

MEDIA RELEASE

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Domestic violence is a workplace issue

MCCs call on all leaders to step up together: new guide released today

In an Australian first, members of the Male Champions of Change who employ a collective 600,000 employees have worked with experts to create a practical guide for workplaces looking to respond to domestic and family violence as a workplace issue. The report calls on all leaders to “Play Their Part” in reducing the prevalence and impact of domestic and family violence.

Says Male Champions of Change Chair, businesswoman, advocate and former Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick *“Playing Our Part is significant because this is the first time a group of leaders – including some of the nation’s most powerful business leaders - have come together to acknowledge domestic violence as a workplace issue. After learning from experts, they are committed to taking practical action to reduce the prevalence and impact of such violence, and to sharing what they have learned.”*

Commissioned by the Male Champions of Change and prepared by KPMG Australia, *Playing Our Part: Workplace Responses to Domestic and Family Violence* was unveiled by Male Champions of Change representatives including Elizabeth Broderick, Lieutenant General David Morrison, AO (Ret’d), Dr. Martin Parkinson, PSM (Non-Executive Director), and KPMG CEO Gary Wingrove along with representatives from Telstra, and ‘Australian of the Year’ Rosie Batty.

“Gender inequality is both a cause and consequence of domestic violence. We realise now that we can’t champion gender balanced leadership without addressing domestic and family violence, whose victims are overwhelmingly women,” say the Male Champions of Change in a letter sent to ASX-listed entities.

“The Male Champions of Change have been through a year-long process of deepening our understanding of domestic and family violence, including meeting with two courageous women who are survivors of such violence – Rosie Batty and Kristy McKellar – and commissioning this report. One thing is certain – domestic and family violence is a workplace issue,” said Broderick.

Today around 1.4 million Australian women are living in an abusive relationship or have done so in the past, and of these, around 800,000 are in the paid workforce. Economic factors are the most significant predictor of whether a woman experiencing domestic violence remains, escapes or returns to an abusive relationship. KPMG estimates that domestic and family violence will cost Australian business \$609 million annually by 2021.

“Our workplaces assist in keeping employees safe, providing economic independence that supports women’s choices, and playing a leadership role in the community. Furthermore, workplaces can also ensure perpetrators are not able to make use of work resources such as email and phone to carry out their abuse. Workplaces can play their part in addressing this significant issue,” added Ms Broderick.

KPMG's report describes practical actions that organisations can take to reduce the prevalence and impact of domestic and family violence. This includes a three-level model of implementation, supported by examples of responses from Male Champions of Change organisations.

Gary Wingrove, CEO of KPMG Australia and himself a Male Champion of Change commented: "As the CEO of a large professional services firm, I believe it is vital to speak out about what is often a very uncomfortable topic."

"It is imperative that workplaces take positive action against domestic violence, and listen and respond with understanding to the significant impact it makes on women's lives both at home and at work. I am very proud of KPMG's contribution to this important piece of work. And I am equally proud that my firm is officially launching our own domestic violence policy today, based on the report's recommendations."

Concludes Broderick, "We believe organisations can play a significant role when they have a robust response which is thought-through, leader-led, implemented strongly and not left to chance. The Male Champions of Change are calling on the workplaces of Australia to make a start now, and implement a workplace response to domestic and family violence. The report, and support from experts, can help them take these steps."

Implementing a workplace response to domestic and family violence

1 Level 1 – Making a start

The first step for organisations – of any size – is awareness and beginning to understand how they can make a difference. Organisations should focus on demonstrating a broad commitment to gender equality, ensuring those who disclose their experience of violence are safe at work, and that employee referral pathways and assistance are available.

2 Level 2 – Getting serious

The transition to the second level happens when organisations move from initial awareness and uncertainty around the issue, to an acceptance of domestic and family violence as a workplace issue impacting safety and productivity. This involves communicating domestic and family violence as a workplace issue; communicating that support is available; equipping managers to implement policies; providing additional paid leave to employees experiencing violence; and providing guidance on dealing with perpetrators via workplace policies.

3 Level 3 – Integrated

At the third level, organisations work to continually improve the ways they support those impacted by violence and establish the workplace as an active partner in a whole-of-community response to ending domestic and family violence. Organisations join forces with their customers, suppliers and communities to create a culture where domestic and family violence is unacceptable.

The Telstra story so far

Telstra is an example of a Male Champions of Change organisation which has taken an integrated approach to domestic and family violence. Beginning in 2009 with visible support from then-CEO David Thodey, Telstra began its journey by encouraging employees to support the White Ribbon campaign. In 2014, the company introduced its Family and Domestic Violence Support policy to support Telstra employees experiencing the effects of family and domestic violence.

It provides employees up to 10 days paid leave each year, in addition to other leave entitlements. Telstra undertook the White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation program from 2012-2014, which guided their internal work and identified opportunities to further support people experiencing family and domestic violence. In November 2014 Telstra introduced 'Safe Connections'. In partnership with the Women's Services Network (WESNET), Telstra provides 5000 smart phones annually, along with \$30 pre-paid recharge cards and technology safety tips for distribution through partner agencies, including women's refuges, shelters and safe houses. Telstra also provides \$1 million in mobile pre-paid recharge cards each year to help people affected by domestic violence to remain connected, and has removed silent-line fees for customers experiencing domestic or family violence.

Read the report

The *Playing Our Part* report can be found at www.malechampionsofchange.com

About Male Champions of Change (MCC)

The Male Champions of Change is a coalition of 30 Australian CEO's, department heads and non-executive directors from across business and government. We believe gender equality is one of the nation's most significant societal and economic issues. Established in 2010 by then Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, our mission is to step up beside women to achieve a significant and sustainable increase in the representation of women in leadership.

www.malechampionsofchange.com

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