issues such as attending court, medical or legal appointments or to seek safer accommodation.
- Assess the risks to your workplace and consider developing a workplace safety plan with specific measures to minimise the risk that employees will be subject to violent or abusive behaviour at work, including protocols for dealing with a crisis situation.
- Confidentiality is extremely important for the safety and wellbeing of the person disclosing DFV and sharing information within the workplace should be strictly on a needs to know basis or to ensure the safety of the person and the workplace.



All policies in the workplace that relate to DFV should be consistent with or enhance existing workplace health and safety policies and protocols and should take into account the rights of all employees to a safe working environment as well as the practicalities of an accessible and relaxed workplace. The Services Union has developed a comprehensive guide to developing a DFV policy that can be adapted to suit your workplace. <http://www.dvworkaware.org/policy/>

Paid Leave - All employees covered by the Fair Work Act, National Employment Standards (NES), have an entitlement to five days unpaid Family and Domestic Violence Leave.

Australian Unions We Wont Wait campaign calls upon all political parties to support a minimum of 10 days paid domestic and family violence leave to be included in the National Employment Standards. Having economic independence and job security is essential for all employees experiencing DFV so they can take steps to address the violence. For women, particularly those on lower incomes, who are casual or part time and who often have disrupted work histories because of DFV, paid leave is essential in addressing the risk of poverty and homelessness.

Paid DFV leave recognises that employees may have already used up their personal leave entitlements and can least afford to take unpaid leave at a time when maintaining an income is critical. Under the NES leave can be applied for if an employee needs to do something to deal with the impact of DFV and its impractical to do so outside of their ordinary work hours.

This could include:

- Making arrangements for their safety or that of a close relative
- Attending court hearings, or
- Assessing specialist DFV, police or legal services

Employers should be advised as soon as possible of the requirement to take leave and how long the leave is likely to last.

Refer To Specialist Services

The issues associated with domestic violence are often complex and require a range of specialist supports including counselling, legal and court support and accommodation. It is important that employees are made aware of these supports and that your workplace maintains up to date details of these agencies. Specialist services staff are aware of the special needs of Aboriginal women and women from other cultures, as well as those living in rural and remote areas. Most services can provide culturally appropriate workers and translators where required. Workplaces offering EAP should ensure that their providers are trained in DFV identification and response including referring to specialist DFV services. Please refer to DV Resource 11 for referral information for Queensland.

For more information for employers about responsibilities in relation to DFV visit Fair Work Australia:

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/family-and-domestic-violence-leave/employer-guide-to-family-and-domestic-violence> this includes a checklist for employers.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Confidentiality is extremely important for the safety and wellbeing of the person disclosing DFV.
- If there is a risk to safety of others, you have a duty under Workplace Health and Safety Laws to take action to address the risk (this is primarily the responsibility of the Employer or person conducting the undertaking or business, but everyone in the workplace has a responsibility to report a potential risk.
- Always make the person experiencing violence aware if a disclosure needs to be made.
- If concerns are raised about the safety of children mandatory reporting may also apply For more information visit <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>.

It is very important to recognise that attempting to leave or address an abusive relationship may increase the risks and dangers of the violence accelerating for the person experiencing the violence. It can be supportive to have a number of psychological and practical resources put in place to assist the person especially at this time. This is why safety planning along with continued certainty about employment and access to financial resources and income are important.

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1. Deloitte Access Economics, *Change for a better future – Addressing domestic and family violence together: The role of business (2015)*

2. Price Waterhouse Coopers (2015) 'A high price to pay: the economic case for preventing violence against women', report prepared for Our Watch and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth)

3. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AT THE WORKPLACE: Investigating the Impact of Domestic Violence Perpetration on Workers and Workplaces <http://dvwatworknet.org/sites/dvwatworknet.org/files/>

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