

RESEARCH REPORT

# DFV Insights Reports

---

Domestic and Family Violence in the Australian Workplace

**June 2026**

Prepared by WorkHaven



## 1. Purpose and Audience

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is often not a private matter that stays at home. It follows people into their workplaces. It can affect their concentration, performance, relationships with colleagues and, in some cases, their physical safety at work. For employers, it is not simply an issue that might impact a person's time and experience at work - it is a workplace issue, and one that Australian law now formally recognises as such.

DFV affects over one in four women (27%) and over one in eight men (12%) in Australia since the age of 15.<sup>1</sup> For intimate partner violence specifically, the figures are 1 in 4 women (23%) and 1 in 14 men (7.3%) (ABS Personal Safety Survey 2021–22, cited in AIHW 2026). Over 60% of women currently experiencing violence remain in employment, meaning this is an issue that is highly likely to present in Australian workplaces.<sup>2</sup> Employers need to be equipped to provide relevant and effective support for their workers.

This report has been produced by WorkHaven in response to a clear and urgent need. While awareness of DFV as a workplace issue is growing, many organisations still lack the practical, evidence-informed guidance they need to move from good intentions to meaningful action. Many workplaces have provisions and policies available but fail to communicate them to employees or provide information on how to access them. Leaders want to help but may not know what to say or how to approach this sensitive topic. Workplaces may focus their approach to support by connecting employees to Employee Assistance Program (EAP) yet overlook possible pathways to safety and support through specialist DFV services. These issues and others outlined in this report create a gap between what many workplaces currently provide and what would enable safe and effective support for people affected by DFV.

---

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023). Personal Safety Survey, Australia 2021–22. ABS. Cited in Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2026). Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia. Available at [www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence](http://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence)

<sup>2</sup> Summers, A., Shortridge, T. and Sobek, K. (2025). The Cost of Domestic Violence to Women's Employment and Education. University of Technology Sydney. Available at [https://figshare.uts.edu.au/articles/report/The\\_Cost\\_of\\_Domestic\\_Violence\\_to\\_Women\\_s\\_Employment\\_and\\_Education/28489736](https://figshare.uts.edu.au/articles/report/The_Cost_of_Domestic_Violence_to_Women_s_Employment_and_Education/28489736)

## 1.1 What this report does

This DFV Insights report draws on direct consultation with business and community leaders across Australia, WorkHaven's in-depth experience spanning more than six years of specialist workplace DFV work, and the broader research and legislative landscape. Together, these sources provide a comprehensive picture of where Australian workplaces currently stand, what is working, where the most significant barriers lie, and what practical steps organisations of all sizes and sectors can take to strengthen their response.

The report presents findings across four core dimensions:

- the measures and resources currently in place
- the organisational culture and leadership approaches that shape how DFV is addressed
- the challenges that most commonly prevent progress
- the opportunities that evidence and experience show are most likely to drive lasting change.

## 1.2 Who this report is for

This report has been written for multiple audiences, each of whom will find different sections most relevant to their role.

**For Queensland Government stakeholders and funding bodies:** the Executive Summary and Recommendations Framework provide a clear, evidence-based case to add to existing approaches to DFV in the workplace. A standalone Government Focused Brief is also available as a condensed companion document.

**For industry bodies, peak organisations, and sector leaders:** the findings on current practice, challenges, and opportunities provide a benchmark for workplaces and a framework to support them.

**For HR professionals, People and Culture leaders, and workplace health and safety practitioners:** the practical findings and recommendations across the report provide directly applicable guidance on policy, training, communication, and support infrastructure.

---

**For organisational leaders and business owners:** this report makes the case in plain language and grounded in the experience of peers across sectors, for why DFV belongs on the leadership agenda and what it looks like in practice to take it seriously.

### 1.3 How the findings will be shared

---

The findings of this report will be distributed to the Queensland Government and key industry stakeholders, published on the WorkHaven website as a freely downloadable resource, and promoted through LinkedIn and WorkHaven's broader networks.

New and updated tools, resources, and training programs have also been developed in response to the research outcomes, ensuring that this report is a catalyst for action as well as a helpful body of research.

### 1.4 A note on how to read this report

---

This report is designed to be useful whether you read it from beginning to end or navigate directly to the sections most relevant to your organisation. Cross-references throughout will help connect findings to recommendations, and the case examples in Section 15 bring the data to life with practical illustration.

All participants who contributed to this research are de-identified. Findings are presented thematically to reflect collective insight rather than to identify any individual or organisation.

## 2. Project Outcomes and Measurements

This project was designed to deliver a specific and measurable set of outcomes for employers, and the broader community response to DFV. The following outcomes guided the project from the outset and provided the framework for assessing impact.

### **Research Participation**

Consultations were conducted with organisations across healthcare, financial services, government, higher education, aviation, energy, community services, and transport, with representation from both metropolitan and regional areas across Australian states and territories. These insights included larger organisations and small businesses.

### **Report Delivery**

The primary deliverable is this comprehensive, evidence-based report integrating qualitative consultation data, quantitative survey findings, WorkHaven practitioner insights, and a review of current Australian and international research.

### **Webinar Series**

Two employer-focused webinars were delivered in June 2026 to present the findings and support the implementation of the recommendations.

### **Guidance for workplaces**

The aim of this report is to guide workplaces to implement or enhance their own DFV prevention, support, and awareness resources.

### 3. Table of Contents

1. Purpose and Audience.....	2
1.1 What this report does .....	3
1.2 Who this report is for .....	3
1.3 How the findings will be shared .....	4
1.4 A note on how to read this report .....	4
2. Project Outcomes and Measurements.....	5
3. Table of Contents .....	6
4. Executive Summary.....	11
4.1 About This Research.....	11
4.2 Key Findings .....	13
4.2.1 Most workplaces have the basics on paper but not in practice.....	13
4.2.2 Manager capability is the most critical and most under-resourced gap.....	13
4.2.3 Culture and leadership are the most powerful enablers of change. ....	13
4.2.4 Small businesses are almost entirely unaddressed by current frameworks..	13
4.2.5 Measurement is virtually absent. ....	14
4.3 Critical Gaps Identified .....	15
4.4 Strategic Opportunities.....	15
4.5 Recommendations .....	16
5. Introduction and Context .....	17
5.1 The Role of Workplaces in Addressing DFV.....	17
5.2 The Australian Legislative and Policy Context.....	19
6. Literature Review and Existing Evidence Base.....	20
6.1 The Scale of the Problem: Prevalence and Economic Impact.....	20
6.2 What Makes Workplace Support Effective .....	24
6.3 Key Resources Reviewed .....	27
6.3.1 Fair Work Ombudsman - Small Business Employer Guide to Family and Domestic Violence <sup>33</sup> .....	27
6.3.2 Comcare - Regulatory Guide: Family and Domestic Violence at Work <sup>34</sup> .....	27
6.3.3 Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) - Family and Domestic Violence <sup>35</sup> .....	28
6.3.4 Safe Work Australia - Family and Domestic Violence Information Sheet <sup>36</sup> ....	28
6.3.5 Safe Work Australia - Model Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work <sup>37</sup> .....	29
6.3.6 Queensland Government - DFV Workplace Policy Guide <sup>38</sup> .....	29

6.4 Change the Story .....	30
7. DFV Insights Report - Research Objectives and Key Questions .....	31
7.1 Primary Research Objectives.....	31
7.2 Key Research Questions .....	31
7.3 Target Participant Groups .....	32
8. Methodology.....	33
8.1 Research Design .....	33
8.2 Participants .....	33
8.3 Ethical Considerations .....	33
8.4 Limitations .....	34
9. Employer Landscape: Current State of Practice .....	35
9.1 Introduction .....	35
9.1.1 Survey Findings: Respondent Profile .....	35
9.2 Policies and Leave Provisions.....	36
9.3 Employee Assistance Programs and Specialist Support .....	37
9.4 Intranet Resources and Information Hubs .....	37
9.5 Training and Education .....	38
9.6 Financial Support Measures .....	40
9.7 Awareness Campaigns and Community Engagement .....	40
9.8 Support for Customers and Clients .....	40
10. WorkHaven Practitioner Insights .....	42
10.1 Background.....	42
10.2 WorkHaven Practitioner Insights and Evidence.....	42
10.2.1 Standalone DFV Policies .....	43
10.2.2 Specialist Support Pathways Beyond EAP's .....	43
10.2.3 Equipping Leaders to Respond .....	43
10.2.4 Communication and Visibility of Support .....	44
10.2.5 Training and Awareness .....	44
10.2.6 Understanding Legislative Responsibilities .....	44
10.3 Key Principles for Workplace Responses to DFV .....	45
10.3.1 Multifaceted and Individually Centred Responses .....	45
10.3.2 Inclusive and Appropriate for All Genders.....	45
10.3.3 Supporting Both People Affected by Violence and People Using Violence ..	45
10.3.4 Balancing Formal and Informal Supports .....	45
10.3.5 Confidentiality and Discretion .....	46

10.3.6 Connected Communities and Partnerships .....	46
10.3.7 Support Across All Phases of DFV .....	46
11. Organisational Ethos and Leadership Approaches .....	48
11.1 A Person-Centered, Non-Judgmental Approach .....	48
11.2 Leadership Commitment .....	48
11.3 DFV as Part of a Broader Wellbeing and Inclusion Agenda .....	49
12. Key Challenges and Barriers .....	50
12.1 Stigma and Barriers to Disclosure .....	50
12.2 Leader Capability and Confidence .....	51
12.3 Low Uptake and Visibility .....	51
12.4 Addressing People Who Use Violence in the Workplace .....	52
12.5 Resourcing and Competing Priorities .....	53
12.6 Reaching Diverse and Dispersed Workforces .....	53
13. Opportunities and Enablers .....	54
13.1 Sustained Awareness and Communication .....	55
13.2 Building Leader Capability .....	55
13.3 Policy Strengthening and Expansion .....	55
13.4 Technology and Infrastructure .....	56
13.5 Community Partnerships and Sector Leadership .....	56
13.6 Engaging Men and Diverse Populations .....	56
13.7 Measurement and Continuous Improvement .....	57
14. Identified Gaps in Systems and Support .....	58
14.1 The Policy-to-Practice Gap .....	58
14.2 Inconsistent Implementation Across Teams and Managers .....	58
14.3 Insufficient Manager Capability and Confidence .....	58
14.4 Absence of Measurement and Evaluation .....	59
14.5 Gaps in Referral Pathways and Specialist Support .....	59
14.6 The Unmet Needs of Small Business .....	59
15. Case Examples and Practice Snapshots .....	60
15.1 Case Study 1: Supporting Leaders to Respond Safely and Confidently .....	60
15.2 Case Study 2: Building Awareness and Creating Visible Support Pathways .....	61
15.3 Case Study 3: Delivering Flexible and Individualised Support .....	63
15.4 Case Study 4: When a Policy Exists But Has Never Been Used .....	65
16. Implications for Government and Industry .....	67
16.1 Policy Implications for Government .....	67
16.2 Funding and Investment Priorities .....	67

16.3 Regulatory and Guidance Opportunities .....	68
16.4 The Role of Industry Bodies and Peak Organisations .....	68
16.5 Public/Private Partnerships .....	68
17. Recommendations .....	69
17.1 The What: Priority Actions .....	69
17.2 The Who: Responsibilities by Actor .....	70
17.2.1 Government.....	70
17.2.2 Industry Bodies and Peak Organisations .....	71
17.2.3 Employers .....	71
18. Conclusion .....	72
19. Appendices .....	74
20. Appendix A: Research Instruments .....	75
20.1 Interview Guide .....	75
20.1.1 Question 1 .....	75
20.1.2 Question 2 .....	76
20.1.3 Question 3 .....	76
20.1.4 Question 4 .....	76
20.1.5 Question 5 .....	77
20.2 Employer Survey.....	77
20.2.1 Section 1: About Your Organisation.....	77
20.2.2 Section 2: Your Organisation’s Current Approach.....	79
20.2.3 Section 3: Challenges and Opportunities .....	79
20.2.4 Section 4: Additional Information .....	80
21. Appendix B - Survey Data Tables .....	81
21.1 Table B.1 Industry Sector (Q1, n=19) .....	81
21.2 Table B.2 Organisation Size (Q2, n=19) .....	81
21.3 Table B.3 Respondent Role (Q3, n=19) .....	82
21.4 Table B.4 DFV Initiatives Beyond Legislated Leave (Q4, n=19) .....	82
21.5 Table B.5 Types of Support Provided (Q5, n=16, multiple response) .....	82
21.6 Table B.6 Key Challenges (Q7, n=18, multiple response).....	83
21.7 Table B.7 Opportunities for Improvement (Q8, n=19, multiple response).....	83
21.8 Methodology Note .....	83
22. Appendix C: Definitions and Terminology .....	84
22.1 Core DFV Terms.....	84
22.2 Workplace and Legislative Terms .....	87

---

22.3 Inclusion and Identity Terms .....	91
22.4 Organisational and Sector Terms .....	93
23. Appendix D: Literature Review Sources and Resources Reviewed.....	97
23.1 Group 1: Legal and WHS Guidance.....	97
23.2 Group 2: Employer Practice and Policy Resources.....	98
23.2.1 Group 3: Prevention Frameworks .....	99
23.3 Group 4: Cost, Economic Impact and Employment Research .....	99
23.4 Group 5: Effectiveness of Workplace DFV Programs.....	101
23.5 Group 6: Policy Development and Legislative Context .....	102
23.6 Group 7: International Resources and Toolkits .....	103
23.7 Group 8: Academic Framing and Field Overview.....	103

## 4. Executive Summary

### 4.1 About This Research

WorkHaven's DFV Insights Report is a comprehensive, evidence-based examination of how Australian workplaces are currently responding to DFV, where they are falling short, and what practical actions can drive meaningful change. The report draws on direct consultation with organisations across Australia representing diverse sectors, sizes, and geographic locations, alongside WorkHaven's own six years of specialist experience and a review of the existing Australian and international research landscape.

The research was motivated by a clear and pressing need. DFV is not only a profound human rights issue, but also a significant economic one. Research by Vodafone and KPMG estimates that approximately 80 million working women globally are affected by domestic abuse.<sup>3</sup> Dr Anne Summers' landmark Australian research demonstrates that DFV pushes approximately 50% of affected women into lower income brackets, with lasting damage to employment and earning capacity.<sup>4</sup> Australia's legislative framework governing workplace DFV response has strengthened considerably in recent years. Employers now have obligations under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth),<sup>5</sup> the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth and Qld),<sup>6</sup> and the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)<sup>7</sup> to support employees, manage psychosocial risks, and take proactive steps to prevent harm. Evidence from the 2024 Flinders University independent review of the paid DFV leave entitlement confirms that legislative intervention works when properly implemented. Of the workers who had taken paid family and domestic violence leave, 91% said it helped them maintain their income, and 89% said it helped them to retain their employment.<sup>8</sup> Yet the evidence consistently shows that most organisations are struggling to address this topic effectively and meaningfully. The gap between legal intent and lived practice remains significant in many workplaces, meaning that employees feel uncomfortable or unsafe disclosing if they are affected by DFV and are unable to make requests or receive necessary support.

<sup>3</sup> KPMG and Vodafone (2019). The Workplace Impacts of Domestic Violence and Abuse. Available at [https://assets.ctfassets.net/q7ob9vms4z5k/2ti8bXQTGgMNdTIUx0KyQN/ba1c0016c212aafacae7bf7425a16a4e/kpmg\\_report\\_workplace\\_impacts\\_of\\_domestic\\_violence\\_and\\_abuse.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/q7ob9vms4z5k/2ti8bXQTGgMNdTIUx0KyQN/ba1c0016c212aafacae7bf7425a16a4e/kpmg_report_workplace_impacts_of_domestic_violence_and_abuse.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Summers, A. (2022). The Choice: Violence or Poverty. UTS ePress, University of Technology Sydney. Available at Summers, A. (2022). The Choice: Violence or Poverty. University of Technology Sydney. Available at [https://assets.website-files.com/62b998c0c9af9f65bba26051/63228540ce74a60866ee4e98\\_TheChoice-violence-or-poverty-web.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/62b998c0c9af9f65bba26051/63228540ce74a60866ee4e98_TheChoice-violence-or-poverty-web.pdf)

---

<sup>5</sup> Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth). Available at [www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2009A00028](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2009A00028)

<sup>6</sup>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth). Available at [www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00305](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00305). See also Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld). Available at [www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2011-018](http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2011-018)

<sup>7</sup>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth). Available at [www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2023C00003](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2023C00003)

<sup>8</sup> Marmo, M., Seymour, K., Cebulla, A., Esmaili, H., Sinopoli, E., Richards, J. and Ibrahim, N. (2024). Independent Review of the Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Act 2022: Final Report. Flinders University, commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. Delivered to Government 30 August 2024, tabled in Parliament 9 October 2024. Available at [www.dewr.gov.au/workplace-relations-australia/consultations/paid-family-and-domestic-violence-leave-review](http://www.dewr.gov.au/workplace-relations-australia/consultations/paid-family-and-domestic-violence-leave-review)

## 4.2 Key Findings

### 4.2.1 Most workplaces have the basics on paper but not in practice.

While a growing number of larger organisations have DFV policies and leave provisions in place, formal policies remain the exception rather than the rule across the Australian employer landscape. Far fewer organisations still have the communication infrastructure, manager capability, or cultural conditions needed to make those provisions work in practice. Policies go uncommunicated, leave goes unused, and disclosures are often mishandled. The distance between what exists in a policy document and what happens when an employee needs help is the defining challenge of the current landscape.

### 4.2.2 Manager capability is the most critical and most under-resourced gap.

Managers are often the first point of contact when an employee discloses DFV. Many feel underprepared, uncertain, and anxious about responding. This research indicates this training is infrequent, may lack practical guidance, and often covers DFV only briefly within a broader program. The result is that an employee's experience of disclosure depends heavily on the individual manager they happen to have, rather than on a consistent, well-supported organisational process.

### 4.2.3 Culture and leadership are the most powerful enablers of change.

Across every organisation consulted, the presence of visible, committed senior leadership was consistently identified as the most significant enabler of an effective workplace DFV response. Where leaders actively champion DFV as a priority, organisations move faster, communicate more effectively, and create cultures in which employees feel safe seeking support. Furthermore, leadership support often enables greater organisational resources and financial investment into this topic. Where leadership is absent or passive, even well-designed policies fail to translate into practice.

### 4.2.4 Small businesses are almost entirely unaddressed by current frameworks.

Small businesses represent 97.3% of all Australian businesses and employ over 5 million people, 39% of the private-sector workforce.<sup>9</sup> Yet existing resources, guides, and training programs have predominantly been designed for medium to large organisations with dedicated HR capacity. Small employers can face distinct DFV challenges, including close personal relationships, limited support infrastructure, and the added complexity of managing disclosures in environments where most people know one another. While some small business owners navigate these situations with care and confidence, many do so without access to tailored guidance, specialist advice, or internal support structures

---

that larger organisations can draw on. Current frameworks, though valuable, offer limited guidance tailored to this cohort.

#### **4.2.5 Measurement is virtually absent.**

Very few organisations systematically measure the effectiveness of their DFV programs. Without measurement, organisations cannot identify what is working, justify continued investment, or demonstrate improvement over time. This absence of evaluation infrastructure is a significant barrier to sustaining progress at both the organisational and systems level.

---

<sup>9</sup>Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (2025). Small Business Counts. ASBFEO. Available at [www.asbfeo.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-12/Number%20of%20small%20businesses%20in%20Australia\\_Aug%202025.pdf](http://www.asbfeo.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-12/Number%20of%20small%20businesses%20in%20Australia_Aug%202025.pdf)

### 4.3 Critical Gaps Identified

To summarise, the research identified six critical gaps in which current workplace DFV responses are falling short and where targeted action is most needed.

- The policy-to-practice gap - good policies not translating into consistent, effective action
- Insufficient manager capability and confidence to respond to disclosures
- Low visibility of available support leading to chronic underutilisation of leave and other provisions
- Inadequate guidance and relevant support for small and medium businesses
- Limited referral pathways to specialist DFV services, particularly in regional and rural Queensland
- A gap in the systematic measurement of the DFV program effectiveness

### 4.4 Strategic Opportunities

Alongside the gaps, the research identified five significant opportunities where employers, industry bodies, and government can take meaningful action to strengthen workplace DFV response.

- Strong and growing employer appetite to do more, with leadership engagement identified as the highest-impact lever
- The positive duty framework (the legal obligation introduced under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)<sup>10</sup> requiring employers to proactively prevent harm rather than simply respond to it) creates a significant opportunity for systemic prevention rather than reactive response
- Industry-wide collaboration and communities of practice can reduce duplication and accelerate progress across sectors
- Technology and digital tools can extend the reach of DFV support to dispersed, remote, and shift-based workforces the right number after the changes
- Partnerships between employers and specialist DFV services can provide effective pathways to safety and support.

<sup>10</sup>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth), s 47C. Available at [www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2023C00003](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2023C00003)

---

## 4.5 Recommendations

---

The full recommendations framework is provided in Section 17 of this report. These recommendations are drawn from the outcomes of the one-on-one engagement and survey responses undertaken as part of this report, practitioner insights from WorkHaven, existing research and other current resources and information.

## 5. Introduction and Context

Australia's legislative framework governing workplace responses to DFV has changed significantly in recent years, and employer obligations are now broader and more explicit than ever before. Understanding that context, and the gap between what the law requires and what most workplaces are currently doing, is the foundation for everything that follows in this report.

### 5.1 The Role of Workplaces in Addressing DFV

Workplaces occupy a unique and important position in the broader DFV response landscape. For many people experiencing violence, work represents one of the few places where they have independence, economic security, and access to trusted relationships outside the home. This makes the workplace both a critical support platform and, in some circumstances, a site of ongoing risk where a perpetrator may make contact, issue threats or escalate controlling behaviour through workplace channels.

The scale of the issue is significant. In 2023–24, an average of 18 women per day were hospitalised due to DFV in Australia, and in 2024–25, 58 women and 15 men lost their lives at the hands of a current or former partner.<sup>11</sup> For women in employment, the consequences extend well beyond immediate safety: a 2025 UTS study found that women experiencing partner violence had a 5.3% lower employment rate, averaging 31 days off work following abuse, with young women facing a 9.1% reduction in full-time employment and a 9.7% reduction in university degree attainment.<sup>12</sup> DFV costs the Australian economy an estimated \$22 billion per year.<sup>13</sup>

Research consistently demonstrates that workplaces that respond effectively to DFV can make a meaningful difference to the safety and recovery of affected employees. Practical measures such as flexible work arrangements, safety planning, confidential leave provisions and connections to specialist support services can reduce risk, support stability, and in some cases, save lives.<sup>14</sup>

It is also important to acknowledge that workplaces may employ people who are using or have used DFV. Working hours and workplace resources can be misused to monitor, harass, or control a partner through repeated calls or messages, tracking location via work devices, or using work time to maintain coercive control. At the same time, the workplace occupies a uniquely trusted position in the life of a person using violence. Colleagues, managers, and HR professionals may notice warning signs before others do, and the

workplace relationship (built on consistency, accountability, and trust) can be a powerful lever for early intervention. With the right tools and support, workplaces can guide employees who are using violence toward recognition of their behaviour and connection with appropriate services, including behavioural change programs. Addressing DFV in the workplace, therefore, means responding to both those experiencing violence and those perpetrating it.

---

<sup>11</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2025). Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia. AIHW. Available at [www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence](http://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence). See also Our Watch (2025). Quick Facts. Available at [www.ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts)

<sup>12</sup> Summers, A., Shortridge, T. and Sobeck, K. (2025). The Cost of Domestic Violence to Women's Employment and Education. University of Technology Sydney. Available at [https://figshare.uts.edu.au/articles/report/The\\_Cost\\_of\\_Domestic\\_Violence\\_to\\_Women\\_s\\_Employment\\_and\\_Education/28489736](https://figshare.uts.edu.au/articles/report/The_Cost_of_Domestic_Violence_to_Women_s_Employment_and_Education/28489736)

<sup>13</sup> NSW Government (2023). Women's Opportunity Statement: Women's Safety. Available at [www.nsw.gov.au/womens-opportunity-statement/background/womens-safety](http://www.nsw.gov.au/womens-opportunity-statement/background/womens-safety)

<sup>14</sup> Giesbrecht, C.J. (2022). Toward an effective workplace response to intimate partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(3–4), 1158–1178. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520921865>. See also MacGregor, J.C.D., Oliver, C.L., MacQuarrie, B.J. and Wathen, C.N. (2021). Intimate partner violence and work: A scoping review of published research. *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 22(4), 717–727. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838019881746>

## 5.2 The Australian Legislative and Policy Context

Australia's legislative framework increasingly recognises DFV as a workplace issue and places formal obligations on employers.

National Employment Standards (NES): From 1 February 2023, all employees in the national workplace relations system, including casual employees, have access to 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave per year under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth).<sup>15</sup> This leave must not be identified as DFV leave on pay slips.

Work Health and Safety laws: Under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth) and corresponding state and territory legislation, employers have a duty to eliminate or minimise psychosocial risks in the workplace, so far as is reasonably practicable.<sup>16</sup> DFV is recognised as a source of psychosocial risk that affects the workplace and must be managed accordingly.

In some cases, issues of sexual harassment may overlap with DFV situations. Positive duty under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth): From December 2022, employers have a positive duty to take proactive steps to eliminate sexual harassment, sex-based harassment, and related unlawful conduct in connection with work.<sup>17</sup> This duty requires action before harm occurs, not only in response to it.

---

<sup>15</sup> Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth), s 106A. Available at [www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2009A00028](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2009A00028). See also Fair Work Ombudsman guidance on paid family and domestic violence leave at [www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/family-and-domestic-violence-leave](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/family-and-domestic-violence-leave)

<sup>16</sup> Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth), s 19. Available at [www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00305](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00305). See also Safe Work Australia (2023). Family and Domestic Violence Information Sheet. Available at [www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/family-and-domestic-violence-at-work\\_infosheet\\_dec2023.pdf](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/family-and-domestic-violence-at-work_infosheet_dec2023.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth), s 47C. Available at [www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2023C00003](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2023C00003). See also Australian Human Rights Commission guidance on positive duty at [www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/projects/positive-duty-under-sex-discrimination-act](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/projects/positive-duty-under-sex-discrimination-act)

## 6. Literature Review and Existing Evidence Base

As part of this report, WorkHaven reviewed the existing body of resources addressing DFV in the workplace context. A range of guidance materials has been developed by government agencies, peak bodies, and specialist organisations, collectively providing a foundation across four key themes.

- **Practical guidance:** Employers are encouraged to develop clear policies and training programs to support employees affected by DFV, ensuring a prepared, private, and supportive environment.
- **Risk management:** DFV is framed as a workplace health and safety issue requiring structured risk management, including identifying hazards, assessing risks, and implementing controls.
- **Support systems:** Resources highlight the importance of consultation with employees and the need for practical support measures such as leave provisions and access to external help.
- **Policy development:** Guidance on creating effective DFV policies is provided through case studies and legislative overviews to assist organisations in refining their approaches.

While these resources represent an important starting point, the research undertaken for this report consistently found that they are often not reaching the employers who need them most. Existing guidance tends to be designed for medium to large organisations with dedicated HR capacity, is not widely promoted or actively disseminated, and rarely addresses the specific contexts of small businesses or regional and rural workforces. The gap is not simply one of awareness, it is one of relevance, accessibility, and reach.

The full annotated bibliography of resources reviewed is provided in Appendix D.

### 6.1 The Scale of the Problem: Prevalence and Economic Impact

Understanding the scale of DFV in Australia is essential context for any workplace response. DFV affects over one in four women (27%) and over one in eight men (12%) in Australia since the age of 15. For intimate partner violence specifically, the figures are 1 in 4 women (23%) and 1 in 14 men (7.3%) (ABS Personal Safety Survey 2021–22, cited in AIHW 2026).<sup>18</sup>

The physical toll is significant. In 2023–24, half of all hospitalisations involving treatment for assault were due to family and domestic violence, with 76% of those hospitalisations being for females (AIHW, 2025). In 2024–25, 67% of all female domestic homicide victims were killed by an intimate partner (AIC, 2026). Almost half (49%) of all homicide and violence burden among females was attributable to intimate partner violence in 2024 (AIHW Australian Burden of Disease Study, 2024).<sup>19</sup>

### **The Economic Cost to Employers**

The economic consequences of DFV extend well beyond individual harm and into the workplace. Updated modelling cited in the NSW Government Women's Opportunity Statement (2023) estimates that DFV now costs the Australian economy \$22 billion per year, with sexual harassment adding a further \$3.5 billion. Research commissioned by Vodafone and KPMG estimates that approximately 80 million working women globally are affected by domestic abuse, representing a significant and largely unmeasured cost to business productivity worldwide.

For employers specifically, a 2025 peer-reviewed study in The Economic and Labour Relations Review estimated the total annual cost of providing 10 days of paid DFV leave to award-covered employees at between \$13.1 million and \$34.3 million nationally, a modest figure relative to the \$22 billion annual economic cost and one that directly counters the argument that DFV leave is prohibitively costly for employers (Cassells, Duncan, Hailemariam and Mavisakalyan, 2025).<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023). Personal Safety Survey, Australia 2021–22. ABS. Cited in Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2026). Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia. Available at [www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence](http://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence)

<sup>19</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2025). Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia. Available at [www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence](http://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence). See also Australian Institute of Criminology (2026). Domestic Homicide in Australia. Available at [www.aic.gov.au](http://www.aic.gov.au). See also Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024). Australian Burden of Disease Study 2024. Available at [www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/australian-burden-of-disease-study-2024](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/australian-burden-of-disease-study-2024)

<sup>20</sup> NSW Government (2023). Women's Opportunity Statement: Women's Safety. Available at [www.nsw.gov.au/womens-opportunity-statement/background/womens-safety](http://www.nsw.gov.au/womens-opportunity-statement/background/womens-safety)

<sup>21</sup> KPMG and Vodafone (2019). The Workplace Impacts of Domestic Violence and Abuse. Available at [https://assets.ctfassets.net/q70b9vms4z5k/2ti8bXQTGgMNdTIUx0KyQN/ba1c0016c212aafacae7bf7425a16a4e/kpmg\\_report\\_workplace\\_impacts\\_of\\_domestic\\_violence\\_and\\_abuse.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/q70b9vms4z5k/2ti8bXQTGgMNdTIUx0KyQN/ba1c0016c212aafacae7bf7425a16a4e/kpmg_report_workplace_impacts_of_domestic_violence_and_abuse.pdf)

---

<sup>22</sup> Cassells, R., Duncan, A., Hailemariam, A. and Mavisakalyan, A. (2025). Workplace policy responses to family and domestic violence: Assessing employers' costs and benefits of providing 10 days paid leave. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, Vol. 36, Issue 2. Available at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-economic-and-labour-relations-review>

---

## The Employment and Education Impact

The most comprehensive Australian research on DFV's impact on women's employment was published in February 2025 by Professor Anne Summers AO, Thomas Shortridge and Kristen Sobeck at the University of Technology Sydney. This report quantifies the employment and education gap between women who have and have not experienced domestic violence, using current national data, for the first time.<sup>23</sup>

In 2021–22, women who had experienced partner violence or abuse in the past five years had a 5.3% lower employment rate than those who had not, a gap that widens to 9.4% for women experiencing economic abuse specifically. For young women, the consequences extend into education: domestic violence reduces rates of full-time employment by 9.1% and university degree attainment by 9.7%, with lasting implications for lifetime earning capacity.<sup>23</sup>

The impact is also immediate and operational. Nearly 35% of women who were working when they experienced domestic violence took time off work, averaging 31 days absent following the abuse. In 2021–22, more than 704,000 women aged 18 to 64 were experiencing partner violence while in employment. A further 451,000 had a previous partner who had controlled or tried to control them from working or earning money, directly suppressing workforce participation.<sup>23</sup>

Earlier research by Dr Anne Summers (*The Choice: Violence or Poverty*, 2022) established that DFV pushes approximately 50% of affected women into lower income brackets.<sup>24</sup> Showalter and McCloskey (2021) further document how DFV causes job loss and employment instability across a range of workplace contexts.<sup>25</sup> Together, this body of evidence makes clear case for employer intervention.

---

<sup>23</sup> Summers, A., Shortridge, T. and Sobeck, K. (2025). *The Cost of Domestic Violence to Women's Employment and Education*. University of Technology Sydney. Available at

[https://figshare.uts.edu.au/articles/report/The\\_Cost\\_of\\_Domestic\\_Violence\\_to\\_Women\\_s\\_Employment\\_and\\_Education/28489736](https://figshare.uts.edu.au/articles/report/The_Cost_of_Domestic_Violence_to_Women_s_Employment_and_Education/28489736)

<sup>24</sup> Summers, A. (2022). *The Choice: Violence or Poverty*. University of Technology Sydney. Available at

<https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/handle/10453/158339>

<sup>25</sup> Showalter, K. and McCloskey, R.J. (2021). Employers' perceptions of intimate partner violence among a diverse workforce. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(23–24). Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520903140>

---

## The Role of Leave Entitlements

A Department of Social Services and Flinders University review (2024/25) provides evidence that Australia's paid DFV leave entitlement, introduced under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) from February 2023, is working, increasing uptake and reducing financial barriers to seeking support.<sup>26</sup> This confirms that legislative intervention translates into measurable change when employers implement and communicate it effectively.

### 6.2 What Makes Workplace Support Effective

---

A growing body of Australian and international research identifies the specific conditions under which workplace DFV programs are most effective. This evidence base directly informs the recommendations in this report.

**Victim-survivor experience of workplace support:** Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner and McNicol (2023) studied how victim-survivors experience DFV leave and workplace support in practice, identifying the specific features, including non-judgement, confidentiality, and manager capability, that make workplace support feel safe and accessible.<sup>27</sup> This study is directly relevant to the findings in Section 12 on organisational ethos and the factors that enable disclosure.

**What works in prevention programs:** Sarpy et al. (2022) evaluated the Community, Respect and Equality (CRE) project, a workplace-focused primary prevention initiative in Geraldton, Western Australia, aimed at changing harmful social norms that enable DFV. Critically, the evaluation found that the project had largely failed to permeate workplace culture due to ineffective promotion, perceived low benefits, and limited resources.<sup>28</sup> This finding is directly relevant to this report as it is not enough for a DFV program to exist on paper - it must be actively communicated, resourced and embedded into workplace culture to have any impact. The parallels with the policy-to-practice gap identified in our own research are clear.

Woods et al. (2023) conducted an online survey of local community perspectives on DFV in outer regional Australia, finding that national surveys may not capture community-level diversity in attitudes and knowledge. The study reinforced that traditional gender values disempowering women are a principal driver of violence, and that locally targeted prevention messaging is needed to address community-specific attitudes.<sup>29</sup> For this report, the implication is significant: a one-size-fits-all approach to workplace DFV

programs is unlikely to be effective, particularly in regional and rural contexts where attitudes and available services differ markedly from metropolitan areas.

**Leadership and HR practices:** Chan-Serafin, Sanders, Wang and Restubog (2023) found that organisations where women hold leadership roles adopt significantly more DFV-supportive HR practices.<sup>30</sup> This is one of the most directly actionable findings in international literature: increasing women's representation in leadership is not only a gender equality objective but also a measurable driver of better workplace DFV response.

**Concrete implementation steps:** Giesbrecht (2022) conducted a qualitative study involving 27 participants, including survivors of intimate partner violence, workers, managers, union employees, and HR professionals, exploring how workplaces can respond effectively to DFV.<sup>31</sup> Three themes emerged: the workplace impact of DFV, workplace-based interventions, and policy suggestions for organisations. The study's central takeaway is the need for workplace training and information on how to recognise DFV, how to respond, and where to refer employees for specialist support, alongside concrete measures such as legislative and policy change, paid DFV leave, and workplace accommodation for affected workers. These findings directly reinforce the recommendations in this report, particularly the emphasis on manager capability, clear referral pathways, and embedding practical support into workplace policy rather than relying on awareness alone.

MacGregor et al. (2021) conducted a scoping review of 235 peer-reviewed studies on DFV and work - the most comprehensive map of the evidence base available. Their review confirmed that, although a substantial body of research documents the impact of DFV on employment and the workplace, very few studies evaluate the effectiveness of workplace interventions.<sup>32</sup> This gap in the evidence itself is a significant finding: it tells us that although the case for action is well established, employers and policymakers have limited rigorous evidence on which specific interventions work best. This supports a key argument in this report that investment is needed not only in workplace DFV programs themselves, but in measuring and evaluating their effectiveness so that future practice can be guided by evidence rather than assumption.

---

<sup>26</sup> Marmo, M., Seymour, K., Cebulla, A., Esmaeili, H., Sinopoli, E., Richards, J. and Ibrahim, N. (2024). Independent Review of the Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Act 2022: Final Report. Flinders University, commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. Available at [www.dewr.gov.au/workplace-relations-australia/consultations/paid-family-and-domestic-violence-leave-review](http://www.dewr.gov.au/workplace-relations-australia/consultations/paid-family-and-domestic-violence-leave-review)

- 
- <sup>27</sup> Fitz-Gibbon, K., Pfitzner, N. and McNicol, E. (2023). Domestic and family violence leave across Australian workplaces: Examining victim-survivor experiences of workplace supports and the importance of cultural change. *Journal of Criminology*, 56(2–3), 294–312. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/26338076221148203>
- <sup>28</sup> Sarpy, C., Shukralla, H., Greville, H. and Thompson, S.C. (2022). Case-study: A wicked way to address family violence in a regional setting in Western Australia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(24), 16703. Available at <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192416703>
- <sup>29</sup> Woods, M., Ward, B., Greville, A., Moran, A., Nattabi, B., Martin, K. and Thompson, J. (2023). Community attitudes to domestic violence in outer regional Australia: Findings from an online survey. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajr.12981>
- <sup>30</sup> Chan-Serafin, S., Sanders, K., Wang, L. and Restubog, S.L.D. (2023). The adoption of human resource practices to support employees affected by intimate partner violence: Women representation in leadership matters. *Human Resource Management*, 62(5), 745–764. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22157>
- <sup>31</sup> Giesbrecht, C.J. (2022). Toward an effective workplace response to intimate partner violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(3–4), 1158–1178. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520921865>
- <sup>32</sup> MacGregor, J.C.D., Oliver, C.L., MacQuarrie, B.J. and Wathen, C.N. (2021). Intimate partner violence and work: A scoping review of published research. *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 22(4), 717–727. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838019881746>

## 6.3 Key Resources Reviewed

### 6.3.1 Fair Work Ombudsman - Small Business Employer Guide to Family and Domestic Violence<sup>33</sup>

**Purpose:** Provides practical guidance for small business employers on preparing for, responding to, and supporting employees affected by DFV.

**Intended audience:** Small business employers, managers, and supervisors.

**Key takeaways:**

- A workplace response to DFV should be prepared, private, supportive, and safety focused.
- Employers are encouraged to have a policy, train staff, and make reasonable adjustments where possible.
- The guide treats DFV as a workplace issue that requires active management, not just referral to external support.

### 6.3.2 Comcare - Regulatory Guide: Family and Domestic Violence at Work<sup>34</sup>

**Purpose:** Helps organisations understand and meet workplace health and safety duties when DFV creates risk at work.

**Intended audience:** Organisations, workers, and WHS practitioners in the Commonwealth jurisdiction.

**Key takeaways:**

- DFV should be managed as a WHS risk where it affects the workplace.
- The guide emphasises a structured risk management approach in identifying hazards, assessing risks, controlling them, and reviewing controls.

Includes third-party DFV against workers and situations where workers themselves may be using violence.

<sup>33</sup> Fair Work Ombudsman. Small Business Employer Guide to Family and Domestic Violence. Available at [www.fairwork.gov.au/sites/default/files/migration/1414/employer-guide-to-family-and-domestic-violence.pdf](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/sites/default/files/migration/1414/employer-guide-to-family-and-domestic-violence.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Comcare. Regulatory Guide: Family and Domestic Violence at Work. Available at [www.comcare.gov.au/scheme-legislation/whs-act/regulatory-guides/regulatory-guide-family-domestic-violence](http://www.comcare.gov.au/scheme-legislation/whs-act/regulatory-guides/regulatory-guide-family-domestic-violence)

### 6.3.3 Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) - Family and Domestic Violence<sup>35</sup>

**Purpose:** Provides workplace action guidance and resources to help employers respond to DFV and support affected employees.

**Intended audience:** Employers, HR teams, workplace leaders, and organisations developing DFV response approaches.

**Key takeaways:**

- A practical workplace action resource that helps organisations understand DFV and their role in addressing it.
- Relevant as an employer-facing resource on supporting employees and building workplace responses.

### 6.3.4 Safe Work Australia - Family and Domestic Violence Information Sheet<sup>36</sup>

**Purpose:** Provides a WHS-oriented overview of DFV as a workplace issue and how to manage associated risks.

**Intended audience:** Employers, managers, and work health and safety advisers.

**Key takeaways:**

- DFV can be embedded within tailored WHS risk processes rather than treated as a standalone issue.
- The resource strongly links workplace response to consultation, training, and practical controls.

---

<sup>35</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency. Family and Domestic Violence. Available at [www.wgea.gov.au/take-action/family-domestic-violence](http://www.wgea.gov.au/take-action/family-domestic-violence)

<sup>36</sup> Safe Work Australia (2023). Family and Domestic Violence Information Sheet. Available at [www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/family-and-domestic-violence-at-work\\_infosheet\\_dec2023.pdf](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/family-and-domestic-violence-at-work_infosheet_dec2023.pdf)

### 6.3.5 Safe Work Australia - Model Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work<sup>37</sup>

**Purpose:** Sets out a model code for managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace, directly relevant where DFV creates psychological risk.

**Intended audience:** Employers, WHS managers, and organisations required to manage psychosocial risks.

**Key takeaways:**

- The code supports a systematic risk-management model for psychosocial hazards, which is directly relevant when DFV affects workers.
- Controls must be maintained and reviewed over time.

### 6.3.6 Queensland Government - DFV Workplace Policy Guide<sup>38</sup>

**Purpose:** Provides guidance and insights for creating a workplace DFV policy.

**Intended audience:** Leaders, People and Culture personnel, and WHS leaders responsible for developing and implementing DFV policies.

**Key takeaways:**

- A practical DFV policy development reference covering policy content, case studies, legislative overview, and guidance on supporting both victim survivors and people using violence.

---

<sup>37</sup> Safe Work Australia. Model Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work. Available at [www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-code-practice-managing-psychosocial-hazards-work](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-code-practice-managing-psychosocial-hazards-work)

<sup>38</sup> Queensland Government. Domestic and Family Violence Workplace Policy Guide. Available at [www.publications.qld.gov.au/ckan-publications-attachments-prod/resources/25a8c7f2-d94e-4d12-9676-b0c73719c9d9/dfv-workplace-policy-guide.pdf](http://www.publications.qld.gov.au/ckan-publications-attachments-prod/resources/25a8c7f2-d94e-4d12-9676-b0c73719c9d9/dfv-workplace-policy-guide.pdf)

## 6.4 Change the Story

A cornerstone of Australia’s national approach to DFV prevention is the Our Watch framework “Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women in Australia” (2nd edition, 2021).<sup>39</sup> This framework is the most comprehensive national evidence base for understanding the drivers of violence against women and the conditions required for effective prevention.

### Key findings from Change the Story:

- Gender inequality is the single most significant driver of violence against women. Workplaces that actively promote gender equality are better positioned to prevent DFV and create safe environments for all employees.
- Violence against women is not inevitable. It is driven by specific social conditions and can be prevented through targeted, evidence-based action at individual, organisational, community, and societal levels.
- Effective prevention requires action on the underlying conditions that drive violence, not just responses to incidents after they have occurred. This aligns directly with the positive duty obligations introduced under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth).
- Workplaces are identified as a key setting for prevention, with the potential to both model gender-equitable practices and reach large numbers of people with prevention messages and programs.
- Intersecting factors, including race, disability, age, sexuality, and socioeconomic status, shape women’s experiences of violence and must be considered in prevention and response approaches.

---

<sup>39</sup> Our Watch (2021). Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women in Australia (2nd edition). Our Watch. Available at [www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story)

## 7. DFV Insights Report - Research Objectives and Key Questions

This research was designed to generate practical, evidence-based insights into how Australian workplaces are currently approaching DFV and which steps are most likely to drive meaningful improvement. The following objectives and key questions guided the design of the research, the development of the interview and survey instruments, and the analysis and presentation of findings throughout this report.

### 7.1 Primary Research Objectives

- To document the current state of workplace DFV practice across a diverse range of Australian organisations, including the measures, policies, resources, and cultural approaches currently in place.
- To identify the key challenges that prevent organisations from responding more effectively to DFV, and to understand the factors that sustain those challenges over time.
- To identify the opportunities and enablers that evidence and experience suggest are most likely to drive lasting improvement in workplace DFV response and associated outcomes for employees.
- To identify the systemic gaps in current frameworks, resources, and support systems that are limiting progress at an organisational and sector level.
- To generate a practical, evidence-informed recommendations framework that is actionable for government, industry bodies, and employers of all sizes.

### 7.2 Key Research Questions

The research was organised around five core questions, each of which maps directly onto a findings section of this report:

1. What DFV-related measures, policies, resources, and activities do organisations currently have in place?
2. What does the organisational culture and leadership approach to DFV look like, and how does it shape what is possible?
3. What are the key challenges and barriers that prevent organisations from doing more?

- 
4. What are the key opportunities and enablers for improving workplace DFV response?
  5. Where are the most significant gaps in current systems, resources, and support?

### **7.3 Target Participant Groups**

---

Participants were drawn from four broad groups:

- senior organisational leaders with strategic responsibility for workforce and culture
- HR, People and Culture, and WHS practitioners with direct operational responsibility for DFV policy and support
- small business owners and operators navigating DFV without dedicated HR infrastructure
- representatives of peak bodies and industry organisations with sector-wide perspectives on employer practice.

---

## 8. Methodology

This report draws on three evidence streams

- qualitative consultations with organisational leaders
- a quantitative employer survey
- WorkHaven's practitioner experience.

Together, these sources provide a comprehensive picture of current workplace DFV practice across Australia.

### 8.1 Research Design

---

A mixed-methods approach was used. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted with leaders across a diverse range of Australian organisations, exploring current practice, ethos, challenges, opportunities, and identifying gaps. An anonymous employer survey was distributed via SurveyMonkey, receiving 20 completed responses from HR professionals, executives, and people and culture practitioners across a range of sectors and organisation sizes. WorkHaven's insights, drawn from more than six years of specialist workplace DFV work, are integrated throughout as a formal evidence stream.

### 8.2 Participants

---

Consultations were conducted with organisations across diverse sectors including healthcare, financial services, government, higher education, aviation, energy, community services, and transport. Organisations ranged from medium sized regional bodies to large national employers. We also consulted with representatives from small business. All participants are de-identified throughout this report. Survey respondents represented 20 organisations across construction, community services, professional services, education, mining, healthcare, government, and other sectors.

### 8.3 Ethical Considerations

---

All participants provided informed consent and participation was entirely voluntary. No individual or organisation is identifiable in any published findings. DFV is a sensitive topic, and the research team was prepared to respond sensitively throughout. Findings are presented thematically to reflect collective insight rather than the perspective of any single participant.

---

## 8.4 Limitations

---

This research focuses on Australian employers, with an emphasis on Queensland. Participation was voluntary, which may introduce self-selection bias toward organisations already engaged with DFV. The survey received 20 responses, which should be treated as indicative rather than statistically generalisable. WorkHaven's practitioner insights reflect its client base rather than a representative sample of all Australian workplaces.

## 9. Employer Landscape: Current State of Practice

### 9.1 Introduction

This section presents findings from a series of consultations with employers across diverse industries and organisational sizes. The organisations consulted include private and publicly listed companies, government departments, not-for-profits, financial institutions, educational institutions, and healthcare providers. Together, they represent tens of thousands of employees across Australia.

The consultations explored four key areas:

- the measures and resources currently in place to address DFV
- organisational ethos and approach
- the challenges organisations face or anticipate
- the opportunities available to strengthen workplace responses.

Organisations are not identified in this analysis - findings are presented thematically to reflect the collective experience and insights of those consulted.

#### 9.1.1 Survey Findings: Respondent Profile

The following findings are drawn from a survey of 19 Australian organisations conducted in May 2026, providing quantitative data to complement the qualitative consultation findings throughout this section. Respondents represented a diverse cross-section of industries, organisation sizes, and senior roles.

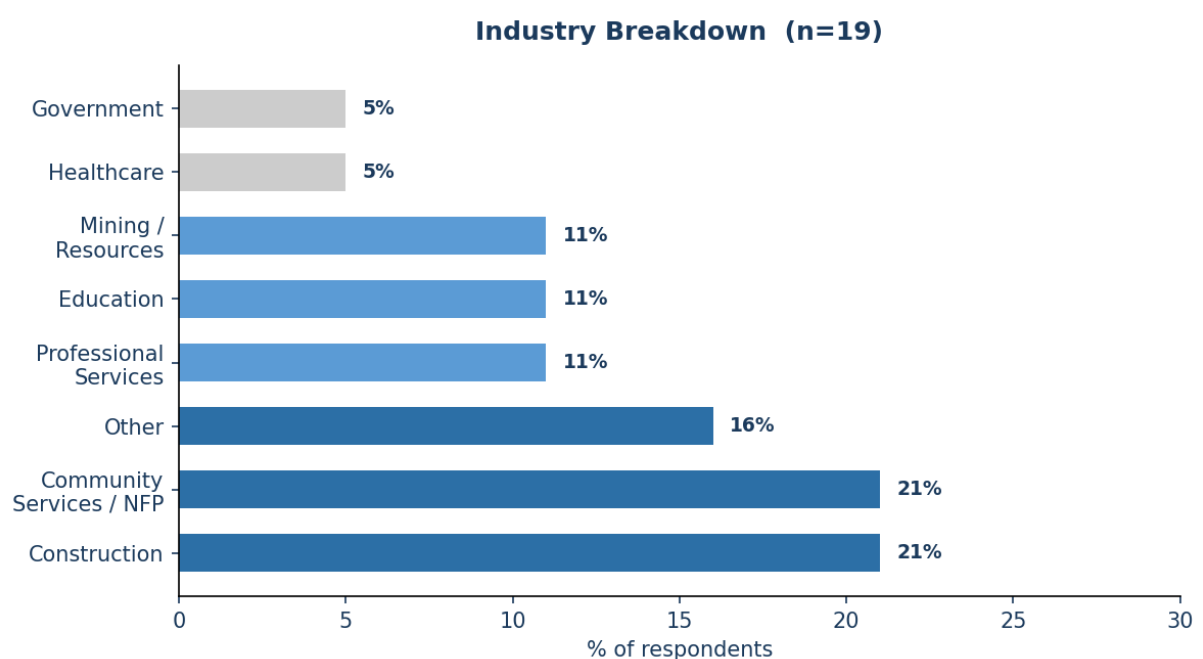


Figure 1: Industry breakdown of survey respondents (n=19)

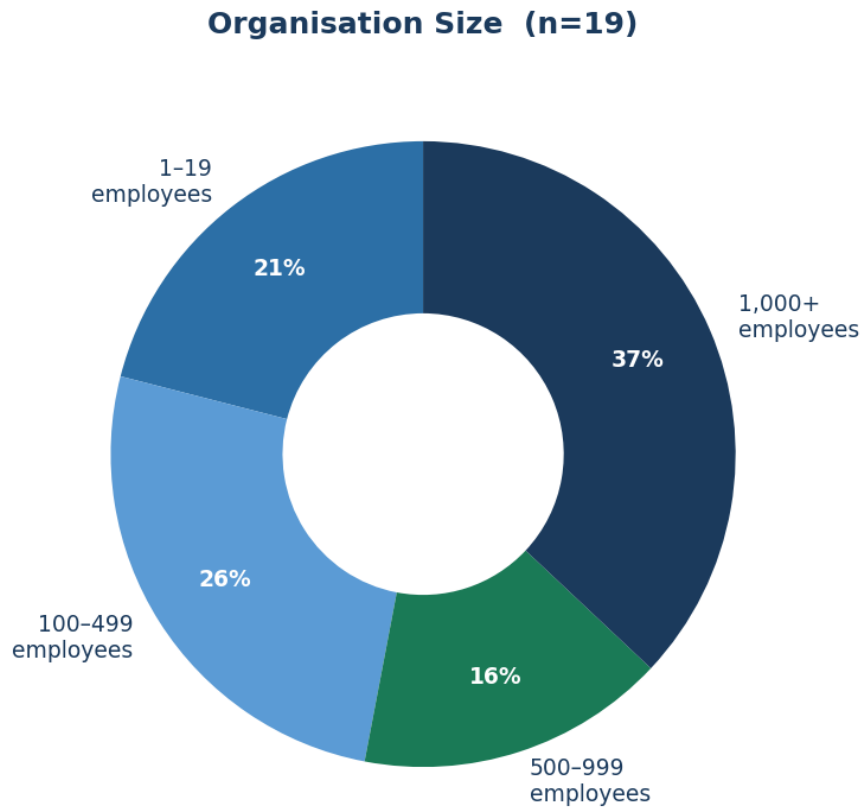


Figure 2: Organisation size of survey respondents (n=19)

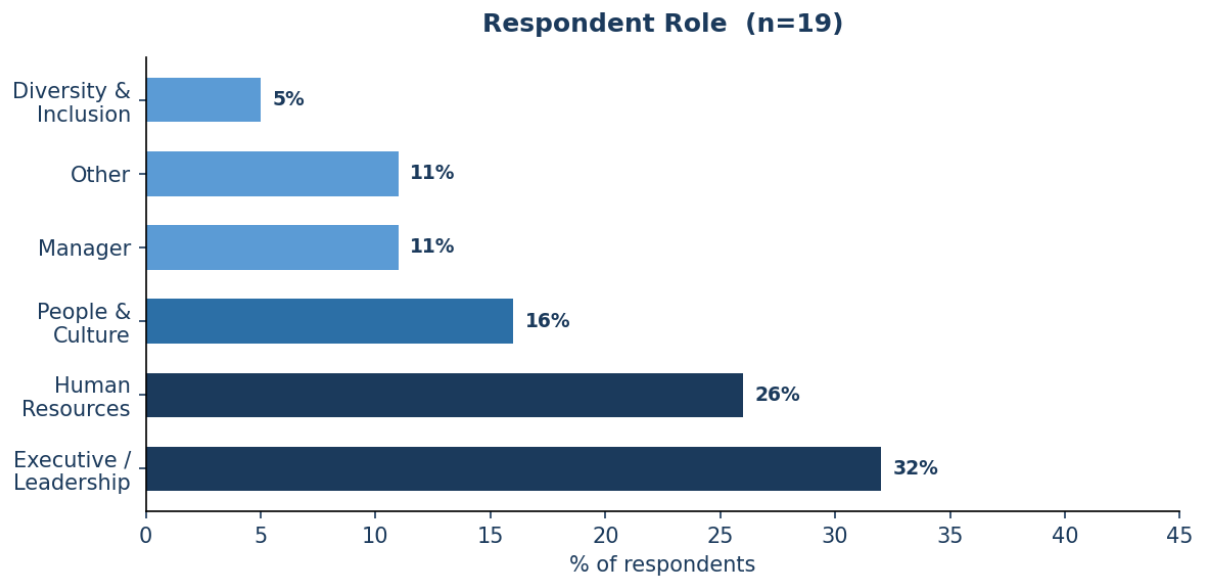


Figure 3: Respondent roles (n=19)

## 9.2 Policies and Leave Provisions

Across the organisations consulted, DFV policies are the most common foundational measure in place. Most organisations have a standalone DFV policy, though a small number incorporate DFV provisions within broader wellbeing or HR policies. Many are

currently reviewing or refreshing their policies to strengthen their scope, including clarifying their position on employees who use violence, an area that multiple organisations identified as particularly complex.

Paid DFV leave is widely provided, with a legislated 10-day entitlement as the standard baseline. Several organisations offered leave entitlements above this minimum before it was legislated, and more than one organisation now provides twenty days of paid leave per year, including for employees supporting an affected family member or household member. Flexible work arrangements and role adjustments (such as changes to shift times, work locations, contact details and travel arrangements) are also commonly available as part of a safety planning approach, with several organisations explicitly noting that documentation is not required to access these measures.

*“We have DFV leave in our Enterprise Agreement (EA), and this is above the legislated requirements. In addition to NES, employees who are supporting a family member or member of the household due to DFV are entitled to 20 days leave per year”.*

### **9.3 Employee Assistance Programs and Specialist Support**

EAPs are a universal feature across all organisations consulted, providing confidential counselling and referral services to employees and their families. Several organisations have selected EAP providers with specialist DFV expertise or have supplemented their EAP with additional DFV-specific counselling, case management, or recovery programs.

Several larger organisations have invested in dedicated DFV support infrastructure beyond the EAP. This includes specialist health, safety and wellbeing teams trained in DFV case management, physical security personnel able to advise on domestic violence orders and personal safety at work and trained medical professionals offering trauma-informed support. One organisation provides an online DFV recovery program specifically for victim-survivors, offering ongoing support in a private, self-directed format.

### **9.4 Intranet Resources and Information Hubs**

Many organisations have developed internal information pages, hubs or portals dedicated to DFV. These resources typically include policy documents, links to leave provisions, referrals to external support services, guidance for employees and leaders and in some cases, audio and visual content. Several organisations have specifically noted the importance of keeping these resources current and accessible, including prominently featuring DFV information on the intranet home page rather than burying it in subpages.

Some organisations have enhanced the usability of their digital resources by incorporating quick-exit buttons for employee safety, ensuring content addresses DFV across diverse communities, including First Nations, LGBTIQ+ communities and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and providing resources tailored to different roles within the organisation. At least one organisation is implementing an AI-powered chatbot to help employees quickly locate DFV information and support.

## 9.5 Training and Education

Training for managers and leaders is a common element of organisational responses. Approaches vary considerably in depth and format. Some organisations have invested in face-to-face training delivered by specialist DFV training providers, while others rely on online modules embedded in existing leadership development programs. Training typically covers what DFV is, how to recognise it, how to have a supportive conversation and where to refer employees for assistance.

Several organisations provide leadership guides and safety assessment tools to equip managers with practical reference resources. All staff training is less universal, but a number of organisations either provide or are developing DFV awareness training for the broader workforce. Some embed DFV content within existing mandatory training programs that cover topics such as respect at work and mental health and wellbeing.

*“We partner with a specialist organisation to deliver annual DFV prevention and awareness training to leaders and employees. We also run an online DFV training program but prefer to do it face to face.”*

*“We worked with QMCA’s and WorkHaven’s suite of resources to develop a procedure, employee training and associated resources in the DFV space.” Survey respondent, construction sector*

### Survey Findings: Current DFV Initiatives

Survey data confirms that 63% of responding organisations have some form of DFV initiative beyond legislated leave, though the depth and maturity of these programs vary considerably. The most common supports are employee awareness communications and flexible work arrangements (both 69%), while dedicated DFV contact officers (13%) and specialist partnerships with DFV organisations (6%) remain rare.

**Organisations with DFV Initiatives Beyond Legislated Leave (n=19)**

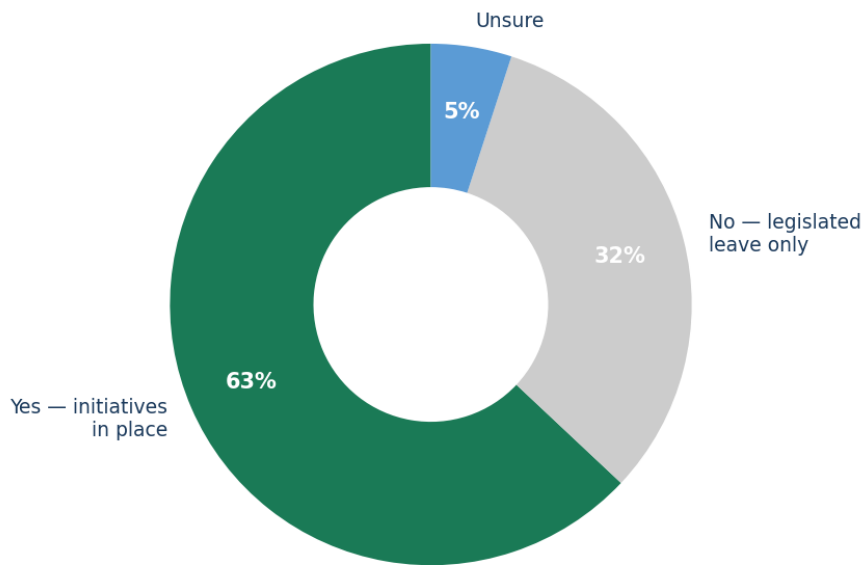


Figure 4: Organisations with DFV initiatives beyond legislated leave (n=19)

**Types of DFV Support Currently Provided (n=16, multiple response)**

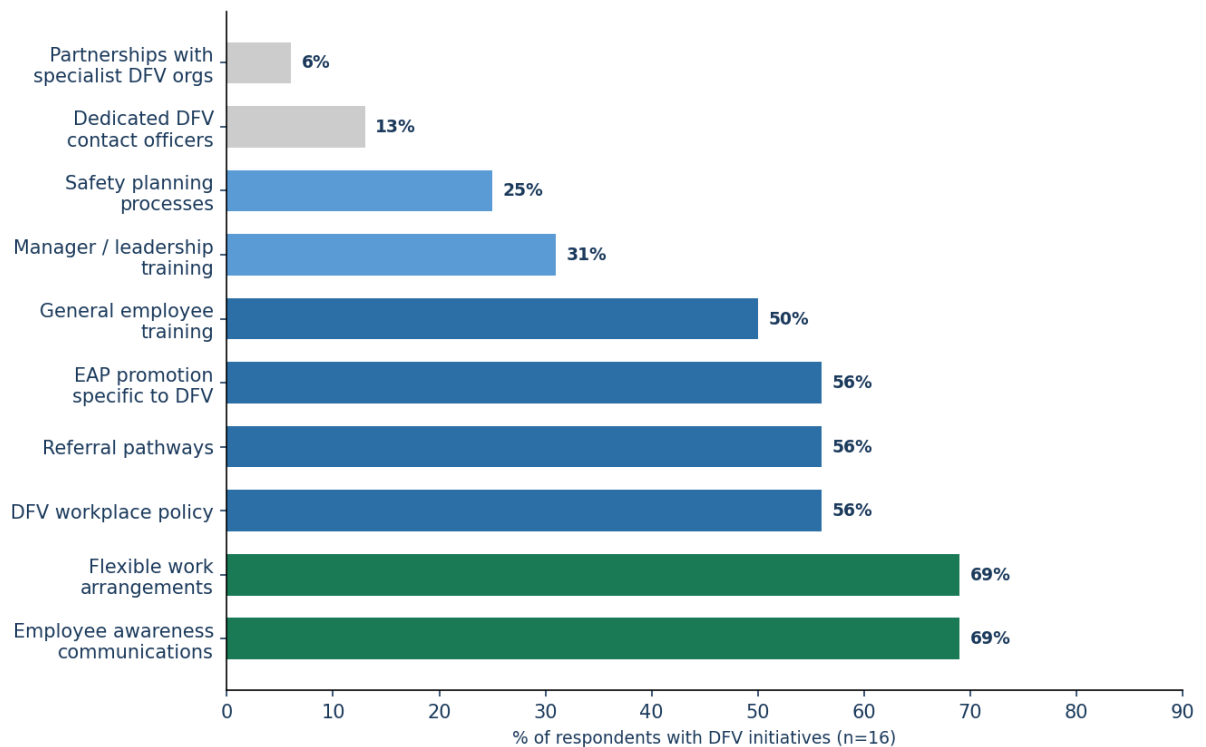


Figure 5: Types of DFV support currently provided, of those with initiatives (n=16, multiple response)

*“Only a basic policy that we’ve never had to enact.” - Survey respondent*

## 9.6 Financial Support Measures

A small number of organisations have developed financial support provisions that go beyond leave entitlements. These include one-off assistance packages to help employees meet upfront costs associated with leaving a DFV situation (such as rental bonds, legal costs and relocating) as well as access to confidential financial counselling. One organisation has established a staff-funded grants program that provides emergency financial assistance of up to \$1,000 to employees facing a range of crises, including DFV. Superannuation contributions above the standard rate, income protection insurance and confidential financial support hubs are also offered by some organisations as part of a broader commitment to employees' financial security.

*"10 days paid DFV leave, flexible working arrangements, paid accommodation up to 10 days, alternative phone, Uber, paid removalist if moving away from the relationship." Survey respondent, describing their organisation's support provisions*

## 9.7 Awareness Campaigns and Community Engagement

Many organisations supplement their internal policies and training with regular awareness-raising activities throughout the year. These include communications tied to recognised campaigns such as DFV Prevention Month, the 16 Days of Activism and R U OK Day, as well as internal events, guest speakers and sharing of personal stories by employees willing to share their lived experience.

Several organisations have extended their DFV response beyond the workforce to include community partnerships, volunteer days, charity fundraising, and contributions to local DFV services. Some have formalised partnerships with specialist DFV organisations to support both employees and customers, and at least one organisation maintains a dedicated peer-led DFV support network for staff to connect with and share information throughout the year.

## 9.8 Support for Customers and Clients

Several organisations, particularly those in the financial services, healthcare and banking sectors, have developed specific provisions for customers who may be experiencing DFV. These include specialist support teams trained to handle enquiries from vulnerable customers, hardship policies that can pause or waive debt collection, confidential financial assistance, banking safety guidance, and referrals to specialist services. One organisation has developed a discrete system code to flag DFV-affected customers and ensure they are

transferred to a trained care champion, protecting both the customer and the employee handling the interaction.

## 10. WorkHaven Practitioner Insights

### 10.1 Background

WorkHaven is a Queensland-based organisation with a national footprint that supports workplaces and communities to address DFV in relevant, practical, and meaningful ways. Established in 2020, WorkHaven partners with organisations to develop workplace responses that improve safety, awareness and support for people affected by DFV.

At the time of writing this report in June 2026, WorkHaven's services and resources are accessible to more than 140,000 employees across Australia, with representation across several industries including aviation, healthcare, local and state government, manufacturing, legal services and construction.

#### **WorkHaven's services include:**

- Consultation and strategic advice
- Development of workplace DFV policies and procedures
- Training and awareness programs
- Communication campaigns and resource development
- Delivery of the Verdella online DFV recovery program
- Bespoke workplace and community projects

WorkHaven's work is informed by both evidence-based practice and lived experience.

The organisation has partnered with local, state, and federal government agencies, as well as organisations across the corporate and community sectors. Clients include the Queensland Government, Brisbane City Council, Brisbane North Primary Health Network, Seqwater, Micah Projects, Sunwater, Queensland Major Contractors Association, Bupa, Collins Foods, Verizon and Boeing.

### 10.2 WorkHaven Practitioner Insights and Evidence

The following section outlines key insights and recommendations drawn from WorkHaven's operational experience supporting workplaces and communities in responding to DFV.

### 10.2.1 Standalone DFV Policies

Many organisations place DFV provisions, including domestic violence leave, within broader leave policies. WorkHaven has found this can make support difficult to locate, particularly for employees experiencing the disruption, trauma and urgency associated with DFV.

WorkHaven recommends developing a standalone DFV policy that is clearly communicated and easily accessible, discreetly.

#### Effective policies should:

- Clearly outline available supports
- Explain how support can be accessed
- Define workplace responsibilities
- Include referral pathways to specialist support services
- Be practical, accessible, and user-friendly

### 10.2.2 Specialist Support Pathways Beyond EAP's

Many workplaces rely heavily on EAPs when responding to DFV disclosures. While EAP providers can play an important role, WorkHaven has observed that some may not have the specialist expertise required to respond effectively to high-risk DFV situations.

Where safety concerns are present, referral to specialist DFV services is often more appropriate. Specialist services are equipped to provide risk assessment, safety planning, crisis support and pathways to protection and recovery.

### 10.2.3 Equipping Leaders to Respond

Leaders are frequently the first point of contact when an employee is experiencing DFV. WorkHaven's experience demonstrates that many leaders want to support staff appropriately but lack the confidence, knowledge or tools to do so effectively.

#### Organisations should therefore provide:

- DFV awareness and response training for leaders
- Practical guidance on how to navigate sensitive conversations
- Clear referral pathways and escalation processes
- Leader guides and support resources that can be referenced when situations arise

This helps leaders respond with confidence, consistency, and care.

#### 10.2.4 Communication and Visibility of Support

WorkHaven has identified that some organisations provide strong DFV support and provisions but fail to communicate them effectively. As a result, employees may remain unaware of the assistance available to them.

**Communication activities should accompany all DFV initiatives to ensure support is:**

- Easy to locate
- Clearly explained
- Accessible discreetly
- Regularly reinforced across the organisation

Effective communication is essential to creating awareness and enabling help-seeking behaviour.

#### 10.2.5 Training and Awareness

Awareness is a critical component of any workplace response to DFV. This training should be provided for employees to enable peer support and organisational awareness, as well as to leaders.

**Training and education activities help employees:**

- Understand what DFV is
- Recognise potential warning signs
- Understand impacts on individuals and workplaces
- Develop confidence to have supportive conversations
- Connect people to appropriate support services

WorkHaven has observed that awareness initiatives contribute to earlier intervention, improved workplace culture and increased confidence in responding appropriately.

#### 10.2.6 Understanding Legislative Responsibilities

It is also important that workplaces understand their legislative obligations in relation to DFV, including responsibilities relating to leave entitlements, workplace health and safety, privacy, discrimination and employee wellbeing.

## 10.3 Key Principles for Workplace Responses to DFV

### 10.3.1 Multifaceted and Individually Centred Responses

DFV is complex and affects individuals differently. Risks, impacts and support needs vary significantly from person to person.

WorkHaven recommends that organisations adopt a person-centred approach that allows support strategies and workplace adjustments to be tailored to the person's specific circumstances and needs.

### 10.3.2 Inclusive and Appropriate for All Genders

While women are disproportionately represented in DFV statistics, support systems should remain inclusive and accessible to people of all genders.

Using non-gendered communication and inclusive support approaches helps create safer and more accessible workplace cultures for everyone.

### 10.3.3 Supporting Both People Affected by Violence and People Using Violence

WorkHaven's experience indicates that workplaces can play an important role in breaking cycles of violence by supporting both people affected by DFV and people who are concerned about or choosing to use violence.

Providing clear expectations of behaviour as well as pathways to behavioral change programs and specialist support services can help create opportunities for accountability, intervention, and long-term change.

### 10.3.4 Balancing Formal and Informal Supports

Effective workplace responses require a balance of formal and informal support mechanisms.

#### **Formal support may include:**

- Paid DFV leave
- Flexible work arrangements
- Safety planning
- Role adjustments

#### **Informal supports may include:**

- Peer support

- Trained workplace advocates
- Supportive workplace culture
- Increased awareness and understanding among colleagues

This balance allows employees to access support in ways that feel safe and appropriate to them.

### 10.3.5 Confidentiality and Discretion

Confidentiality is essential in any workplace response to DFV.

**WorkHaven recommends that organisations ensure:**

- DFV leave is not identifiable on payslips (as legislated)
- Information is securely stored
- Access to information is restricted appropriately
- Employees are not identified unnecessarily in workplace discussions
- Leaders and HR personnel are specifically trained and supported in enabling confidentiality
- Privacy and discretion are prioritised at all stages

Confidentiality is critical to maintaining safety and trust.

### 10.3.6 Connected Communities and Partnerships

Workplaces should not attempt to address DFV in isolation.

Strong responses are built through partnerships with specialist support services, community organisations, and external providers that can offer expertise, referral pathways, and additional support options.

### 10.3.7 Support Across All Phases of DFV

DFV often involves multiple stages, including:

- Recognising unhealthy or unsafe behaviour
- Crisis and escalation
- Leaving a relationship or situation
- Recovery and rebuilding

In many cases, these stages may occur cyclically over time.

WorkHaven recommends that workplaces provide support across all phases of DFV to ensure employees are supported not only during periods of crisis, but also throughout longer-term recovery and rebuilding journeys.

---

## 11. Organisational Ethos and Leadership Approaches

Across the organisations consulted, there is a consistent and genuine commitment to supporting employees affected by DFV. While the maturity and comprehensiveness of responses vary, the underpinning ethos is notably consistent: DFV is understood as a workplace issue, employees deserve a safe and non-judgemental environment in which to seek help, and organisations have a duty of care that extends to the personal challenges employees may face outside of work.

### 11.1 A Person-Centered, Non-Judgmental Approach

---

Almost every organisation consulted emphasised the importance of a non-judgemental, person-centered approach. This means meeting the individual where they are, asking what they need rather than prescribing a solution, and removing as many barriers to disclosure as possible. Many organisations have moved away from requiring formal documentation or evidence to access DFV leave, reflecting a trust-based approach that prioritises the wellbeing and safety of the person disclosing.

Several organisations described their ethos in terms of 'trust and belief, beginning every interaction with the assumption that the employee is telling the truth and working from there to understand what support is needed. This approach is seen as fundamental to creating a psychologically safe environment in which employees feel able to come forward.

*"We start with trust and belief. If someone reports it, we do not ask them to provide evidence. Our managers echo this."*

### 11.2 Leadership Commitment

---

Strong leadership commitment is consistently identified as a key enabler of effective workplace DFV responses. A number of organisations highlighted the positive influence of senior leaders, including chief executives, general managers, and board members, in championing DFV awareness, modelling appropriate behaviours and signaling organisational values clearly to the workforce. In some organisations, the CEO has taken a personal, visible role in DFV prevention activities, and this is described as lending authenticity and weight to organisational messaging.

---

Conversely, several organisations noted that leadership transitions can pose a risk to continuity of approach, particularly where DFV champions in senior roles move on and new leaders need to be engaged on the importance and momentum of the work.

### **11.3 DFV as Part of a Broader Wellbeing and Inclusion Agenda**

---

Many organisations situate their DFV response within a broader commitment to employee wellbeing, gender equality, diversity and inclusion, and positive workplace culture. DFV is increasingly understood not as a standalone or niche issue, but as connected to broader conversations about respectful workplaces, psychological safety and the organisation's social license. Several organisations have linked their DFV work explicitly to frameworks such as Respect at Work, positive duty obligations, and gender-based violence prevention.

Some organisations described a deliberate approach to 'joining the dots, helping employees and leaders understand how the organisation's values and culture connect to the prevention of and response to DFV, rather than treating it as a compliance exercise or a box to tick.

*"We don't want this to just tick a box. We are 100 per cent committed to helping those who reach out for assistance."*

## 12. Key Challenges and Barriers

Organisations consulted identified a range of challenges in addressing DFV in their workplaces. These challenges span policy and process, capability and culture, communication, and resourcing. While individual challenges reflect the specific circumstances of each organisation, several themes recur strongly across the cohort.

### Survey Findings: Key Challenges

Survey responses closely mirror the themes identified through qualitative consultations. Lack of knowledge or expertise and uncertainty about what constitutes good support were the top barriers, each cited by 44% of respondents, underscoring a consistent and urgent need for practical, accessible guidance across all sectors.

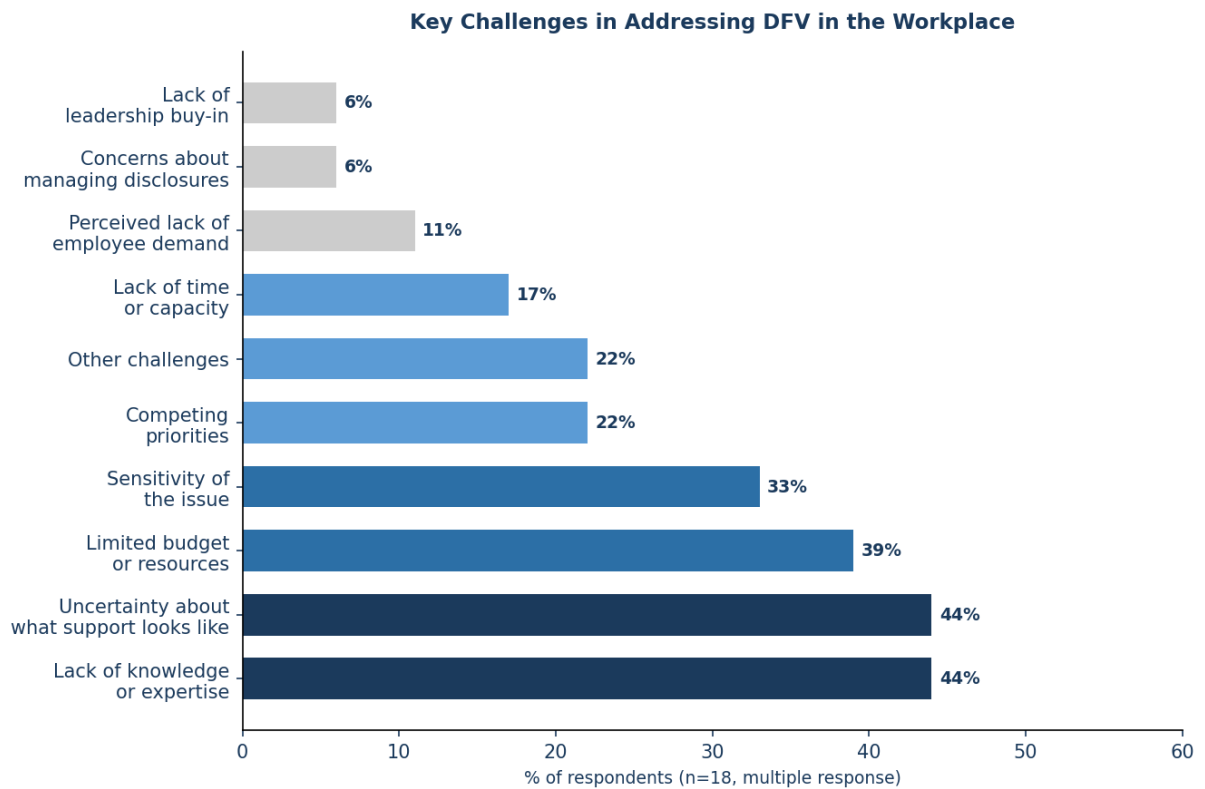


Figure 6: Key challenges in addressing DFV in the workplace (n=18, multiple response)

*"Even my trainers in HR and Safety still feel under-qualified or under-prepared to deliver awareness and support training in the DFV space." — Survey respondent*

### 12.1 Stigma and Barriers to Disclosure

The most consistently cited challenge is the difficulty of encouraging employees to disclose DFV and seek support. Fear of judgement, concerns about confidentiality, embarrassment, professional identity, and self-worth were all identified as barriers.

Employees may not identify with their own experience as DFV, particularly where their situation involves non-physical forms of violence, and outdated or imprecise policy language can compound this.

Some employees, particularly those in high-performing roles or professions with strong social identities, may be less likely to see themselves as candidates for DFV support, or may fear that seeking help will reflect negatively on their professional standing or place additional burden on their colleagues. Cultural factors can also create barriers, with employees from some backgrounds less familiar with the concept of DFV or the entitlement to seek support.

*“The socio-economic standard and status of education professionals may prevent people from seeing themselves in a DFV situation because of who they are in their community or their professional standing.”*

## 12.2 Leader Capability and Confidence

Equipping leaders to respond effectively and supportively when an employee discloses DFV is a widely shared challenge. Many managers feel underprepared, are unsure of what to say or do, or are anxious about getting it wrong. Training is not always sufficient to build the confidence and capability needed, particularly when it is infrequent, covers DFV only briefly within a broader program, or leaders encounter a disclosure before they have had an opportunity to attend training.

Several organisations noted that leaders often look to HR for guidance when a disclosure occurs, which underscores the need to equip HR professionals as well as people managers. There is also recognition that leaders are not expected to be DFV specialists, but they do need to know how to identify possible signs of DFV, listen supportively and provide details about available options and where to refer employees for specialist assistance.

## 12.3 Low Uptake and Visibility

A number of organisations reported low uptake of DFV leave and support provisions relative to the likely prevalence of DFV in their workforce. Employees may choose to use personal or sick leave rather than DFV-specific provisions to maintain privacy. Some organisations noted low reporting levels despite the statistical likelihood that employees in their workforce are affected by DFV.

This is consistent with international evidence. A 2021 Vodafone multi-country survey found that only 16% of workplaces globally had a DFV policy, and even where policies existed, employee awareness and uptake remained low.<sup>40</sup> Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner and McNicol (2023) found that victim-survivors' experience of workplace support is heavily shaped by how it is communicated and by whether employees feel safe accessing it without professional stigma.<sup>27</sup>

Low visibility of available support was identified as a contributing factor. Where DFV resources are housed in intranet pages that employees do not regularly visit, or where communications about available support is infrequent, employees may simply not know what help is available. Keeping DFV resources accessible and in front of mind, without overwhelming employees with information, is a genuine practical challenge.

## 12.4 Addressing People Who Use Violence in the Workplace

A number of organisations highlighted the complexity of addressing employees who use violence, both within and outside the workplace. Policy frameworks have historically focused on supporting victim-survivors, and many organisations are only now grappling with how to address perpetrators' behaviour, including how to respond when both a victim and a perpetrator are employed in the same organisation.

This includes questions about how to respond when employees make competing claims, how to align DFV provisions with existing zero-tolerance harassment policies, and how to support employees who use violence to change their behaviour. These are legally and ethically complex questions, and the desire to get this right is cited as a reason for delays in policy renewal.

---

<sup>40</sup>[https://assets.ctfassets.net/q7ob9vms4z5k/2ti8bXQTGgMNdTIUx0KyQN/ba1c0016c212aafacae7bf7425a16a4e/kpmsg\\_report\\_workplace\\_impacts\\_of\\_domestic\\_violence\\_and\\_abuse.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/q7ob9vms4z5k/2ti8bXQTGgMNdTIUx0KyQN/ba1c0016c212aafacae7bf7425a16a4e/kpmsg_report_workplace_impacts_of_domestic_violence_and_abuse.pdf)

---

## 12.5 Resourcing and Competing Priorities

---

For many organisations, DFV is one of many strategic priorities competing for limited time, budget and attention. Training and communication about DFV must compete with other mandatory training requirements and organisational communications. Smaller organisations may lack a dedicated HR or people and culture team with the capacity to drive DFV initiatives alongside other demands. Government organisations may face additional constraints from centralised policy frameworks that limit how much their approaches can be tailored.

---

## 12.6 Reaching Diverse and Dispersed Workforces

---

Organisations with large, geographically dispersed, or operationally diverse workforces face specific challenges in ensuring that DFV support reaches everyone. Field staff, remote workers, casual employees, and shift workers may have less access to online resources, less contact with managers and less exposure to internal communications. Reaching workforces with DFV messaging that is perceived as relevant and credible presents its own challenge, as does ensuring that communications are appropriate and accessible for employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

*“Geographically dispersed and diverse workforces make consistent delivery of training and support difficult, particularly where workers lack access to technology.” Survey respondent*

### 13. Opportunities and Enablers

Alongside the challenges, organisations identified a wide range of opportunities to deepen and extend their response to DFV. These opportunities span the full spectrum of organisational action, from policy and process improvements to cultural change, community engagement, and sector leadership

#### Survey Findings: Opportunities for Improvement

Training and education were identified as the top opportunity by an overwhelming majority of survey respondents (74%), far ahead of all other options. This finding, combined with the knowledge gaps identified as the top challenge, points to a clear and unmet need for accessible, practical, sector-relevant DFV training across Australian workplaces.

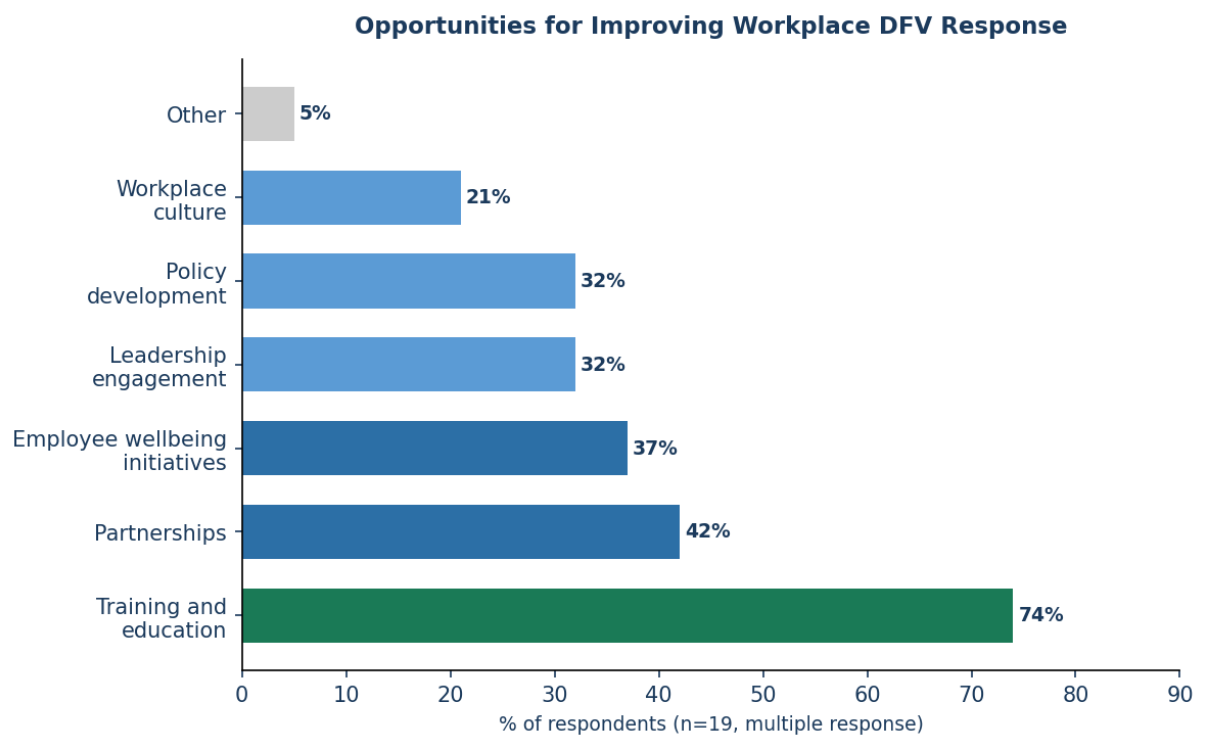


Figure 7: Opportunities for improving workplace DFV response (n=19, multiple response)

*“74% of survey respondents identified training and education as the top opportunity for improving their organisation’s DFV response.”*

### 13.1 Sustained Awareness and Communication

Consistent, year-round communication about DFV support is identified as one of the highest-impact opportunities. Rather than concentrating DFV messaging on one or two awareness campaigns per year, organisations see value in building a sustained rhythm of communication through short messages, intranet updates, manager check-ins, and regular reminders of available support that keep DFV visible and normalise conversations about it.

*“Keeping the conversation occurring, through micro training, small communications throughout the year, makes sure the dialogue is open, not just once or twice during the year.”*

### 13.2 Building Leader Capability

Strengthening the capability of people leaders is consistently identified as a significant opportunity. This includes more targeted, practical training that equips leaders with the skills and confidence to respond when a disclosure occurs - leader guides and safety assessment tools that provide a ready reference, and coaching and support from HR and wellbeing specialists who can assist leaders in navigating specific situations. Training that reflects the cyclical nature of DFV, addresses a range of forms of violence, and is refreshed regularly, is seen as essential.

A number of organisations are also exploring ways to support leaders in managing the risk of vicarious trauma and recognising that supporting an employee through a DFV situation can be emotionally demanding for the leader as well.

### 13.3 Policy Strengthening and Expansion

Several organisations see clear opportunities to enhance their DFV policies, making them more inclusive of diverse experiences and communities, extending provisions to employees supporting affected family members, addressing situations involving employees who use violence, and aligning leave entitlements and conditions with best practice. Many are also looking to better integrate DFV provisions with related frameworks, including positive duty obligations, Respect at Work requirements and gender equality strategies.

A small number of organisations are moving towards more generous financial support provisions, recognising that financial insecurity is a significant barrier to leaving a DFV

situation. This includes one-off transition grants, assistance with relocation costs and enhanced confidential financial counselling.

### **13.4 Technology and Infrastructure**

Digital tools and infrastructure present meaningful opportunities to improve access to DFV support. This includes ensuring that intranet DFV hubs are well-maintained, easy to navigate, and prominently featured - developing AI-assisted tools to help employees quickly locate relevant information and implementing discrete systems to flag and manage DFV-related cases within payroll and HR systems while protecting confidentiality.

For organisations serving external clients or customers, there is a clear opportunity to leverage technology to identify and respond to customers experiencing DFV, including through specialist support teams, hardship provisions and discrete flagging systems that ensure vulnerable individuals are connected quickly to appropriate support.

### **13.5 Community Partnerships and Sector Leadership**

Partnerships with specialist DFV organisations are a significant opportunity, both to access expertise and resources that organisations cannot develop in-house, and to demonstrate visible commitment to the community. Several organisations are exploring or expanding community partnerships, including volunteering programs, fundraising initiatives, joint awareness campaigns, and collaboration with local DFV services.

There is also an appetite for peer learning and sector-wide collaboration among the organisations consulted. Sharing approaches, resources, and learnings across sectors, rather than each organisation working in isolation, is seen as a way to accelerate progress and make a more meaningful collective impact.

### **13.6 Engaging Men and Diverse Populations**

Engaging men meaningfully in DFV prevention and response is identified as both a challenge and a priority opportunity. This includes developing communications and programs that speak to men as potential allies, bystanders and, in some cases, people who use violence and doing so in ways that are credible, non-threatening and relevant. Some organisations have found success in working with organisations that specialise in engaging men, including in traditionally male-dominated industries, and in connecting DFV conversations to broader conversations about mental health and wellbeing.

---

Ensuring that DFV support is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ employees, employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, employees with disabilities, First Nations employees, and employees at different stages of life and career is also widely recognised as an area for continued growth.

### **13.7 Measurement and Continuous Improvement**

---

One of the most consistent findings across the consultations was the absence of any systematic approach to measuring the effectiveness of workplace DFV responses. Most organisations do not track whether employees are accessing available support, whether leave provisions are being used, or whether their programs are making a meaningful difference to employee safety and wellbeing. Without this data, organisations cannot learn what is working, identify where gaps remain, or make the case internally for sustained investment.

The result is that good practice remains invisible, poor practice goes unchallenged, and the evidence base needed to drive genuine improvement across the sector does not exist. Several organisations expressed a desire for practical guidance on what to measure and how to measure it, noting that the absence of a shared measurement framework makes it difficult to know where to start.

## 14. Identified Gaps in Systems and Support

The consultation findings reveal a set of systemic gaps that go beyond the challenges individual organisations face. These are structural deficiencies in how the broader workplace DFV landscape is designed and resourced, gaps that no single employer can address alone and that require coordinated action across government, industry, and the specialist sector.

### 14.1 The Policy-to-Practice Gap

Perhaps the most consistent finding across the consultations is the distance between what exists on paper and what happens in practice. Most larger organisations have a DFV policy. Far fewer have the communication infrastructure, manager capability, or cultural conditions needed to bring that policy to life. The result is that policies become compliance documents rather than practical support tools, and employees who need help may not know they exist or feel safe accessing them.

### 14.2 Inconsistent Implementation Across Teams and Managers

Even within organisations that are genuinely committed to supporting employees, the quality and consistency of responses vary significantly from manager to manager and team to team. An employee's experience of disclosure and support is often determined more by who their direct manager is than by the organisation's official policy. This inconsistency creates inequity and erodes trust in the system.

### 14.3 Insufficient Manager Capability and Confidence

There is a critical and widespread shortage of practical, accessible training designed specifically for frontline managers and team leaders, the people most likely to receive a disclosure. Most available training focuses on awareness and policy, rather than on the practical skills managers need: how to respond to a disclosure in the moment, how to ask the right questions, how to document appropriately, and how to connect the employee to specialist support.

---

#### **14.4 Absence of Measurement and Evaluation**

---

The absence of measurement across Australian workplaces is explored in detail in Section 13.7. This gap limits the sector's ability to learn from what is working, direct investment where it is most needed, and make the case for sustained commitment to workplace DFV response over time

---

#### **14.5 Gaps in Referral Pathways and Specialist Support**

---

Across the organisations consulted, access to specialist DFV support services beyond the EAP services is inconsistent. In metropolitan areas, referral pathways tend to be more established. In regional and rural Queensland, specialist services are often limited, under-resourced, or difficult to access quickly. Some organisations reported uncertainty about which services to refer to and how to warm-refer employees safely and appropriately.

---

#### **14.6 The Unmet Needs of Small Business**

---

Current frameworks, guides, and training programs are predominantly designed for medium to large organisations with dedicated HR and WHS capacity. Small businesses face a distinct set of challenges - close personal relationships between owners and employees, limited internal support infrastructure, less access to specialist advice, and the complexity of navigating DFV in environments where most people know one another. Existing resources rarely address this context in a meaningful way.

## 15. Case Examples and Practice Snapshots

The following case studies draw on direct consultation with Australian organisations across a range of sectors and sizes. All organisations are de-identified. Each case study presents the context, the approach taken and the key lessons that emerged. Together, they illustrate what effective workplace responses to DFV can look like in practice.

### 15.1 Case Study 1: Supporting Leaders to Respond Safely and Confidently

**Sector:** Government

**Focus Area:** Leader Capability and Response Frameworks

One government organisation recognised that leaders are often on the frontline of DFV disclosures, yet many managers feel uncertain about how to respond safely, appropriately, and confidently. In response, the organisation implemented a comprehensive approach to equip leaders with the tools, guidance and support needed to navigate these situations effectively.

Each year, the organisation delivers dedicated DFV training for leaders across the organisation. The training focuses not only on awareness but also on practical response skills, including recognising signs of DFV, responding to disclosures sensitively, maintaining confidentiality, assessing risk and connecting employees with appropriate support pathways.

Recognising that employees may not always feel comfortable disclosing to their direct manager, the organisation also provides DFV awareness training to strengthen peer support capability across the workplace. This helps create multiple safe pathways for employees to seek support if they are not ready or willing to approach their leader directly.

To further strengthen confidence and consistency, the organisation has developed a comprehensive Leader Guide. Rather than being solely educational, the guide also functions as a practical procedural document, providing leaders with clear step-by-step guidance on how to respond if an employee discloses DFV. This includes guidance around confidentiality, documentation, workplace adjustments, referral pathways and safety considerations.

Leaders are additionally supported by a structured safety assessment tool designed to help them ask appropriate questions, identify potential risks and work collaboratively with

employees to develop safer workplace responses. Depending on the individual circumstances, responses may include workplace safety measures, flexible work arrangements, connection to specialist DFV services or referral to emergency supports where appropriate.

Importantly, the organisation also recognises that not every leader will be the most appropriate person to provide support in every circumstance. As a result, alternative support pathways are available where required, allowing leaders to refer employees to another trained contract within the organisation. Leaders themselves are also provided with confidential debriefing and support options through People and Culture representatives and EAP providers.

This multifaceted approach has helped create greater confidence amongst leaders, improved the consistency and quality of support provided to employees and strengthened organisational confidence that disclosures are being managed safely, compassionately, and appropriately.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Equip leaders with practical, scenario-based DFV response training, not just awareness education.
- Develop clear procedural guidance so leaders know exactly what to do following a disclosure.
- Provide multiple support pathways for employees beyond direct managers.
- Ensure leaders have access to confidential debriefing and support mechanisms.
- Use structured safety assessment tools to guide safer and more consistent responses.

## **15.2 Case Study 2: Building Awareness and Creating Visible Support Pathways**

**Sector:** Commercial Organisation / Healthcare Industry

**Focus Area:** Employee Awareness and Accessible Support Information

One healthcare organisation recognised that DFV support is only effective if employees know it exists and understand how to access it. The organisation implemented a comprehensive awareness strategy designed to normalise conversations about DFV,

increase understanding across the workforce and ensure employees can easily find support when needed.

The organisation delivers DFV awareness sessions for employees both in person and online, ensuring accessibility across different work locations and schedules. These sessions help employees understand the dynamics and impacts of DFV, recognise available workplace supports and identify pathways to specialist assistance. Importantly, the sessions are designed not only for employees directly affected by violence, but also for colleagues who may be supporting someone experiencing abuse.

In addition to formal training, the organisation runs regular webinars and informal lunchtime learning sessions throughout the year. These sessions feature subject matter experts and people with lived experience, helping to build empathy, understanding and confidence in discussing what can often feel like a difficult or sensitive topic.

While the organisation maintains a year-round focus on DFV, it also places particular emphasis on key awareness periods such as Domestic Violence Prevention Month and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. During these times, the organisation delivers additional awareness activities and visible communications across the workplace.

To ensure information is easy to access, discreet posters and flyers are displayed throughout workplace sites, including on the back of toilet doors and in other private but accessible locations. These materials provide information about DFV, available workplace support options, and local specialist services employees can contact for assistance.

The organisation has also ensured that all DFV-related information is clearly housed in a dedicated section of the company intranet, making it easier for employees to quickly locate support information during what may already be a stressful or overwhelming time.

Recognising the important role leaders play in shaping workplace culture, team leaders are additionally provided with speaking points and guidance to help them raise awareness about DFV and support pathways during team meetings and workplace discussions. Information about DFV support is also included within onboarding materials for new employees, ensuring workers are aware from the outset that the organisation provides support if they experience violence or abuse.

Importantly, the organisation's approach extends beyond supporting victim survivors alone. Employees who are concerned about their own behaviour or who may be using

violence are also provided with information and referral pathways to specialist behaviour change and intervention services, reinforcing the organisation's broader commitment to prevention and accountability.

Across all communications and awareness activities, the organisation uses clear calls to action so employees understand what support is available, how to access it and where to go for additional information.

This approach has contributed to a more informed and supportive workplace culture, increased employee confidence in seeking support, and strengthened opportunities for peer support and early intervention.

**Key Takeaways:**

- Ensure DFV support information is visible, accessible, and easy to find.
- Use a combination of formal training and informal awareness activities to build understanding over time.
- Include lived experience and subject matter expertise to strengthen empathy and engagement.
- Equip leaders with tools and talking points to help normalise conversations about support.
- Incorporate DFV information into onboarding processes so awareness begins from day one.
- Provide referral pathways for both victim survivors and people concerned about their own behaviour.
- Use clear calls to action in all communications so employees know exactly where and how to seek help.

**15.3 Case Study 3: Delivering Flexible and Individualised Support**

**Sector:** Community Organisation

**Focus Area:** Tailored Employee Support and Ongoing Response

A community organisation with approximately 30 employees recognised that no two experiences of DFV are the same, and that effective workplace responses must be flexible, individualised and responsive to changing needs over time.

To support employees affected by DFV, the organisation provides a range of formal workplace supports, including legislated DFV leave, flexible work arrangements and role adjustments where required. These measures are designed to help employees manage safety concerns, appointments, legal processes, health impacts and other disruptions that may arise as a result of violence or abuse.

Importantly, the organisation's approach extends beyond standard entitlements and recognises that employees may require different types of support depending on their individual circumstances. The organisation's DFV policy explicitly states that additional supports may be explored following disclosure, allowing managers and employees to work together to identify what assistance may be most appropriate at that time.

This flexible approach acknowledges that employees may experience different risks, needs and challenges during various stages of DFV, including both crisis and recovery periods. For some employees, support may centre around immediate safety planning and flexibility, while for others, longer-term adjustments and wellbeing support may be more relevant as they rebuild stability and confidence over time.

To ensure employees are aware of available support pathways, all DFV communications within the organisation include clear information about what support options are available and how employees can access them. This includes guidance around workplace entitlements, referral pathways and key contact people within the organisation.

The organisation's response process also includes regular check-ins with employees who are accessing support. These conversations help ensure that the assistance being provided continues to align with the employee's current circumstances, recognising that needs may change over time as situations evolve.

By taking an individualised and adaptable approach, the organisation has created a supportive framework that balances consistency with flexibility. Employees can access support that reflects their unique circumstances, while leaders are equipped to respond in a way that remains compassionate, practical and responsive throughout different stages of recovery.

**Key Takeaways:**

- Recognise that there is no one-size-fits-all response to DFV.
- Provide flexible support options that can adapt to changing employee needs over time.

- Ensure policies allow for individualised responses beyond minimum legislative entitlements.
- Include clear information in communications about how employees can access support.
- Conduct regular check-ins to ensure workplace support remains appropriate and effective.
- Consider both immediate crisis supports and longer-term recovery needs when designing workplace responses.

## 15.4 Case Study 4: When a Policy Exists But Has Never Been Used

**Sector:** Small Business

**Focus area:** Policy-to-Practice Gap

Not every case study in this report is a story of success. This study highlights some gaps in approach that help other organisations guard against them.

A small business with fewer than 20 employees had, some years earlier, developed a basic DFV policy. It had been drafted, approved, and filed. From that point on, it had never been discussed with staff, never included in inductions, and never referenced in any workplace communication. When asked whether the policy was working, the business owner acknowledged that they had never needed to use it, or at least, they assumed they had not.

What this case illustrates is not a failure of intent. The owner's motivation in developing the policy was genuine. It illustrates the gap that opens between good intentions and embedded practice when implementation is treated as an afterthought.

A policy filed away and difficult to find is not a useable or useful document. Employees who are unaware that a policy exists cannot use it. Managers who have never been briefed on it cannot activate it. And organisations that have never tested or communicated their approach have no way of knowing whether it would hold up if needed.

The business owner reflected that, in hindsight, at least some of their employees had likely experienced DFV during the years the policy sat dormant. The question of whether any of

them needed support they did not know how to ask for was one they found difficult to sit with.

### **Key Takeaways**

- Developing a policy is only the first step. Communication, training, and regular reinforcement are what make a policy real.
- Employees who do not know a policy exists cannot benefit from it.
- Low uptake of DFV leave, or support, is not evidence that no one needs it.
- Small businesses face challenges in keeping policies active and visible without a dedicated HR function. Practical tools and sector-relevant guidance are needed to bridge this gap.

## 16. Implications for Government and Industry

The findings of this report have clear implications that extend beyond individual organisations. Government, industry bodies, and peak organisations each have a distinct and critical role to play in creating the conditions that enable employers to respond more effectively to DFV.

### 16.1 Policy Implications for Government

The legislative framework governing workplace DFV response has strengthened considerably in recent years, and this is to be welcomed. However, the findings of this report suggest that legislation needs accompanying communications and awareness to drive uptake of practical support when needed.

This is particularly important for small and medium businesses that lack the internal HR and WHS capacity to navigate complex obligations without assistance.

### 16.2 Funding and Investment Priorities

The findings of this report point out several areas where targeted investment would have the greatest impact on employer capability and employee safety. Critically, the case for investment is not simply that more resources are needed; rather, the right resources for the right audiences do not yet exist.

As this report's research identifies, existing workplace DFV resources are valuable but leave significant gaps. Investment should therefore be directed toward filling those gaps specifically. This means funding the development of plain-language, integrated legislative guidance that helps employers navigate the Fair Work Act, WHS obligations, sex discrimination duties, and privacy legislation together. It means creating practical tools designed specifically for small businesses without dedicated HR support, which currently lack resources that reflect their context and constraints. And it means developing sector-relevant resources for industries where DFV rates are high but existing materials do not speak to the workforce culture or the specific challenges managers in those industries face.

Beyond resource development, investment is needed in active dissemination. The research found that many employers are unaware that existing guidance even exists. Funding a coordinated awareness and distribution strategy through industry bodies, peak

organisations, and employer networks would significantly extend the reach of both existing and new resources.

Investment in specialist DFV services in regional and rural Queensland is also a priority, with particular focus on extending their reach into workplace settings through partnerships and outreach programs. Sustained funding for research and evaluation is needed to build the evidence base on which workplace interventions are most effective and for which populations, and to close the measurement gap that currently limits the workplace's ability to learn and improve.

### **16.3 Regulatory and Guidance Opportunities**

Whilst some guidance currently exists, there is a clear and unmet need for consolidated, plain-language guidance that addresses all four frameworks together.

### **16.4 The Role of Industry Bodies and Peak Organisations**

Industry bodies and peak organisations are well-positioned to accelerate progress by supporting their members in meeting their obligations and building their capability. The findings suggest a strong appetite among organisations for peer learning and sector-wide collaboration, sharing approaches, resources, and learnings rather than each organisation working in isolation.

Industry bodies can play a specific and valuable role in developing sector-specific frameworks and toolkits, convening communities of practice, integrating DFV awareness into existing industry training pathways, and normalising DFV as a legitimate and important workplace safety issue across their membership.

### **16.5 Public/Private Partnerships**

Several organisations consulted described the value of partnerships with specialist DFV services and community organisations. These partnerships extend the reach of workplace programs, provide access to expertise that organisations cannot develop in-house, and create visible connections between the workplace and the broader community response to DFV. Government investment to support and scale these partnerships would significantly multiply their impact.

## 17. Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the findings of this report, WorkHaven's practitioner experience, and the review of existing resources. They are structured in two parts: The What (the action required) and The Who (who carries primary responsibility for that action). Gaps identified in existing government resources (previously Section 6.4) have been incorporated directly into the relevant government recommendations.

### 17.1 The What: Priority Actions

#### **W1. Develop and fund a national workplace DFV resource hub**

Consolidate existing guidance into a single, actively maintained hub for employers of all sizes. Include plain-language summaries of legal obligations across the Fair Work Act, WHS laws, sex discrimination duties, and privacy legislation integrated guidance that does not currently exist anywhere. Provide practical policy templates, manager response guides, and referral directories.

#### **W2. Create targeted support for small and medium businesses**

Develop a free advisory service providing practical, confidential guidance for small and medium businesses. Small businesses represent 97.3%\* of all Australian businesses and employ 39% of the private sector workforce, yet current resources often overlook their specific context or constraints. Sector specific tools are also needed for industries where current guidance does not reflect the workforce culture or the particular challenges managers face.

*\*Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman citing ABS Australian Industry data 2023–24\**

#### **W3. Invest in practical manager training at scale**

Support the development and delivery of practical DFV response training specifically designed for frontline managers and team leaders, with modules tailored to different industries. All employers should implement mandatory training covering how to respond to disclosures, access referral pathways, apply workplace adjustments, and support employees at different stages of DFV. Refresh training at least every two years.

#### **W4. Strengthen specialist DFV services in regional and rural areas**

Strengthen and resource specialist DFV services in regional and rural Queensland, enabling employers to actively partner with specialist services to strengthen referral pathways and access expertise.

#### **W5. Develop and communicate standalone DFV workplace policies**

Develop or review a standalone DFV policy that clearly outlines available support, explains how to access it discreetly, defines workplace responsibilities, includes referral pathways to specialist services, and addresses both people affected by violence and those who may be using it. Communication of that policy is as important as the policy itself.

#### **W6. Build sector-wide collaboration and communities of practice**

Develop sector-specific DFV frameworks and toolkits with priority given to construction, hospitality, and agriculture. Establish communities of practice that bring employers together to share approaches and accelerate collective progress. Integrate DFV awareness into existing industry training pathways, leadership development, and WHS training.

#### **W7. Assign formal leadership accountability for DFV response**

Assign formal responsibility for DFV response at the executive or senior leadership level, and include DFV in risk registers, annual reporting, and strategic planning.

#### **W8. Establish measurement and continuous improvement**

Implement baseline measurement of DFV response at employer and sector levels, set targets for improvement, and review annually. Invest in national data and reporting frameworks to enable evidence-based policy and funding decisions.

## **17.2 The Who: Responsibilities by Actor**

### **17.2.1 Government**

- **W1:** Develop and fund the national workplace DFV resource hub with integrated legislative guidance
- **W2:** Increase targeted support for small and medium businesses
- **W4:** Strengthen and resource specialist DFV services in regional and rural Queensland

- **W8:** Invest in national data and measurement frameworks for workplace DFV response

### 17.2.2 Industry Bodies and Peak Organisations

- **W2:** Develop sector-specific tools for industries where current guidance does not reflect workforce culture or the specific challenges managers face.
- **W3:** Support manager training programs delivered at scale across sectors and regions
- **W3:** Integrate DFV training into existing industry training pathways and professional development
- **W6:** Establish sector-specific frameworks and communities of practice
- **W6:** Publicly champion DFV as a legitimate and important workplace safety issue

### 17.2.3 Employers

- **W3:** Implement mandatory practical manager and team leader DFV training
- **W4:** Establish clear referral pathways to specialist DFV services and actively partner with them
- **W5:** Develop a standalone DFV policy and communicate it actively and regularly
- **W7:** Assign formal executive-level accountability for DFV response
- **W8:** Establish baseline measurement and annual review of DFV response effectiveness

## 18. Conclusion

The findings of this report tell a story that is both encouraging and sobering.

There are Australian workplaces doing remarkable work in their approach to DFV. Employers who have invested in specialist training, built genuine cultures of support, extended leave provisions well beyond the legislative minimum, and created the conditions where employees feel safe to come forward. These organisations demonstrate, clearly and compellingly, that meaningful workplace responses to DFV are possible, and that when they are done well, they make a real difference to real people.

There are also many organisations that are contemplating their approach. This includes workplaces where:

- DFV leave sits unused because employees do not know it exists
- managers want to help but do not know what to say
- policies are filed away and never communicated
- the gap between good intentions and practical action remains wide.

Closing that gap is the work that remains.

This report does not present a picture of failure. It presents a picture of a workforce and an employer community that is increasingly aware of its responsibilities and genuinely motivated to do more, but that needs better tools, clearer guidance, and stronger support to get there. Therefore, this report presents an opportunity.

The recommendations in this report are not aspirational. They are grounded in what evidence shows works, what employers have reported they need, and what WorkHaven's six years of specialist experience have demonstrated is possible. They are practical, achievable, and relevant to organisations at every stage of their DFV response journey.

WorkHaven extends its deepest thanks to every leader and organisation that contributed to this research. Your willingness to share honestly about what is working, what is hard, and what you wish you had more support with is what makes this report what it is. Your experiences and insights will shape how Australian workplaces respond to DFV for years to come. And as resources, insights and approaches develop, it is important that workplaces evolve in their response to this complex, difficult and prolific issue.

DFV is not a private matter. It is a workplace issue, a community issue, and a shared responsibility. Together, through government action, industry leadership, and employer commitment, we can build workplaces where every person is safe, respected, and supported.

## 19. Appendices

- **Appendix A** - Research instruments: interview guide, consultation questions, employer survey
- **Appendix B** - Detailed methodology and participant profile
- **Appendix C** - Supporting data tables and quantitative survey results
- **Appendix D** - Definitions and terminology
- **Appendix E** - List of literature review sources and frameworks reviewed

## 20. Appendix A: Research Instruments

### 20.1 Interview Guide

The one-on-one consultations formed the primary qualitative evidence base for this report. Interviews were conducted with senior leaders and representatives across a diverse range of Australian organisations spanning multiple sectors, organisation sizes, and geographic locations. The purpose of the interviews was to gather in-depth, first-hand insights into how organisations are currently approaching DFV in the workplace, the challenges they face, the opportunities they see, and the gaps they identify in current systems and support.

A semi-structured interview format was used. This approach was chosen because it provides a consistent framework for gathering comparable data across all participating organisations, while allowing participants the flexibility to share experiences, perspectives, and examples specific to their own context. Semi-structured interviews are particularly well-suited to sensitive and complex subject areas where the depth of individual experience is as important as the themes that emerge across the cohort.

Each interview was guided by five core questions designed to map directly onto the key finding's sections of the report, ensuring a clear line of sight between what participants were asked and how their responses are presented. All interviews were conducted via video conference, recorded with the explicit consent of each participant, and transcribed prior to analysis. All participants and organisations are de-identified throughout this report.

**Interviewer's note:** These questions are intended as a guide only. Follow the participant's lead and allow the conversation to go deeper where relevant. Questions and clarifying follow-ups are encouraged.

#### 20.1.1 Question 1

What measures and resources do you have in place to address DFV in the workplace?

**Prompt areas if not covered:**

- Policies, procedures and leave entitlements
- Training and awareness activities
- EAP's or specialist support services

- Internal communications and intranet resources
- Financial support measures
- Support for customers or clients

### 20.1.2 Question 2

What is your organisation's general ethos or approach to DFV or other similar topics?

**Prompt areas if not covered:**

- How does leadership approach and model the organisation's values around DFV?
- Is DFV framed as a workplace issue, a health and safety issue, a values issue, or something else?
- How does the organisation create a culture where employees feel safe seeking support?

### 20.1.3 Question 3

What are the key challenges you have faced or may anticipate in addressing DFV in your workplace?

**Prompt areas if not covered:**

- Barriers to disclosure or uptake of available support
- Leader capability and confidence
- Resourcing, capacity, and competing priorities
- Cultural or workforce-specific challenges
- Responding to employees who use violence

### 20.1.4 Question 4

What are the key opportunities you have faced or may anticipate in addressing DFV in your workplace?

**Prompt areas if not covered:**

- Partnerships, programs, or initiatives that have made a positive difference
- Leadership or cultural enablers
- Technology, communications, or infrastructure improvements

- Sector-wide or cross-organisation opportunities

### 20.1.5 Question 5

Are there any gaps you can see in your workplace or others that could help the organisation address DFV in a relevant and meaningful way?

#### **Prompt areas if not covered:**

- Gaps in policy, procedure, or entitlements
- Gaps in capability, training, or resources
- Systemic gaps across the sector or industry
- What additional support from government, industry bodies, or specialist organisations would be most helpful?

## 20.2 Employer Survey

The employer survey was developed as the quantitative component of this research, complementing the qualitative insights gathered through the one-on-one consultations. While the consultations provided depth and nuance from a select group of organisations, the survey was designed to reach a broader audience of Australian employers and gather data on the prevalence of DFV-related practices, the challenges organisations face, and the opportunities they see for improvement.

The survey was distributed anonymously via SurveyMonkey to WorkHaven's networks, promoted through LinkedIn, and shared via industry contacts and partner organisations. It was open to any Australian employer regardless of sector, size, or current level of DFV engagement. No identifying information was collected from respondents, and all responses are treated as confidential. Results are reported in aggregate only, and no individual or organisation is identifiable in any published findings.

The survey is structured across four sections: organisational profile, current DFV initiatives and practices, challenges and opportunities, and optional additional information.

### 20.2.1 Section 1: About Your Organisation

#### **Industry sector (select one)**

- Construction
- Professional Services

- Government
- Education
- Healthcare
- Community Services / Not-for-profit
- Manufacturing
- Retail
- Hospitality
- Mining / Resources
- Transport / Logistics
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Organisation size (select one)**

- 1 to 19 employees
- 20 to 99 employees
- 100 to 499 employees
- 500 to 999 employees
- 1,000 or more employees

**Your role (select one)**

- Executive / Leadership
- Human Resources
- WHS / Safety
- People & Culture
- Manager
- Employee Wellbeing / EAP
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### 20.2.2 Section 2: Your Organisation's Current Approach

**Question 2:** Beyond the legislated paid DFV leave entitlement, does your organisation currently have any initiatives, policies, or practices in place to address DFV?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**Question 3:** If yes, which of the following does your organisation currently provide? (Select all that apply)

- A DFV workplace policy
- Employee awareness communications and resources
- Manager or leadership training
- General employee training or education
- Safety planning or workplace support processes
- Referral pathways to external support services
- EAP promotion specific to DFV
- Flexible work arrangements for impacted employees
- Dedicated DFV contact officers or champions
- Partnerships with specialist DFV organisations
- Other activities (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 4:** Please provide a brief description of any DFV-related activities, initiatives, or approaches currently in place within your organisation.

*Short written response*

### 20.2.3 Section 3: Challenges and Opportunities

**Question 5:** What are the main challenges your organisation faces in addressing DFV in the workplace? (Select all that apply)

- Sensitivity of the issue
- Lack of knowledge or expertise

- Limited budget or resources
- Competing organisational priorities
- Lack of time or capacity
- Uncertainty about what support should look like
- Concerns about managing disclosures appropriately
- Perceived lack of employee demand or awareness
- Lack of leadership buy-in
- Difficulty engaging managers
- Other challenges (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 6:** What opportunities do you see for improving your organisation's approach to DFV?

You may wish to consider leadership engagement, training and education, policy development, partnerships, workplace culture and employee wellbeing initiatives.

Short written response

#### 20.2.4 Section 4: Additional Information

**Question 7:** Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your organisation's approach to DFV?

*Optional written response*

**Question 8:** Would you like to receive information about workplace DFV training, policy support, or other services?

- Yes
- No

## 21. Appendix B - Survey Data Tables

The following tables present the full quantitative results from the Workplace DFV Insights Survey conducted in May 2026 (n=20). Some questions permitted multiple selections and proportions for these questions may exceed 100%. All responses are anonymous.

### 21.1 Table B.1 Industry Sector (Q1, n=19)

Industry Sector	Responses	%
Construction	4	21%
Community Services / NFP	4	21%
Other (Trade, Insurance, Financial Services)	3	16%
Professional Services	2	11%
Education	2	11%
Mining / Resources	2	11%
Government	1	5%
Healthcare	1	5%
All other sectors	0	0%

Table B.1: Industry sector of respondents

### 21.2 Table B.2 Organisation Size (Q2, n=19)

Organisation Size	Responses	%
1-19 employees	4	21%
20-99 employees	0	0%
100-499 employees	5	26%
500-999 employees	3	16%
1,000+ employees	7	37%

Table B.2: Organisation size of respondents

### 21.3 Table B.3 Respondent Role (Q3, n=19)

Role	Responses	%
Executive / Leadership	6	32%
Human Resources	5	26%
People & Culture	3	16%
Manager	2	11%
Other	2	11%
Diversity & Inclusion	1	5%

Table B.3: Respondent roles

### 21.4 Table B.4 DFV Initiatives Beyond Legislated Leave (Q4, n=19)

Response	Count	%
Yes — initiatives or policies in place	12	63%
No — legislated leave only	6	32%
Unsure	1	5%

Table B.4: Organisations with DFV initiatives

### 21.5 Table B.5 Types of Support Provided (Q5, n=16, multiple response)

Type of Support	Count	%
Employee awareness communications / resources	11	69%
Flexible work arrangements	11	69%
DFV workplace policy	9	56%
Referral pathways to external support services	9	56%
EAP promotion specific to DFV	9	56%
General employee training or education	8	50%
Manager or leadership training	5	31%
Safety planning or workplace support processes	4	25%
Dedicated DFV contact officers / champions	2	13%
Other activities	2	13%
Partnerships with specialist DFV organisations	1	6%

Table B.5: Types of DFV support currently provided (multiple response)

**21.6 Table B.6 Key Challenges (Q7, n=18, multiple response)**

Challenge	Count	%
Lack of knowledge or expertise	8	44%
Uncertainty about what support should look like	8	44%
Limited budget / resources	7	39%
Sensitivity of the issue	6	33%
Competing organisational priorities	4	22%
Other challenges	4	22%
Lack of time / capacity	3	17%
Perceived lack of employee demand	2	11%
Concerns about managing disclosures	1	6%
Lack of leadership buy-in	1	6%
Difficulty engaging managers	0	0%

*Table B.6: Key challenges in addressing DFV (multiple response)*

**21.7 Table B.7 Opportunities for Improvement (Q8, n=19, multiple response)**

Opportunity Area	Count	%
Training and education	14	74%
Partnerships	8	42%
Employee wellbeing initiatives	7	37%
Leadership engagement	6	32%
Policy development	6	32%
Workplace culture	4	21%
Other opportunities	1	5%

*Table C.7: Opportunities for improving workplace DFV response (multiple response)*

**21.8 Methodology Note**

This survey was conducted in May 2026 and received 19 complete responses. Results are presented as proportions of those who answered each question. Given the small sample size, findings should be treated as indicative rather than statistically generalisable.

## 22. Appendix C: Definitions and Terminology

The following definitions are provided to support readers who may be unfamiliar with specific terms used throughout this report. Where a definition is drawn from a legislative or authoritative source, that source is cited. Where no single authoritative source exists, definitions reflect the understanding applied in this report, informed by current Australian practice and research.

### 22.1 Core DFV Terms

#### **Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)**

Behaviour by a person towards another person with whom they are in a relevant relationship (including intimate partners, family members, or informal care relationships) that is physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically, or economically abusive, threatening, coercive, or aimed at controlling or dominating the other person through fear. DFV encompasses a broad range of behaviours that may occur as single incidents or as part of an ongoing pattern.

**Source:** *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 (Qld), Section 8; Queensland Courts - What is Domestic Violence? ([www.courts.qld.gov.au](http://www.courts.qld.gov.au))*

#### **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)**

Violence, abuse, or controlling behaviour perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner, including spouses, de facto partners, boyfriends or girlfriends, and dating partners. Intimate partner violence is a subset of family and domestic violence and is used most commonly in academic research and public health contexts. It encompasses physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse. This report uses DFV as the primary term but references IPV where citing specific research that uses this terminology.

**Source:** *WorkHaven usage note - consistent with Australian Institute of Health and Welfare usage ([www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au))*

#### **Family and Domestic Violence (FDV)**

An alternative term for DFV is used interchangeably across Australian legislation, policy, and practice. The ordering of the words differs across jurisdictions and organisations, but the meaning is substantively the same. This report uses DFV throughout for consistency.

**Source:** *WorkHaven usage note - consistent with Australian Institute of Health and Welfare usage ([www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au))*

### **Coercive Control**

A pattern of abusive behaviours over time used to intimidate, manipulate, isolate, and dominate a partner or family member. Coercive control can be physical or non-physical and may include emotional and psychological abuse, economic abuse, isolation from family and friends, monitoring and surveillance, sexual coercion, and cyberstalking. Unlike single incidents of physical violence, coercive control is characterised by its ongoing, cumulative nature. From 26 May 2025, coercive control became a criminal offence in Queensland under the Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024, carrying a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment.

**Source:** *Queensland Police Service ([www.police.qld.gov.au/domestic-violence](http://www.police.qld.gov.au/domestic-violence)); Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 (Qld)*

### **Victim or Person Affected by Violence**

A person who is experiencing or has experienced DFV. "Person affected by violence" is increasingly used in workplace and service settings because it is inclusive and non-labelling, recognising that a person is more than their experience of violence. It can also encompass those indirectly affected, such as children or other family members. This report uses "person affected by violence" and "victim-survivor" according to context.

**Source:** *WorkHaven usage note; consistent with usage by Our Watch, 1800RESPECT, and the Queensland Government*

### **Victim-Survivor**

A person who has experienced DFV. The term is preferred in contemporary Australian practice over "victim" alone because it acknowledges both the harm experienced and the person's strength, agency, and resilience. This report uses "victim-survivor" throughout.

**Source:** *WorkHaven usage note - consistent with usage by Our Watch, 1800RESPECT, and the Queensland Government*

### **People Using Violence / People Who Use Violence**

Terminology is used to describe individuals who perpetrate DFV. This language is preferred in contemporary practice because it focuses on behaviour rather than attributing a fixed identity to the person, and because it acknowledges the possibility of

behavioural change. This report uses this term alongside "perpetrator," both of which are in current use.

**Source:** *WorkHaven usage note - consistent with usage in Queensland Government DFV policy frameworks*

### **Perpetrator**

A person who commits DFV against another person. See also People Using Violence above.

**Source:** *Common usage in Australian legislation and DFV practice*

### **Cycle of Violence**

A model describing the recurring patterns that can characterise abusive relationships, including periods of tension building, an incident of violence or abuse, a reconciliation or honeymoon phase, and a period of calm, after which the cycle may begin again. The model has been influential in DFV practice, though it is recognised that not all abusive relationships follow this pattern and that coercive control may be present continuously rather than cyclically.

**Source:** *Commonly attributed to Lenore Walker (1979); referenced in Our Watch and 1800RESPECT educational resources*

### **Safety Planning**

A structured process, typically conducted with the support of a specialist DFV practitioner or trained workplace contact, that helps a person experiencing DFV identify risks, make decisions about their safety, and put practical measures in place to reduce harm. Safety planning in a workplace context may include adjusting work schedules, updating contact details, installing security measures, and developing a plan to respond to threatening contact at work.

**Source:** *1800RESPECT; Queensland Police Service; Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre*

### **Early Intervention**

Action taken to identify and respond to DFV before it escalates, causes serious harm, or becomes entrenched. Early intervention in a workplace context may include noticing changes in an employee's behaviour, creating an environment where employees feel safe to disclose, and connecting people with support before a crisis occurs.

**Source:** *Our Watch - Change the Story (2nd ed., 2021); Queensland Government DFV Prevention Framework*

### **Economic Abuse**

A form of DFV that involves controlling, withholding, misusing, or sabotaging a person's access to financial resources, employment, or economic independence. Economic abuse can include preventing a person from working, running up debt in their name, withholding money for essential needs, or destroying property. It is a common barrier to leaving an abusive relationship.

**Source:** *Queensland Courts - What is Domestic Violence? (www.courts.qld.gov.au); ANROWS research*

### **Third-Party Harassment**

Harassment directed at a worker by a person external to the organisation, such as a client, customer, contractor, supplier, or delivery driver. Employers have WHS obligations to manage the risk of third-party harassment in the same way as internal workplace hazards.

**Source:** *Safe Work Australia - Family and Domestic Violence Information Sheet; Comcare Regulatory Guide*

## **22.2 Workplace and Legislative Terms**

### **Disclosure**

The act of a worker telling a colleague, manager, or employer that they are experiencing, or have experienced, DFV. Disclosures may be formal or informal, full or partial, planned or spontaneous. How an employer responds to a disclosure significantly affects whether the person feels safe seeking further support.

**Source:** *WorkHaven usage note- consistent with 1800RESPECT and Our Watch guidance*

### **Positive Duty**

A legal obligation introduced into the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) in December 2022, requiring all organisations and businesses covered by the Act to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate, as far as possible, sexual harassment, sex-based harassment, sex discrimination, conduct creating a hostile workplace environment on the ground of sex, and related acts of victimisation. Unlike previous reactive obligations, the positive duty requires employers to act proactively before harm occurs. From 12

December 2023, the Australian Human Rights Commission has the power to enforce compliance.

**Source:** *Australian Human Rights Commission - The Positive Duty under the Sex Discrimination Act (www.humanrights.gov.au); Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Act 2022 (Cth)*

### **Psychosocial Hazard**

Anything in the workplace that could cause psychological harm, such as harm to a worker's mental health. Psychosocial hazards arise from the way work is designed, managed, or carried out, or from the work environment and relationships. Common psychosocial hazards include bullying, sexual harassment, violence and aggression, poor workplace relationships, high job demands, and low job control. DFV is recognised as a source of psychosocial risk where it affects the workplace.

**Source:** *Safe Work Australia - Psychosocial Hazards (www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au); Safe Work Australia Model Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work (2022)*

### **Psychosocial Risk**

The possibility that a worker will be exposed to a psychosocial hazard and that this will result in psychological or physical harm. Employers under Australian WHS laws are required to manage psychosocial risks in the workplace so far as is reasonably practicable.

**Source:** *Safe Work Australia Model Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work (2022); Comcare Regulatory Guide*

### **Workplace Health and Safety (WHS)**

The laws, regulations, and practices in Australia that protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of workers in the workplace. Under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth) and corresponding state and territory legislation, health is defined to include both physical and psychological health. In Queensland, the key legislation is the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) and the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (Qld).

**Source:** *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth); Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)*

### **National Employment Standards (NES)**

A set of minimum employment entitlements that apply to all employees covered by the national workplace relations system in Australia, set out in the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth).

From 1 February 2023, the NES includes an entitlement to 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave per year for all employees, including casual employees.

**Source:** *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth); Fair Work Ombudsman — Family and Domestic Violence Leave* ([www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au))

### **Sexual Harassment**

Unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in connection with work that a reasonable person would anticipate would offend, humiliate, or intimidate the person to whom the conduct is directed. Sexual harassment is prohibited under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) and relevant state and territory laws and is also a psychosocial hazard that must be managed under WHS legislation.

**Source:** *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth), Section 28A; Australian Human Rights Commission* ([www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au))

### **Sex-Based Harassment**

Conduct that demeans, humiliates, or intimidates a person on the basis of their sex, but which may not be explicitly sexual in nature. Sex-based harassment is prohibited under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) and must be eliminated under the positive duty.

**Source:** *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth); Australian Human Rights Commission — Positive Duty guidance*

### **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

A confidential, employer-funded counselling and support service available to employees and often their immediate family members. EAPs typically provide short-term psychological counselling, financial advice, legal information, and referral to specialist services. While EAPs are a widely used and valuable workplace support mechanism, they may not always have the specialist expertise required to respond effectively to high-risk DFV situations.

**Source:** *Comcare; WGEA - Family and Domestic Violence resources; WorkHaven practitioner note*

### **Reasonable Adjustments**

Changes to the workplace, work arrangements, or work systems are made to support an employee's safety, wellbeing, or ability to continue working. In the context of DFV,

reasonable adjustments may include changes to shifts or rosters, relocation of workstations, changes to contact details or security protocols, and temporary changes to duties or location. Reasonable adjustments are made in consultation with the affected employees and are tailored to their individual circumstances.

**Source:** *Fair Work Ombudsman - Employer Guide to Family and Domestic Violence; WorkHaven usage note*

### **Trauma-Informed Approach**

A framework for practice in which organisations, policies, and individuals understand, recognise, and respond to the effects of trauma on the behaviour and wellbeing of those they work with. A trauma-informed approach is founded on principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment, and avoids practices that may re-traumatise or cause further harm to people who have experienced trauma. In a workplace DFV context, a trauma-informed approach shapes how disclosures are received, how investigations are conducted, and how support is provided.

**Source:** *Australian Institute of Family Studies - Trauma-Informed Practice (aifs.gov.au); Mental Health Australia; Quadara & Hunter (2016) cited in AIFS*

### **Vicarious Trauma**

The psychological impact experienced by a person who is indirectly exposed to another person's trauma through their work. In a workplace DFV context, vicarious trauma may affect managers and HR practitioners who regularly support employees experiencing violence. Organisations should provide supervision, debriefing, and support to workers who may be affected.

**Source:** *Australian Institute of Family Studies; referenced in Safe Work Australia psychosocial hazard guidance*

### **Hardship Provisions**

Policies and processes that allow organisations to pause, reduce, or waive financial obligations (such as debt repayments, fees, or penalties) for customers or clients who are experiencing financial hardship, including hardship caused by DFV. Hardship provisions are particularly relevant in the financial services, utilities, and banking sectors.

**Source:** *Australian Banking Association; referenced in consultation findings*

## Behavioural Change Program

A structured intervention designed to support a person who is using violence to take responsibility for their behaviour and develop non-violent ways of relating to others. Behavioural change programs are typically delivered by specialist organisations and are distinct from relationship counselling or mediation. Workplaces may refer employees to behavioural change programs as part of their response to employees who are using or at risk of using DFV.

**Source:** *Queensland Government DFV framework; Men's Referral Service (Australia)*

## De-identification

The process of removing or modifying information so that individuals or organisations cannot be identified from the data. In research contexts, de-identification protects the privacy and confidentiality of participants. In this report, all organisations and individuals are de-identified in the findings and any published material.

**Source:** *Office of the Australian Information Commissioner; WorkHaven research protocol*

## Informed Consent

A process by which a person voluntarily agrees to participate in a research or support activity after being provided with clear information about its purpose, how their information will be used, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent is a fundamental ethical requirement of research involving human participants.

**Source:** *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2023)*

## 22.3 Inclusion and Identity Terms

### LGBTQIA+

An acronym standing for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual, with the + acknowledging the diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations not captured by the preceding letters. People who identify as LGBTQIA+ may experience specific forms of DFV, including abuse related to their gender identity or sexual orientation, and may face additional barriers to seeking support.

**Source:** *ACON (Australia's leading LGBTQ+ health organisation); Rainbow Health Australia*

## **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)**

A term used in Australian policy and practice to describe people from backgrounds other than English-speaking, mainstream Australian culture. CALD communities may include people born overseas, people who speak a language other than English at home, and people from diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. CALD workers may face particular barriers to accessing DFV support, including language barriers, cultural stigma, visa status concerns, and unfamiliarity with Australian legal and support systems.

**Source:** *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; ANROWS research on DFV and CALD communities*

## **First Nations**

A term used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia — the first peoples of this continent. First Nations workers and communities experience DFV at disproportionately high rates and face specific barriers to support, including geographic isolation, cultural and community factors, and historical trauma related to colonisation. This report uses First Nations as the preferred term, consistent with contemporary Australian practice.

**Source:** *Our Watch - Changing the Picture: Addressing Violence Against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and their Children (2018)*

## **Gender-Based Violence**

Violence that is directed at a person because of their gender, or that disproportionately affects people of a particular gender. DFV is a form of gender-based violence, as is sexual harassment and sex-based harassment. Gender-based violence encompasses a broader category of violence than DFV alone and includes violence perpetrated in public spaces, online, and in institutional settings.

**Source:** *Our Watch - Change the Story (2nd ed., 2021); United Nations definition of gender-based violence*

## **Gender Equality**

The equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of people of all genders. Gender equality is both a goal and a driver of DFV prevention, research consistently demonstrates that gender inequality is one of the most significant drivers of violence against women.

Workplaces that actively promote gender equality are better positioned to prevent DFV and create safe, respectful environments for all employees.

**Source:** *Our Watch - Change the Story (2nd ed., 2021); WGEA*

### **Non-Gendered Communication**

Communication that does not assume or reinforce binary gender norms, and that is inclusive of people of all gender identities. In the context of DFV workplace programs, non-gendered communication ensures that support is accessible to all employees regardless of gender identity and does not inadvertently exclude or stigmatise those whose experiences do not fit a traditional male perpetrator / female victim narrative.

**Source:** *WorkHaven usage note; Rainbow Health Australia guidance*

### **Intersectionality**

A framework for understanding how multiple aspects of a person's identity — such as gender, race, class, disability, age, and sexual orientation — interact and overlap to shape their experiences of discrimination, disadvantage, and vulnerability. An intersectional approach to DFV recognises that people's experiences of violence and their access to support are shaped by multiple, overlapping factors, and that responses must be tailored accordingly.

**Source:** *Krenshaw (1989); Our Watch - Changing the Picture (2018); ANROWS research*

## **22.4 Organisational and Sector Terms**

### **Lived Experience**

The first-hand knowledge, perspectives, and insights of a person who has personally experienced a particular situation or condition - in this context, DFV. Lived experience is increasingly recognised in Australian policy and practice as a valuable and distinct form of expertise that should inform program design, policy development, and advocacy. WorkHaven's own CEO, Jo Mason, brings lived experience of DFV to the leadership and direction of this research.

**Source:** *ANROWS; Mental Health Australia; National Lived Experience Leadership and Advocacy Network (LELAN)*

## Social License

The ongoing acceptance and approval of an organisation's activities by the community and broader society. In the context of this report, social licence refers to the growing community expectation that employers will take meaningful action on DFV, and that failure to do so may affect an organisation's reputation, employee trust, and broader standing in the community.

**Source:** *Commonly used in Australian business and policy contexts; referenced in consultation findings*

## Bystander

A person who witnesses or is aware of behaviour that may constitute harassment, abuse, or other harmful conduct, and who has the opportunity to respond. In DFV prevention, bystander approaches engage people as active participants in calling out and preventing harmful behaviour, rather than passive observers. Bystander programs are increasingly used in workplace DFV and gender-based violence prevention.

**Source:** *Our Watch - Bystander Resources; Queensland Government Coercive Control Communication Framework (2024)*

## Peer Support

Informal or structured support is provided by colleagues, co-workers, or community members who share similar experiences. In the workplace DFV context, peer support may involve trained DFV champions or contact officers who provide a non-formal point of contact for employees, or informal networks where employees can connect and access information.

**Source:** *WorkHaven usage note - referenced in consultation findings*

## Workplace Advocate / DFV Champion

A trained employee who acts as an internal point of contact for colleagues experiencing DFV. Workplace advocates and DFV champions typically provide confidential, accessible first point of contact, can provide information about available supports, and can assist in connecting employees with specialist services. They are not counsellors or specialists, but serve an important role in creating visible, accessible pathways to support.

**Source:** *WorkHaven usage note - Our Watch Workplace Equality and Respect guidance*

## Community of Practice

A group of people who share a common concern, interest, or professional practice, and who come together regularly to share knowledge, learn from one another, and improve their collective practice. In the context of this report, communities of practice refer to sector-wide or cross-industry networks of employers who come together to share approaches to DFV, reduce duplication, and accelerate collective progress.

**Source:** *Wenger (1998); referenced in the recommendations section of this report*

## Leading Practice

An approach, program, or initiative that represents a high standard of current practice in a given field, based on available evidence and experience. Leading practice is a preferred term in Australian policy and research contexts over "best practice" because it acknowledges that practice continues to evolve and that what is considered leading will change as evidence develops.

**Source:** *WGEA; Australian Public Service Commission; WorkHaven usage note*

## Thematic Analysis

A qualitative research method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes within data. In this report, thematic analysis was applied to interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns, observations, and insights across the organisations consulted. The five interview questions provided the initial thematic framework, with additional themes emerging from the data.

**Source:** *Braun & Clarke (2006); Australian Institute of Family Studies research methodology guidance*

## Evidence Stream

A distinct and coherent body of evidence contributing to the findings of a research project. This report draws on three evidence streams: the primary qualitative interviews and consultations, the quantitative employer survey, and WorkHaven's practitioner insights. Treating practitioner knowledge as a formal evidence stream reflects a commitment to integrating experiential and practice-based knowledge alongside more traditional research data.

**Source:** *WorkHaven research protocol; ANROWS research methodology guidance*

---

**Self-Selection Bias**

A form of bias that may affect research findings when participation is voluntary and participants self-select into the study. In this research, self-selection bias may mean that organisations already engaged with DFV as a workplace issue are over-represented in the consultation cohort, potentially presenting a more positive picture of current practice than exists across the broader employer population. This limitation is acknowledged in Section 5.6 of this report.

**Source:** *Standard research methodology term, referenced in the limitations section of this report*

---

## 23. Appendix D: Literature Review Sources and Resources Reviewed

The following resources were reviewed as part of the literature review for this report. Resources are grouped by category. All links were verified as active at the time of writing.

### 23.1 Group 1: Legal and WHS Guidance

---

#### **Fair Work Ombudsman - Small Business Employer Guide to Family and Domestic Violence**

**Link:** <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/sites/default/files/migration/1414/employer-guide-to-family-and-domestic-violence.pdf>

**Summary:** Practical guidance for small business employers on preparing for, responding to, and supporting employees affected by DFV. Covers legal obligations, suggested policy content, leave entitlements, workplace safety measures, and referral to support services.

#### **Comcare - Regulatory Guide: Family and Domestic Violence at Work**

**Link:** <https://www.comcare.gov.au/scheme-legislation/whs-act/regulatory-guides/family-domestic-violence>

**Summary:** Guides Commonwealth jurisdiction employers on WHS duties when DFV creates workplace risk. Covers risk controls, consultation, safe systems of work, incident reporting, training, confidentiality, and leave provisions. Includes guidance on third-party DFV and employees using violence.

#### **Safe Work Australia - Family and Domestic Violence Information Sheet**

**Link:** [https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-01/family\\_and\\_domestic\\_violence\\_information\\_sheet.pdf](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-01/family_and_domestic_violence_information_sheet.pdf)

**Summary:** WHS-oriented overview of DFV as a workplace issue. Covers risk management steps, employer responsibilities, working from home considerations, and responding to workers who may be using violence.

#### **Safe Work Australia - Model Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work**

**Link:** <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-code-practice-managing-psychosocial-hazards-work>

**Summary:** Sets out a systematic risk-management model for psychosocial hazards at work. Directly relevant where DFV creates psychological harm. Covers identify, assess, control, and review steps, and reinforces that controls must be maintained and reviewed over time.

## 23.2 Group 2: Employer Practice and Policy Resources

### Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) - Family and Domestic Violence

**Link:** <https://www.wgea.gov.au/take-action/family-domestic-violence>

**Summary:** Provides workplace action guidance and resources to help employers respond to DFV and support affected employees. Covers legal responsibilities, leading practice supports, and links to key data and frameworks.

### Queensland Government - DFV Workplace Policy Guide

**Link:** <https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/ckan-publications-attachments-prod/resources/25a8c7f2-d94e-4d12-9676-b0c73719c9d9/dfv-workplace-policy-guide.pdf>

**Summary:** Practical guide for developing a workplace DFV policy. Covers the definition of DFV, why it is a workplace issue, case studies, guidance on supporting both affected employees and those using violence, and an overview of relevant legislation.

### Our Watch - Workplace Equality and Respect: How-to Guide

**Link:** <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/workplace/resources/workplace-equality-and-respect-how-to-guide>

**Summary:** Overarching guide for embedding gender equality and preventing DFV and sexual harassment in workplaces. Includes standards documents, communication toolkits, bystander action guides, and leader engagement resources.

### Fair Work Ombudsman - Employer Guide to Family and Domestic Violence (full version)

**Link:** <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/family-and-domestic-violence-leave/employer-guide-to-family-and-domestic-violence>

**Summary:** The full employer guide covering legal obligations, developing a workplace response, and supporting employees experiencing DFV.

---

**NSW Government - Domestic and Family Violence Workplace Support Policy (M2025-08, October 2025)**

**Link:** <https://arp.nsw.gov.au/m2025-08-domestic-and-family-violence-workplace-support-policy>

**Summary:** The most recently updated NSW Government workplace DFV policy for all government sector agencies, issued October 2025.

**Comcare - Regulatory Guide: Family and Domestic Violence at Work**

**Link:** <https://www.comcare.gov.au/scheme-legislation/whs-act/regulatory-guides/family-domestic-violence>

**Summary:** See Group 1 above.

**23.2.1 Group 3: Prevention Frameworks**

**Our Watch - Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women in Australia (2nd ed., 2021)**

**Link:** <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story>

**Summary:** The national evidence-based framework for a coordinated approach to preventing violence against women. Essential reference for the literature review and recommendations framework.

**AIHW - Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Summary**

**Link:** <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/resources/fdsv-summary>

**Summary:** The primary source for current Australian DFV prevalence statistics. Updated regularly. Key source for data cited throughout this report.

**23.3 Group 4: Cost, Economic Impact and Employment Research**

---

**Anne Summers: The Choice: Violence or Poverty (2022)**

**Link:** <https://www.violenceorpoverty.com/>

**Summary:** Landmark Australian research project linking DFV to women’s economic security and employment. Uses ABS data to show DFV pushes approximately 50% of affected women into lower income brackets with lasting effects on earning capacity and employment.

**Anne Summers: The Choice (peer-reviewed, Labour and Industry, 2023)**

**Link:** <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10301763.2023.2171685>

**Summary:** Peer-reviewed version of The Choice research. Demonstrates that DFV pushes approximately 50% of affected women into lower incomes, with direct employment disruption.

**Cordier et al: Australian survey of 658 survivors (Trauma, Violence and Abuse, 2023)**

**Link:** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10778012231181044>

**Summary:** Australian survey demonstrating DFV's lasting health effects damage employment outcomes. Directly relevant to the economic case for employer intervention.

**Showalter and McCloskey: DFV, job loss and employment instability (2021)**

**Link:** <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32009499/>

**Summary:** US study on how DFV causes job loss and employment instability. Provides the employment-disruption evidence base cited in the Introduction and Executive Summary.

**NSW Government (2023) Women's Opportunity Statement: Women's Safety**

**Link:** <https://www.nsw.gov.au/womens-opportunity-statement/background/womens-safety>

**Summary:** Updated economic modelling estimating DFV costs \$22 billion per year and sexual harassment costs \$3.5 billion per year. Most current Australian government citation for these figures.

**Cassells R, Duncan A, Hailemariam A and Mavisakalyan A (2025) Workplace policy responses to family and domestic violence: Assessing employers' costs and benefits of providing 10 days paid leave**

**Link:** <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-economic-and-labour-relations-review>

**Summary:** 2025 peer-reviewed study estimating total annual cost to employers of 10 days paid FDV leave at \$13.1–\$34.3 million nationally. Provides the evidence base for countering employer cost objections to DFV leave expansion.

---

**Summary:** US study on how DFV causes job loss and employment instability. Provides the employment-disruption evidence base cited in the Introduction and Executive Summary.

**Vodafone and KPMG: International benchmark on workplace impacts of domestic abuse**

**Link:** <https://www.vodafone.com/news/empowering-people/international-research-shows-workplace-impacts-of-domestic-abuse>

**Summary:** International research estimating approximately 80 million working women globally are affected by domestic abuse. Provides the global business case for employer action.

**Vodafone: Multi-country employer survey (2021)**

**Link:** <https://www.vodafone.com/news/press-release/employer-support-domestic-abuse-adapt-hybrid-working>

**Summary:** 2021 multi-country survey finding only 16% of workplaces had a DFV policy. A key statistic for the gaps and implications sections of this report.

### 23.4 Group 5: Effectiveness of Workplace DFV Programs

---

**Fitz-Gibbon, Pfitzner and McNicol: Victim-survivor experience of DFV leave (2023)**

**Link:** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/26338076221148203>

**Summary:** Australian study examining how victim-survivors experience DFV leave and what makes workplace support feel safe and accessible. Key findings: non-judgement, confidentiality, and manager capability are the determining factors.

**Sarpy, Shukralla, Greville and Thompson: WA workplace prevention program evaluation (2022)**

**Link:** <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/24/16703>

**Summary:** Evaluates a real Western Australian workplace DFV prevention program. Rare Australian evidence on what is effective when implemented. Open access.

**MacGregor, Oliver, MacQuarrie and Wathen: Review of 235 studies on DFV and work (2021)**

**Link:** <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31615345/>

**Summary:** The most comprehensive literature map available on DFV and work. Reviews 235 studies and identifies consistent themes across the evidence base. Essential reference for the literature review.

**Chan-Serafin, Sanders, Wang and Restubog: Women in leadership and DFV HR practices (2023)**

**Link:** <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22157>

**Summary:** Finds that organisations where women hold leadership roles adopt significantly more DFV-supportive HR practices. One of the most directly actionable findings in the literature for the recommendations framework.

**Giesbrecht: Concrete steps for effective workplace DFV response (2022)**

**Link:** <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32450746/>

**Summary:** Qualitative study providing concrete recommended steps for an effective workplace DFV response. Useful for the employer-level recommendations section.

## 23.5 Group 6: Policy Development and Legislative Context

**Ellicott: How Australia's paid DV leave policy developed (2023)**

**Link:** <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10301763.2023.2171683>

**Summary:** Traces the policy development history of Australia's paid DV leave entitlement. Useful policy background for the Introduction and Context section.

**Department of Social Services: Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave review (2024/25)**

**Link:** <https://www.dss.gov.au/national-plan-end-violence-against-women-and-children/progress/first-action-plan-progress/first-action-plan-activities-addendum/paid-family-and-domestic-violence-leave>

**Summary:** Government implementation summary and Flinders University review of the paid DFV leave entitlement. Evidence that the leave is working and increasing uptake. Most current Australian government evidence available (2024/25).

**Fair Work Ombudsman: Family and Domestic Violence Leave**

**Link:** <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/family-and-domestic-violence-leave>

**Summary:** The legal source for the 10 days paid DFV leave entitlement. The core Australian workplace legislative reference.

**Australian Government: Working for Women Strategy**

**Link:** <https://genderequality.gov.au/working-for-women/priority-area-1-gender-based-violence>

**Summary:** National gender-based violence strategy setting out expected workplace actions, including policies and bystander training. Relevant to the government-level recommendations.

**NSW Government: Women’s Opportunity Statement**

**Link:** <https://www.nsw.gov.au/womens-opportunity-statement/background/womens-safety>

**Summary:** NSW policy statement pairing the cost of DFV with workplace leave data. Provides a model for how state governments can make the business and policy case for employer action.

**23.6 Group 7: International Resources and Toolkits**

**Vodafone Foundation: Employer Toolkit: Recognise, Respond, Refer (2021)**

**Link:**

<https://assets.ctfassets.net/q7ob9vms4z5k/2XCQeWxBKyufpMauxT25fE/bf1791378b18b1e51d00fb663c09a3f9/vodafone-domestic-violence-abuse-toolkit-2021.pdf>

**Summary:** Ready-made employer toolkit structured around Recognise, Respond, Refer. A model program framework that can be referenced in the resource development roadmap.

**EU-OSHA: Domestic Violence and the Workplace (OSHwiki)**

**Link:** <https://oshwiki.osha.europa.eu/en/themes/domestic-violence-and-workplace>

**Summary:** European safety agency overview of domestic violence as a workplace issue. Includes international policy examples and reference to ILO Convention 190.

**23.7 Group 8: Academic Framing and Field Overview**

**Gavin and Weatherall: Editorial framing the field of domestic violence and work (2022/23)**

---

**Link:** <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10301763.2023.2171682>

**Summary:** Editorial framing the academic field of domestic violence and work. Useful orientation read for literature review.

**Stewart, MacMillan and Kimber: Clinical update covering workplace impacts and DV leave (2021)**

**Link:** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0706743720939676>

**Summary:** Clinical guidance update covering workplace impacts of DFV and DV leave provisions. Useful for the methodology and ethical considerations sections.

**Woods et al: Community attitudes in regional Australia (2023)**

**Link:** <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37036881/>

**Summary:** Surveys community attitudes in regional Australia to inform how to target prevention messaging. Particularly relevant to the section on regional and rural employer challenges. Open access.