

## Productivity Gains from Workplace Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence

Kahui, Ku and Snively, 2014

Domestic violence is a workplace issue. It impacts on the work and employment of victims, on their colleagues and ultimately on their employer through reduced productivity.

Employment is a key pathway out of domestic violence. The body of research about domestic violence over the past 30 years finds conclusively that staying in employment is critical to reducing the effects of violence. Security of employment enables those affected by domestic violence to maintain domestic and economic stability, assisting them to find a pathway out of violence and to successfully re-build their lives.

Economist Suzanne Snively was commissioned by the Public Service Association (PSA) to undertake an economic analysis of the costs to business of family violence and any productivity gains directly associated with putting in place workplace policies and protections for employees who are victims of domestic violence. Productivity Gains from Workplace Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence as published in March 2014. A full copy of the report is available from the PSA website:

<http://www.psa.org.nz/CampaignsAndIssues/FamilyViolenceAndNewZealandWorkplaces.aspx>

The assumptions in the economic framework used in the report are conservative and so the costs detailed in the findings are also conservative. It assumes that 7% of women in the workplace are victims while the literature indicates that, over a lifetime, 1 in 3 women experience domestic violence<sup>1</sup>. It does not include impacts on victims' family, colleagues or other staff.

### Key findings

#### Costs to employers

In 2014, in the absence of workplace protections, domestic violence will cost New Zealand employers:

- At least \$368 million. If nothing is done, it will cost employers at least \$3.7 billion by 2024 – a loss of 2.3 million days of work.
- An average of 130 lost working hours for each employee who is a victim. An estimated 111,070 women (7% of all New Zealand women) in the workforce will experience domestic violence in 2014.

This includes:

- 17,493 days of work lost due to victims leaving work early or arriving late to work; and

---

<sup>1</sup> Fanslow and Robinson, 2001, pp747)

- 950,725 days of work lost due to termination of employment; and
- 1,286,473 days of work lost due to victims being distracted at work;
- 26,724 days will be lost due to physical abuse and 8143 days lost due to sexual abuse.
- 1410 days of work lost because of stalking.

### **Workplace protections**

- Workplace protections can include:
  - Paid leave to attend counselling, move to safe accommodation, attend legal/police appointments and court.
  - Safety planning including flexibility around work location, start and finish times, days of work, monitoring or interception of harassing calls, emails and texts and safe access to transport home.
- For every woman whose experience of violence is prevented as a result of workplace protections an average of \$3,371 in production-related costs can be avoided in a calendar year.
- With appropriate protections, workplaces and employers can enhance victims' safety, retain and develop their skills in the workplace. This will lead to increased levels of production and productivity and offset the current (hidden) costs of domestic violence and the projected costs of the implementation of workplace protections.

### **Contacts**

#### **Public Service Association**

Kirsten Windelov, policy advisor

04 816 5065

kirsten.windelov@psa.org.nz