



Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse

---

# **Employment as a path to financial independence**

**Why work matters to women experiencing domestic violence**

Isobelle Barrett Meyering

Research Assistant



# ADFV Clearinghouse

---

- Based in the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies, UNSW
- Funded by FaHCSIA
- Useful resources
  - Research and resources database
  - Good practice database
  - Publications

[www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au)



# Outline

---

- Study overview
- Employment as a path to financial independence



# Study overview

---



## Context

---

- Growing interest in women's financial security
  - S Cerise *et al.* 2009, *Accumulating poverty? Women's experiences of inequality over the lifecycle*, Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney
- Increasing awareness of the economic costs of domestic violence
- Government commitment to implement a national plan of action



## Methods

---

- 8 services across Qld, SA and Vic
- Qualitative interviews and focus groups
- 57 female clients & 50 workers



## Key concerns

---

1. Economic issues are a key factor in women's decisions to stay/leave
2. Financial risk or poverty frequently results from domestic violence
3. There is a lack of perpetrator accountability for the economic impacts of abuse
4. Financial hardship impacts on women's recovery



# Defining financial security

---

- Seemingly beyond their reach
- Modest goals
  - Being able to put food on the table
  - To not worry about the next bill


Financial security = empowerment



# Enhancing women's financial security

---

1. Appreciate the financial impact of domestic violence on women's lives
2. Provide targeted short and longer term financial and material support
3. Build women's capacity to be economically independent
4. Create economic opportunities for women affected by domestic violence
5. Inform women's financial decisions and choices
6. Make abusive men accountable for women's economic outcomes



# Employment as a path to financial independence

---



# Key data

---

## ○ Employment

- 20 out of 57 women employed (35%)
- 7 full-time
- 13 part-time

## ○ Income

- 6 women had no income (11%)
- 5 women earned \$1500+ per fortnight (9%)



*I was leaving a house that I had put a lot of money into, a lot of work into, and also a business...*

*Financially it does stress you.*

*[Service 2, Client 1]*



# Barriers

---

- Direct impacts of abusive behaviour
  - Sabotage of work
  - Trauma
  - Time pressures
- System barriers



---

*The day after the dog squad and me and my kids standing out on the median strip and he pulled a gun to my head on the Sunday and I rocked up at work on the Monday and had to just perform.*

*[Service 5, Client 3]*



# Barriers

---

- Direct impacts of abusive behaviour
  - Sabotage of work
  - Trauma
  - Time pressures
- System barriers
  - Child care
  - Loss of entitlements
  - Low paid, casual work
  - Discrimination
  - Transport difficulties



## Barriers

---

*Last week I worked two days and I had to pay  
\$60 a day in child care, it is big money...  
My husband does not look after the children...*

*[Child care] is especially important for migrants  
because I don't have anyone here.  
It means I am by myself.*

*[Service 1, Client 1]*



# Strategies

---

- Preparing for employment
  - Volunteering
  - Education and training
- Finding work
- Staying employed



## Strategies

---

*You have to keep yourself going and saying 'Education is obviously the way', like these ladies have done.*

*They studied and did training and that's ultimately the best guide for the best employment, especially when you're in a situation like this when you're dependent on yourself.*

*[Service 8, Client focus group]*



# Strategies

---

- Preparing for employment
  - Volunteering
  - Education and training
- Finding work
  - Employment advocacy
  - Recruitment services
- Staying employed
  - Disclosure to supportive employers
  - Flexible working conditions



# Recommendations

---

- **Employers**

- Supportive workplace arrangements
- Training

- **Government**

- Affordable child care
- Reassessment of the impact of paid work on social security entitlements
- Improved transport options



## For more information

---

Isobelle Barrett Meyering

Email: [i.barrettmeyering@unsw.edu.au](mailto:i.barrettmeyering@unsw.edu.au)

Ph: (02) 9385 2837

ADFV Clearinghouse

[www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au)