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# Genders at Work: Exploring the Role of Workplace Equality in Preventing Men's Violence Against Women

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# Genders at Work: Exploring the Role of Workplace Equality in Preventing Men's Violence Against Women

## **Abstract**

This report examines the role of workplaces, and men in workplaces in particular, in preventing men's violence against women.

The report begins by noting that men's violence against women is a widespread social problem which requires urgent action. It highlights the need for preventative measures oriented to changing the social and structural conditions at the root of this violence, including through settings such as workplaces.

Men's violence against women is a workplace issue. As well as being a blunt infringement of women's rights, this violence imposes very substantial health and economic costs on workplaces and organisations.

## **Keywords**

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# **Genders at Work: Exploring the role of workplace equality in preventing men's violence against women**

**Scott Holmes and Michael Flood**

**Australia's campaign to  
stop violence against women**

**White Ribbon**



White Ribbon is the world's largest movement of men and boys working to end men's violence against women and girls, promote gender equity, healthy relationships and a new vision of masculinity.

White Ribbon Australia, as part of this global movement, aims to create an Australian society in which all women can live in safety, free from violence and abuse.

We are Australia's only national, male-led violence prevention organisation. We work to examine the root causes of gender-based violence, challenge behaviours and create a cultural shift that leads us to a future without men's violence against women.

Through education, awareness-raising, preventative programs, partnerships and creative campaigns, we are highlighting the positive role men play in preventing men's violence against women and inspiring them to be part of this social change.

The Research and Policy Group provides expert advice, scholarship and general information on furthering prevention efforts in relation to the:

- White Ribbon Research Series – Preventing Men's Violence Against Women
- White Ribbon Factsheets Series
- Other White Ribbon resources and publications as required.

The White Ribbon Policy Research Series is directed by an expert reference group comprising academic, policy and service experts. At least two reports will be published each year and available from the White Ribbon website at [www.whiteribbon.org.au](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au)

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# Genders at Work: Exploring the role of workplace equality in preventing men's violence against women

## Executive Summary

This report examines the role of workplaces, and men in workplaces in particular, in preventing men's violence against women.

The report begins by noting that men's violence against women is a widespread social problem which requires urgent action. It highlights the need for preventative measures oriented to changing the social and structural conditions at the root of this violence, including through settings such as workplaces.

Men's violence against women is a workplace issue. As well as being a blunt infringement of women's rights, this violence imposes very substantial health and economic costs on workplaces and organisations.

If we are to address how workplaces can be part of the solution, we must first address how they are part of the problem in three ways. First, workplace gender inequalities – including unfair divisions of labour and power and norms of male dominance – contribute to women's economic and social disadvantage and men's privilege. Workplaces thus can intensify the wider gender inequalities in which violence against women flourishes. Second, the cultures of some workplaces encourage and institutionalise violence-supportive social norms. Women in these institutions or in contact with their members face greater risks of victimisation, and the male members are more likely than other men to tolerate and perpetrate violence. Third, workforces can contribute to violence against women through the ways in which they respond to employees who are victims of violence or its perpetrators.

Workplaces are increasingly prominent sites for violence prevention and intervention. While most strategies focus on responses to victimisation, a growing number of companies and organisations also engage in activities designed to prevent men's violence against women. For example, in Australia, a recent workplace pilot study has been implemented by White Ribbon Australia. This Workplace Accreditation project identifies 3 standards and 17 criteria for workplaces to meet in order to qualify as a White Ribbon Australia Accredited Workplace.

If the workplace is to have a real impact on preventing men's violence against women, then efforts in part must address men. There are seven overlapping strategies through which men at work can be engaged in change.

1. Through face-to-face educational programs and social marketing, workplace-based strategies can raise men's awareness of issues of gender inequality in general or men's violence against women in particular.
2. Workplaces can promote a culture of zero tolerance for sexist and disrespectful behaviour.
3. Undermining established masculine norms and cultures is crucial to such efforts, and should include moves away from traditional models of masculine leadership.
4. Men can be involved through their professional roles themselves.
5. Men can be mobilised as advocates for change in workplaces, for example by running White Ribbon and other violence prevention campaigns at work.

6. Men can challenge the structures and systems at work that produce inequality and exclusion, including by countering unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion, conducting gender audits, setting targets for women's representation, and examining gendered interactions at work.
7. Finally, workplaces can encourage men out of the paid workforce, adopting strategies for men to spend less time at work and more time involved in parenting and domestic work.

Workplace-based efforts to engage men in the prevention of men's violence against women include attention to male leaders. 'Buy-in' by leaders and organisations is crucial in any program of workplace change, but this is particularly difficult when it involves unsettling the established links between management, masculinity, and privilege. Nevertheless, there are powerful examples of both individual men and men's networks in workplaces acting as 'champions' of violence prevention in the workplace.

Ongoing patterns of workplace organisation and culture reinforce the unequal treatment of women and the unfair privileging of men. From working hours and structures, to recruitment, to employee care and advertising, workplaces have countless opportunities to choose either to reinforce the old ways or to take the path to a fairer and violence-free world. The challenge for workplaces is not knowing what to do to prevent violence against women – it is finding the will to do it.

## **Section 1: Men's violence against women and its prevention**

### ***Introduction***

Workplaces are key settings in which men's violence against women can be prevented and reduced. The workforce is the place where most men and women spend much of their daily lives. Most women who are victims of domestic and sexual violence are in paid work (McFerran 2011: 5), and so are most men who perpetrate this violence. Violence and abuse affect women's participation in paid work and impose substantial costs on workplaces and businesses. On the one hand, workplace cultures may tolerate or contribute to men's violence against women. On the other, workplaces can play key roles in prevention.

This report examines the role of workplaces in preventing men's violence against women. Workplaces are a largely untapped resource in the work of primary prevention of men's violence against women. While there are obvious ways in which workplaces are affected by violence against women, initiatives which engage workplaces in systematic ways in prevention are only just beginning. Contemporary initiatives in Australia include the White Ribbon Australia Workplace Accreditation Program, which commenced in 2012, and YMCA Victoria's Y Respect Gender Project, a Victorian Health Promotion Foundation funded project that also commenced in 2012.

In recent years there has been an increasing focus on the need to engage men in the process of ending men's violence against women. The White Ribbon Campaign itself is one example of such a focus, and there are an increasing number of others in diverse parts of the world.<sup>1</sup> This focus on the need to engage men recognises the gendered nature of the underlying factors contributing to men's violence against women, including structurally based gender inequalities, and the way masculinity is constructed and maintained across our society. If we are to prevent this violence before it occurs we must engage men in the process of examining not just their relationship with women, but also their relationship with each other, with the dominant representations of masculinity in their culture, and the way in which masculinity functions as a system of control and privilege.

The White Ribbon Campaign focuses in particular on the positive roles which men can play in stopping men's violence against women. Reflecting that focus, we pay particular attention to men at work. We explore the obstacles to prevention represented by traditional masculine workplace cultures and by men's resistance to gender equality, and in turn, we highlight effective ways to engage men as advocates for the elimination of violence against women.

The report begins with a short introduction to the extent of the problem of men's violence against women, and its prevention.

### ***Men's violence against women***

The term 'men's violence against women' refers to the wide variety of forms of violence and abuse perpetrated by men against women, including physical and sexual assaults and other behaviours which result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. The term is a useful, catch-all term for a range of forms of violence which women experience, and includes domestic or family violence, rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the Instituto Promundo in Brazil, Men Against Rape and Discrimination (MARD) in India, and the Sonke Gender Justice network in South Africa.

Data from across the globe documents that substantial proportions of women experience violence. A recent international report notes that overall, 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence (World Health Organisation 2013). Here in Australia,

- The *Personal Safety Survey* finds that nearly one in six women (16 percent) have experienced violence by a current or previous partner since the age of 15 (ABS 2006);
- The Australian component of the *International Violence Against Women Survey* finds that over a third of women (34 percent) who have ever had a boyfriend or husband report experiencing at least one form of violence during their lifetime from an intimate male partner (Mouzos and Makkai 2004: 44).

Efforts to name, respond to, and prevent the problem of men's violence against women have been pioneered above all by women's movements and feminism. Feminist activism and theory has involved a thorough critique of the gender inequalities which disadvantage women and privilege men, and men's violence against women has been widely identified as a central element in this injustice. Men's violence against women thus has been the focus of an enormous amount of feminist activism, struggle and theorising.

In Australia as in other countries, feminist activism made men's violence against women a public issue and a social policy concern (Phillips 2006: 200). Beginning in the early 1970s, feminist efforts have led to progress in legislation, the creation of domestic and sexual violence units within police forces and other institutions, government funding for refuges, counselling, community education, and rehabilitation, and national government agendas on violence against women (Laing 2000). Feminist and violence-focused groups and organisations have worked to establish legal and other protections for the victims of men's violence, to criminalise violent behaviour and impose community and legal sanctions on its perpetrators, and to undermine cultural and institutional supports for violence against women through community education, activism and advocacy.

An emphasis on the need to *prevent* men's violence against women – by changing the social and structural conditions at the root of this violence – has long been part of feminism. At the same time, and drawing on a health promotion framework, the 1990s saw an increasing emphasis on what is termed primary prevention. In this framework, primary prevention refers to activities which take place before violence has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimisation. Secondary prevention involves immediate responses after violence has occurred to deal with the short-term consequences of violence, to respond to those at risk, and to prevent the problem from occurring or progressing. Tertiary prevention involves long-term responses after violence has occurred to deal with the lasting consequences of violence, minimise its impact, and prevent further perpetration and victimisation. These different activities complement and reinforce each other.

Alongside a growing emphasis on primary prevention, the health promotion framework has seen the development of a number of other trends in the violence prevention field. These include increased emphases on comprehensive approaches which address multiple levels of the social order, the value of evaluation and evidence of effectiveness, and the targeting of the social determinants or causes of violence against women associated with particular settings, communities and social dynamics (Walker *et al.* 2008).

One significant development in the violence prevention field is an increased emphasis on settings-based prevention – on working in and through particular formal and informal contexts to make progress in preventing violence against women. Children, young people, and schools have long been a significant focus of prevention activity, particularly through respectful relationships education in schools, but there is now increased attention to school settings as important in the

success of prevention efforts. This is visible for example in assessments of 'school readiness' to implement violence prevention. Three other settings which are increasingly prominent in violence prevention in Australia are sporting institutions and cultures, military forces, and workplaces.

Before examining workplaces' roles in prevention, we outline how men's violence against women is a problem in and for workplaces.

## **Section 2: Men's violence against women as a workplace issue**

There are victims and perpetrators of men's violence against women in every workplace. One survey finds that two thirds of women victims of men's violence are in paid employment (McFerran 2011: 5). In turn, it is likely that many if not most of the men who perpetrate violence against women and girls are in paid employment. Whether it occurs outside or within the workplace, men's violence against women has a direct impact on women's and men's participation at work, and workplaces themselves may contribute to or tolerate violence against women.

In addition, women are subjected to violence in workplaces themselves. For example;

- 62 percent of working women had experienced violence at work within the last five years, according to a representative survey in the state of Victoria, Australia. This violence included: being sworn at or shouted at; hostile behaviours; being intimidated or threatened; bullying; victimisation; physical attacks; racial harassment, sexual harassment, robbery; wounding or battering; stalking; and rape (URCOT 2005: 7);
- One-quarter of women (25 percent) aged 15 years and older have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the past five years (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012: 15);
- In a survey completed by over 3,600 union members in Australia, with 81 percent of respondents female, nearly one-third of respondents (30 percent) had personally experienced domestic violence (McFerran 2011: 6). Among those individuals who had experienced domestic violence in the last 12 months, nearly one in five (19 percent) reported that the violence continued at the workplace, for example through abusive phone calls and emails and the partner physically coming to work (McFerran 2011: 10).

### ***A workplace issue***

Domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence against women have a profound impact on workplaces. Key impacts of this violence include "higher rates of absenteeism, loss of productivity, reduced employee morale and increased need for support in the workplace for victims" (Wells *et al.* 2013: 19). Domestic violence has a direct impact on the economy. In Australia for example, the economic cost of violence against women and their children was estimated to be \$13.6 billion in 2009 (National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2009). There is increasing recognition among employers that there are both ethical and economic reasons to address and prevent violence against women. Recent research by KPMG puts the cost of this violence at \$14.7 USD billion per year, or roughly 1.1 percent of Australia's GDP (KPMG 2013).

Men's violence against women has both direct and indirect impacts on work and employment. Domestic violence has significant negative consequences for women's physical and mental health, both short and long-term, and in turn these diminish their workforce productivity and participation (Murray and Powell 2008: 3-5; Women's Health Victoria 2012: 11-13). Economic costs associated with victimisation include absenteeism, lost productivity related to use of sick leave, distraction and lack of concentration, underperformance, poor workplace relationships, access to employment support services etc., and staff replacement. There are further, second generation costs to do with counselling, changing schools, child protection, increased use of government services, and juvenile and adult crime (Access Economics 2004). Domestic violence has wider impacts at work. Friends, family and colleagues may also take leave from work for various reasons, and staff may try to protect or support victims (Women's Health Victoria 2012: 13-14). Domestic violence also impedes women's capacity to gain and maintain employment (Murray and Powell 2008: 4). As McFerran (2011: 2) summarises,

The evidence is that women with a history of domestic violence have a more disrupted work history, are consequently on lower personal incomes, have had to change jobs more often and are employed at higher levels in casual and part time work than women with no experience of violence.

Domestic violence also may 'come' to work, with the workplace a site of domestic violence and associated behaviours itself. For example, victims may experience physical or verbal harassment by perpetrators during work hours, and they may be stalked at or around their workplaces (Murray and Powell 2008: 4-5; Women's Health Victoria 2012: 14). Men seeking to coerce and control their female partners or ex-partners may target them at work to increase their control and compromise their economic independence (McFerran 2011: 3).

While domestic violence impacts on employment, employment in turn impacts on domestic violence. Participation in paid work allows some women to find assistance and support, to benefit from financial security and independence, and to maintain social networks and support which can be vital in gaining safety (Murray and Powell 2008: 6). Being in employment is a key pathway to women leaving a violent relationship (McFerran 2011: 2). Women may seek assistance in the workplace for experiences of violence, whether these occur inside or outside the workplace setting, through workplace support mechanisms and collegial networks (Powell 2011: 27).

### **Section 3: Workplaces, gender inequality, and violence against women**

The focus of this paper is on the potential for the workplace to be included as a location where men are engaged with the task of advancing the equality of women, in order that, over time, we can eliminate men's violence against women. If the workplace is to be part of the solution to gender inequity, it is important that we first understand the ways in which workplaces have been part of the problem. Work, and by extension the places where work is conducted, is a highly gendered part of human culture. Men's relationship with work, and the meaning of work for men, has been closely linked to the formation of men's identity and sense of place in the male world. Work has also been one of the most significant ways that men have built and maintained dominance over women in most cultures. Therefore, any actions that advocate for work and workplaces to be gender-equitable will have impacts far beyond the workplace itself. And, because such actions continue to create resistance in our society, the workplace will also be a location of such resistance.

Workplaces themselves may contribute to the problem of men's violence against women. To the extent that workplace norms and relations are marked by gender inequality, they intensify the wider gender inequalities in which violence against women flourishes.

Workplaces can contribute to men's violence against women both indirectly and directly, as we discuss in more detail below. Indirectly, the gendered patterns of workplaces can feed into violence against women by increasing women's vulnerability to victimisation and men's likelihood of and opportunity for perpetration. Specifically, patterns of paid work may sustain women's economic dependence on men and men's economic privilege and power. Divisions of paid work often intersect with women's greater burden of parenting and domestic work. Also, to the extent that men's interpersonal power over women is exercised and reproduced at work, it increases men's sense of license also to exercise power over women in the 'private' domains of relationships and families. That is, if men learn at work to expect entitlement over and deference from women, they may also expect this from women in other contexts.

More directly, workplaces can contribute to men's violence against women by intensifying the sexist and violence-supportive social norms which inform men's use of violence. And to the extent that workplaces fail to respond to victims or perpetrators of violence, they leave the problem to continue.

Workplaces are influential spaces in which gender-inequitable norms and behaviours may be enforced, or challenged. How then are workplaces implicated in the gender inequalities which are the foundation of men's violence against women?

### ***Work and gender inequalities***

Paid work and the workforce are characterised by persistent gender inequalities. Gender inequalities are visible in the first instance in wages, economic decision-making, and the kinds of work men and women do. Focusing on wages, in May 2012, the average (mean) non-managerial adult hourly ordinary time cash earnings for females was \$31.20, compared to \$35.40 for males. Mean adult weekly total cash earnings for female employees was \$946.80. This represents 68 percent of the mean adult weekly total cash earnings for male employees (\$1399.60) (ABS 2013). The difference between the equivalent average full time male income and the average full time female income is currently 17.6 percent and has remained stuck at around this level for close to two decades. Even starting salaries for new graduates show a considerable gender gap (Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2013).

Economic decision-making is dominated by men. Looking at the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in the top 200 (ASX) publicly listed companies, women occupy only 3.5 percent of CEO positions. Putting this another way, men occupy 96.5 percent of these positions (ABS 2013). This has changed little in a decade: ten years ago, the figure was 98.7 percent. Men are 90.8 percent of the Board Directors in the top 500 companies. It is worth noting that the situation is quite different in the community sector (YWCA Australia 2012). In workplaces in general, while there has been some progress towards gender equality in middle management, men continue to dominate the upper echelons of economic power. This represents a vertical segmentation of the labour market, but there is also a horizontal segmentation, with women highly concentrated in some occupations or industries and men in others.

Work has long been gendered: men and women have laboured at different things, and men's and women's work have had different meanings and statuses. Female employees represent more than 60 percent of employees in the clerical and administrative, community and personal services, and sales sectors of the workforce. In contrast, machinery operators and drivers, technicians and trades workers, labourers and managers are over 60 percent male employees. Women comprise

80 percent of health care and social assistance workers, and 62 percent of education and training workers. In contrast, over 60 percent of science and technical professionals are men. Only 35.1 percent of managers are women (Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2013).

Gendered divisions of labour also are visible in unpaid work. Men continue to do far less parenting and domestic work than women. For men, the average time per day spent on total domestic activities, at 1 hour 37 minutes in 2006, has not changed since 1992. For women, the average time spent on domestic activities has declined over time, from 3 hours and 2 minutes in 1992 to 2 hours 52 minutes a day in 2006 (Headey 2009).

Inequalities in unpaid, domestic work and in paid work are mutually reinforcing. Research has shown that women's career progression is impacted by the inability of workplaces to adequately cater for the breaks that women have when they have children, or when they choose to care for elderly relatives (Hewlett 2007). This impact is not simply because of the actual time away from work, but also because of the potential for these breaks to result in women being viewed as less committed to their careers and less reliable.

Work often fails therefore to create economic independence for women. For example, women are over-represented in what is known as insecure work – part time and casual work, and other arrangements without access to entitlements such as sick leave and annual leave. The gendered nature and impacts of insecure work is well documented in a recent report commissioned by the ACTU (Howe, Munro, Biddington and Charlesworth 2012). Industries which have historically had higher rates of female employees have also tended to be those which have been the most poorly paid – such as childcare workers, social workers, and other community workers. The combination of women's lower salaries, periods of time away from work in order to look after children, and over-representation in casual and part time work, means that women retire with considerably less superannuation than men.

Historically, there are powerful connections between men's identities and paid work. Work often has been the primary way in which many men define their value and being (Pease 2002: 97). This reflects the longstanding expectation that men will provide economically for themselves and their family (Pease 2002: 98). Success at work became the most important success in a man's life, and the way that a man could be confident that he indeed *was* a man (Rao, Stuart and Kelleher 1999). The 'breadwinner' role has been equated with full masculine and adult status. In this sense, masculinity is measured by what men earn. Thus, "for many men, employment provides the interrelated economic and symbolic benefits of financial rewards, skills, careers, power and status" (Collinson 2007: 69).

Today, work continues to be closely associated with masculine identity. From a very young age boys are asked what they hope to 'be' when they grow up, meaning, what work they will do. Rituals of male initiation, which once happened as part of community life, are now most often associated with work – patterns of teasing aimed at junior apprentices, or the 'hazing' that happens in military schools and other places. Social norms emphasise that the 'proper' thing for a man to do is work, with unemployment, or even part time or casual work, continuing to be a significant stigma. As is commonly stated, men are workers who may occasionally parent; women are parents who may occasionally work.

Contemporary workplaces continue to be organised in ways which reflect and reinforce gender inequalities. These are evident for example in the timing of work and norms of leadership and management. Despite the move to 24/7 retail trading, and some other factors such as continuous manufacturing lines, the vast majority of workplaces still operate on a 9am to 5 pm basis, a pattern which in most places is not aligned with school operating hours. This pattern assumes that the worker has no responsibility for delivering children to school or picking them up again. Factoring in the time that is often taken in travelling to and from the workplace, it may

well mean that the worker is also unable to participate in the daily routines of young children. It is, in other words, a pattern that assumes the traditional gendered division of labour. This pattern is also discernible in the number of hours worked per week, with men more likely to be working full time, and women more likely to be working part-time or casually. (As of July 2013, women constitute 69.9 percent of all part-time employees, 35.3 percent of all full-time employees, and 55.3 percent of all casual employees.) Women's participation in the workforce has generated adaptations to this gendered pattern in the form of flexible working arrangements. Interestingly, numbers of reports suggest that both men and women are reluctant to make use of these arrangements, recognizing that there could be penalties for using them because they are contrary to the acceptable norm.

Men's monopoly of the upper echelons of business and public sector institutions is sustained in part by gendered constructions of leadership. There is a powerful overlap between dominant constructions of masculinity and dominant constructions of management and leadership, producing a taken-for-granted association between maleness and organisational power. There is a two-way relationship between the many symbolic expressions of the authority and status of managers and of the authority and status of men (Collinson and Hearn 2005: 297). Workplace leadership styles long have been based on masculine-normative expectations that emphasise power and control over others, hierarchical arrangements, and the importance of individual success and glory. Leaders need to be tough, work long hours, put in the 'hard yards', and make the 'hard calls'. Various reports note the difficulties that women face in engaging with these leadership styles. If they adopt the overly masculine approach they are seen as betraying their gender; if they adopt a style with different values they are not seen as being a good leader (Rudman 2008). For men on the other hand, there are no contradictions between being a successful manager and a successful man (Whitehead 2002: 132-36).

Gender inequalities in paid work are sustained not only by unfair divisions of labour and power and gendered social norms, but by men's active maintenance of women's subordination. Men have used a variety of strategies to resist women's entry into their workplaces and institutions or to maintain the subordination of those women already there. Historically, men have resisted women's entry using formal barriers to women's employment such as discriminatory laws and institutional policies and union rules. More recently, as studies among police in Australia and the US demonstrate, for example, male superiors and co-workers have used unduly harsh treatment of women, ridicule, anti-women remarks, demeaning terms of address, sexual innuendo, bullying, and sexual harassment (Eveline and Harwood 2003: 100-104; Prokos and Padavic 2002). Particularly in male-dominated settings, men who do not go along with dominant masculine norms of hostility towards female workers and superiors themselves may be targeted for abuse (Eveline and Harwood 2003: 101).

Male privilege in workplaces and institutions is also maintained through men's collective social relations. In some workplaces, male workers maintain sex-based job segregation, male bonding, and male-focused networking by emphasising gender boundaries in friendship and group relations. They exclude women from informal networks, give greater acknowledgement of each others' presence than of women, and focus on each others' company and approval (Miller 2004: 51; Pease 2002: 103-104; Prokos and Padavic 2002: 442-446).

In short, gender inequalities at work are produced and sustained by a variety of processes. To summarise,

Unjust gender relations are maintained by individual men's sexist and gendered practices, masculine workplace cultures, men's monopolies over decision-making and leadership, and powerful constructions of masculinity and male identity. (Flood and Pease 2005: 121)

These inequalities have an enormous impact on men's and women's experience of work, including the types of occupations in which they are prominent or not; their rates of pay; the pace at which they are able to progress their careers; their ability to reach their professional goals; and their overall influence in public life.

### ***Workplaces and violence-supportive social norms***

Workplaces can increase the risk of violence victimisation or perpetration through their production and maintenance of gender inequalities in general, but they also can do so by fostering violence-supportive social norms in particular. There is now substantial evidence that violence-supportive attitudes are encouraged and institutionalised in the peer relations and cultures of particular organisations and workplaces. Data on this comes largely from male-dominated university colleges, sporting clubs, workplaces, and military institutions (Flood and Pease 2006: 36-42).

It is clear that some workplaces are more dangerous places for women than others, and that men in some workplaces or institutions are more likely than other men to perpetrate violence against women. For example, in professional sports, there is evidence that risks of sexual violence against women by male athletes are higher in contexts and cultures involving intense male bonding, high male status and strong differentiation of gender roles, high alcohol and drug consumption, ideologies and practices of aggression and toughness, and practices of group sex (Flood and Pease 2006: 37). In military institutions, violence against women is promoted by norms of gender inequality and other bonds that foster and justify abuse in particular peer cultures (Rosen *et al.* 2003; Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997; Harrison 2002). A US study provides quantitative support for an association between patriarchal male bonding in peer cultures and violence against women. Using survey data among 713 married male soldiers at an Army post in Alaska, Rosen *et al.* (2003: 1064-1065) found an association between 'group disrespect' (the presence of rude and aggressive behaviour, pornography consumption, sexualised discussion, and encouragement of group drinking) and the perpetration of intimate partner violence, at both individual and group levels.

At least three processes shape the higher support for men's violence against women and greater use of violence found among men in some contexts. First, there is *group socialisation*: in joining particular sporting teams or fraternities, men are actively inducted into the existing norms and values of these contexts. Second, there is *identification*: individuals who identify with the group and see it as a reference group may be more likely to increase their adherence to violence-supportive beliefs and their likelihood of assaultive behaviour (Humphrey and Kahn 2000: 1320). Third, there is *self-selection*: men with pre-existing violence-supportive attitudes and behaviours and an orientation towards other features of these contexts such as heavy drinking may join groups with similar characteristics.

There is evidence that the character of men's informal social networks and peer relations can contribute to or lessen their involvement in violence against women. A series of studies document that a particular risk factor for men's perpetration of violence against women is their participation and investment in homosocial male peer groups. Beginning in the 1990s, DeKeseredy *et al.* in the USA documented that male peer support for sexual assault, including young men's attachment (close emotional ties) to abusive peers and peers' informational support for sexual assault (peer guidance and advice that influences men to assault their dating partners), were significantly correlated with sexual assault (DeKeseredy and Kelly 1995; Schwartz and DeKeseredy 1997). Among men, being more dependent on a male reference group for one's gender role self-concept is associated with attitudes conducive to the sexual harassment of women (Wade and Brittan-Powell 2001), while having a homosocially focused social life can restrict men's acceptance of more progressive views of gender roles (Bryant 2003). To the

extent that individuals' peers share negative beliefs about gender and about violence and are involved in physically aggressive or coercive behaviours, those individuals are more likely to perpetrate relationship abuse (Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe 2001; Sellers *et al.* 2005: 389). In short, men who are attached to and invested in male friends who support or perpetrate violence against women are more likely to support or perpetrate violence against women themselves.

### ***Victims and perpetrators in the workplace***

Workforces also may contribute to men's violence against women through the ways in which they respond to employees who are victims of violence or its perpetrators. Until recently, few workplaces had specific policies or procedures that focused on this issue. For example, employees requiring time off work because of circumstances related to their experience of violence, such as to attend court hearings, move house, or because of hospitalisation, had no specific entitlements for this leave and were required to use leave designed for other purposes, particularly annual leave. Supervisors received no guidance about their management of employees whose work performance is being impacted by their experience of family violence, nor how to manage the impact of this on the colleagues of the affected employee. Such management might also include the need to develop safety plans for employees who experience violence from their domestic perpetrators while at the workplace. For these reasons, inadequate employer response to employees who are victims of violence may contribute to the inability of those victims to achieve a safe and just outcome to their situation. Similar issues relate to the perpetrators of violence, who may also require leave, and whose presence at work (if identified) will impact colleagues.

In response to these concerns, in 2009, the Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse (ADFVC) and the New South Wales Public Service Association (PSA) began discussions regarding the introduction of domestic violence entitlements into industrial instruments. The Domestic Violence Workplace Rights and Entitlements Project (which concluded in June 2013) has been successful in enabling a growing number of Australian workplaces to include Family Violence clauses in their Employee Agreements, or to develop policy relating to the workplace response to family violence.

This analysis of the gendered nature of workplaces has indicated the role that workplaces play in creating and reinforcing gender inequality across our society. In particular, the role of the existing workplace culture on the ability of women to have financial independence, and on their ability to have representation and influence in public and corporate decision making, has wider implications for the quest to eliminate the entrenched patriarchy of contemporary society. At the same time, the analysis also points to the potential for workplaces to play a significant role in fostering a new approach to gender, work and power, and therefore to eliminating the environment in which men's violence against women is able to continue.

The next section of this paper explores how workplaces can begin this process of change. It describes the ways in which workplaces have been engaged in the reduction and prevention of men's violence against women, before we turn to efforts to involve men in particular in this work.

### ***Workplaces as sites for prevention***

Workplaces have been identified as key settings for the prevention of men's violence against women (VicHealth 2007: 57). Organisations represent excellent sites for the introduction of prevention strategies to end men's violence against women, for several reasons. First, organisational efforts "scale up" the impact of violence prevention, in that they have the potential to influence both their internal cultures and the communities which surround them. By changing its policies, practices and culture, an organisation can not only change from within, but also have an impact in surrounding communities, serve as an example for other organisations,

influence wider policy, and inform community norms (Davis *et al.* 2006: 12). Organisations have the potential to reach large numbers of people and create conditions in which change can be promoted and sustained. Second, given the impacts of relationship and family violence documented earlier, employers are key stakeholders in prevention: “they are responsible for setting policy, sharing information, promoting skills development, and motivating employees, clients, consumers, and partners to become engaged in efforts to end violence at the individual, family, community and societal levels” (Wells *et al.* 2013: 19). Third, given the violence-supportive cultures of some workplaces or organisations, intensive intervention is needed.

There are a range of benefits for workplaces in preventing and reducing men's violence against women, including direct and indirect economic and other benefits:

Direct benefits include increased productivity and decreased costs in relation to leave and staff replacement [...] Indirect benefits include supporting staff and being identified as an employer of choice who shows social responsibility and provides community leadership. [...] By being aware of domestic violence issues and having prevention strategies in place, employers can also better ensure that they are meeting equal opportunity and anti-discrimination requirements, as well as their duty of care in ensuring a safe work environment (Murray and Powell 2008: 3)

Men's violence against women is clearly a workplace issue. At the same time, establishing this is not necessarily easy. As a Victorian study reports, the most consistent barrier in getting workplaces involved in violence prevention 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. (VCCAV 2004: 28)

In workforces, strategies for the *primary* prevention of intimate partner violence are scattered and underdeveloped. On the other hand, organisations and workforces are a common site for the development of improved responses to the occurrence of such violence. Most workplace-based efforts to reduce or prevent men's violence against women are centered on secondary or tertiary prevention (Wells *et al.* 2013: 48-49). Strategies include training police, legal staff, and other personnel in appropriate responses to and interventions into intimate partner violence; developing coordinated community responses to intimate partner violence; and sensitising health care providers, encouraging routine screening for violence, and developing protocols for the proper management of abuse (World Health Organisation 2002). There is evidence that such efforts do improve professional responses to the victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence, increase women's safety, and assist their processes of recovery.

Workplaces are increasingly prominent sites for domestic violence prevention and intervention. In the USA, UK, and elsewhere, some larger companies now have domestic violence programs in their workplaces. It is mandatory in some jurisdictions for large organisations to have policies providing special leave related to domestic violence, and violence prevention organisations and trade unions have developed training manuals and resources for workplace-based prevention (Murray and Powell 2008: 7; VCCAV 2004: 12). Corporate alliances and public sector networks in the US and elsewhere have developed workplace programs regarding intimate partner violence. While most strategies focus on responses to victimisation (such as security measures, victim resources, and education), many companies also engage in activities designed to raise awareness in general of intimate partner violence (Lindquist *et al.* 2006). Similar initiatives have taken place among state governments, city councils, and local community services (VCCAV 2004: 13).

Strategies for workplace prevention vary according to the size, location, and character of the workplace, who is initiating the activities, and whom they target. Typical activities focused on employees include:

the implementation of policies regarding workplace responses to incidents of domestic violence; statements from management to staff condemning domestic violence and supporting domestic violence prevention in forums such as messages on payslips, workplace newsletters and intranet sites; the training of key personnel who are likely to come into contact with domestic violence issues in the workplace, including managers, employee assistance program staff and human resources personnel; and the display of posters and information sheets that provide information about domestic violence and sources of assistance (Murray and Powell 2008: 8).

In Australia, a recent workplace pilot study has been implemented by White Ribbon Australia. This workplace accreditation project identifies a range of criteria for workplaces to meet in order to qualify as a White Ribbon Australia Accredited Workplace. The project has a strong emphasis on aligning workplaces and their staff with the goal of White Ribbon Australia to engage men in saying no to violence against women. Across three steps, Recognition, Accreditation, and Awards, the program encourage workplaces to take steps to:

- raise awareness of the prevalence of violence against women;
- strengthen within the workplace culture the importance of gender equity and respectful relationships; and
- establish policies and processes to support women affected by violence either in the workplace or in the home.

Twenty-eight Australian workplaces are currently involved in the pilot phase of this program, which includes baseline surveys and other evaluation processes. Twenty-four of these are expected to achieve accreditation by the end of 2013, and a further 104 workplaces have expressed interest in participating in the program when it rolls out as a fully implemented program in 2014.

Different models or styles of violence prevention are suited to different workplaces (VCCAV 2004: 28). Efforts may be employer-led, based on brokerage partnerships, union-based, or organised in other ways (Murray and Powell 2008: 8). Employer-led efforts involve incorporating prevention strategies – such as flexible leave provisions, increased security, flexible shifts, and the provision of referral information – into existing human resources structures or organisational processes (Murray and Powell 2008: 9). In brokerage models, domestic violence prevention is done as part of philanthropic or corporate social responsibility activities. Businesses may support domestic violence services and promote awareness in their organisation and the wider community, and may receive awareness training and support in return (Murray and Powell 2008: 10). Unfortunately, little data is available, based on robust impact evaluations, with which to assess the effectiveness of these efforts (Murray and Powell 2008: 15).

We turn now to workplace strategies for building gender equality and preventing violence against women which focus on men.

## **Section 4: Shifting men's gender relations in the workplace**

An awareness of the need to address gender inequality in the workplace is not new. It is decades now that women have been present in the workforce in significant numbers, long enough for it to become apparent that the changes that women dreamed of are yet to be realized (Summers 2013).

One factor that may have played a role in this slow pace of change is that much of the focus of addressing inequality in the workplace has concerned strategies that change the circumstances for women without requiring any significant change from men. These have included improvements to maternity leave arrangements, targets for increasing women's representation in leadership, and increased opportunity for flexible and casual work. These strategies deal with the challenge that women face in meeting the requirements needed to advance in their chosen career while at the same time meeting the requirements involved in being wives and mothers. However, while these changes did undoubtedly assist women in staying in the workplace, they have not, by and large, required that men examine, let alone change, the way the workplace functions to reinforce the attitudes and behaviours that undergird inequality and sexism. If the workplace is to have an impact on preventing men's violence against women, the focus of our strategies needs to address more than the numbers of women in particular roles. It needs to focus on how the workplace can change men. This section of our report explores a number of ways that workplaces can begin to engage with men in this process of change.

### ***Raising men's awareness***

Various workplace-based strategies seek to raise men's awareness of issues of gender inequality in general or men's violence against women in particular. An initial approach to how workplaces can engage men in a change process has focused on raising men's awareness of the way workplace inequality reinforces gender inequality more broadly, and on the connection between this inequality and men's violence against women. Much of this awareness raising has successfully made use of the social marketing potential of national and international campaigns, including the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women – White Ribbon Day and International Women's Day.

One stream of education in workplaces includes face-to-face educational groups and programs. The vast majority of face-to-face education addressing men's violence against women takes place in schools and universities, and few programs are focused on men in workplaces. Nevertheless, there are some isolated examples of education programs which address or touch on issues of domestic and family violence. For example, the health promotion program "Men at Work" addresses health and wellbeing issues, including violence, among men accessed at the workplace in industries including retail, oil, finance, construction and mining (VCCAV 2004: 22).

In relation to interpersonal violence, the most common primary prevention education that has occurred in workplaces in general concerns sexual harassment. Various studies have demonstrated that workplace training can improve attitudes towards sexual harassment, among employees in universities and in federal government workplaces (Antecol and Cobb-Clark 2003). In fact, such training has been shown to have an effect on organisational cultures over and above the impact of individual training, in that more widespread training in a workplace is associated with a greater recognition of sexual harassment, regardless of whether or not individual training has been undertaken (Antecol and Cobb-Clark 2003).

The evidence is that education programs which are intensive, lengthy, and use a variety of teaching approaches have been shown to produce positive and lasting change in attitudes and behaviours related to violence against women (Flood 2005-2006). More effective educational programs in workplaces will be those which are closest to the standards of best practice identified in violence prevention education (Carmody *et al.* 2009; Flood *et al.* 2009).

Another important stream of community education includes communication and social marketing strategies. Again, there is evidence that such campaigns can produce positive change in the attitudes and behaviours associated with men's perpetration of violence against women (Donovan and Vlais 2005). And again, relatively few social marketing efforts have focused on men in particular workplaces or institutions.

Workplace training engaging men faces obvious barriers. There is evidence that men are not as receptive as women to organisational efforts to eliminate gender bias (Prime *et al.* 2009: 2). Men are less supportive of diversity programs for minorities and more likely than women to respond with backlash (Kidder *et al.* 2004: 93). Further, it is not clear whether raising men's awareness about the extent of men's violence against women progresses to a commitment by men to change the systems and attitudes that are implicated in gender inequality. Men can say 'no' to violence against women without necessarily saying 'yes' to eliminating gender inequality.

Workplace efforts to reduce gender inequalities and prevent men's violence against women may address particular dimensions of these problems, from sexist and disrespectful behaviours to established masculine norms and cultures.

### ***Addressing sexist and disrespectful behaviours***

A powerful way that workplaces can encourage men to examine the nature of their gender relations is to promote a culture of zero tolerance for sexist and disrespectful behaviour. Although Australia has had laws to criminalise gender-based harassment and discrimination for some time, there continues to exist in many workplaces a type of 'low-level' culture of jokes, put-downs and gender-stereotypical assumptions that create a culture that is unfriendly for women. The Gender Equality Project, based at the Melbourne Business School, notes the ways in which these behaviours impact women in the workplace (Wood 2012: 20)

The impacts of low-level sexism are insidious but as the results of our meta-analysis show, very real. The perpetrators may not believe or accept that they are being sexist, and will often respond when challenged that they are "just joking". The effects for women are insidious because they create a reaction referred to as "stereotype threat" in which the individuals targeted by sexist remarks will often ruminate on the implications and be distracted from the task at hand. The fact that stereotype threat is such a strong negative predictor for female performance highlights how distractive ruminations created by sexism undermine women's functioning at work.

Wood (2012) suggests that one strategy to counter this sexism is to institute a 'no just joking' policy, in which "anyone who hears a sexist remark would be expected to point it out". In a similar vein, some workplaces have begun to look at the possibility of pro-social bystander training, in which both men and women are equipped to have the confidence to disrupt the social norms by which sexist comments and jokes go unremarked. See, for example, the work that is being done in Victoria by VicHealth (Powell 2011).

If, however, men do not believe or accept that they are being sexist, as Wood suggests, there may also be a place for an educative strategy that invites men to reflect on the way language functions to reinforce stereotyping and unequal power, or to explore the relative respectfulness of various situations. An educative process of this sort may form part of an existing process, such as anti-harassment and anti-bullying training, or exist as a stand alone training experience. For example, in the Y Respect Gender Project, based at YMCA Victoria, exercises to encourage reflection on the meaning of respect in the workplace were built into the annual refresher training required of all staff at one particular centre. Other options are to link this educative process with the organisational values, or to include it as part of the induction process.

### ***Disrupting the masculine status quo***

Workplace efforts to build gender equalities and prevent men's violence against women also must undermine established masculine norms and cultures. Men's sexist and unequal treatment of women is often understood to be part of the way men ensure they are seen as 'manly' enough by other men. Men consolidate their own bonds to each other and their own identity by casting women in the role of the 'other', the 'common enemy'. It follows then that another way to shift gender relations in the workplace is strategies that invite men to think about masculinity – and their own gender identity – in different ways.

Leadership styles are a particularly relevant area in this regard. The classical male workplace leader is a tough, take-no-nonsense, authoritarian character. He leads from the front, is careful not to show any weakness, and expects no dissent. Looking mainly to consolidate his own power, this leader consults minimally if at all, and is not interested in empowering other people. Working under such a leader, other men face considerable pressure to behave in stereotypically masculine ways if they are to keep favour. Alternative models of leadership that operate in opposite ways to the above caricature may create a space where men may feel less pressure about conforming. Such spaces then open up the possibility of treating women not as the 'other' but as true colleague and peer.

Other strategies to disrupt traditional masculine cultures in workplaces may take a more creative approach. In many parts of Australia a favourite office activity is the annual sports tipping competition. Notwithstanding that many women enjoy being part of these competitions, the sport that is involved in these activities is almost invariably sport played by men, and the competition thus reinforces the primacy of men's sports. Supplementing (or even replacing) the usual sport with one played by women may enable men to think differently about themselves.

Men reinforce masculinity not just by denigrating women, but also by denigrating men who do not fit the unspoken masculine standard, particularly gay and bisexual men, but also men whose behaviour is outside traditional masculine norms. Therefore, another strategy to disrupt the status quo is for the workplace to actively promote a strong culture of diversity and to have a zero tolerance for homophobic comments and behaviour.

### ***Educating male professionals***

A further way in which men have been engaged in violence prevention in workplaces is in terms of their occupational or professional roles. Various training programs seek to increase individual men's (and women's) abilities to prevent or reduce violence through their roles as doctors, teachers, carers, police, child care workers, judges, and so on. Such professionals can play an important role in transmitting information, skills, and motivation to clients, community members, and colleagues, and they can be effective advocates for prevention policies (Davis *et al.* 2006).

There are a small number of initiatives which engage male professionals in workplaces in fostering gender equality or non-violence. For example, in Pakistan, an NGO called Rozan has run gender violence sensitisation workshops with police in order to transform the way that the institution thinks about and responds to violence against women (Lang 2003: 11). In South and Central America, the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) has trained soccer coaches to promote adolescent health and introduce gender equity in relationships to boys ages 8 to 12 (Schueller *et al.* 2005: 3).

### ***Fostering male advocates in the workplace***

Another strategy is to engage men in themselves advocating for change in their workplaces. Community mobilisation strategies are built on the recognition that we must not only educate men and women but also organise them for collective action (Greig and Peacock 2005). Engaging men in activism is vital in catalysing broader social change in social norms and power relations. In particular, it can facilitate engagement with structural factors and forces and put pressure on governments to take action (Institute of Development Studies 2008: 50).

Relatively little has been done to mobilise men in workplaces as advocates for social change towards gender equality. Nevertheless, organisations such as White Ribbon Australia have provided the rationale and resources for some workplaces to implement 'action teams' that have taken responsibility for organising events to mark White Ribbon Day and which have been the catalyst for rallying men in the workplace to commit themselves to 'never remaining silent about violence against women.' In some cases, this initial activity has led to more sustained activity throughout other parts of the year, and given weight to other initiatives such as gender equity policies and action plans. Local governments in Victoria have been particularly successful in using this approach. On the other hand, in many workplaces men's involvement has been limited, with the 'action teams' as much led by women as they are by men. Recognising this, a strong focus of the White Ribbon Australia Workplace Accreditation Program is to ensure that men understand that ending men's violence against women is as much the responsibility of men as it is of women. The program's criteria for accreditation include actively engaging men in all aspects of workplace initiatives to prevent violence.

### ***Involving men in shifting the structures and systems that produce inequality***

A final set of strategies to shift men's gender relations in the workplace are those which engage men in addressing the structures and systems that produce inequality and exclusion. While these will differ from workplace to workplace, there are some approaches which are common to most: countering unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion, conducting gender audits, setting targets for women's representation, and involving men in examining gendered interactions at work.

In recent years growing attention has been paid to the way unconscious bias (also known as implicit associations) affects the ways that we all make decisions (Genat, Wood and Sojo 2012). These include biases about gender roles, especially our biases about the suitability of women and men as leaders. Unconscious bias has been shown to have a particular impact on recruitment and promotion, with various studies showing how simply changing the name on a job application from female to male, without changing anything else about the application, increases the likelihood that the applicant will be interviewed. A range of interesting examples of this phenomenon can be found in the book *Delusions of Gender*, particularly chapter 5 (Fine 2010). Offering training for managers, male and female, in ways to counter the effect of unconscious bias (such as having job applications reviewed by a gender balanced team rather than one person) may enable men to think more deeply about the biases and assumptions that they carry with them both in the workplace and beyond (Ross 2008).

Gender audits are another way to expose men to the systemic nature of inequality and exclusion in the workplace. Such audits may include not just the numbers of women and men occupying roles in the workplace, but also a gender audit of the policies and procedures, of the programs being offered, and of the facilities themselves. In Australia, non-government organisations with over 100 employees are required under the Workplace Gender Equality Agency Act to conduct an audit of their staffing profile each year and report this to the agency. Organisations must also make this report available to all their staff, and demonstrate the ways in which they have done so. This audit can be a powerful tool to expose men to the lack of equality that continues to exist in the average Australian workplace.

In a similar vein, more and more workplaces are moving to include some sort of target for women's leadership representation as part of the key performance indicators of their senior staff. Such targets ensure that the lack of women in leadership remains front and central for these staff in their day to day work. For further information on the issue of targets, and a comparison with using quotas, see both Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2013, and Whelan & Wood 2012.

A final strategy is to engage men in an examination of the processes and habits that govern the way men and women interact in the more formal workplace practices. Do meetings have a rotating chair to ensure that it is not always men who are in the chair? Is there a formal process that ensures everyone has a voice at meetings? Is there a policy that ensures consultation groups contain a balanced mix of genders? Do meetings coincide with the times parents may be dropping off or picking up children from school? The habitual nature of many of these practices masks the ways that women's voices and perceptions are excluded from workplace decision-making. By engaging men in an examination of these patterns, men are challenged to face their own complicity in reinforcing inequality and exclusion.

Prevention efforts may also seek to change entire workplaces, organisations, and organisational practices overall (Davis *et al.* 2006: 12). This level of prevention embodies the recognition that workplaces and other organisations can play key roles in building non-violent internal cultures and in fostering wider social change.

There are very few primary prevention initiatives which engage men in workplaces in organisational change. However, Victoria provides an example of a recent violence prevention project which at least aspired to generate organisational change. This was called *Stand Up: Domestic Violence is Everyone's Business*, and run by the Melbourne-based NGO Women's Health Victoria. This workplace program aimed to strengthen the organisational capacity of a male-dominated workplace to promote gender equality and non-violent norms (Durey 2011: 6). The program took place over 2007-2011 with the trucking company Linfox. It focused in particular on building the capacity of employees, particularly men, to challenge violence-supportive attitudes and behaviours. The project began with training for employees, focused on bystander intervention, and was extended with engagement with the company at other levels including the development of domestic violence policies. However, the project faced significant institutional barriers and its impact was uneven. The training itself was limited in duration, and there were limits to the whole-of-company engagement in and support for the project. The report on this project illustrates the wider truth that deliberate culture change in workplaces is complex, takes time, requires leadership, and ultimately, can be difficult to achieve (Durey 2011: 74). The project has since been followed by a guide to developing workplace programs for the primary prevention of violence against women (Women's Health Victoria 2012).

Two other primary prevention initiatives are being implemented as pilot projects at the time of writing of this report. These are the White Ribbon Australia Workplace Accreditation Program (described earlier in this report) and the Y Respect Gender Project, based at YMCA Victoria and funded under VicHealth's *Creating Healthy Workplaces Program*. Both emphasise the importance of cultural transformation with regard to gender equity and respectful relationships.

### ***Men's work in the home***

A final way in which workplaces can make a difference to gender relations is by encouraging men *out of* the paid workforce – by encouraging men to spend less time at work and more time at home. Until men's commitment to domestic duties – including care of children and elderly relatives – is equivalent to that of women, men will always maintain an economic advantage. A small number of community based strategies to encourage men to become more involved in domestic duties are beginning to appear, such as the international MenCare campaign (MenCare 2010). How can workplaces shift men's ideas about the place of work in their lives?

One place to start is the language that is used about this very issue. The most common expression in this regard is work/life balance. This seemingly simple phrase represents a typically masculine approach to work, in which work and everything that is non-work (life) are on opposite sides of the scale. Work/life balance does not encourage men (or, for that matter, women) to understand work as one facet of the totality of life, but implies that work and everything that is non-work are separate worlds that are in constant competition for our time and attention. Alternative phrases, such as life-friendly work, recast the relationship as one of cooperation rather than competition and create the possibility of exploring the role of work in new ways.

Another significant factor is the role of flexible working conditions. Although these are present in employer agreements as available for both women and men, the evidence suggests that they are used more by women. For example, one recent report indicated that requests for flexible work arrangements came from 43.0 percent of eligible women (mothers with pre-schoolers) compared to 19.8 percent of eligible men (Skinner, Hutchinson and Pocock 2012). Moreover, men (and women) continue to report using these arrangements less than they would like because of anxiety that their use of flexible work arrangements will jeopardize their employment status (Australian Council of Trade Unions 2013). Men may also resist any arrangements that are not full time because of the perceived loss of status and power. This suggests that there needs to be a reframing of the place of flexibility in the workplace, particularly for men. Rather than seen as an 'option' that is available to solve a temporary problem (such as a sick child), flexibility needs to be reimagined as a primary way of creating a lifestyle that promotes gender equality and well-being. Including a statement about flexibility in position descriptions, and reviewing flexibility in work patterns as part of annual performance appraisals, are some ways of doing this work of reimagining. More suggestions can be found in the Diversity Council of Australia Report, *Men Get Flexible!* (Russell 2012).

At a more subtle level, workplaces can assist men to think about their commitment to home life by paying attention to the content of workplace communications and interactions. Do workplace magazines contain stories of men working from home? Do they include information pertinent to the concerns of parents, such as how to choose a childcare centre for your child to attend? Are the images used in work publications always of men in business clothes, or do they also show men in casual clothes, men with children or elderly parents? Are there work functions that are family friendly? Are men encouraged to have photos of their family, partner, or hobbies at their desk? Workplaces in some instances have been used to engage men in family and parenting services. In Ballarat for example, Child and Family Services Ballarat takes its family relationships services, including material on family violence, to men in the local factories (VCCAV 2004: 18-19).

Finally, the importance of the modeling that is offered by senior men cannot be underestimated. If men only ever see their managers working long hours, they will find it difficult to practice different options for themselves.

One significant global campaign to involve men in parenting is MenCare. This promotes men's involvement as equitable, responsive and non-violent fathers and caregivers. The campaign is coordinated by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke) in collaboration with the MenEngage Alliance. Using media, program development, and advocacy, the campaign works at multiple levels to engage men as caregivers and as fathers: engaging men as participants in fathers' groups, advocating for progressive family legislation, and encouraging institutions to see engaging men as caregivers as a key dimension of gender equality. The campaign is described as having a preventative effect on men's violence against women by encouraging fathers to treat mothers with respect and care, diminishing the corporal punishment which feeds into cycles of family violence, involving fathers in preventing sexual violence against children, and contributing to boys' adoption of peaceful and progressive masculinities and girls' empowerment (MenCare 2010).

There are many ways in which workplaces can begin to shift men's gender relations and establish new patterns and expectations of gender equality and respect. The emergence of efforts to implement this shift in specific male-dominated industries is a positive sign of the growing importance of this work (Australian Human Rights Commission 2013). The key to the strategies discussed above is that they are all about asking men to take responsibility for the way that traditional masculinity has worked to reinforce privileges for men (such as economic and political privilege) while denying such opportunities to women. Much of this has happened in the workplace. It is only when the systems which reinforce the privilege and power of men are dismantled that equality between women and men will be a reality. While there is much to be gained in letting go of privilege and power, the letting go is never easy. How can workplaces engage men – particular men who are leaders – to take up this challenge?

## **Section 5: Engaging male leaders in addressing gender equality: challenges and opportunities**

Workplace-based efforts to engage men in the prevention of men's violence against women include attention to male *leaders*. Many of the business and public institutions in which work takes place are led by men, and engaging them is vital. In some ways, these men are symbolic of stereotypical masculinity – their privilege, power and influence, financial rewards, and public esteem mark them out as the big winners of the system. As such, they have the most to lose if the system is changed. What, then, are the challenges and opportunities in working with male leaders in the workplace?

### ***Leadership and organisational change***

When an organisation commits itself to increasing capacity to address gender equality, it will be embarking on a process of organisational change. As has been made clear throughout this report, the extent to which both organisations and work itself have been gendered spaces, means that the changes required to address this inequality will, in most cases, be extensive. They will include changes to practices and procedures, to policy, and the workplace culture itself.

There are a range of models of how organisational change can be affected. Common to all of them is the importance of leadership commitment to the change – of getting 'buy-in' from the senior leaders. This was the experience for example of CEO Challenge, a Brisbane initiative which aims to raise awareness of family violence as a social issue in the business sector. Their access to and involvement with workplaces depended on having a personal 'in', an individual within the business who is willing to promote the idea of men's violence against women as a workplace issue and to negotiate involvement (VCCAV 2004: 16).

Change models assume that 'buy-in' will be achieved because the leaders will be convinced that changes that benefit the organisation will also benefit themselves as the organisation's leaders. But in the case of changes that address gender inequality this assumption is particularly vulnerable. While it is true that dismantling male privilege and power requires all men to relinquish the benefits they have received from that privilege and power, for male leaders in the workplace this relinquishment is further burdened by being a highly public process. As well, these are men for whom male privilege has become entwined with their professional persona and character. Thus, achieving the leadership 'buy-in' that organisational change models advocate has enormous challenges.

The symptoms of this challenge vary in severity. At one end of the spectrum – and possibly becoming rarer – is outright hostility to the idea that women have a place in the boardroom or in the executive. More common is passive resistance – an acknowledgement that there is a problem, but without a genuine commitment to do something about it. Commonly, men (and often women) will appeal to the importance of merit, citing that nobody – least of all women – would want to be in a position only to fulfil a quota or target. Such appeals invariably fail to acknowledge the barriers that women face in the workplace, and the point that targets and quotas are designed to address inequity rather than diminish merit. Other symptoms of this challenge include arguments based on gender essentialist attitudes – for instance, that women are much better parents than men and shouldn't aspire to careers – and on suggestions that women are themselves to blame for their lack of career zeal and commitment. Common to all these reactions is a reluctance to face the uncomfortable truth that gender inequality in the workplace (and, of course, everywhere else) is a phenomenon that has benefited men and which men must take responsibility to change. How, then, can male workplace leaders be empowered to engage with this responsibility?

## ***Champions and catalysts***

One strategy is to identify a small number of leaders who can offer leadership on this issue amongst the other leaders. Often referred to as champions,<sup>2</sup> or early adopters, these men will ideally be ones who already have respect and influence in their workplace, and who have the confidence to be identified with the gender equity cause. Because of their influence, they are able to be catalysts for discussion and awareness raising, which in turn can lead to formal actions resulting in organisational change.

How can such men be identified? A 2009 report published by Catalyst<sup>3</sup> sought to gain some insight into what such champions of change might look like. It identified three characteristics that enabled men to have a higher awareness of gender bias and therefore greater potential to advocate for gender equality (Moss-Racusin 2009):

- Defiance of some masculine norms
- Having female mentors
- A strong sense of fair play

As well as men with these characteristics, there are also men who have been personally affected by men's violence against women, most often because of acts committed against their female relatives or friends, but also occasionally as perpetrators who have come to see their behaviour in a new light. While such men may be willing and committed to ending men's violence against women, they may not necessarily understand the importance of addressing gender inequity, and they may unwittingly reinforce the drivers of gender inequality by adopting change strategies that are themselves based on male power and privilege.

Further, the current scarcity of men (relative to the numbers of women) who are prepared to be publicly vocal as change leaders can draw attention to these men in ways which may further act to silence and marginalise women.

This highlights the need for all potential workplace champions to receive training and ongoing support. Unfortunately, training opportunities specifically tailored to male leaders are, at present, few and far between. One example is the Preventing Violence Against Women Leaders Course, a three-hour workshop developed and offered by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) in Melbourne.

Where no potential champions can be identified, the characteristics of potential gender equity champions highlighted by the Catalyst Report may themselves provide a useful starting point. Actions which encourage male workplace leaders to engage women mentors, identifying ways in which they might defy some of the masculine norms of the workplace, and focus on fair play, may be the beginning for some of them to start to question the social constructs and attitudes which maintain gender inequality.

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<sup>2</sup> This term is perhaps problematic as it reinforces the competitive nature of stereotypical masculinity; however, no other term has emerged to replace it.

<sup>3</sup> Catalyst is an American organization focused on expanding opportunities for women and business

Across Australia, the increasing focus on preventing men's violence against women has seen the emergence of some networks dedicated to supporting and encouraging male champions. One example is Male Champions of Change (MCC), a collaborative initiative of corporate and institutional leaders convened by Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission. As Wells *et al.* (2013: 24) describes,

MCC has a broad mandate of promoting and inspiring women's leadership in the workplace but includes a specific objective to address violence in the workplace. The initiative includes CEOs and board members from corporations who are leading efforts to address women's equality in the workplace. MCC highlights three incremental steps in achieving gender equality in the workplace: promote organisational interest and work to remove barriers and challenges; shift from policy to practice and implementation, ensuring commitment and buy-in across all levels of leadership and front line; and be a driving force for true culture change within an organisation where a culture of inclusive leadership is emphasized [...]. This initiative helps to advance the point that men and women can work together to promote greater equality and safety in the workplace and in society.

By highlighting the strategies they have led in their organisations to increase women's representation and leadership, these men offer incentive to other leaders to champion such strategies as well<sup>4</sup>.

### ***Managers and masculinity***

At the heart of the challenge to engage male workplace leaders as agents of change in their workplaces lies the issue of management and masculinity. The paradigm of 'think manager, think male' continues to pervade out culture and is one reason why the glass ceiling is so firmly in place. If workplaces are to become leading players in the pursuit of gender equality then it will take more than just having a few champions in the workplace. It will take a rethink of the way that the theory and practice of management itself is aligned with the performance of dominant styles of masculinity. Collinson and Hearn (1996 : 3) argued that in the 1990s a central criterion for the evaluation of managers' performance was "the masculinist concern with personal power and the ability to control others and self". They noted that:

Such masculine discourses are also embedded in conventional managerial language which is frequently gendered, for example both in terms of highly (hetero)sexualized talk about 'penetrating markets' and 'getting into bed with suppliers/customers/competitors', and in the extensive use of sporting metaphors and sexual joking in making sense of and rationalizing managerial decisions and practices.

Many women would argue that very little has changed in the years since, and that the dominance of this style of management is one reason why women themselves do not choose to put themselves forward for senior management roles. As stated in a more recent report (Barr 2013), "one of the big hurdles women face is working in boys' clubs or battling testosterone style leadership; they will walk away every time."

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<sup>4</sup> The Committee for Economic Development of Australia has also been doing some excellent work through their Women in Leadership series.

Recent years have seen a steady trend toward management styles that have a greater focus on what have been traditionally understood as feminine skills – empathy, teamwork, consultation, process rather than outcome, empowering others. However, rarely, if at all, is it acknowledged that for male managers to adjust their style in this way is to set up a conflict between their performance as managers and their performance of masculinity. Without this acknowledgment, and the acquisition of skills to work through this conflict, it is unlikely that we will see substantial changes in the gendered nature of management. How might this happen in the workplace?

One interesting example is the *Walk the Talk* program developed by AB Volvo, and running since 1998. In this program selected managers meet for 15 days over the course of a year and engage in a variety of processes to enable them to reflect on gender and leadership issues. These processes include:

- Leadership development
- Personal reflections and discussions
- Theory and research
- Directed literature studies (fiction)
- Meetings and discussions with courageous male role models
- Reverse mentoring with women managers.

What is notable about this approach is that it engages the whole person – the managers as men, as well as men as managers. By doing so, it hopefully enables the male managers to not simply shift their gender relations in the workplace, but in all aspects of their lives. It is this holistic approach that has the potential to enable these male managers to model a deeply transformative approach to gender equity in the workplace.

### ***Incentives to change***

Given the many barriers to engaging male leaders in the journey toward gender equality, what are the incentives that may assist men in overcoming those barriers? A particular question in this regard is whether a focus on ending men's violence against women is itself a beneficial or detrimental incentive. While gender inequality and rigid adherence to gender stereotypes have been identified as the social determinants of men's violence against women, this does not mean that strategies to address gender inequality must of necessity be linked to the aim of eliminating men's violence against women. Practitioners in the emerging sector of primary prevention of men's violence against women, including the co-author of this paper, report mixed experiences about this matter.

Attempting to engage male leaders as advocates for gender equity in the workplace without any reference to men's violence against women is most often a frustrating experience. The pervasive and normative nature of male privilege and power, whose symptoms in the workplace have been noted throughout this report, create a barrier of polite apathy and indifference. Statistics and stories about women's experience of violence can be a very powerful way of awakening men from this apathy and enlisting their support. However, there is no guarantee that this new interest – once awakened – will translate into an equal interest and commitment to gender equity in the workplace. Indeed, in some respects the focus on violence against women can have the opposite effect, by reinforcing in men the need to be 'protectors' of women, with such protection potentially including violent behaviour toward men who are perceived to be perpetrators.<sup>5</sup> As well, the long

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<sup>5</sup> Many responses to the murder of Jill Meagher in Melbourne in 2012 were indicative of this reaction, such as social media sites dedicated to getting rid of the 'bad' men in the community.

term nature of the strategies to change men's gender relations in the workplace can struggle to compete against the immediacy of the need to 'do something' about violence itself.

Complicating this is the complexity of articulating the connection between addressing gender equity in the workplace and eliminating men's violence against women in the community. It often seems far easier for men to take on board the notion that the causes of violence are personal and relational (exemplified particularly by the belief that alcoholism is the major cause of this violence) than it is that the causes are social and gendered. So far there is little evidence to guide workplaces in this matter. The two notable workplace based primary prevention programs, *Stand Up: Domestic Violence is Everyone's Business*, based at trucking company Linfox during 2007 – 2011, and the *Y Respect Gender Project* being run at YMCA Victoria from 2012 – 2015 have both incorporated information both about men's violence against women and gender equity.<sup>6</sup> And while there has been much research on strategies to improve women's representation in workplace leadership which are purely based on gender equity (such as setting targets or quotas), the focus of this research has always been either on the quantitative data or on the impact on the women themselves, and rarely on the impact of these strategies on male managers' commitment to gender equality. Information from the White Ribbon Australia Workplace Accreditation Program surveys and evaluation will be an important step in filling this gap.

Another incentive that is commonly used to encourage male workplace leaders to engage with gender equity strategies is the 'business case' – that increasing gender diversity will have a proven benefits to achieving the organisational goals, including profitability and retention of talent. While there is no doubt that this incentive has a strong appeal and is more readily sellable to both managers and boards, its focus on measures of profitability and financial success may distract attention from enabling a deeper shift in workplace gender relations.

Men's dominance over women has been a deeply engrained feature of almost all human cultures for hundreds of generations. Despite over a century of critique of that domination in Western society, it still remains invisible and unremarked upon in many ways. As Bob Pease notes in his book, *Undoing Privilege* (Pease 2012: 10)

Oppressed people are continually reminded of how their gender or their class or their race are sources of discrimination. As a result, they are likely to have a heightened consciousness of their oppression, whereas those privileged by prized statuses often remain blithely unaware of them.

In this light, the invitation to male workplace leaders to address their own privilege and be advocates for gender equity in the workplace and beyond, will be one that needs to be made time and time again, and with patience and perseverance.

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<sup>6</sup> *Y Respect Gender Project* has a strong gender equity focus, but at the time of writing is still being implemented and has not been evaluated. See the preliminary evidence review for further information. (VicHealth, 2011)

## Section 6: From workplace to the world

Men's violence against women is ubiquitous in our world. The increasing focus on the primary prevention of this violence is evidence of a growing determination by governments, community organisations, and individuals to address the problem at its roots. Only when the foundational conditions that allow this violence to flourish are changed can we hope to see a sustained reduction in the rates at which women are hurt – a system of male privilege and power, comprising structural inequalities, sexist social norms, and everyday patterns of privilege and disadvantage.

Work and the workplace is one sphere of our human world which contributes to the continuation of this patriarchal system. As argued in this report, ongoing patterns of workplace organisation and culture reinforce the unequal treatment of women and the unfair privileging of men. Despite women working outside the home in greater numbers than ever before, work and workplaces have been slow to show any signs of new perspectives on the role of work in the lives of women or men. Even the most simple adaptations are won at the cost of much debate, and many far from radical ideas fail to get off the ground.

Work is a vital way that most of us participate in the task of maintaining and growing the societies we live in and rely on. It provides the opportunity for many of us to share our talents and interests in the pursuit of the common good, and the growth of our common wealth. And because a sizeable part of this common good is the right for all people to live free from the fear of violence, work and workplaces *must* rise to the challenge of contributing to the prevention of men's violence against women. There is no excuse for any workplace to not be involved in this task. From the decisions made about working hours and flexibility, to the way that managers are recruited and developed, to the policies that determine the care of workers affected by domestic violence, and to the images that are used to sell products – in all these ways and more, workplaces have countless opportunities to choose either to reinforce the old ways of patriarchy, or to take the path to a fairer and violence-free world. Even the smallest private company can, for example, ensure that the language of its reports is free from any sexist overtones, or choose to deal primarily with other businesses that can demonstrate a strong commitment to gender equity, or include a statement of support for gender equality in its email signature. Addressing gender inequality is as much a matter of attending to the smallest details of our relationships and values as it is to the larger matters of social norms or industrial laws.

But these larger matters are also vital. Increasing globalisation, along with technological advances and the increasing consumerisation of society, means that organisations and their workplaces have a vast impact not only on workers and their families, but on whole communities and societies. The power of commercial advertising means that hundreds of brands and their logos are now recognizable by people of different languages and cultures in every corner of our planet. Computer programs record and analyse our use of the internet in order to tailor the products that are flashed before our eyes or appear on social media sites. This immense power to impact whole cultures brings both dangers and opportunities. How can it be harnessed to ensure that our society continues its slow journey along the path of equality, respect, and non-violence?<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the same creative and entrepreneurial energy which gave us the internet may be at least part of the answer to this question. Although the gendered nature of work and workplaces may be resistant to change, in other ways work has adapted to the changing contexts of our world. The work that many of us do, and the workplaces that we do it in, is very different to the work

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<sup>7</sup> At a national level, the emergence of social media driven organisations such as *Destroy The Joint* gives some clue about the potential positive harnessing of this power.

and workplaces of our grandparents, or even parents. What might happen if that same spirit of change was applied to the attitudes, systems and structures that currently prevent women from experiencing equality and respect in the workplace? What might happen, for example, if workplaces put a premium on employing men who wanted to work part time and stay home with their children part time? If the corporate world made *every day casual clothes day*, so that men could let go of obsessing about power and position? If all organisations of a certain size were required by law to have a breastfeeding room? If annual performance appraisals included the opportunity for both male and female staff to reflect on all of their life, not just the work part of it? If diversity targets were the rule and not the exception? If staff experiencing domestic violence were, without question, able to take the leave they need to care for themselves and their families?

The challenge for workplaces is not knowing what to do to prevent violence against women – it is finding the will to do it. The evidence is that the will of public organisations, governments and workplaces alike, to make progressive change is influenced in powerful ways by pressure for change. In particular, progress in policies, laws, and services regarding men's violence against women around the world has been influenced by the presence of organised women's movements. If workplaces are to contribute to the prevention and reduction of men's violence against women, then pressure for change by women *and* men both in and outside workplaces is vital.

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