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Report: Best practice approaches and insights learned from implementation of workplace responses to domestic and family violence

Seventeen of Australia's most influential organisations jointly [released a pioneering report](#) today, detailing best practice approaches and emerging challenges in implementing workplace responses to domestic and family violence.

A year ago, the Male Champions of Change, whose organisations collectively employ over 600, 000 people, recognised they could not champion gender-balanced leadership without addressing domestic and family violence.

"It is an uncomfortable fact that large companies have victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence as customers, employees and shareholders. We cannot simply accept that fact. Rather, we must accept our responsibility to play our part in changing it," said CEO of CBA, Ian Narev.

In Australia, of the 1.4 million women who are or have lived in an abusive relationship, 800,000 are in the paid workforce. Nearly half of those experiencing violence report difficulty getting to work. Performance is also impacted by employees feeling anxious, distracted and unwell. Violence can force people to take time off work, often without pay or by using valuable personal leave. KPMG estimates by 2021 this reality will cost Australian businesses \$609 million a year.

In 2015, the first *Playing our part* report proposed a three part model of actions that organisations can take to reduce the prevalence and impact of domestic and family violence. This second report, [Playing our part: Lessons learned...](#), shares the steps, processes and frameworks that organisations have found effective.

"Organisations are naturally at different points in both finding ways to address this very personal issue of profound gender inequality, and in bringing their workplace's mindset along with them – *Playing our part* accommodates that," said Gary Wingrove, CEO of KPMG Australia. "It breaks this journey into three levels: initiatives and processes that have been learned for organisations that are 'making a start', but are unsure of the boundaries; those that are 'getting serious' and starting to see organisational acceptance that this is a workplace issue; and organisations that have 'integrated' action throughout and are evaluating the effects."

"*Lessons learned...* also includes case study examples of strategies employed by Male Champions organisations relating to Employee Assistance Providers (EAPs) and managers, as well as organisational examples from Citi, the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Telstra and the Commonwealth Bank," said MCC Founder and Chair, Elizabeth Broderick.

For organisations 'making a start', the MCC's experience in *Lessons learned...* shows that initiating communication about this issue in the workplace can be difficult. But just starting the conversation reveals that many employees have been impacted and have stories to share, assisting in wider workplace education. Engaging external expertise is pivotal, as is, often, partnering with relevant EAPs. Communications should be inclusive: "violence against anyone is unacceptable.

"As organisations 'get serious', the MCCs found that reviewing policies and practices becomes vital. For example, sometimes the support on offer needs to be made more explicit. They found that manager training becomes integral because employees are more likely to disclose to a line manager than HR. Moreover, actions like simplifying leave approval processes and broadening the personnel who can approve leave are pivotal," Elizabeth Broderick said.

Finally, *Lessons learned...* makes clear that overcoming domestic violence requires access to education, support and tools whether you are a victim, perpetrator or bystander. Organisations that had reached the 'integrated' level found the need to strengthen policies and procedures to recognise and support customers and suppliers in crisis, and to provide education about financial independence. Entering into public advocacy and fostering national policy discussions also emerged as important opportunities.

"Everyone has the right to feel safe and free from violence and this is not the case for many women across the globe and for far too many in Australia. We all have a role to play to change this and workplaces that take steps will help change lives," said Andy Penn, CEO of Telstra.

The report and more information about Male Champions of Change can be found [here](#).

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