



Gendered Violence & Work

Domestic and Family Violence Clauses in your Workplace: Implementation and good practice

Never Stand Still

Gendered Violence Research Network

Prepared by the Social Policy Research Centre and the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies, UNSW – June 2013.

The Gendered Violence Research Network (GVRN) at the University of New South Wales (UNSW Australia) has succeeded the Centre of Gender Related Violence Studies (CGRVS) which previously housed the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse (ADFVC). Researchers from GVRN have continued to develop certain work undertaken by CGRVS/ADFVC alongside many new initiatives such as the Gendered Violence & Work program.

Summary

This twelve-month (2012-2013) monitoring study was undertaken by the Social Policy Research Centre and the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies at the University of New South Wales with a number of large workplaces which had enterprise agreements that included a domestic violence clause.

The monitoring process reinforced that the essential elements for a successful implementation of domestic violence clauses are ongoing monitoring and research, awareness and information strategies, the guarantee of confidentiality, and training.

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Safe at Home, Safe at Work



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Domestic and Family Violence Clauses in your workplace: Implementation and good practice

Draft report

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DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE CLAUSES IN YOUR WORKPLACE: *IMPLEMENTATION AND GOOD PRACTICE*

I think we have a vision to tackle some very challenging components of creating flexible work arrangements, but in practice it takes time to engender a level of trust in the culture of an organisation and have that filter down. That does mean we can get the theory right but in practice it doesn't always flow because you are guessing how to do things. You don't have other people to look to, which is why it's good to reflect and practice. (Consultative group participant)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A twelve month (2012-2013) monitoring study was undertaken between the Safe at Home, Safe at Work Project (at the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies, UNSW) and a number of large workplaces with enterprise agreements that included a domestic violence clause. The study included a number of surveys and a series of discussions across the organisations and associated unions.

The monitoring process reinforced that the essential elements for a successful implementation of domestic violence clauses are ongoing monitoring and research, awareness and information strategies, the guarantee of confidentiality, and training.

The surveys reinforced the findings of the national domestic violence and workplace survey (McFerran 2011) that domestic violence can negatively affect attendance at work, work performance and safety. The survey results and discussions with managers, unions, and employees raised a number of core issues:

- The rates of reporting of domestic violence at work were appreciably higher than in the national survey (53% compared with 17%). This would indicate that the process of introducing a domestic violence clause with an information campaign and training has raised the awareness of the issue and the capacity to identify the work consequences. However, there were concerns with low levels of awareness amongst certain groups of workers.
- Co-workers are more aware and more affected than expected. This reinforces the need for a whole- of- workplace information and security strategy to ensure all workers are able to respond appropriately.
- The increasing numbers of male workers identifying as having experienced domestic violence suggest that further study is required to identify if different support strategies are needed for female and male workers.
- To guarantee the critical issue of confidentiality may require the participation of all agencies in the workplace. This is possible when the domestic violence protection is standardised, and enforceable.

BACKGROUND

Australia's Recognition of the impact of domestic violence at work

Ongoing partnership between Australian governments and communities has fostered the development of strong policies and services that address domestic violence. Acknowledging the importance of '**whole of community support**' demonstrates their understanding of the widespread nature of domestic violence and ensures that those experiencing violence receive the protection and assistance they need. Moreover, policy makers and practitioners recognise that the majority of Australian women experiencing domestic and family violence are in paid employment, and that paid employment plays an important role in promoting women's independence and wellbeing upon exit from violent relationships (Braaf and Barrett-Meyering 2011, p. 85). However, women with histories of domestic violence have more disrupted work records, decreased productivity, absenteeism, and many have either resigned or been fired from their job because of the effects violence has had on their work and working lives (Access Economics 2004; ADFVC 2012). As a result, Australian approaches have come to recognise that the workplace is a crucial part of any integrated community and government response to domestic violence.

The safe at home, safe at work project: background and aims

The Domestic Violence Workplace Rights & Entitlements Project entitled *Safe at Home, Safe at Work* was funded between 2010 -2013 by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The project sits alongside the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, in the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies at the University of New South Wales.

The Safe at Home Safe at Work projects is underpinned by three basic principles:

1. Workers have the right to be safe at home and at work from domestic violence
2. Domestic violence can put jobs at risk, affecting performance, productivity and safety at work
3. In a supportive and informed workplace, workers will feel safe to disclose.

In order to achieve its goals the *Safe at Home, Safe at Work* project has worked extensively in collaboration with both unions and employers in all Australian States and Territories. The **goal of the collaboration** was to encourage Australian workplaces to adopt standardised domestic violence clauses specifying worker's rights and entitlements in industrial agreements. The clauses are non-discretionary and enforceable, and aim to protect the capacity of Australian workers experiencing domestic and family violence to maintain their employment by encouraging them to remain in their jobs, their communities and their homes.

By 2013 through the process of collective bargaining, over one million workers across the country were protected by domestic violence clauses, and the Australian Government has introduced domestic violence protections into the Fair Work Act. Australia has been internationally recognised for its leading role in introducing paid domestic violence leave.

In addition to initiating and maintaining ongoing dialogue with unions, employers and State/Territory and Commonwealth governments, the Safe at Home Safe at Work Project has offered training to employers nationally, developed a comprehensive web presence featuring national and international resources for use by project stakeholders and the general public. However, in keeping with the participatory action research framework of the Safe at Home Safe at Work project, monitoring the implementation and use of the domestic violence clauses and explicating 'lessons learnt' has been an important concluding component of the process and is the focus of this report.

The Safe at Home Safe at Work Monitoring Process

In 2011, the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, in conjunction with Safe at Home Safe at Work project staff, developed a *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*¹ designed to assess the mid to long term usefulness of domestic violence clauses on reducing domestic violence and its adverse effects: both in the workplace and on victims' labour market outcomes.

The monitoring project was developed with three large organisations with domestic violence clauses: a local government council, a transport statutory authority and a federal public sector agency. Survey (in two organisations) and consultative methods were designed primarily to obtain information about the introduction of the clauses in the selected organisations, including their anticipated impact.

The aims of the monitoring project were to understand how the introduction of the clauses benefitted those needing support to maintain their employment; examine the workplace as a whole in their responses to those particular employees; and, identify how any barriers to implementation have, or could, be overcome. In order to achieve these goals the monitoring project sought to specifically capture the experiences of:

- workers covered by the clauses;
- senior managers in the organisations in which the clauses were introduced;
- unions supporting the introduction and operation of the clauses.

Ultimately, the monitoring project was envisaged as a protracted opportunity to further develop and test practice, and to disseminate knowledge of what works well, and ways the implementation of industrial agreements could be better managed and responses to workers disclosing domestic violence further enhanced.

1 See SPRC 2011 *Domestic Violence Causes: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*<http://www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au/research>

RESULTS AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

1. EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Overall, 393 employees responded to the survey: 60% women and 40% men. Nearly 30% of all respondents reported that they had experienced domestic violence. Just over a quarter of those reporting having 'experienced' domestic violence were male employees, of which 28% had a domestic violence protection order taken out against them (compared with 2% of reporting female employees).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The results reinforced the findings of the national workplace survey (<http://www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au/research>) that domestic violence is experienced by a broad range of working Australians. This is an important message to communicate in the workplace. The experience does not belong to any socio-economic or cultural group, to any particular industry or workplace, to certain age groups or even a gender.

A higher rate of reporting having experienced domestic violence occurred in the organisation where unions distributed surveys to members. The impact of methods of survey distribution on rates of reporting is worthy of further investigation, to improve methodologies for studying domestic violence and work.

The over-representation of women from the participating organisations in the survey is unsurprising, given the survey topic. However, the rate of response from men may reflect the improved awareness of the issue due to the introduction of the clause in their organisations.

Importantly, the domestic violence clauses are not gendered and recognise that men may experience from violence from heterosexual partners, same sex partners or other members of their family. In practice, it is important that those involved in the operation of domestic violence clauses and associated organisational policies are non-judgemental of men's reports of domestic violence. Further, it is important that further research identifies if women and men's experiences affect work attendance, performance and safety differently, so that appropriate responses can be developed.

2. EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WORK

- A third of people who had experienced domestic violence (32.5 percent) reported it had affected their capacity to get to work.
- One in four people (25.6 percent) reported it had made them late for work.
- 41.9 percent reported having to take time off work because of the violence.
- All of the 23 people who reported disclosing that they needed time off work for reasons related to domestic violence found that the person to whom they disclosed was supportive.
- Most (53.0 percent) had experienced domestic violence in the workplace in some way².

2 The most frequently occurring experiences of domestic violence at work were abusive phone calls, text messages or

- Twenty-four (20.5 percent of those who had experienced domestic violence) had had the abusive person physically turn up at the workplace
- Of the 117 respondents who had experienced domestic violence, 69 (59 percent) reported that their work was negatively affected as they were unwell, for example due to anxiety, depression or headaches.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

As with the national domestic violence and the workplace survey, these findings demonstrate that domestic violence can have a significant effect on attendance at work, on work performance, and on safety and wellbeing. The rates of reporting of domestic violence at work were, however, appreciably higher than in the national survey (53% compared with 17%). This would indicate that the process of introducing a domestic violence clause with an education campaign and training has raised the awareness of the issue and the capacity to identify the work consequences.

The finding also demonstrate that for a significant proportion of employees the violence they may be experiencing at home has not affected them getting to work, performing their job or put their safety at risk. For these employees the workplace may be a safe and respectful place where they are able to concentrate on their jobs.

Creating the supportive environment for disclosure

The practice implications are that workplaces need to create an environment where those needing support feel safe to disclose.

- Employees should be informed that their employer understands how domestic violence can affect the workplace, that support will be confidentially provided.
- Workers should not be monitored for 'indicators' of domestic violence and questions about what may be occurring at home should be avoided.
- Workplaces need to respond to domestic violence as a workplace issue and for all other matters to be able to refer their employees to appropriate support services.

Critical to responding well is having the important conversations and asking the right questions. This needs to be discussed in training and all staff who may process disclosures must be trained to do so sensitively and correctly.

emails, reported by 32.5 percent of those who experienced domestic violence. Twenty-four (20.5 percent of those who had experienced domestic violence) had had the abusive person physically turn up at the workplace, while 22 respondents (18.8 percent) reported that the abusive person had contacted co-workers or the employer about them.

3. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTION ORDERS AND THE WORKPLACE

Of the 117 people who reported having experienced domestic violence, 30 (25.6 percent) had obtained a domestic violence protection order. Of these, 24 were women and 6 were men. Of the 30 employees with orders, 13 reported that the workplace was included in the order as a place not to be approached, while 3 were not sure. Eleven respondents (nine male and two female) reported having a domestic violence order taken out against them.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The results in the monitoring surveys are consistent with the national survey, suggesting that there is much scope for ongoing information to workers about their legal rights, the need to have the workplace included on an order and the availability of support including paid leave to seek legal advice and attend legal appointments.

Domestic violence protection orders

When domestic violence affects attendance, performance and safety at work the risk indicators are increasing critically, suggesting that legal protection should be actively sought. A protection order may restrict the abusive person from contacting the protected person, or from approaching the person at their home and their workplace. In terms of safety planning, the order provides the workplace with clarity about the necessary responsibilities and restrictions, and actions required should such an order be breached.

Legal protection information

Good practice is to communicate information about domestic violence and work, and the protections available, to all staff.

- This should be done in plain English, and in significant other languages used in the workplace.
- The information or resource packs should include basic information about the legal protections available in the state or territory (available from Legal Aid or the local domestic violence service), and information about the national counselling service (1800 RESPECT) and the local/regional domestic violence service.
- Local police or domestic violence service providers may be invited to give a lunch and learn session for staff, or staff time can be set aside to watch e-learning modules on the www.dvandwork website.

Both parties work together

There are specific challenges where both parties work for the same organisation and in the same workplace. Workplaces should, for example, be aware of the complicating issue of cross application, where the Court

issues orders with conditions on both parties.³

Other complicating factors may be that one partner is in a senior position to the other or both may work in small, isolated local workplaces. Alternatively, when both parties are employed by the same organisation Human Resources staff may be able to manage the situation more effectively, being able to monitor the behaviour of both.

Co-habitation

Workplaces should be aware that domestic violence protection orders can be made where both parties are continuing to live together. The restrictions are on the behaviour rather than on approaching and contacting the protected party. A judgement of people staying in violent relationships should not be made. Most people just want the violence to stop. An order may assist this process if supported appropriately.

The abusive worker

A hidden aspect of the link between domestic violence and work is the abusive person who is in employment and may be absent from work, using work resources and time to be abusive, or be underperforming due to distraction, anxiety, or tension. Research in the U.S. suggests that this hidden layer can be a cost to the workplace on a par with the impact on the abused person.

Workplaces need to make strong statements that this behaviour is unacceptable at work, that misuse of work resources can be a disciplinary matter, and that employees should seek urgent assistance about their behaviour from e.g. the Employer Assistance Program (EAP). It is necessary, however, to ensure that the organisations' EAP has the skills and knowledge to respond appropriately: knowledge of legal rights, referral pathways and abuser accountability.

4. IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CO-WORKERS

Of the 117 respondents who reported experiencing domestic violence, 97 (82.9 percent) perceived that it did not affect their colleagues. Of the 55 people who were aware of a colleague experiencing domestic violence, 22 people (40 percent) reported that the co-workers' violence had caused conflict and tension with co-workers.

In the consultative discussions, participants described events when colleagues had attended work as a safe place after hours or when not rostered; had come to work visibly injured and upset; or the violent partner had attended the workplace generating a serious workplace safety issue, requiring police involvement.

³ A national inquiry into family violence expressed concern that when the applications were heard together, the orders were being made by consent between the parties, and recommended (a) mutual protection orders should not be made by consent; and (b) a court may only make mutual protection orders where it is satisfied that there are grounds for making a protection order against each party. (Australian Law Reform Commission & NSW Law Reform Commission, 2010)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Generally, the impact of domestic violence on co-workers appears to be under-estimated. In the national survey most of the respondents who had experienced domestic violence thought their co-workers were unaware, but the data did not support this belief. In fact, disclosure rates are higher than many anticipated and the primary person disclosed to was a co-worker.

Ensure the whole workplace is informed and responsible

Good practice is to ensure that all workers have information about how domestic violence may affect their workplace and co-workers, and have an outline of their responsibilities, particularly where the safety and performance of co-workers is affected. Safety plans (see resources at www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au) for the workplace need to be discussed between the individual needing protection and HR or management, but co-workers and other key personnel may need to be informed and engaged (a need-to-know basis).

HR may provide information to a supervisor, some reasonable adjustments that need to occur. That is what we talk through with the individuals, to explain why we need to discuss this with the supervisor to facilitate the adjustments. It is always a difficult interplay with confidentiality and if there were security risks we would probably be need to have the agency security advisor involved. Again, you talk with the individual first and explain that to them. See if they have concerns, see if you can alleviate their concerns. A lot of people don't trust it will be kept confidential and don't understand the constraints or parameters that we operate in. Or have had a bad experience in the past. But we do have a very robust case management system.

(Organisation 3, Consultative group participant)

Responsibilities and responses

The information should clearly outline the limits of responsibility and the necessity to try and keep this a workplace issue. This can be a challenge where staff are friends or feel a social responsibility to intervene.

The workplace can also provide guidelines ('do's and don'ts') for what to do if a colleague discloses: (http://www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au/sites/www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au/files/imce/generic_delegates_resource_kit_v1_130225_0.pdf)

The workplaces can develop strategies for responses where there is a risk to staff and clients/customers/passengers (these can be developed from existing safety plans related to abusive clients/customers/passengers etc.).

Mutual responsibility

The information should seek to gain the support of co-workers for the workers directly affected but should also raise the issue of mutual responsibility or reciprocity, the responsibility of the directly affected worker seeking support to take steps to address the issue. The workplace should avoid adding to existing pressure from home and family or partner, and should expect that the pathway out of a violent relationship will

take time. However, workers should be aware that they are not alone, that they will be supported but the violence affects many people and needs to be resolved.

5. RECEIPT OF INFORMATION ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

63.4 percent of respondents had received information about domestic violence from their workplace or their union. Receipt of information was lower for some groups. Only half (51.4 percent) of respondents working part time had received information about domestic violence, compared to 65.8 percent of respondents who worked full time. Just over half (52.0 percent) of those born overseas had received information about domestic violence compared to 66.0 percent of those who were born in Australia.

6. AWARENESS OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLAUSE

All survey respondents were asked if they were aware that there is a domestic violence clause in their enterprise agreement. Roughly half of respondents were aware of the domestic violence clause. Consultative group discussions cast light on who might miss out on information. Some participants identified casuals as a group who may miss out on the information, as they may be sent to different locations, or work for short hours, and may not have consistent email access to receive the information. They may also feel that as they are more marginal to the workplace, information provided is not relevant to them.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings reaffirm the need for an ongoing communication strategy to ensure that all workers, and in some cases the most vulnerable, receive information about the issue and the support available. The practice implications are a challenge for organisations where there is often a steady stream of information being handled by staff.

Ongoing communication strategies cannot rely on electronic memos but may include lunch and learns, wall posters and toilet stickers, e-learning modules, orientation, and external activities supporting local domestic violence services. The messages need to be reinforced on a regular basis by the organisational leadership, by the CEOs, Union Secretaries, and Chiefs of Staff.

In unionised workplaces the union can be critical in informing and supporting members, with the added message of union solidarity and social justice to reinforce the need to reject family and domestic violence. For examples of communication strategies see policies in resource section of dvandwork@unsw.edu.au

7. RECOGNISING THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AT WORK

Overwhelmingly (93.6 percent) reported that they did think domestic violence could impact on the work lives of employees in their organisation.

The widespread recognition of the impact of domestic violence at work evident in the survey was reflected

in survey comments and the group discussions.

Being at work can provide a positive impact on victims of Domestic Violence as they are removed from the situation, if only for a short time. They can mix and interact with people and even confide or get assistance. (Organisation 2, survey respondent)

I had the opportunity to travel for work everyday and used this as an escape from my now ex husband. I believe at the time I was throwing myself into my work, which was a life saver for me and gave me independence I didn't have in my home life. (Organisation 2, survey respondent)

Domestic violence is a shameful thing to suffer, most times we suffer in silence as we at times are made to believe its 'normal', we deserve it and we are worthless. Work becomes our 'safe place'. (Organisation 1, survey respondent)

If a person is unhappy, frightened or feeling insecure, their productivity will suffer and they will be unable to fulfill their role to the level they know they are capable of. (Organisation 2, survey respondent)

8. ATTITUDES TO WORKPLACE ENTITLEMENTS

65.1 percent believed workplace entitlements could reduce the impact of domestic violence in their organisation.

Those with personal experience of domestic violence were most likely to support workplace entitlements (71.8 percent) and the least likely to be unsure whether entitlements could reduce the impact of domestic violence at work (18.8 percent). In addition, those respondents who had received information about domestic violence from their organisation or their union were more likely to support workplace entitlements than those who had not.

Survey comments and the consultative group discussions demonstrate high levels of support for the domestic violence clause among staff in both organisations, with many using the opportunity to applaud their organisation's commitment to addressing domestic violence.

It is wonderful [the organisation] is so proactive in this area. Keeping it out there and taking the guilt away for the victim helps no end. (Organisation 2, survey respondent)

I think the new strategy is good and hopefully encourages employees to access the support they need. (Organisation 2, survey respondent)

I think it's great that [the organisation] has recognised the impact of family violence on employees but also productivity of staff. It makes a stance that violence against women will not be tolerated (Organisation 1, survey respondent)

[It] feels good to work at an organisation that takes its role in domestic violence seriously (Organisation 1 survey respondent)

In addition, in the group discussions, participants described how the organisational culture around issues of domestic violence had altered since the policies and clauses had been implemented. Union delegates

representing staff in Organisation 2, for example, felt people were more inclined to talk about domestic violence at work, although there was considerable scope to improve communication and training around the policy.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ENTITLEMENTS

The perspectives captured in the group consultations and survey reflect widespread acceptance of the importance of domestic violence entitlements. However, in monitoring implementation and outcomes, it is evident that a number of barriers to accessing these entitlements remain. These include barriers relating to confidentiality, disclosure and organisation's internal processes for using the clause, as well as access to training, especially for managers and supervisors.

1. CONFIDENTIALITY

Many recognised that supporting people experiencing domestic violence can be fraught, and that those who might benefit from the clause may need support to use it.

It is always a difficult interplay with confidentiality and if there were security risks we would probably be need to have the agency security advisor involved. Again, you talk with the individual first and explain that to them. See if they have concerns, see if you can alleviate their concerns. A lot of people don't trust it will be kept confidential and don't understand the constraints or parameters that we operate in. Or have had a bad experience in the past. But we do have a very robust case management system. (Organisation 3, consultative group participant)

Some commented that the clause is likely to be more effective in the medium to long term, as in practice it takes time to engender a level of trust in the culture of an organisation, and this needs to filter down so that employees on the ground have a level of trust that makes them willing to take it up.

Traditionally domestic violence has never been brought up in the workplace. It's so new that people who trust the organisation can take a step forward, it's also about equipping the staff to have the trust. (Organisation 3, consultative group participant)

Domestic violence was recognised as a particularly challenging issue, and many people are sensitive about confidentiality and prefer to keep these matters private at work. As one person explained:

It is wonderful that there is now a domestic violence clause - though having the courage to access it may not be so easy for these people - for their lives are controlled by the person inflicting this violence. As you know, it is a cycle. It took me 11 years to tell anyone - and my marriage looked to be picture perfect. (Organisation 2, survey respondent)

Judging the correct response, making the right assessment and knowing how to have the right conversation is a skill that needs developing in this emerging workplace issue:

Just the discussion is providing help-giving them referral details- checking in with them in two weeks time. It might be the greatest help that person gets in those circumstances at that time. It's about the good assessment of the supervisor about impact and likely outcomes, and understanding too about

when is the right time for people to connect. (Organisation 3, consultative group participant)

Also understanding that for 40% of those who had experienced domestic violence their work was not negatively affected, and this was not, therefore the business of work. A respondent currently living with domestic violence expressed their preference to keep it private:

I live it nearly everyday and still get up and come to work I don't talk to my work mates about it as my co workers don't need to know about my private life (Organisation 2, survey respondent)

However, if confidentiality was guaranteed, and managers were better prepared to implement the policy, people in these circumstances would perhaps be more willing to access the supports they require. Indeed, concerns about confidentiality appear key barriers to using the clause, even though the policies and clauses say the matter will be dealt with confidentially. In the group discussions and meetings with managers and union representatives, there was much uncertainty about how to ensure a confidential and appropriate response, and to balance confidentiality with the need for some colleagues to know. Indeed, in the consultative groups and surveys, employees expressed much anxiety about having immediate supervisors know the details, or about others in the organisation knowing about, and keeping records of their use of domestic violence leave. As one person who had experienced domestic violence explained:

My only concern with this leave type is that it will be recorded on your history as this leave type and therefore anyone in HR or Payroll will be able to view it. When I suffered as a result of domestic violence, I only told my supervisor and in no way did I want anyone else to know about it ever. HR and Payroll employees tend to gossip a lot and I would be afraid of it getting around. (Organisation 2 survey respondent)

Indeed, for some, confidentiality among managers, human resource officers and union delegates was poorly regarded, and fears that confidentiality would not be maintained appeared a deterrent from using the clause.

Who in all honesty has that must trust that the information will remain confidential with management? You might as well take out an ad on page three of the newspaper. (Organisation 2 consultative group participant)

For these reasons, respondents expressed concern that internal information about any individual's use of the domestic violence clause should be limited to only those managers or other staff needing to know for security or other reasons.

2. ORGANISATIONAL PROCESSES

Of concern was a lack of awareness among employees and managers about how to access the domestic violence entitlements, including who would be the first point of contact about using the leave, safety planning, referral and other supports.

Organisations have considered the benefits of a centralised system:

It's the old balancing act- a risk management perspective. Statistically we know that three or four managers might have this happening- general awareness is a great thing

but whether or not you invest in great blocks of training rather than contact people who have a greater awareness- we will have to see how this goes- if we find a lot of managers saying they have to handle it but don't know what to do- we will equip them- but at the moment we have some expertise centrally. (Organisation 3 consultative group participant)

Others thought it more appropriate for contact people to be embedded in local workplaces, and for there to be clear communication around who the first point of contact for staff should be, and to ensure there are structures in place to minimise employees having to repeat their stories, or be exposed to the threat of lack of confidentiality.

3. TRAINING

A further barrier to obtaining support related to information about the policy and entitlements, and the need for further education and training. This was seen as especially for supervisors and managers, and union delegates, who may be in the position of advocating for a staff member, and facilitating access to support from the organisation to protect somebody experiencing domestic violence, or who may be the local managers who can change their work duties or facilitate a transfer. In some cases, consultative group participants considered themselves well trained to respond to domestic violence, and felt confident in connecting employees with people qualified to provide them with support (Organisation3). However, in Organisations 1 and 2, consultative group and survey participants identified scope for further education and training for managers and supervisors, to ensure they could properly perform the functions required of them under their organisations' domestic violence clause and policy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Domestic violence in the workplace is an emerging and sensitive industrial issue, and requires informed introduction and oversight. Many large workplaces have discussed the value of a central well trained team to perform this role. This may lead to delays in approval, or duplication when workers are used to contacting local or regional line supervisors. The centralised team or person may be seen as too remote for staff. Another challenge is to maintain this structure should other pressures distract the organisation, and to ensure an informed practice with the managers and supervisors in all parts of the organisation.

Having domestic violence entitlements in an Agreement commits the workplace and ensures the role of the union or unions to support their members. To guarantee the critical issue of confidentiality may require the participation of all agencies in the workplace. This is possible when the domestic violence protection is standardised, and enforceable. Unions should play an active role in the informing and supporting of members and in advocating for members through the process of disclosure and support.

In all cases, the need for targeted training for the critical 'go to people' in a workplace must be emphasised. This training should be incorporated into the training calendar of a workplace, and supplemented with e-learning and other training resources. Safe at Home, Safe at Work has found that most effective is a balanced training that incorporates an agreement on what constitutes domestic violence, its impacts at work, and the roles of

responsibilities of key staff in implementing domestic violence supports.

DISCUSSION

This monitoring exercise, which has been built around the action research approach outlined in the following section, has generated considerable insight into implementation processes and impact, and how these can be improved. A key area needing further research, for example, is the gendered effects of domestic violence at work. It is clear that workers receiving support need high levels of sensitivity and confidentiality, and that practices to guarantee confidentiality could be improved. It is also clear that continued work needs to be done to raise awareness of the impacts of domestic violence at work, and the supports that can be provided.

The essential elements for a successful future implementation of domestic violence clauses are ongoing monitoring and research, awareness and information strategies and training.

It is the sincere hope of the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies and the Social Policy Research Centre that national monitoring will be ongoing and will generate further insight into ways to support the safety and wellbeing of people experiencing domestic violence. The CGRVS and the SPRC wishes to acknowledge and thank the participating union officials and members; and employers, managers and staff, whose co-operation was essential to the project.

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TABLES

Table 1: Respondents' experience of domestic violence

	Organisation 1	Organisation 2	All
Experienced DV in last 12 months	2.9%	8.6%	6.6%
Experienced DV more than 12 months ago	19.7%	25.0%	23.2%
Not personally experienced DV but I know someone in my organisation who has	12.4%	14.8%	14.0%
No experience of DV	65.0%	51.6%	56.2%

Table 2: Impact on attendance and punctuality

	Number	% of people who personally experienced DV
Affected capacity to get to work	38	32.5
Had to take time off work	49	41.9
Made them late for work	30	25.6
Total with personal experience of DV	117	100

Table 3: Domestic violence at the workplace

	Number	% of people who personally experienced DV
Experienced DV in the workplace in some way	62	53.0
Abusive communications	38	32.5
Abuser came to workplace	24	20.5
Abuser contacted co-worker	22	18.8
Abuser worked at same workplace	13	11.1
Total with personal experience of DV	117	100

Table 4: Impact of own work performance

Work negatively affected because they were:	Number	% of people who personally experienced DV
Unwell e.g. anxiety, depression	69	59.0
Tired due to sleep deprivation	54	46.2
Distracted	44	37.6
Injured	10	8.5
Total with personal experience of DV	117	100