



## Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse

House Standing Committee on Education and Employment

By email: [ee.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ee.reps@aph.gov.au)

27 February 2012

Dear Committee

### Re: Inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Better Work/Life Balance) Bill 2012

The Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse (ADFVC) submits this response to the **Fair Work Amendment (Better Work/Life Balance) Bill 2012**. Our submission to the Fair Work Act Review, endorsed by the Australian Council of Trade Unions, raises the important issue of the impact of domestic violence on workplace safety and productivity, and in section three on page seven explicitly addresses the need for flexible working arrangements to victims of domestic violence within a context of a suite of other protections and support.

We urge the Committee to consider the inclusion of domestic violence as a workplace issue based on the findings of our extensive *Safe at Home, Safe at Work? National Domestic Violence and the Workplace Survey* (2011) and recent research undertaken by the ADFVC on the impact of family violence on women's financial security. The survey was the first of its kind in Australia and was completed by over 3600 union members. A full copy of the report is available on the website: [www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au](http://www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au). The key findings were:

- Nearly a third of respondents (30%) had personally experienced domestic violence.
- Nearly half those who had experienced domestic violence reported that the violence affected their capacity to get to work; the major reason was physical injury or restraint (67%), followed by hiding keys and failure to care for children.
- Nearly one in five (19%) who experienced domestic violence in the previous 12 months reported that the violence continued at the workplace
- The major form the domestic violence took in the workplace was abusive phone calls and emails (12%) and the partner physically coming to work (11%).
- The main reported impact was on work performance, with 16% reporting being distracted, tired or unwell, 10% needing to take time off, and 7% being late for work.
- 45 % of respondents with recent experience of domestic violence discussed the violence with someone at work, primarily co-workers or friends rather than supervisors, HR staff or union representative.
- Of those who had discussed the domestic violence with someone at work, almost half (48%) had disclosed the violence to their manager/supervisor, though only 10% found them helpful.
- For those who did not discuss the problem at work, the major reason given was 'privacy', followed by reasons of shame and fear of dismissal.
- All respondents thought that domestic violence can impact on the work lives of employees (100%) and a high percentage (78%) believed that workplace entitlements could reduce the impact of domestic violence in the workplace.

The ADFVC (a project of the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies, University of New South Wales) is a national, non government organisation, providing high quality information about domestic and family violence issues and practice. The primary goal of the ADFVC is to prevent domestic and family violence. The ADFVC manages the Safe at Home, Safe at Work Project funded through DEEWR to promote the introduction of domestic violence clauses nationally through collective bargaining. These clauses assist workers who are experiencing domestic violence to stay safely in their jobs and in their homes.

Please do not hesitate to contact me regarding the content of this submission or if you have further questions.

Yours sincerely

Gaby Marcus  
Director