WORKING WITH WORKPLACES
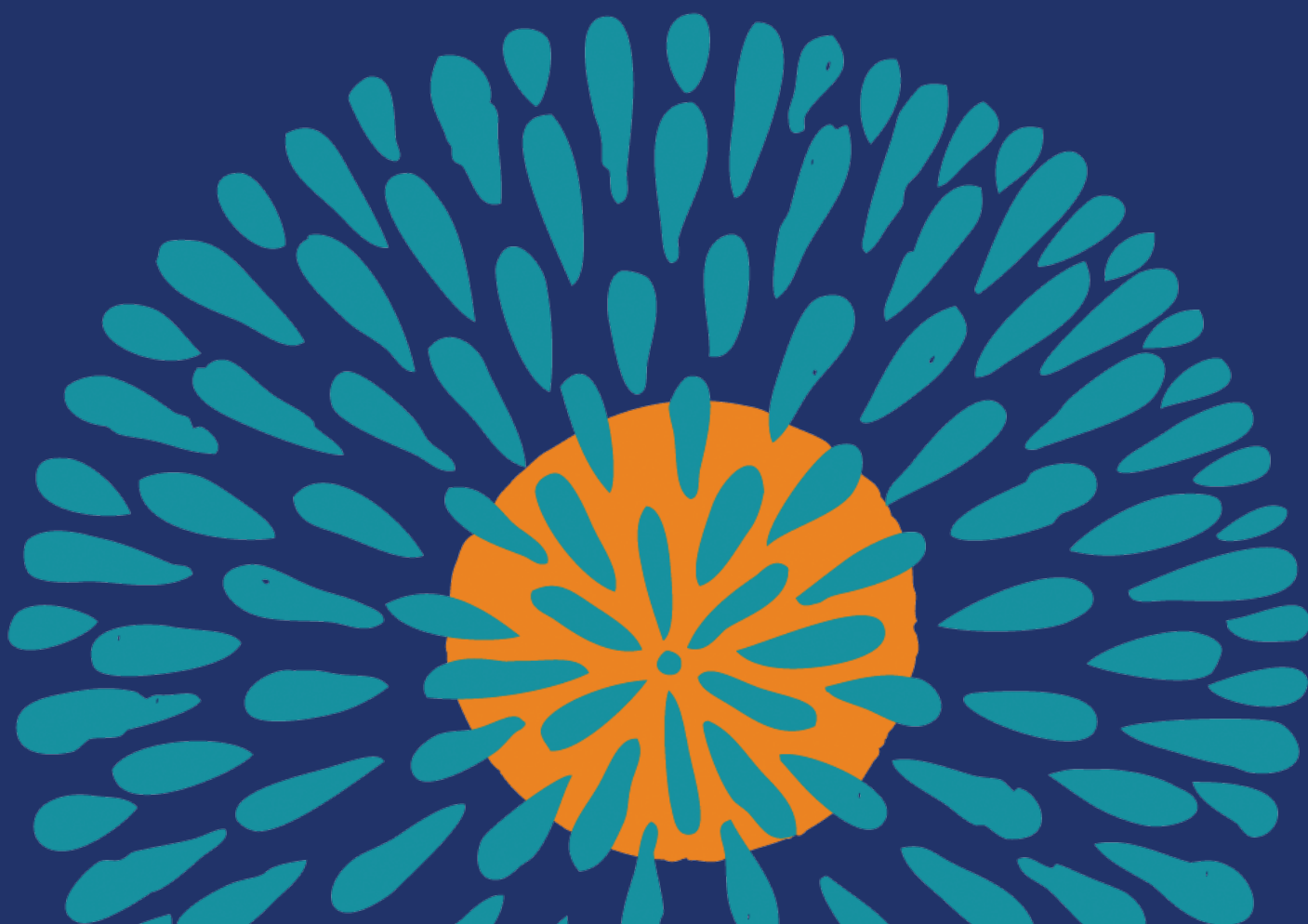
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND BYSTANDER PROGRAMS

Women's Health
V I C T O R I A

ABSTRACT

This paper explores some of the challenges, tensions and opportunities in workplace-based programs for the primary prevention of violence against women, based on findings from program evaluation. The purpose of this paper is twofold: firstly, it will inform the continuous improvement of Women's Health Victoria's *Take a Stand* program to ensure it remains consistent with current evidence and good practice. Secondly, it is anticipated that the findings will contribute to the evidence base on effective primary prevention practice in general, particularly in the context of the current focus in Victoria on workplaces as a key setting for the prevention of family violence and violence against women, and on bystander approaches to primary prevention.

ABOUT WOMEN'S HEALTH VICTORIA

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) is a statewide women's health promotion, advocacy and support service. We work collaboratively with women, health professionals, policy makers and community organisations to influence systems, policies and services to be more gender equitable to support better outcomes for women.

As a statewide body, WHV works with the nine regional and two statewide services that make up the Victorian Women's Health Program. WHV is also a member of Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC), the Victorian peak body for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women.

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INTRODUCTION

It has now been ten years since *Take a Stand* was launched, the first whole-of-organisation workplace program to prevent violence against women in Australia. Since the inception of *Take a Stand* in 2007, Women's Health Victoria (WHV) has accumulated considerable practice knowledge on how to engage workplaces to address and prevent violence against women through delivery of the program in a range of workplace settings.

This paper explores some of the challenges, tensions and opportunities for workplace-based violence prevention programs, based on our practice experience and findings from program evaluation. The purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it will inform the continuous improvement of the *Take a Stand* program to ensure it remains based on current evidence and good practice. Secondly, the findings will contribute to the evidence base on effective practice for the primary prevention of violence against women (PVAW), particularly in relation to using the workplace as a setting, and the role of bystander approaches in primary prevention.

Workplace and bystander approaches are currently a focus for the Victorian Government, as identified in *Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women* (2017) and the associated First Action Plan released in early 2018.

PRIMARY PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND *TAKE A STAND*

Primary prevention approaches to violence against women are informed by public health theory and practice. Primary prevention is action taken before negative health outcomes occur, and aims to prevent them from happening in the first place. In the context of violence against women, primary prevention approaches use whole-of-population initiatives to address the underlying 'drivers' – or causes – of violence. The current evidence base makes clear that the primary driver of violence against women is gender inequality (Our Watch et al. 2015; Our Watch 2017a, VicHealth 2007).[1]

Take a Stand aims to prevent violence against women by addressing its gendered drivers, using the workplace as a setting for change. The program recognises that workplaces are significantly affected by family violence, sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women, and that they also have a key role to play in preventing it.

Workplaces are key spaces where peer relationships, norms and stereotypes are formed, shaped and reinforced (Our Watch et al. 2015; Powell et al. 2015). Workplaces can help shift cultural norms to eliminate sexism and disrespectful behaviour, promote workplace gender equality, support victims of family violence or sexual harassment, and hold perpetrators accountable when violence impacts the workplace. They also provide an opportunity to reach large populations of people (Powell et al. 2015; Our Watch 2017a).

Take a Stand was initially developed by WHV with funding from VicHealth, and piloted with Linfox between 2007 and 2011. The original focus of the program was prevention of domestic violence and encouraging men to speak out about behaviour and attitudes within the workplace that support domestic violence, as well as other forms of violence against women, particularly within male-dominated workplaces.[2]

TAKE A STAND *is a whole-of-workplace program that provides support and capacity-building to workplaces to prevent and address family violence, sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women.* **Take a Stand** *engages all levels of the workplace using a staged approach. The three components of the program are:*

LEAD: Workplaces are supported to establish the infrastructure, supports, policies and procedures needed to encourage bystander action and assist staff affected by violence.

TRAIN: Staff across the workplace gain an understanding of violence against women, and the skills and confidence to speak up against sexism as positive bystanders, and to support colleagues affected by violence.

PROMOTE: Key program messages are promoted across the workplace, and staff are encouraged to actively participate in violence prevention activities and campaigns for gender equality.

Since then, *Take a Stand* has grown and transformed. The program has been delivered by WHV and partner women's health services to more than 25 workplaces across metropolitan and regional Victoria, and more recently in Queensland.[3] Workplaces that have undertaken the *Take a Stand* program include large corporations, such as Aurizon, not-for-profits such as Oxfam Australia, and a range of government agencies, including local councils and Victoria Police. In 2016-17, the program was updated and expanded to maintain alignment with the growing evidence base. An adapted version focusing on sexual harassment was developed and piloted, and additional content included to broaden the program's reach to mixed gender and 'white collar' workplaces.

The 'Train' component of *Take a Stand* utilises a bystander approach. 'Bystander action' is defined as 'safe and appropriate actions taken to challenge the drivers of violence against women' (Our Watch 2017a). In the context of primary prevention, bystander action refers to actions that individuals and organisations can take to challenge attitudes, behaviours, practices or policies that contribute to violence against women, including examples of sex discrimination and 'everyday sexism'.

The bystander approach draws on theories about social psychology and the impact of norms on individual behaviour. It sends a message that violence against women is everyone's business and that everyone has a positive role to play in eliminating it. By focusing on a positive message – that change is possible – *Take a Stand* reinforces respectful behaviours and centres on what people in the workplace can do to make a difference.

Take a Stand delivers bystander action training to all staff across the workplace. The training explores the links between gender inequality and violence against women. It provides practical tools for employees and managers to directly challenge sexism, gender stereotypes, inequality and discrimination.

While the 'Train' bystander component of the program is often the most prominent aspect for workplaces engaging WHV, *Take a Stand* places equal importance on the 'Lead' and 'Promote' components. These aim to create and sustain the enabling environment and culture that fosters individual action. These components include:

- engaging workplace leaders and requiring them to actively demonstrate a commitment to the prevention of violence against women, and to communicate this to staff and external stakeholders;

- supporting workplaces to embed structural mechanisms to respond to violence against women (for example, by developing family violence policies and procedures, and providing training for key staff on how to respond to employees perpetrating or experiencing family violence); and

- supporting whole-of-workplace engagement in violence-prevention campaigns and activities (for example, by developing communications campaigns targeting staff or external stakeholders around annual events that promote women's equality, such as International Women's Day).

The program continues to be responsive to new evidence about what works, through integration of findings from program evaluations, evidence from research, and practice insights from other programs.

THE ROLE OF BYSTANDER PROGRAMS IN THE WORKPLACE SETTING

Workplaces are identified as one of the key settings for violence prevention in *Change the Story*, the national framework for preventing violence against women and children (Our Watch et al. 2015). The Victorian Government has also highlighted the role of workplaces in its strategy *Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women* (2017) and its First Action Plan under *Free from Violence*, released in early 2018. Similarly, the development of the forthcoming Our Watch *Workplace Equality and Respect* standards – a suite of standards and tools to support workplaces to take action to prevent violence against women – recognises the pivotal role workplaces play in preventing violence against women through promoting gender equality.

There is also increasing evidence to support the use of bystander approaches in violence prevention. Recently, Our Watch conducted research into community attitudes towards bystander action, finding that many in the community are concerned about sexism, gender discrimination and inequality in Australian society, and want workplaces to address it. Of the 1,204 Australians surveyed, 79% wanted practical tips about ways to safely intervene when witnessing disrespect towards women and girls, 75% wanted practical tips about how to respond to casual sexism in a social environment, and 94% felt employers should take a leadership role in educating their workforce about respectful relationships between men and women (Our Watch 2017a). Evidence demonstrates that bystander programs can be effective. A recent review published by VicHealth has identified that bystander programs consistently produce positive changes across cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural domains (Taket and Crisp, 2017). However, the majority of these evaluations have been undertaken with adolescents and young adults in educational settings, while relatively few have been carried out in workplace settings (Taket and Crisp, 2017).

As the demand both for workplace violence prevention programs and bystander action training increases, it is imperative that practice learning is shared, in order to ensure a robust, effective and mutually reinforcing network of workplace programs across the country. In this context, and with the **Take a Stand** program marking its 10-year anniversary, it is timely to reflect on our practice and share learnings with others working in this dynamic and evolving area.

METHOD

This paper discusses the challenges, tensions and opportunities in workplace-based violence prevention programs, based on WHV and partner agencies' experience in delivering *Take a Stand* in different workplaces. It draws on program evaluations undertaken by WHV and licensed *Take a Stand* partner agencies (Women's Health Loddon Mallee 2015,[4] Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West 2017[5]).

In particular, the paper reflects on WHV's recent experience in delivering *Take a Stand* in two very different workplace settings: Victoria Police, a highly-structured organisation with a male-dominated workforce; and Oxfam Australia (Oxfam), which has a predominantly female workforce and a focus on social justice and community development.

Victoria Police Transit Safety Division engaged WHV in 2016-17 to implement a tailored version of *Take a Stand* focusing on sexual harassment as part of the agency's response to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's independent review into sex discrimination and sexual harassment in Victoria Police. In 2016-2018, Oxfam engaged WHV to implement *Take a Stand*, focusing on family violence, with staff from Oxfam's offices across Australia.

As part of the evaluation of the delivery of the program in these two workplaces, WHV undertook interviews and focus groups with key informants in both organisations, as well as collecting feedback from participants immediately after training delivery, and capturing the reflections of WHV's training facilitators and staff involved in program delivery.

The paper considers challenges, opportunities and learning across three key areas:

1. whole-of-workplace approaches: designing for effective organisational change

2. bystander training design: questions of scope and content

3. bystander training delivery: dynamics and dangers.

The paper presents the challenges in each of these areas, followed by consideration of possible strategies and practice tips for addressing them.
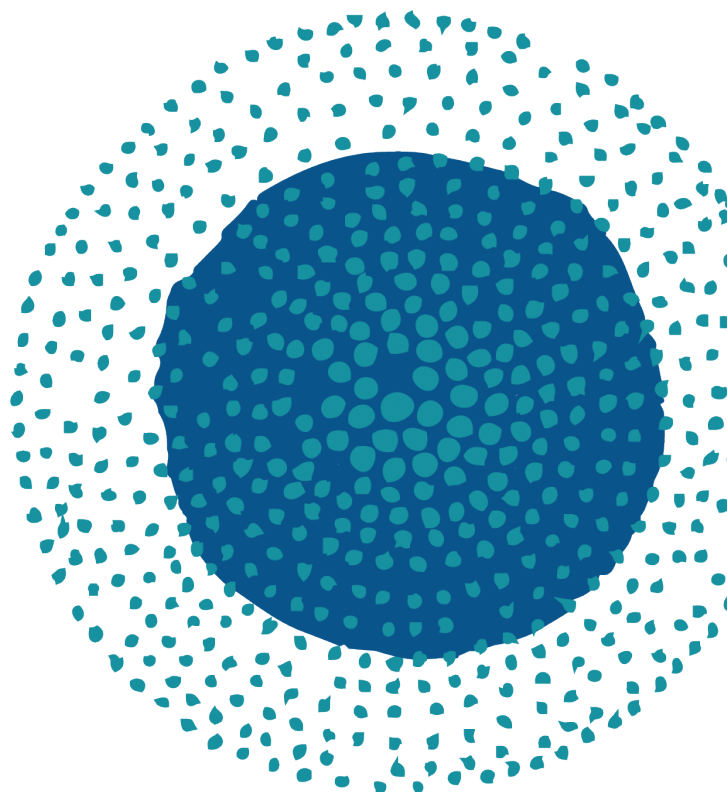
WHOLE-OF-WORKPLACE APPROACHES: DESIGNING FOR EFFECTIVE ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

CHALLENGE 1: MAINTAINING A FOCUS ON STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE

Effective engagement with violence prevention programs can involve a considerable investment of workplaces' resources, time and commitment. Because of this, workplaces often approach WHV wishing to undertake only the bystander training component of the program.

However, evidence indicates that whole-of-workplace approaches are best practice (Powell et al. 2015). Relying on standalone bystander training to change workplace culture places responsibility for change on individuals and ignores the broader structural barriers or enablers that influence workplace attitudes and practices regarding violence against women and gender equity. The importance of change at the community or organisational level (including the need for policies supporting prosocial behaviour and accountability, and for senior groups within a setting to model respectful behaviour and prosocial norms), was highlighted in a recent review of the research on bystander program effectiveness (Taket & Crisp 2017).

There are also safety concerns associated with delivering one-off training in workplaces that are not equipped to manage disclosures of experiences of violence that commonly arise during or following training. Experience shows that disclosures are a common occurrence in the delivery of *Take a Stand* and other primary prevention programs, and workplaces need to be equipped to manage these and support staff. Workplace support mechanisms may be particularly important in rural and regional areas where external family violence support services may be more difficult to access.

It is fundamental to the success of workplace programs that workplace leaders are engaged and understand that, while increasing employees' skills to speak up is important, an effective, whole-of-workplace approach requires changes to organisational practices, cultures and structures. It is particularly important to obtain broad executive level 'buy-in', as practice experience suggests that where engagement is driven by one committed staff member, there is a risk of drop off in workplace participation if that staff member moves on from their role.

In addition, WHV encourages workplaces to engage more broadly in gender transformative work.[6] As identified by Our Watch (2017a), effective violence prevention in workplace settings requires gender equality to be embedded in all organisational structures (for example, by eliminating discriminatory attitudes, practices, policies and procedures; promoting flexible working arrangements and parental leave for men and women; supporting women in leadership; and other measures to enable women to participate fully and safely in the workplace).

Practice tips for building organisational engagement in cultural change

- Present the social and economic case for preventing violence against women and promoting gender equality, highlighting its benefits to workplace productivity and culture, in addition to broader social benefits beyond the workplace.

- Ensure workplace leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to promoting gender equality when they sign up to the program.

- Ensure workplaces allocate resources and staff time to support the program, including designating a program contact person, and enabling a majority of staff from all levels of the workplace to attend bystander training.

- Assist the workplace to establish structural supports prior to the delivery of training, including a family/domestic violence policy and procedures, and designated family violence contact officers to support staff.

- Provide workplaces with a range of resources and templates to assist them to implement structural and cultural changes, such as model family violence clauses and domestic and family violence policies and procedures, and support them to adapt these to the workplace.

- Ensure the workplace explicitly communicates that bystanders will be protected and supported, so that the workplace provides a safe place for staff to speak up.

- Train managers and human resources staff in how to recognise and respond to employees affected by domestic violence or sexual harassment.

- Offer gender equity training for workplaces[7] so that they can continue to build organisational capacity to promote gender equality within the workplace.

- Evaluate and monitor the impacts and any unintended effects of the program.

Combined, this engagement strategy supports workplaces to promote and normalise gender equality in a sustainable way.
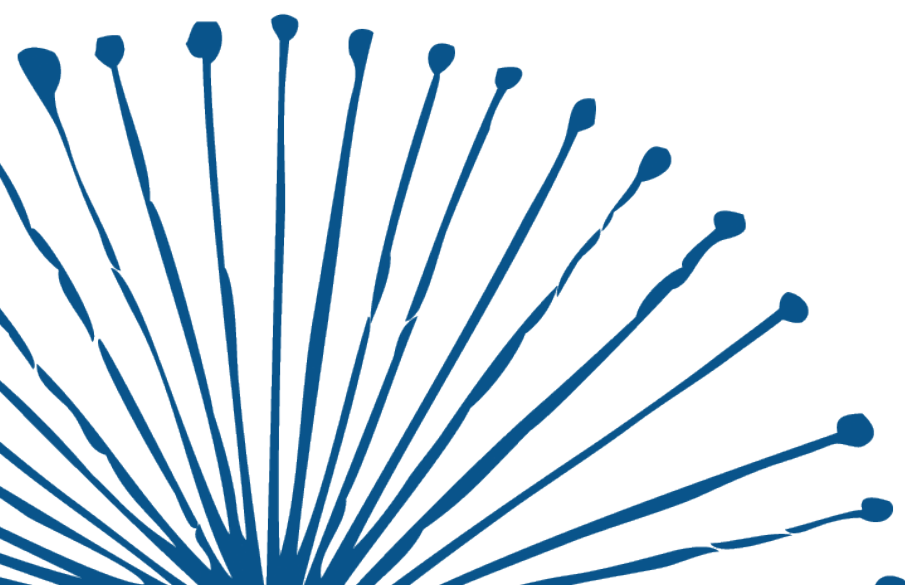
CHALLENGE 2: DELIVERING BYSTANDER PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

The original focus of *Take a Stand* was preventing family violence. Recently a version of the program was developed to focus on preventing sexual harassment. Both forms of violence against women share the same gendered drivers, and therefore much of the *Take a Stand* program content is similar. Both programs explore the links between sexual harassment, family violence, and other forms of violence against women, and provide training for bystanders to challenge the attitudes, behaviours and practices that cause them, including sexism, gender stereotypes and inequality.

However, findings from WHV's recent evaluations of program delivery suggest bystander training on sexual harassment may be more confronting for participants than training on family violence. Facilitators observed that because participants perceive that family violence mostly occurs between couples in private or at home, they appeared more comfortable discussing it as they were able to distance themselves from the content. On the other hand, discussion of sexual harassment was more challenging as the focal point was incidents within the workplace itself. Discussion of sexual harassment may be particularly sensitive where a workplace has been publicly criticised for having a culture that supports sexual harassment (for example following the VEOHRC review into Victoria Police in 2015).

While both forms of violence may share similar drivers, programs designed to prevent family violence cannot simply be 're-purposed' to focus on sexual harassment. WHV employed a number of strategies to manage the challenges associated with delivering a program focused on sexual harassment. One of these was to ensure that the organisation had clear policies for reporting and investigating harassment, and provided confidential counselling and support for participants should they require it (both internally, and through external programs).

Our experiences in this area show that there is still much work to be done on how to design and implement sexual harassment bystander programs in workplaces. Few studies have explored bystander responses to workplace sexual harassment in particular (McDonald & Flood 2012), and further research is needed to examine the differences and challenges for program delivery.

Focusing on specific forms of violence against women, such as family violence or sexual harassment has advantages. In recent years, there has been increased community awareness of the prevalence of family violence (for example, in the context of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence and subsequent Victorian Government strategies to address it), as well as heightened awareness of sexual harassment in the entertainment industry and elsewhere. Focusing on the forms of violence that are of current community concern helps to encourage workplaces to engage with programs like *Take a Stand*.

An alternative approach is to expand the focus of the program, to consider violence against women more broadly, rather than having a narrower focus on family violence or sexual harassment. This makes clear the links between different forms of violence against women, including those that occur within the workplace and outside of it, and encourages participants to think more broadly about the impact of gender inequality.

Practice tips for delivering workplace programs on sexual harassment

- Acknowledge the complexity and 'discomfort' of talking about sexual harassment as well as the work already underway in the workplace to bring about change. Participants can be engaged as people who would act for change, rather than potential victims or perpetrators, focusing on opportunity rather than blame.

- Ensure that the program 'does no harm' and provides support for bystanders and participants experiencing sexual harassment. While counselling, advocacy and support programs for family violence have been available across Victoria for many years (although these have historically been underfunded), there are fewer external referral and support options for those who have experienced sexual harassment. This means particular attention is needed to ensure that the workplace has appropriate avenues for reporting harassment, acting on complaints, supporting victims and protecting bystanders.[8]

CHALLENGE 3: BEING INCLUSIVE OF ALL EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE WHILE FOCUSING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A related question arises when considering how to be inclusive of all experiences of family violence while maintaining a focus on gender inequality. Within the PVAW sector, important work is being undertaken to define and conceptualise an inclusive and intersectional gendered understanding of violence, following recognition that this is a gap in current evidence and practice. This concern has been reflected by a small number of participants involved in *Take a Stand*, who perceived that concentrating on the most common and prevalent pattern of family violence – by men against women – minimised other experiences of victimisation, such as family violence or sexual violence against men, or against people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, non-binary or gender diverse. For some, these concerns stemmed from a desire to recognise gender and sexual diversity. For example, a key informant from one workplace said:

> *'[a couple of staff] had some issues around how we were so predominantly focused around the woman and that type of thing … [they thought] it was quite a traditional view on domestic violence.'*

WHV supports an approach to violence prevention that recognises diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Recent updates and adaptations of *Take a Stand* have explicitly acknowledged diverse experiences of victimisation and perpetration. The program identifies that most of the violence experienced by women – as well as the majority of violent incidents experienced by men – is perpetrated by men. At the same time, *Take a Stand* identifies that family violence is also experienced and perpetrated by people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, non-binary or gender diverse. All of these forms of violence share some of the same drivers – for example, rigid and binary constructions of masculinity and femininity, gender inequality and disrespect towards women – in addition to other causes and systems of oppression (State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) and the Equality Institute 2017; Our Watch 2017a).

WHV's experience shows that it is important to directly address these issues in training. Programs like *Take a Stand* provide a useful opportunity to identify myths, provide accurate evidence, and explain how gender is linked to different patterns of victimisation and perpetration. The materials provided to workplaces as part of the program include a section discussing this topic and facilitators are provided with resources and coaching on how to engage with this issue. This helps to ensure the program is respectful, inclusive, and informed by the latest evidence.

Practice tips to help promote an inclusive approach

- From the beginning of the program, establish why the program focuses on gender inequality as the underlying driver of violence against women, the most prevalent form of family violence.

- Explicitly acknowledge diverse experiences of victimisation and perpetration, including forms of violence experienced on the basis of sexuality and gender identity; identify that these share some of the same drivers as men's violence against heterosexual women, in addition to other causes; and identify that these forms of violence have significant negative impacts.

- Make clear that the family violence policies, and information about how to support colleagues affected by family violence, are relevant to any victim of family violence, regardless of gender or sexuality.

- Identify that the strategies for bystander action can be applied to addressing homophobia, transphobia, sexism, heterosexism or other discriminatory behaviour such as racism and ableism.

More work is needed to develop understandings of family violence that are inclusive of the experiences of people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. These need to recognise the ways in which rigid gender roles and stereotypes contribute to violence and are compounded other individual, relational and societal factors (State of Victoria [Department of Premier and Cabinet] and the Equality Institute 2017; State of Victoria 2018).

Further work is also needed on effective strategies for delivering these complex messages in violence prevention. Time constraints within *Take a Stand* training sessions make it challenging to find a balance between recognising diverse experiences of interpersonal violence and acknowledging the prominence of the gendered drivers of violence against women. However, as the evidence base emerges around drivers of different forms of interpersonal violence and how these intersect with the gendered drivers, WHV will continue to refine this element of *Take a Stand*'s scope.
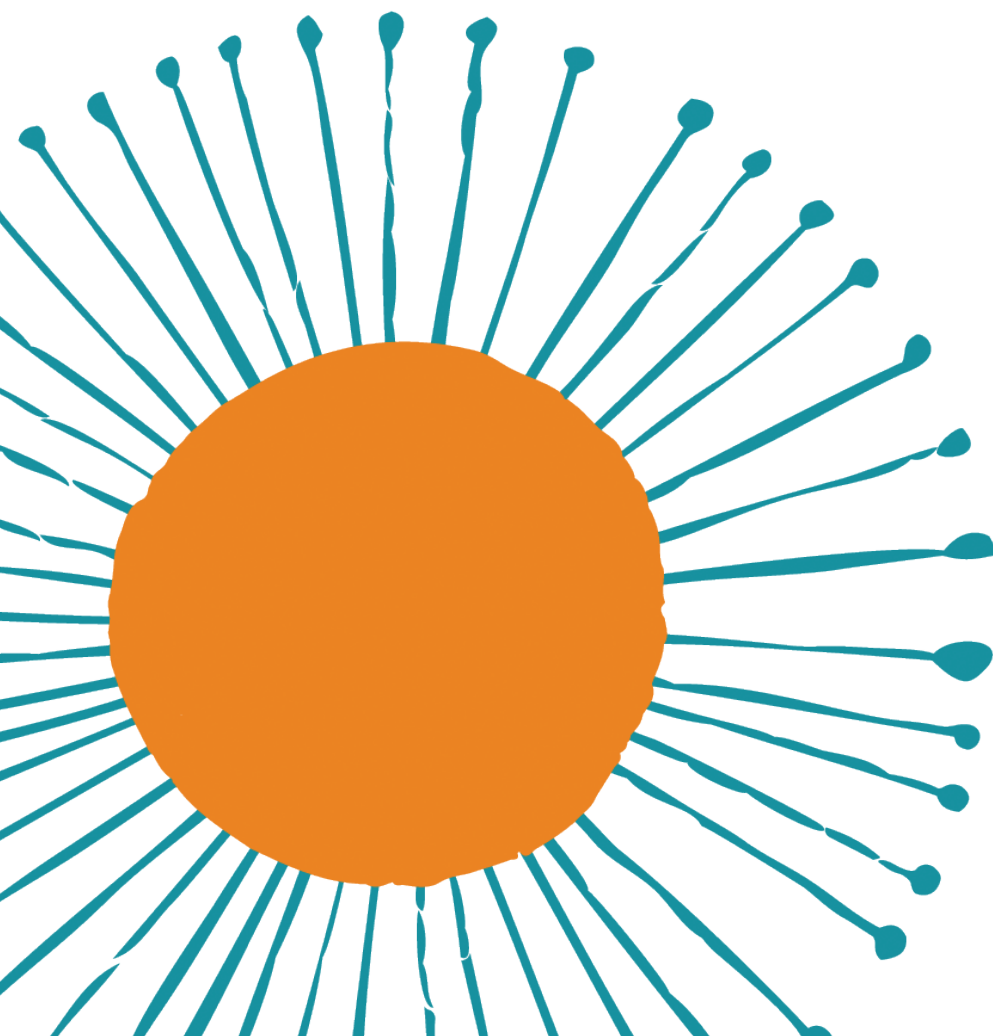
CHALLENGE 4: EMBEDDING SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACE CULTURAL CHANGE

Embedding and sustaining workplace change to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women is challenging, complex, and requires long-term work. This means we need to be realistic about what workplace programs can achieve within time and resource constraints.

It can be difficult for PVAW practitioners and organisations to engage workplaces on a long-term or ongoing basis, due to the cost and resourcing involved, and because the workplace's focus might shift to addressing another social or organisational issue. Many PVAW programs, like *Take a Stand*, are involved with the workplace for a limited period of time (for example, over the course of a year). PVAW practitioners/programs encourage and support workplaces to 'own' the program and sustain changes once the involvement of the external PVAW organisation ends. This can include, for example, assisting the workplace to identify, train and support workplace 'champions'; form an internal action group; or engage with local family violence or women's health services in primary prevention programs and campaigns (such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign).

However, resource constraints, competing priorities and staff turnover can limit workplaces' ongoing commitment. While it is encouraging that PVAW is a priority for an increasing number of workplaces, there is a risk that initial efforts to change attitudes and behaviours will not be maintained if or when the social and political focus on family violence shifts. This highlights the importance of workplaces embedding formal policies, processes and initiatives within their organisational structures, including structural changes like family violence leave, flexible working arrangements, paid parental leave and gender-equitable recruitment processes. Workplace managers also need to role-model and promote utilisation of these policies and entitlements, to help shift the culture in the workplace.

While evaluations of *Take a Stand* suggest that the program does have an impact (for example, after undertaking the program, training participants report increased knowledge about family violence and confidence to speak up about sexism), there is currently limited capacity to collect information about whether momentum for change is sustained. A recent review of bystander interventions found that few evaluations of bystander programs have examined the extent to which attitudinal changes are maintained over time, with most studies measuring impacts within six months of program delivery (Taket & Crisp 2017). In addition, most evaluations only measure the impacts of the program on participants' knowledge and attitudes. Few program evaluations measure the impacts on actual bystander behaviour, and those that do rely on self-reported behaviours (Powell 2014; Taket & Crisp 2017).

Ideally, ongoing monitoring and long-term follow-up evaluations are needed to build the evidence base about how to effectively build momentum and sustain long-term change. PVAW practitioners need to keep testing and sharing learnings from implementing workplace programs in different workplaces and settings. Shared learning forums, including communities of practice, play a critical role in developing the evidence base, along with academic research.

At the same time, it is important to recognise the resource-intensive nature of this work, both for workplaces wanting to implement violence prevention programs and for the PVAW organisations supporting them to do so.

Practice tips for embedding sustainable change and building the evidence base

- Build program messages into employee induction processes and staff codes of conduct

- Assist workplaces to identify, train and support champions' (for example, individuals in key positions, or workplace action groups) who can continue to promote change withing the workplace.

- Assist workplaces to embed structural changes to promote a gender equitable workplace, (such as flexible working arrangements, family violence leave, paid parental leave and gender-equitable recruitment processes), and encourage managers to act as role models in using these policies and entitlements.

- Assist workplaces to establish relationships with local PVAW organisations and programs.

- Encourage workplaces to engage in annual campaigns to promote gender equality or prevent violence against women.

- Explore ways of monitoring and evaluating the long-term impacts of the program (for example, regular whole-of workplace surveys of attitudes, behaviours and perceptions of the culture in the workplace; data collection on use of gender equitable workplace policies).

- Discuss and share practice experiences and learnings about how to embed change in workplaces with other practitioners and organisations engaged in PVAW work.
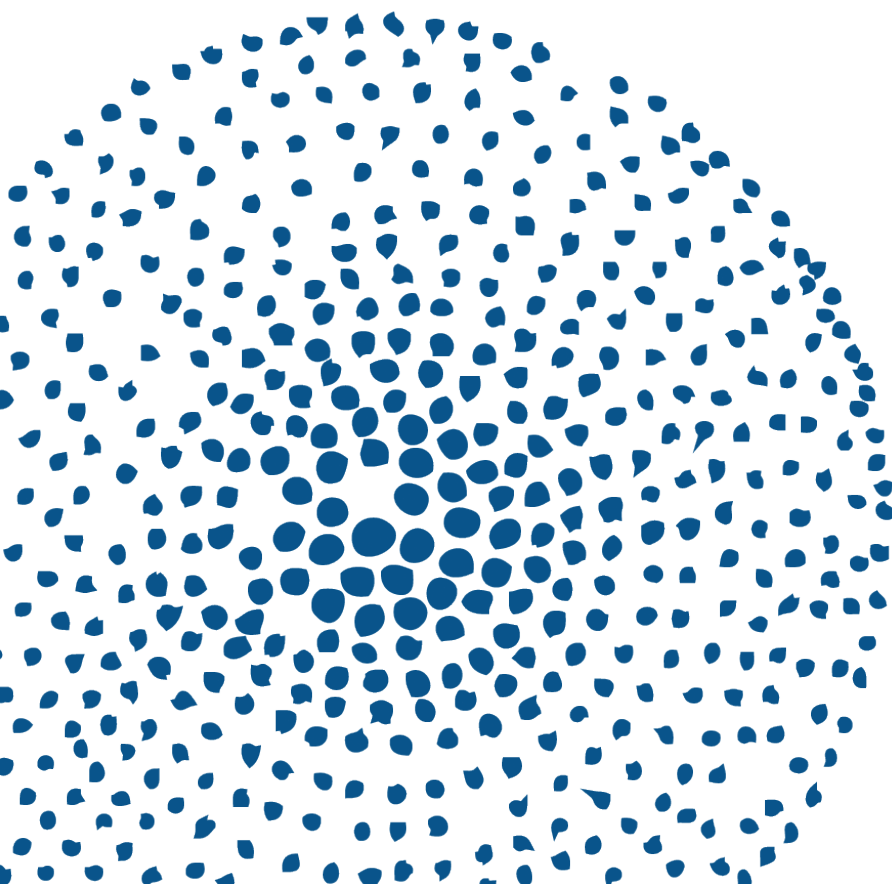
BYSTANDER TRAINING DESIGN: QUESTIONS OF SCOPE AND CONTENT

CHALLENGE 5: ACKNOWLEDGING UNEQUAL POWER IN THE WORKPLACE

A key consideration for meaningful bystander training is how to provide a set of useable skills and tools that acknowledge the reality of unequal power structures and dynamics in the workplace.

Whether employees take action as bystanders relates not only to their level of awareness, individual sense of responsibility or confidence to act, but is also affected by their assessment of the potential risks of speaking out, and the level of cultural and structural workplace support for them in taking action (see, for example, McDonald et al. 2016). Researchers have observed that models of bystander action have not adequately recognised how differences in bystander power, position and status affect the likelihood of taking action (Banyard 2015). This may in part be because early models focused on bystander action to assist strangers (Banyard 2015). In a work environment, there are often considerable differences in power among staff, which may relate to their formal role and status in the workplace, or factors such as their age, gender, sexual identity, ability, class, cultural background or race. These may impact on their ability to take bystander action.

Take a Stand was originally delivered within male-dominated organisations and developed with a predominantly male audience in mind. In the initial pilot, delivered at Linfox, there was a focus on encouraging men to call out sexist or discriminatory behaviour or attitudes among their peers within a male-dominated workplace. Since then, delivery of the program in a variety of organisations – including those with relatively equal numbers of male and female employees – has prompted careful consideration of how to promote a sense of personal responsibility to take bystander action, while also acknowledging that not all employees have equal power in a workplace. For example, female employees and others with less formal or informal power in the workplace, may face significant negative consequences if they speak up and/or feel uncomfortable speaking up due to a fear of reprisals.

The potential risks for some employees in speaking up about sexism or discrimination were an important consideration for WHV in delivering *Take a Stand* to Victoria Police. Training facilitators noted that female participants spoke less in training sessions where there were few women present, and were more outspoken when there was a greater number of female participants (see also Challenge 10). In addition, junior police officers appeared to be particularly uncomfortable about 'breaking rank' and speaking out about sexist behaviour, though they strongly supported change within policing culture. This reflects the findings of the recent review into sexual harassment in Victoria Police, which identified an entrenched workplace culture of everyday sexism and gender-based hostility. The review found that female employees, and male employees who were gay or whose gender identity or behaviour did not fit with traditional masculine norms, reported fears of being ostracised or damaging their reputation or career if they challenged sexualised jokes and behaviour (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission [VEOHRC] 2015). Since the review, Victoria Police has implemented a variety of measures to create a more gender inclusive workplace, including engaging WHV to deliver *Take a Stand*.

Those with influence within an organisation, and who have a responsibility for ensuring a safe and non-discriminatory workplace, are less likely to face reprisals for taking action to challenge sexism and gender inequality. Recognising this, *Take a Stand* requires executive-level commitment and sign off as part of the 'Lead' component, and encourages all staff, including managers, executives and board members, to attend bystander training.

Practice tips to help acknowledge and address power imbalances when delivering bystander training

- Ensure managers are prepared to take the lead, recognising their greater power and influence in the workplace.

- Provide clear messages that employees should consider their own safety and potential repercussions, and that bystanders are not expected to speak up if this will place their own safety and wellbeing at risk.

- Provide information about how and where bystanders can seek support both within and outside of the workplace, and about the policies and structures in place to protect bystanders.

- Acknowledge that not all employees have equal power in the workplace and some may not feel safe or comfortable taking a stand – particularly if they are likely to be targeted or punished for doing so – and that those with more power in the workplace may be in a better position to take action.

- Encourage participants to consider a range of possible bystander actions, rather than emphasising only immediate, public action. Bystander actions may include providing support to a colleague who has experienced sexual harassment, taking a colleague aside to raise concerns about their behaviour, offering to report behaviour on behalf of a colleague, or encouraging the workplace to undertake further training (for example, on responding to sexual harassment or promoting gender equity in the workplace). This provides participants with options for how they might take action in a way that feels safe.
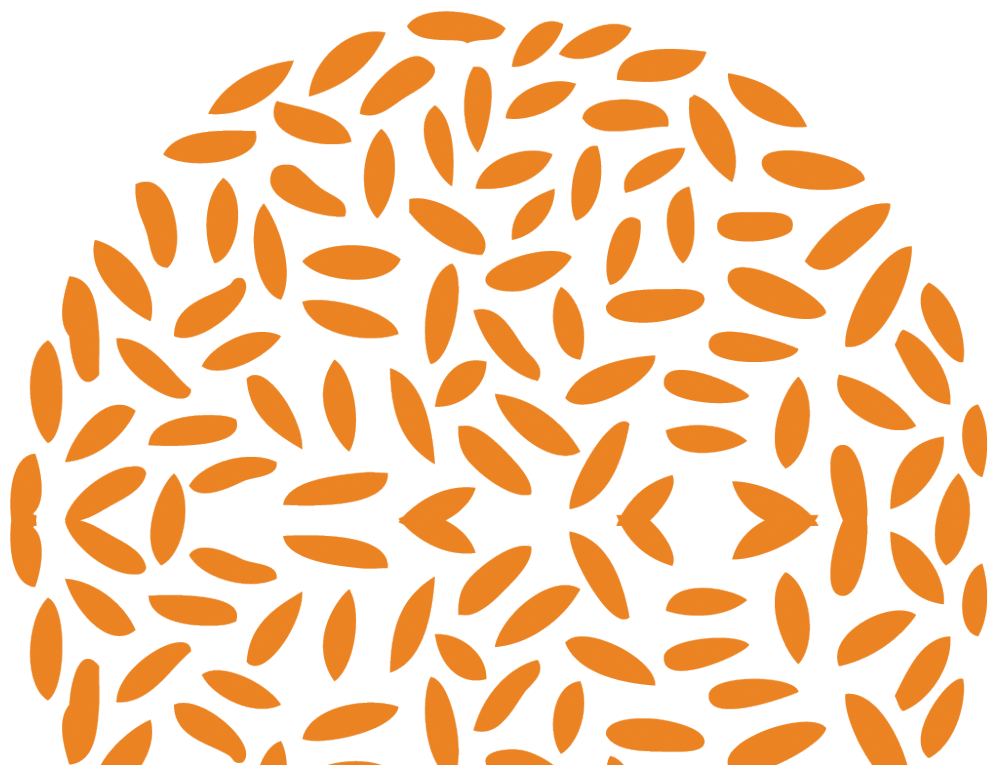
CHALLENGE 6: ENGAGING MEN WITHOUT REINFORCING TRADITIONAL MASCULINE NORMS

The social construction of masculinity – emphasising dominance, power and control – is central to men's violence against women. A persistent challenge for violence prevention initiatives is how to encourage men to reflect on their behaviour and take action, without reinforcing or colluding with male privilege (Flood 2015). Evidence suggests interventions aimed at men are more likely to be effective if they explicitly address the practices, norms and relations associated with manhood (Flood 2015).

Bystander programs often use language that reflects traditional masculine norms (for example, valourising men as leaders, protectors or heroes), and this can be problematic (Flood 2015). It is important that programs like *Take a Stand* avoid language or messages that reinforce masculine power or privilege. In communicating messages promoting bystander action, *Take a Stand* is careful to avoid using language that associates 'standing up' with masculinity, or with 'protecting' women.

Communicating these messages without reinforcing masculine norms and power creates particular challenges in male-dominated workplaces, especially where the core of the work is based on practices of power, protection and paternalism, such as Victoria Police (see also Challenge 10).

A further challenge for bystander training is how to increase awareness of the prevalence of men's perpetration of violence without triggering a defensive response. Feedback from facilitators and participants has identified that when providing statistics about the extent of male violence against women, acknowledging that 'it's not all men' who perpetrate violence helps to reduce male participant defensiveness.

While using these messages may minimise men's potential discomfort, they can inadvertently promote a focus only on physical or sexual forms of violence, as opposed to other forms of coercion and dominance, or the broader patterns of male privilege, sexism, discrimination and gender inequality. They may also enable participants to make a distinction between two types of men: well-meaning men and 'other men' who perpetrate violence (Flood 2015). It is important to reflect on how these messages are provided, to ensure male participants acknowledge and reflect on their own privilege or role in sustaining and benefitting from gender inequality. For instance, a strategy employed by one male facilitator was to acknowledge examples from his own past where his behaviour or comments were problematic and to 'unpack' this with *Take a Stand* participants.

Practice tips to help ensure programs do not reinforce traditional masculine norms

- Carefully consider how language is used and how key messages are presented, and avoid associating bystander action with masculine power or privilege, or with 'protecting' women.

- Include personal stories (including from facilitators) to promote an open and self-reflective approach to learning.


CHALLENGE 7: PREPARING BYSTANDERS FOR PUSH BACK WHEN SPEAKING UP

Bystander approaches, including *Take a Stand*, tend to focus on building skills and knowledge to support an initial response to sexism, discrimination or gender inequality. They do this by identifying and role-playing strategies for how bystanders can speak up or take action immediately after an incident or comment (for example, by expressing disagreement or discomfort in relation to sexist comments, or talking to the person afterwards about their behaviour). However, few bystander models explore or address the consequences of taking action for the bystander, the victim, the perpetrator and others (Banyard 2015).

This issue has been raised in recent evaluations of *Take a Stand* training, with participants expressing a desire for greater discussion of the potential consequences of speaking up, and how to deal with the reactions they may receive after taking action (for example, being criticised or ostracised by colleagues). As a result, in recent *Take a Stand* training sessions WHV has included extended role-plays and scenarios to explore how bystanders can deal with potential reactions to speaking up. This additional content has been well received by participants.

Practice tips to prepare bystanders for push back

- Acknowledge the complexity and potential consequences of taking action as a bystander.

- Provide strategies to assist bystanders to respond to push back or resistance after speaking up, and enable participants to explore and practise these through role plays and scenarios. This approach is consistent with broader strategies that encourage anticipating 'backlash' or resistance and being prepared to manage or respond to it (see Challenge 7).
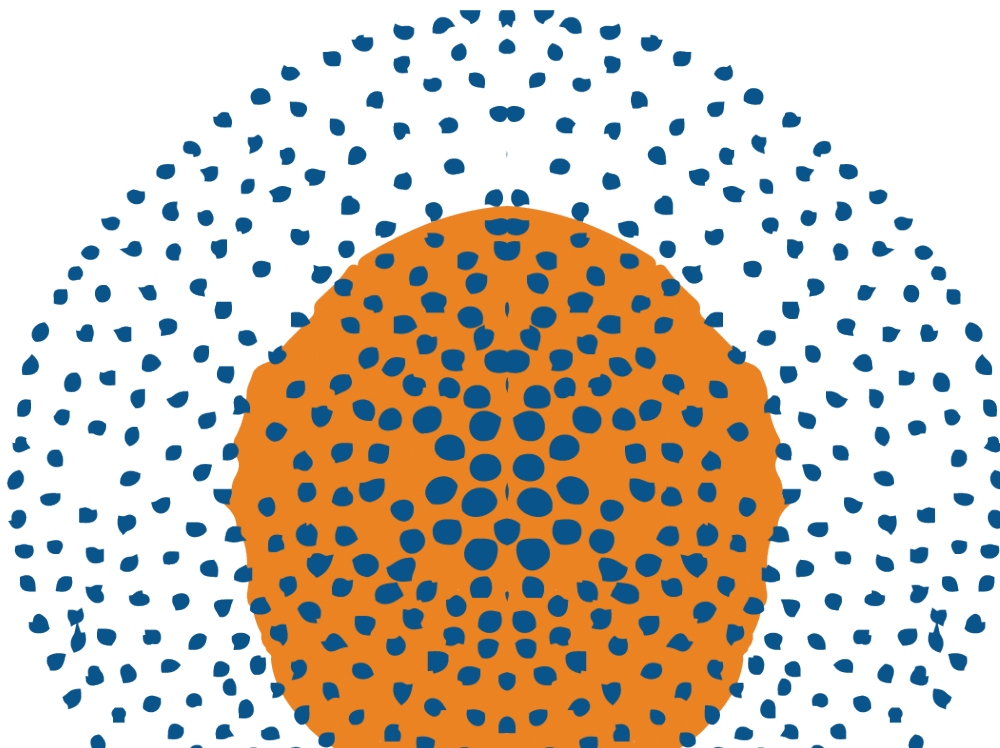
CHALLENGE 8: RESPONDING TO 'BACKLASH' AGAINST GENDERED MESSAGES

PVAW efforts frequently face resistance or 'backlash' from members of the community. Resistance can take many forms, including denial, inaction, appropriation, repression, disavowal, appeasement and co-option (VicHealth 2018), and ultimately reinforces or maintains existing gender inequalities. Examples of resistance include questioning the data that identifies the gendered nature of family violence or rejecting the link between violence against women and gender inequality. Men's rights groups have been particularly active in using co-option as a strategy, by harnessing community concerns about family violence and using data selectively to argue that family violence is not gendered because men can be victims and women can be perpetrators (for example, the 'one in three' campaign).[9] These strategies have been effective, with community attitudes surveys identifying that Australians increasingly believe that women are as likely as men to perpetrate family violence (VicHealth 2014). The national framework *Change the Story* identifies the need to reduce backlash as one of the supporting actions required to address the factors that reinforce violence against women. Therefore it is an important consideration for workplace prevention programs.

The responses to **Take a Stand** from some participants highlight a need to address this. The following are examples from **Take a Stand** evaluations:

'Stop using gender as way to point blame regardless of the research. Why? It will make me put up walls. Back up and rethink the goals of this session.' (participant)

'There should be a focus on stopping violence rather than gender focus.' (participant)

'The senior [staff] came in and were instantly offside when they opened the Take a Stand kit to find the Men's Resource Centre brochure. "It's already started, already targeting men before we've begun" was the quote.' (facilitator)

This feedback usually only comes a small number of vocal participants. However, it often creates barriers to engagement or participation by others in the training room.

VicHealth's recent examination of resistance to gender equality initiatives (2018) provides useful strategies to respond, including drawing the links between masculinity and violence (for example, explaining that most violence against men is perpetrated by other men), articulating the rationale and benefits of gender equality, and highlighting the relevance of the program to addressing other forms of violence. Most PVAW programs, including **Take a Stand**, use the established evidence base to highlight the gendered nature of violence, while also acknowledging the evidence that suggests that not all family violence is perpetrated by men against women in heterosexual relationships. This has helped participants to build a broader understanding of the issue.

Another useful strategy is to ensure workplace leaders and managers communicate clear messages of support for the program, and why the workplace has chosen to engage with it. This highlights again the importance of situating training within a whole-of-workplace approach, and the need for organisational leadership – particularly male leaders – to role model a commitment to a gendered approach to violence prevention, and highlight the benefits of this approach for men as well as women.

It is also important to understand that backlash or resistance is an anticipated part of any social change movement, and that part of the function of bystander training is to allow participants to engage in difficult or complex conversations that may challenge or confront them. Illustrating this point, a workplace leader observed that resistance is an inevitable part of the process:

> *'I find that frustrating, but that's why we're doing the training really, to try and improve our thinking and behaviours and things like that.'*

It is also valuable to acknowledge that long-term change is a gradual process, made up of small achievements. For example, one facilitator observed:

> *'[When] we start talking about men and women, it's just knee-jerk "women do it too". But an hour and a half or two hours later when they've had the session and they're filling out their [feedback] forms, … that's softened a bit… they've lost the acuteness of when they come in or they've placed what we've said.'*

Practice tips for preparing for resistance to a gendered approach

- Ensure senior staff within the workplace demonstrate their commitment to the program's approach, for example, by:
  - hosting a formal 'launch' of the program, inviting staff, management and external stakeholders;
  - using internal and external workplace communication channels to regularly promote key messages from the program; and
  - ensuring executives or managers attend staff bystander training sessions and/or speak at the beginning of training sessions to introduce the program.
- Anticipate the common challenges posed by participants and ensure facilitators are equipped with accurate and up-to-date evidence to support key messages.
- Prior to training, develop a clear understanding of the participant group to help prepare facilitators for possible responses.
- Provide debriefing for facilitators should it be required.

BYSTANDER TRAINING DELIVERY: DYNAMICS AND DANGERS

CHALLENGE 9: RECOGNISING THE PROS AND CONS OF SINGLE-GENDER OR MIXED-GENDER AUDIENCES

Take a Stand was originally designed for male-dominated workplaces, but the expansion of the program into more gender-balanced workplaces has raised questions about whether single-gender or mixed-gender audiences might be more effective. The available research does not offer clear conclusions regarding whether single or mixed-gender programs are more effective (Taket & Crisp 2017). It appears that there may be advantages and disadvantages to each approach, depending on the workplace setting and composition of the training group.

Facilitators have observed that in mixed-gender training sessions, a greater number of female participants has encouraged women to speak up and offer reflections on their own experiences of sexism, discrimination or violence. This has provided opportunities for men to listen to women's experiences and to understand firsthand the impacts of sexism and gender inequality on their female colleagues. For example, during a mixed-gender training session at Oxfam, a training activity was used that compares male and female staff members' perceptions of safety in public. Key informants from Oxfam reported that the training activity was especially useful for male participants, as they were able to hear about female colleagues' experiences:

'[the facilitator] said to the men first, 'tell me about what you do every morning for your safety for the day', and most of the guys in the room had nothing to say. But when it got to the women, the men were quite shocked that the women were coming up with lists of things that they do… They didn't realise that women were constantly having to pre-prepare to do things because of the safety issues… it's opened their eyes and their ears to change.'

However, these activities may not work as effectively in mixed-gender trainings where male participants dominate discussions, or where there are only a small number of female participants. Facilitators of WHV's training often observe that when there are fewer female participants, women tend to speak less (see Challenge 10 for further discussion).

There are advantages to having single-gender groups in bystander training, as this can promote more openness and reflection among participants, and, for all-male groups, encourage men's shared 'ownership' of the issue. The workplace setting and culture also influences whether or not mixed or single gender sessions are effective, as discussed in Challenge 10.

Practice tips to help determine the gender mix of participants in bystander training

- Consider the culture and needs of the workplace and the potential dynamics created by different gender mizes of participants. Work in consultation with managers and key staff in order to agree on the most effective gender composition for training

CHALLENGE 10: DELIVERING PROGRAMS IN MALE-DOMINATED WORKPLACES

Male-dominated environments often perpetuate sexist norms and peer cultures based on aggression and disrespect towards women. These traditional masculine norms and peer cultures have been identified as some of the key drivers of violence against women (Our Watch et al 2015).

WHV's work with Victoria Police has highlighted the challenges associated with delivering messages about gender and violence in a male-dominated profession. The police force has historically been positioned in the role of community 'protectors', and the roles and values associated with policing reflect stereotypical 'masculine' attributes and values. As the VEOHRC review into sexual harassment in Victoria Police found, police members' attitudes and identities closely resemble masculine social norms, with the identity of a police man reflecting 'attributes of logic, toughness, and invulnerability, of being able to manage one's emotions, being objective and able to settle disputes through strength' (2015, p.59).

This identification with masculine norms was apparent in training sessions provided to Victoria Police. Facilitators in sessions with male-dominated groups observed that female participants from Victoria Police often aligned themselves with their male colleagues. For instance, in a **Take a Stand** activity that explored gendered differences in perceptions of safety in public spaces, female participants were often reluctant to acknowledge any vulnerability or fear of sexual violence in their personal lives:

'A female participant commented repeatedly that she was the only women at her station years ago and the jokes, comments etc didn't bother her. Another stressed that the responses in the DVD[10] aren't representative of women; she doesn't know anyone who takes any of those measures to avoid sexual violence. They talked a lot about violence for both men and women as a whole in our community and that both genders take the same precautions.' (facilitator)

This response may reflect concerns on the part of female police members that to appear vulnerable or fearful would be at odds with the (masculine) image of policing based on toughness, objectivity and strength. Similar concerns were identified in the VEOHRC review (2015). Participants in the review expressed a need to act like 'one of the boys' to survive at Victoria Police, which contributed to a reluctance to report incidents of sexism, harassment or discrimination. In addition, there was a consistent theme that being a victim of sexual harassment was inconsistent with their identity as a police member, with the assumption that 'police protected victims, and therefore should not be victims themselves' (VEOHRC 2015 p.76).

This response from Victoria Police participants differed from the response of participants in bystander training delivered at Oxfam, where female participants shared a variety of everyday strategies they used to manage fears of sexual violence (see also Challenge 9).

One strategy suggested by facilitators to help address this in training at Victoria Police was to deliver training off-site and with participants not in uniform, to help 'release' participants from their formal role as law enforcement officers and create a safe space to enable self-reflection. Another strategy suggested from within Victoria Police – to illustrate why a program on improving internal workplace culture was important - was to refer to the mutual trust and responsibility required for an effective policing response:

'an analogy that our members were able to relate to is that we work shoulder-to-shoulder and back-to-back every day looking after each other, that's our frontline policing commitment to each other. However, when something arises in the workplace that is inappropriate that requires us to go head-to-head with our colleagues, [this can be] a most uncomfortable situation - so we needed some tools to Take a Stand...and to step forward and to say that isn't ok, but to do it respectfully so we are able to have a harmonious and safe workplace.' (workplace key informant)

Practice tips for delivering training in male-dominated workplaces

- Prior to delivering training, consider the particular norms, roles and cultures within the workplace, and ways in which training can be modified or tailored to suit the organisation.

- Offer longer or repeated sessions to allow participants more time to 'sit with' and reflect on the content, and to create more opportunities for participants to 'let down their guard'.
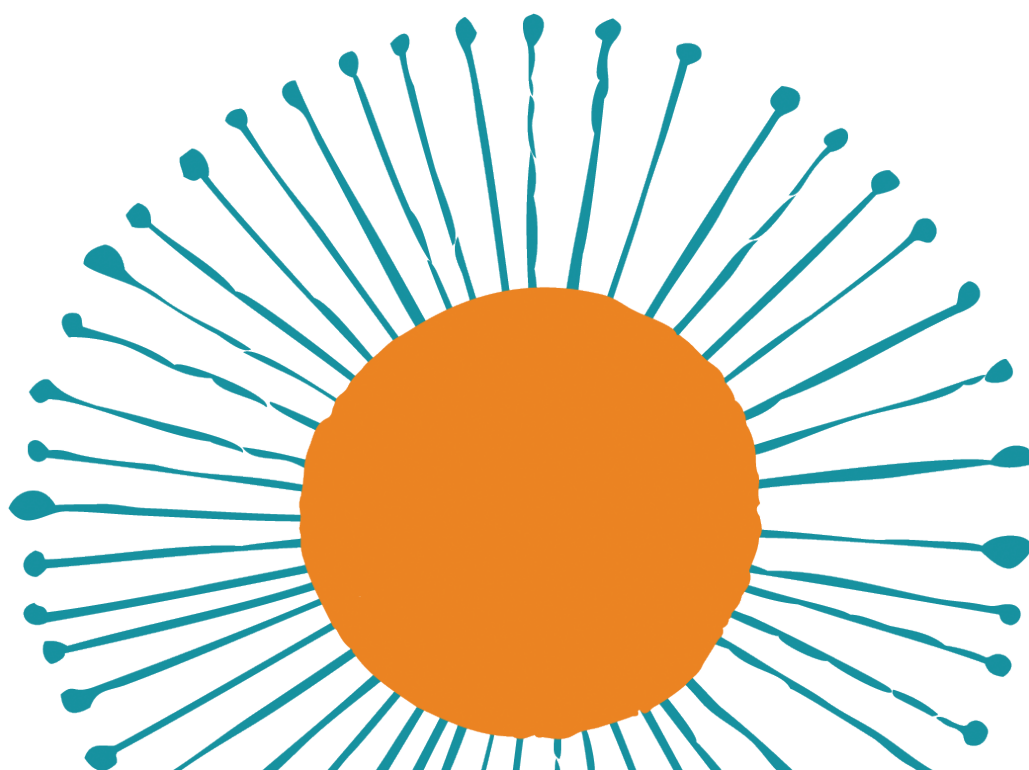
CHALLENGE 11: BALANCING THE INPUT OF MALE AND FEMALE CO-FACILITATORS

Since its inception, *Take a Stand* has been delivered by female and male co-facilitators, with particular segments of the training script purposely assigned to the female or male facilitator.

Having male and female co-facilitators is valuable as it enables role-modelling of an egalitarian and respectful relationship between facilitators. In addition, a male facilitator can say the 'hard stuff' about men's violence or problematic masculine norms. This can be an effective way of conveying these messages, as a man may be perceived by participants as 'less biased' than a woman. But this also raises problems, as male facilitators frequently have to use their male privilege and authority to address myths and negative comments. For instance, if information about gender inequality is only credible if delivered by a male, this in itself is reflective of problematic gender norms and practices, and can reproduce the gendered power dynamics the program is seeking to challenge.

WHV has sought to address these challenges by giving careful consideration to which messages are presented by the male or female facilitator. To monitor these challenges, WHV collects feedback from facilitators immediately after training, provides debriefing following training sessions. WHV is also exploring other opportunities for supervision and debriefing for facilitators to support them to unpack and address gender issues in facilitation.

Practice tips to help ensure a balanced input from male and female co-facilitators

- Consider which training messages will be delivered by the male or female facilitator. For instance, the female facilitator could acknowledge men's experiences of violence, noting that this predominantly takes place outside the home and at the hands of a stranger. This could be followed by the male facilitator identifying and exploring the gendered nature of violence, and acknowledging that the majority of perpetrators of violence are men.

- Provide support and debriefing opportunities for facilitators to discuss and reflect on the impacts of gender issues in facilitation.
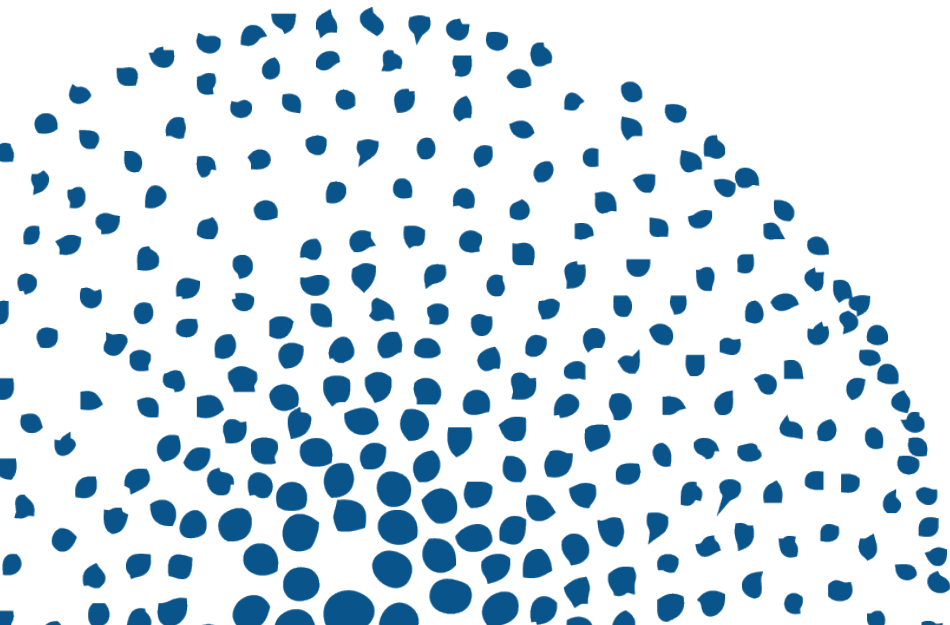
CONCLUSION

It is clear there are both significant challenges and opportunities in the current environment for workplace violence prevention programs, and bystander programs in particular. This paper provides some initial guidance to prompt further discussion, research and shared practice about how to advance this important element of PVAW practice. We need to continue building the evidence base, both by collating and sharing practice knowledge and through robust evaluation processes that consider the impacts of the program over time and compare a range of workplace approaches. Programs must continue to adapt as this evidence base grows and to develop innovative ways to promote sustainable cultural change within workplaces.

Promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women is challenging and requires a sustained approach across a range of different settings. It is important that appropriate recognition is given to the complexity of this work. Without critical reflection, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, there is a risk that workplace PVAW and bystander programs will be ineffective, or will ultimately reinforce the behaviours that they intend to transform. The challenge remains in how to better resource PVAW providers and workplaces to do this work in a way that truly embeds cultural and structural transformation, and allows workplaces to invest in meaningful long-term change.
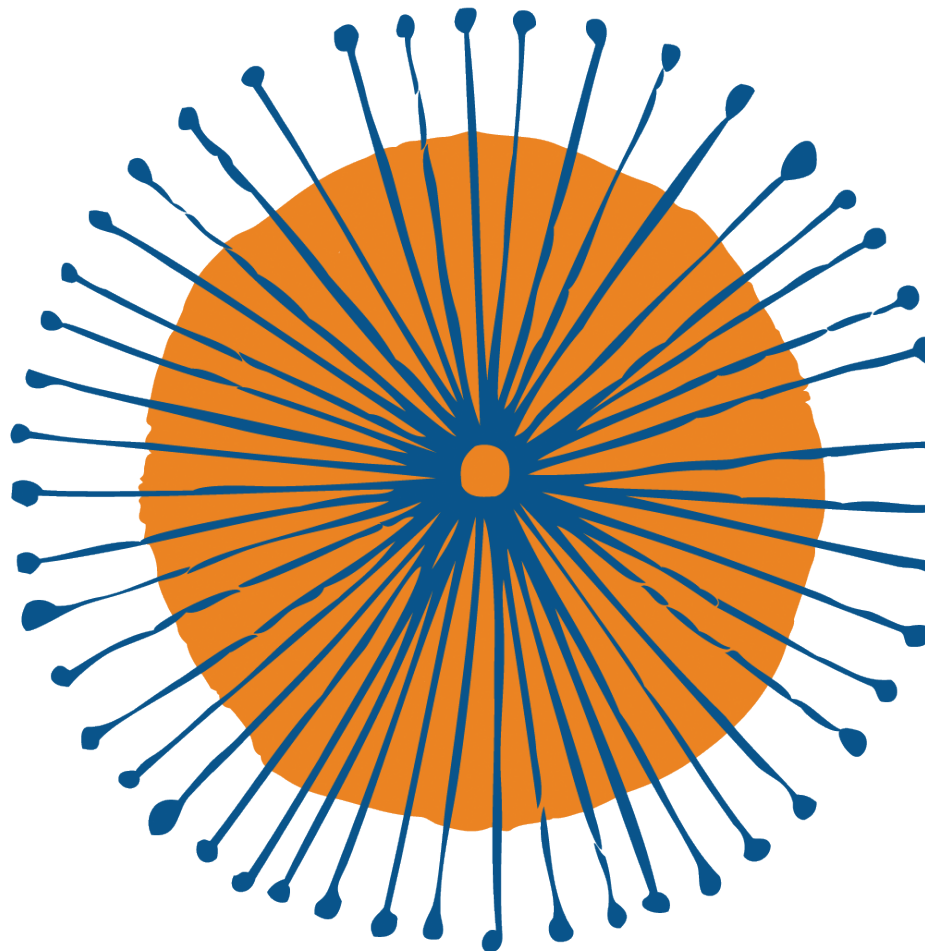
NOTES

1. As identified by Our Watch et al. (2015, 2017a), gender inequality is the main 'driver' or cause of violence against women. Evidence demonstrates that the particular expressions of gender inequality that consistently predict higher rates of violence against women are: (a) condoning of violence against women; (b) men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life; (c) rigid gender roles and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity; (d) male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

2. The terms 'domestic violence' and 'family violence' are often used interchangeably. Both terms are commonly used to refer to violence in intimate partner relationships, although family violence is often used to refer to a broader range of familial and caring relationships in which violence may occur. The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) is an example of this broader conceptualisation. When it was developed, *Take a Stand* used the term 'domestic violence'. However, in keeping with the language and understandings used in current Victorian Government legislation and policy, this paper will use the term 'family violence'.

3. *Take A Stand* is able to be licensed as a 'Partner Package' to other women's health organisations across Australia. Partner organisations have included Women's Health Loddon Mallee, Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West, and Women's Health Centre Rockhampton.

4. In the Loddon Mallee region, *Take a Stand* was delivered in 12 workplaces, and included bystander training for over 2000 employees, a regional action plan, and a conference, forums and roadshows. The evaluation included interviews and focus groups with program stakeholders and feedback from training participants before and after training delivery.

5. In the Barwon South West region, 11 workplaces from a variety of different industries participated in *Take a Stand*. The evaluation included pre- and post- training feedback from participants and facilitators, and reflections from project staff.

6. Gender transformative approaches address the causes of gender inequality by seeking to transform the structures and cultures that promote harmful gender roles, norms and relations. These approaches differ from 'gender blind' approach (which ignores gender norms and inequalities), or a 'gender sensitive' approach (which acknowledges gender inequality but does not seek to change it) (Our Watch 2017a).

7. For example, Women's Health Victoria offers a range of training workshops to build organisational capacity in gender equity.

8. An important factor that enabled WHV to engage with Victoria Police in delivering *Take a Stand* was the availability of confidential support and reporting structures for sexual harassment. These had been established after the review by VEOHRC, including the Safe Space hotline for police members (an external and independent service that provides confidential support to victims or targets of harassment and workplace harm in Victoria Police) and Taskforce Salus (which investigates predatory sexual behavior, sexual harassment and discrimination in Victoria Police).

9. See www.oneinthree.com.au

10. The DVD used in the training was produced by VicHealth and features men and women talking about what they do on a daily basis to manage the threat of sexual violence.

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WORKING WITH WORKPLACES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND BYSTANDER PROGRAMS

Women's Health Knowledge Paper No. 1