

**Submission to the Consultation on the Second Action Plan
National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032**

[REDACTED] School of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business and Law,
Curtin University, Perth, Australia. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], UWA Business School, The University of Western Australia

[REDACTED], UTS Business School, University of Technology Sydney

1. Project and Authors

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] We bring expertise in the discipline areas of employment relations, human resource management, and management, and subject matter expertise across family and domestic violence, sexual harassment, diversity and inclusion, work health and safety, and psychosocial hazards.

Since 2024, our research team has investigated the effectiveness of the implementation of family and domestic violence (FDV) leave in Australian workplaces, supported by grant funding from the WA Department of Communities. The study involved in-depth interviews with 38 stakeholders from trade unions, employer associations, community legal centres, civil organisations in the family and domestic violence sector, and a range of employer organisations. Additionally, an online survey was conducted with 70 workers who accessed family and domestic violence leave entitlements, as well as 7 follow-up interviews with individuals who completed the survey and consented to participate in an interview¹.

2. Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032. The National Plan sets a vision to end gender-based violence within a generation through coordinated action across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. The National Plan recognises workplaces as places where violence can occur. As part of this, the National Plan acknowledges the importance of taking a whole-of-organisation approach to drive prevention across all levels of the organisation and within policies and processes, including strengthening focus on perpetrator accountability.

Our submission also recognises workplaces as critical partners in achieving the objectives of the National Plan. Employment provides economic security, social connection and pathways to independence for victim-survivors, while workplaces can serve as important sites for prevention, early intervention, support and accountability. However, while our research demonstrates that significant challenges remain, including low awareness of FDV entitlements, barriers to disclosure, concerns about confidentiality, uneven organisational capability, and limited attention to perpetrator accountability, we acknowledge a need in the Second Action Plan to move beyond legislative compliance and leave entitlements.

Consistent with the Second Action Plan's priorities, this submission supports a comprehensive workplace framework with stronger emphasis on prevention, workforce capability, victim-survivor-centred approaches and system integration. Australia has made substantial progress by recognising FDV as a workplace issue and by introducing paid FDV leave through national employment standards. However, our research shows that awareness, accessibility, confidentiality, stigma, manager capability, employment insecurity and inconsistent organisational practices continue to limit practical access to support. The Second Action Plan therefore presents an opportunity to move beyond compliance and embed a comprehensive workplace systems approach.

3. Key Findings: Workplace Research

Our research identifies **six** recurring challenges that should inform the Second Action Plan.

First, awareness of FDV leave and workplace support remains uneven, where information is located in policies, enterprise agreements or intranet pages that workers may not access at moments of crisis. Some workers only discovered the entitlement through unions, colleagues or external support services. To address this, workplaces should implement a centralized, clearly communicated, and easily accessible system for sharing information about FDV leave and available support.

Second, fear of stigma remains a major barrier for disclosure. Victim-survivors fear judgement, reputational harm, career consequences, reduced rostered hours or adverse treatment. In small workplaces, concerns about confidentiality can be particularly acute. Workplace systems that rely heavily on victim-survivors self-identifying therefore place additional burden on people already experiencing risk and vulnerability.

Third, workplace capability is inconsistent. Some organisations provide high-quality support, designated contact officers, compassionate management and clear referral pathways. Others lack basic awareness of obligations and available options. Manager responses are especially important. While a trauma-informed and confidential response can support safety and confidence; a poorly handled response can deepen harm and discourage further help-seeking¹. Nationally endorsed training and guidance would help reduce this variability.

Fourth, casual workers face particular challenges. Workers in precarious employment may fear loss of shifts, reduced future opportunities or negative perceptions if they request leave or adjustments. These concerns are important because employment insecurity can intensify economic dependence and reduce the practical ability to leave violence. The Second Action Plan should ensure that workplace support is accessible to all workers.

Fifth, hybrid and remote work require renewed attention. Research on working from home during the COVID-19 period showed that employers often relied on visible cues or informal workplace observation to identify distress². These approaches are inadequate where violence is hidden, where coercive control is digital, or where a worker is isolated from colleagues. Guidance for remote and hybrid environments should address safe communication, privacy, technology-facilitated abuse, flexible arrangements and alternative pathways to support that do not depend on visible disclosure.

Sixth, workplace responses currently focus mainly on victim-survivors and insufficiently address people who use violence. Workplaces can be misused to perpetrate abuse through phones, email, rosters, surveillance, payroll information, leave systems or contact with colleagues. The Second Action Plan

should support organisations to recognise workplace manifestations of coercive control and connect conduct frameworks with appropriate perpetrator accountability and intervention pathways.

4. Alignment with Second Action Plan Priorities

(Priority Area 1: Victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence) - In relation to victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence, workplaces should be recognised as part of a 'no wrong door' system. Many victim-survivors may first disclose to someone at work or may seek workplace adjustments before approaching specialist services. Employers should therefore be supported to provide trauma-informed responses, confidential referral options, safety planning and practical adjustments without requiring burdening evidence or repeated disclosure.

(Priority Area 2: Prevention and early intervention) - For prevention and early intervention, the Second Action Plan should strengthen workplace capability to recognise coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse and early warning signs. Workplace education should move beyond one-off compliance training and contribute to cultural change. This includes challenging gender inequality, promoting respectful workplace norms, supporting bystander confidence and ensuring that managers understand how to respond safely and appropriately.

(Priority Area 4: People who use violence) - For people who use violence, the National Plan should help employers address harmful conduct where it intersects with work. Appropriate responses may include conduct processes, risk management, referral pathways and coordination with specialist services.

(Priority Area 5: System integration and workforce) - For system integration and workforce, workplaces should be connected to broader service, legal, health and community systems. Stronger collaboration between employers, unions, specialist FDV services, community legal centres and government agencies would improve referral pathways, reduce duplication, build trust and support consistent practice. System integration is particularly important for small and medium-sized enterprises, which may lack internal specialist capacity.

5. Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Purpose
1	Establish a National Workplace FDV Capability Framework	Create nationally consistent standards for policies, confidentiality, risk assessment, safety planning, referral pathways, training and reporting.
2	Fund sustained workplace awareness and education	Improve understanding of FDV leave, coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse, workplace rights and available supports.
3	Introduce trauma-informed manager and human resource (HR) training	Equip managers and HR personnel to respond safely to disclosures, avoid retraumatisation and connect workers with specialist support.
4	Embed FDV within work health and safety frameworks	Recognise FDV as a psychosocial hazard where it affects work and strengthens capability for risk assessment and prevention.

5	Strengthen privacy and confidentiality safeguards	Develop guidance for payroll, record keeping, disclosure management, information sharing and protection of sensitive information.
6	Improve access for casual and insecure workers	Ensure workers can access support without fear of roster loss, adverse treatment or unclear entitlement calculations.
7	Address remote and hybrid work risks²	Provide practical guidance on safe communication, technology-facilitated abuse, isolation and support pathways outside visible workplace cues.
8	Strengthen perpetrator accountability in workplaces	Support organisations to recognise misuse of workplace resources and implement appropriate conduct, referral and accountability mechanisms.
9	Support small businesses with practical tools and advice	Provide implementation toolkits, model policies, specialist advisory services and scalable training options for smaller employers.
10	Create national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms	Collect de-identified information on awareness, access, uptake, barriers, workplace capability and support practices to inform continuous improvement.

6. Implementation Considerations

Implementation should be practical, staged and evidence-based. A national framework should set minimum expectations while allowing organisations to adapt responses to industry, size, workforce composition and local service availability. Where possible, organisations should establish designated trained contact persons and clear referral arrangements with specialist services.

Monitoring and evaluation should avoid personally identifiable data and focus on de-identified information about awareness, access, organisational capability, perceived safety, barriers and support practices. This would help governments and workplaces understand whether reforms are reaching workers in different sectors, employment types and locations. It would also enable the Second Action Plan to move from policy intent to measurable implementation.

7. Conclusion

The Second Action Plan is an opportunity to consolidate the gains of the first phase of the National Plan and shift from foundational reform to embedded practice, capability, accountability and measurable outcomes. Paid FDV leave is a significant achievement; however, a stronger whole-of-workplace approach is required.

By recognising workplaces as central partners in prevention, early intervention, victim-survivor support, recovery, economic security and perpetrator accountability, the Second Action Plan can strengthen Australia's violence prevention architecture. The recommendations in this submission provide practical mechanisms for turning national commitments into workplace systems that are trauma-informed, confidential, equitable and effective. They would help ensure that all workers, regardless of employment

status, occupation or location, can access safe and meaningful support, and that workplaces contribute actively to the National Plan's vision of ending violence against women and children within a generation.

Selected Author Publications

- Casado, R., Dayaram, K., & Gavin, M. (2025). [*A review of the effectiveness of paid family and domestic violence leave entitlement since its implementation as a National Employment Standard in Australia – multi-stakeholder and lived experience perspectives.*](#) University of Western Australia, Perth.
- Casado, R., Dayaram, K., & Gavin, M. (2025). Symbolic Compliance or Embedded Practice? Organisational Responses to FDV Leave Policy in Australia. *Work, Employment and Society Conference*. 8-10 September 2025. University of Manchester, UK.
- Casado, R., Gavin, M., & Dayaram, K. (2025). Paid FDV Leave in Australia: Policy, Practice, and the Barriers to Effective Implementation. *ILERA European Congress*. 10-12 September. Durham University Business School, UK.
- Casado, R., Dayaram, K., & Gavin, M. (2026). Symbolic Compliance or Embedded Practice? Organisational Responses to FDV Leave Policy in Australia. *AIRAANZ Conference*. 28-30 January 2026. UTS, Sydney.
- Caspersz, D., Casado, R., Kaplan, C., Fozdar, F., & Baldassar, L. (2023). Group social capital and the employment prospects of refugee women who experience domestic violence. *Labour & Industry*, 32(4): 443-454.
- Dayaram, K. & Galetto, M. (2024). Violence and Harassment in the World of Work: The intersection of OHS and IR – Comparative study between Australia and Italy. *BUIRA Conference*, July.
- Gavin, M., & Weatherall, R. (2025). Domestic violence and work. In J. Helms Mills, A. J. Mills, K. S. Williams, & R. Bendl (Eds.), *Elgar Encyclopedia of Gender in Management* (pp. 115–117). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Gavin M, & Ellicott, S. (2025). Domestic violence leave laws: Assessing their effectiveness for addressing domestic violence and gender inequality. In S. Williamson, J. Parker, N. Donnelly, M. Gavin, & S. Ressa (Eds.), *Research Handbook on Gender, Work and Employment Relations* (pp. 191-207). Edward Elgar Publishing.
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- Gavin, M., Dayaram, K., & Casado, R. (2026). A gendered analysis of decent work: Examining gender-based violence at work. *Research Handbook on Decent Work: Decent work as a pathway to flourishing*. In I McWha-Hermann, C Yao and N Donnelly (eds). Elgar Publishing.

- Gavin, M., & Weatherall, R. (2026). When home is the workplace: Foregrounding ethical responses to domestic violence when working-from-home. *Work Employment and Society*. [10.1177/09500170261434879](https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170261434879)
- Gavin, M., & Weatherall, R. (2022). Domestic Violence and Work: Setting a Workplace Agenda. *Labour and Industry*, 32(4): 339-348. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10301763.2023.2171682>
- Vassiley, A., Barratt, T., Dayaram, K., & Burgess, J. (2025). Psychosocial workplace hazards and industrial relations: An introduction. *Journal of Industrial Relations* 67(2): 177-201.
- Weatherall, R., Gavin, M., & Thorburn, N. (2021). Safeguarding women at work? Lessons from Aotearoa New Zealand on effectively implementing domestic violence policies. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 63(4): 568-590. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185621996766>
- Weatherall, R., & Gavin, M. (2026). “I don’t want to make this such a gender thing”: Theorising the place of gender in domestic violence workplace policies. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/bjir.70064>