



















systems of support (such as newly arrived immigrant/refugee women), which in itself can be a risk factor for family and domestic violence.

Because prevention of domestic and family violence is largely about addressing unequal power between women and men and the discrimination that results from rigidly held gender stereotypes, strategies in the workplace setting overlap greatly with broader initiatives promoting workplace gender equality. As such, any programs, research, advocacy or guidelines for the promotion of structural gender equality in the workplace (e.g. around pay levels and decision-making power) are important components of violence prevention.<sup>11</sup>

However violence prevention also requires an extra effort to directly address the specific cultural or 'normative' drivers of domestic and family violence – especially attitudes around the roles of men and women in relationships and child-rearing, those supporting male dominance and female passivity, and other gender stereotypes. Such norms – whether expressed through structures, practices, attitudes or behaviour – create social and professional barriers that may stop people from taking action when faced not only with disclosures of violence, but with sexism, discrimination and other violence-supportive behaviours or practices.

## Research on bystander behaviour and its implications for workplaces

A large-scale phone survey conducted across Victoria in 2011 revealed important findings on what encourages 'pro-social bystander action' in the face of sexist or discriminatory attitudes, behaviours and practices – in both organisational and social settings. 'Pro-social bystander action' refers to a range of actions such as 'confronting a friend or colleague who continually makes sexist jokes; talking to your manager if women are being treated unfairly in the workplace; or challenging spectators or players who use sexist sledging on the sports field'.<sup>12</sup>

The likelihood of a person taking action under such circumstances was found to be influenced by that person's:

- level of confidence in their capacity to act,
- belief that their action will have a positive impact on the situation,
- belief that they will have the support of their friends, peers or colleagues,
- level of support for gender equality, and

---

<sup>11</sup> See the Commonwealth Government's Workplace Gender Equality Agency website for a comprehensive collection of this work: <http://www.wgea.gov.au/>

<sup>12</sup> VicHealth (2012) *More than Ready: Bystander Action to Prevent Violence against Women in the Victorian Community*.









This also means that *specific and tailored* initiatives are of benefit to suit the needs of different groups. These cannot be stand-alone initiatives, but should link to whole-of-population strategies as part of a holistic effort. They should be based on the principles of meaningful participation, promoting self-advocacy and capacity building based on understandings of diversity, cultural respect and sensitivity.

## 5. Contribute to a collective and evidence-based approach to creating social, cultural and behavioural change across jurisdictions and sectors

In partnership with the Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, Our Watch is developing, in consultation with State and Territory Governments, a National Framework to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children (the Framework). The Framework will not prescribe specific actions, but rather provide evidence and guidance to assist stakeholders to develop appropriate policies, strategies and programs to prevent violence against women and their children. It will provide the 'scaffolding' to help governments guide prevention activity through mechanisms involving cross-portfolio leadership and the participation of civil society, especially women's organisations.

The outcomes of the current Senate Inquiry could help inform the development of the Framework at the national level, and its implementation in the South Australian context. An early consultation on the Framework's underlying principles and conceptualisation was undertaken with key South Australian stakeholders in Adelaide in late February 2015, and another presenting the results of consultations around the country is envisaged for May 2015. Our Watch and its partners look forward to the ongoing engagement of South Australian government, nongovernment and private sector stakeholders in this work.