

# UPSKILLING PRE-SERVICE PROFESSIONALS TO SUPPORT THE PREVENTION OF GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE

An overview of promising practice in developing the capability of university students to support the prevention of gender-based violence through their professional roles

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch acknowledges the traditional owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples past and present.

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# INTRODUCTION

Equipping university students to be competent and effective members of the Australian workforce is not just about vocational skills development. Universities increasingly take pride in their ability to provide an education that ensures students are 'workforce ready' and rank themselves against graduate employability.

At the same time, across different sectors and professions, workplaces are confronting not only the issues of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace but recognising the role they can play in preventing gender-based violence that occurs outside the workplace. Across Australia, many workplaces are actively working towards ensuring gender is no barrier to people being respected, valued and treated as equals at work.

Universities have a powerful role to play in preventing gender-based violence. As a place of learning, growth, development and socialisation, universities can contribute to gender equality outcomes for individuals, communities and society as a whole.

This guide details how universities can equip students to support the prevention of gender-based violence through their future professional roles. It draws on lessons learned through the Upskilling Pre-service Professionals project, implemented by Our Watch in partnership with two Australian universities from 2019 to 2021. This guide is aimed at the university staff who are leading initiatives to promote gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence through teaching and learning. It provides background information about how to prevent gender-based violence, the links to higher education, and the benefits of upskilling students to understand primary prevention practice, all of which can be used to advocate on these issues with university leaders. It then provides practical steps to implementing an upskilling approach which focuses initially on professional learning for teaching academics, who are best placed to develop required knowledge and practical skills in pre-service students.



# AN OVERVIEW: PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## What is gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence is defined by the United Nations as any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.<sup>1</sup>

Gender-based violence is not just physical – it includes behaviours that are controlling or cause psychological, emotional and financial harm.

Internationally, there is emerging evidence and increasing recognition that gender-based violence also includes harmful acts directed towards someone because of their gender expression – such as someone from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and questioning (LGBTIQ+) community.<sup>2</sup>

All violence is unacceptable, no matter who perpetrates it and who experiences it. But the scale and nature of gender-based violence requires our immediate attention.

In Australia:

- 1 woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner.
- 1 in 5 women will experience sexual violence in her lifetime.
- 1 in 4 women will experience emotional abuse from a current or former partner.
- Women are nearly 3 times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner.

Source: Our Watch. [Quick facts](#).

## How do we prevent gender-based violence?

International and Australian research clearly demonstrates that gender-based violence is driven by gender inequality.<sup>3</sup> Gender inequality is where women and men do not have equal social status, power, resources or opportunities, and their voices, ideas and work are not valued equally by society. Having a low level of support for gender equality is the strongest predictor of attitudes supporting violence.<sup>4</sup>

Gender *equity* recognises that women and men start from different places due to deeply embedded sexism and misogyny and is the required approach to achieve gender equality.

Primary prevention of gender-based violence aims to stop violence before it starts by addressing the underlying drivers of violence. Australia's national framework [\*Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia\*](#), identifies four drivers of violence against women that operate in an environment of gender inequality.<sup>5</sup>

The gendered drivers permeate all levels of society; therefore, solutions across all levels are required to challenge the social conditions that allow disrespect and gender inequality to exist. Responses are required across all sectors and social settings, from education and health to law, politics and business. All sectors have a role to play in understanding what the drivers of violence are, how they relate to their workplace settings, and what individuals and organisations can do to stop violence before it starts.

## How can university education support prevention?

Universities can support students in integrating actions that will prevent gender-based violence into their professional practice. The skills and knowledge to understand and prevent gender-based violence should be, and are increasingly expected to be, part of the professional competencies of a wide range of professions. Education is an important element of the work required to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence. In addition, universities need to equip professionals who regularly come into contact with people who have experienced gender-based violence, and ensure they provide safe and appropriate responses.

Regardless of the course they undertake, students' understanding of respect, gender, power and consent can be influenced by the curriculum that is delivered and the environment in which they learn. All staff can model and reinforce the importance of gender equality, formally and informally, across the university. Academic staff can be supported to analyse current curriculum for gender bias, ensure gender equality is throughout the curriculum, and consider the ways the content and teaching methods can challenge the drivers of gender-based violence. All staff have a key opportunity to model respect for all students and challenge sexism.

# BUSINESS CASE: BENEFITS OF UPSKILLING PRE-SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

There are many benefits to the university and its staff and students of upskilling students to support the primary prevention of gender-based violence in their workplaces and through their professional roles. For example, this approach:

- improves student's employability by giving them skills to help create and thrive in safe and respectful workplaces
- responds to the increasing demand from specific industries for professionals to know how to support the prevention of gender-based violence
- responds to expectations of employees and students for universities to proactively address gender inequality and gender-based violence
- prepares students to be active citizens
- engages everyone within the university community to take action to prevent gender-based violence.

## Supporting students to become workforce ready

Across Australia many workplaces are creating an environment where all people are not only safe but also respected, valued and treated as equals, regardless of their gender.

Employers are looking for employees who can not only contribute to a productive and successful workplace culture, but also help them to meet their obligations under federal and state workplace safety and anti-discrimination laws to create a fair, safe and inclusive workplace.

In addition, gender equality is seen by some workplaces as part of 'core business', with research demonstrating the positive impact promoting gender equality can have. Achieving gender equality is important for workplaces not only because it is fair and equitable, but also because it is linked to a country's overall economic performance. Evidence from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency<sup>6</sup> shows that workplace gender equality is associated with:

- improved national productivity and economic growth
- increased organisational performance
- enhanced ability of companies to attract talent and retain employees
- enhanced organisational reputation.

## Responding to the increasing demand from industry

There are also industry-specific developments which will have an impact on the skills and capabilities certain professions require. Industries are taking action to minimise and mitigate the cost that harmful attitudes and practices can have on their clients, customers and staff, acknowledging that investing in equity approaches isn't just the smart thing to do, it's the right thing to do.

Some examples from diverse sectors include:

- **Respectful relationships education** – Teachers across primary and secondary school are increasingly expected to be able to incorporate a gender lens when lesson planning and classroom teaching, in order to challenge gendered norms and promote respectful relationships.
- **Capacity building of the healthcare system** – There is an increasing expectation and desire for nurses, doctors, social workers and other allied health practitioners to have skills in identifying and responding to family violence and sexual assault.
- **Diversity and inclusion in sport** – From grassroots sporting clubs to national sporting codes, coaches, managers and administrators are directing resources to ensure sport is available to, and representative of, the entire Australian population. Sporting organisations are expected to implement measures to ensure all members are equally valued and have equal opportunities to safely participate in all events.
- **Policing and justice reform** – Where in the past the justice system viewed family violence as being a private relationship matter, it is now 'an Australasian policing priority' and core business for Magistrates Courts.<sup>7</sup> As such, workers in the sectors of justice, policing, law and crime prevention are increasingly expected to not only know about the gendered drivers of family and/or sexual violence but to support a community-based approach to responding to and preventing it.
- **Multi-sector collaborations** – The [Thriving Communities Partnership](#) (TCP) is a cross-sector collaboration ensuring that everybody has fair access to the essential services they need to thrive in contemporary Australia, including utilities, financial services, telecommunications and transport. These services are being upskilled in identifying and responding to those experiencing family violence, hardship or mental illness, as well as those who have a disability or are from vulnerable population groups.



## Being an employer and education institution of choice

Increasingly, in order to attract and retain the best talent, workplaces are realising that they don't want to be left behind when it comes to their reputation and their employee experience of gender equality and primary prevention of violence measures in the workplace.

Most Australian universities are demonstrating their commitment to workplace gender equality with concrete action such as organisation-wide strategies, family-friendly and equal opportunity policies, and initiatives to increase and maintain female leadership. This is because universities recognise that gender equality is not only a human right, but also that a university's growth and sustainability will be compromised if the talents of women and gender diverse people are underdeveloped and under-utilised.

Research shows that employees who work in organisations with strong diversity and inclusion climates are three times more confident in their organisation's ability to perform well than those who work in a low-diversity climate.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, employee engagement within these companies is higher and employee turnover is lower than in organisations with low diversity rates.

As well as competition to attract the best staff, universities need to diversify their student recruitment to ensure ongoing growth and sustainable participation in Australia's higher education environment. Investing in teaching and learning strategies that promote gender equity concepts and practices is favoured by current and potential employees, students and other stakeholders and thus should be part of a university's commitment to excellence.

## Preparing students to be active citizens

One of the roles of higher education is to prepare students for life as active citizens. Gender equality is a human right and recognised as being essential to achieving peaceful and democratic societies where everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential.<sup>9</sup> The university sector can be considered an important platform for promoting and highlighting the importance of gender equality.

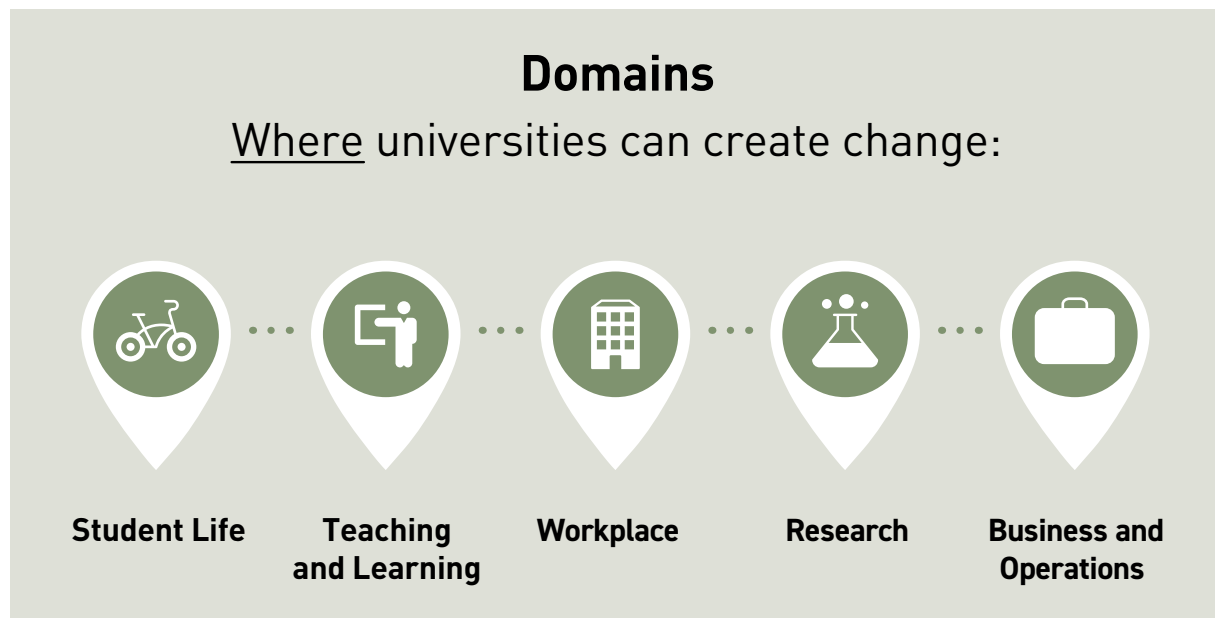
Incorporating gender equality in teaching and learning practice within higher education will no doubt contribute to highlighting the importance of the issue to students and staff. Students will be guided to rethink gendered norms and behaviours that have long been considered acceptable. The expected outcome is that in addition to acquiring skills relevant to employment, students will also be equipped to take an active role in relation to gender equality, women's rights and the elimination of gender-based violence.

## Supporting a whole-of-university approach to prevention

Teaching and learning are important elements of a whole-of-university approach to building a supportive learning and work environment that promotes gender equality and respect, by making classrooms, tutorials, colleges and other university spaces places where all people feel safe, respected and able to access equal opportunities.

Acknowledging that it takes all of society to address the social norms and historical systems that drive gender inequality, a whole-of-university approach to the prevention of gender-based violence works to improve gender equality. The university can assess the way gender interacts with attitudes, behaviours and systems that lead to inequity and inequality. The university can then develop specific strategies across a range of business areas to ensure everyone is safe and respected.

[\*Educating for Equality\*](#) is a whole-of-university model which outlines how universities can address gender-based violence, within the institution as well as in the community. As identified in this model, teaching and learning is a key domain where gender equality can be promoted in universities.



Through applying a gender lens to their teaching practice, academics can help to build a culture where gender stereotypes are challenged, gender discrimination is unacceptable, and gender equality is actively promoted and modelled.

Universities are also workplaces, so in addition to educating the next generation of Australian workers, they can also support gender equality through workplace structures and practices that actively challenge direct and indirect sexism and discrimination. The professional learning that teaching academics benefit from through this approach helps them reflect not only on their role as educators but also their behaviours as colleagues and citizens. Therefore, a teaching and learning approach to primary prevention doesn't just focus on a curriculum that teaches about gendered power relations, but also gives staff the opportunity to model for students what a fair and equitable workplace looks like.

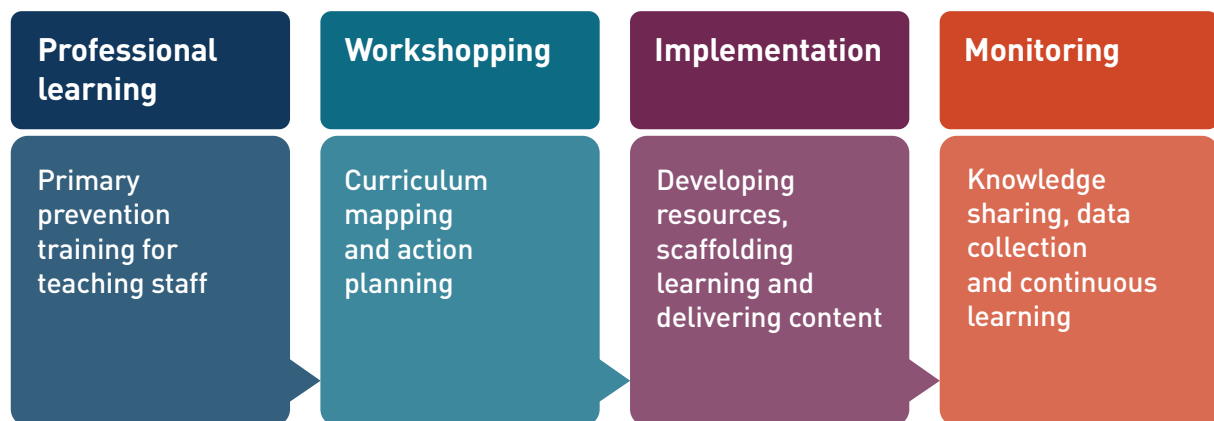
# PRACTICAL GUIDE: UPSKILLING STUDENTS IN YOUR UNIVERSITY

The advice provided in this section can be tailored to all faculties, schools, disciplines and courses delivered across Australian universities. It provides a recommended approach and set of guiding principles that can be put into practice to support the integration of primary prevention content into any undergraduate program.

## Recommended approach

While there are multiple ways in which staff and student capability can be developed regarding the primary prevention of gender-based violence, this document outlines an approach based on the Upskilling Pre-service Professionals project, implemented by Our Watch in partnership with two universities from 2019 to 2021. It includes four main steps or phases:

1. professional learning – primary prevention training for teaching staff
2. workshopping – curriculum mapping and action planning
3. implementation – developing resources, scaffolding learning and delivering content
4. monitoring and ongoing work – knowledge sharing, data collection and continuous learning.



The key focus of this approach is to develop the capability of teaching academics to incorporate primary prevention concepts and content into their existing curriculum. Detail on how to implement each one of these phases is provided in the following sections.

## Primary prevention as the focus of learning

As mentioned above, the primary prevention of gender-based violence aims to stop violence by addressing the underlying drivers of violence. This approach is informed by health promotion and public health theory and practice, which recognises that there are three levels of intervention required to address public health issues:

- Tertiary – Actions can be taken *after* a negative health outcome to avoid it happening again.
- Secondary – Actions can be taken at moments of *risk* to stop the negative health outcome from happening, or to reduce the severity.
- Primary – Actions can be taken *before* the negative health outcome occurs, to stop it from happening at all.

Primary prevention aims to work with all people, across all levels of society, to change and transform the social context in which, on average, one in three women experience physical or sexual violence, mostly perpetrated by a man they know and trust. Of the three levels of intervention, primary prevention will have the largest impact on the prevalence of gender-based violence. Tertiary and secondary initiatives, while essential, are unlikely to significantly reduce the national rates of gender-based violence on their own.

Primary prevention practitioners are people undertaking activities (or practice) that address one or more of the essential actions that prevent gender-based violence. It can be the sole focus of a person's job, or it can be a smaller component, integrated into their core tasks. The essential actions include:

1. Challenge condoning of violence against women.
2. Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships.
3. Build new social norms that foster personal identities not constrained by rigid gender stereotypes.
4. Support men and boys to develop healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships.
5. Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.
6. Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice.
7. Build safe, fair and equitable organisations and institutions by focusing on policy and systems change.
8. Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys, in public and private spheres.

There are a range of skills and areas of knowledge that underpin these actions. You can review these below under [Primary prevention core capabilities](#).

## Getting started

It is important to ensure the following elements are in place before you integrate primary prevention concepts into teaching content and practice:

1. Department leads are supportive and resources have been allocated.
2. Response systems and supports are in place for staff and students.
3. A working group or coordination mechanism exists for collaboration across teams and departments.

## Leadership support and allocation of resources

The success of any teaching approach to upskill students relies on formal support from academic leaders such as deans, faculty heads, school chairs, discipline leads, program/course directors, and unit chairs. A commitment from faculty or school leadership gives legitimacy to the work, encouraging buy-in from all staff in the area, and from students, which can enhance participation and minimise resistance.

Resources will be required to invest in the professional learning of teaching staff (at all levels), including casual and sessional staff, as well as time for planning and modifying curriculum content. Therefore, it is necessary that the commitment to the initiative is accompanied by an allocation of appropriate resources.

## Student and staff safety

Appropriate response policies, referral pathways and support services for staff and students need to be in place before teaching about the prevention of gender-based violence in any course. Teaching on this topic can result in students or staff recognising that what they have previously experienced, or are currently experiencing, is a form of gender-based violence or sexual assault. Therefore, they may feel more confident to disclose, seek support and possibly report their experience. As a result, there can be an increased demand on specialist and generalist support services.

Every university is different and will have its own system, policies and procedures to respond to disclosures or formal reports of violence experienced by staff and students. For detailed advice on the practices that will support universities to embed a victim-survivor-centred approach across their own unique response systems, refer to [\*Practice guidance: A victim/survivor-centred approach to responding to violence\*](#).

## Coordination and collaboration

Gender-based violence and its drivers are deeply entrenched in our society, and change requires continuous effort and a long-term commitment to violence prevention across all levels of society. Short-term or one-off teaching interventions are less effective than longer-term, sustained approaches. For this reason, it is important to form a working group with broad representation of staff who will work together to design, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the integration of prevention content throughout the course in a sustainable manner.

It is important to have academic staff from the relevant discipline involved in the planning and implementation of these teaching initiatives. They will bring awareness of key areas for action around curriculum development, as well as the networks to be able to motivate as many colleagues as possible to commit to participating. Furthermore, they will be able to advise on opportunities and barriers in relation to the curriculum development and teaching cycle, so that any efforts to train staff, review curriculum and monitor implementation are coherent, achievable and aligned with other teaching and learning priorities.

Universities have a range of internal resources available to support primary prevention initiatives, including training modules for staff and students, communications campaigns, support services and staff dedicated to implementing gender equity strategies. In order to streamline the use of existing skills and knowledge within the university it is beneficial to also include key staff from these areas on the working group, as they will be best placed to know how to take advantage of these internal resources and/or advocate for future resource allocation.

It is important that all members of the working group have a foundation level of understanding of the issues relating to gender inequality and gender-based violence and are on board with the messaging. This will ensure that they can be part of the strategic communications to promote the initiative and mitigate any resistance that might come up.



## Professional learning program

It is important that educators delivering any content about primary prevention are confident to deliver the content, facilitate discussions and respond to questions and possible resistance or backlash. Student feedback indicates they are more likely to engage and take on board information about gender-based violence when they see an educator who is perceived as knowledgeable in the content area modelling appropriate behaviour.

Teaching academics in each specific discipline, school or faculty will need training about the prevention of gender-based violence so they can conduct a review of their curriculum and teaching content. They can then identify the most appropriate areas for incorporating content about the prevention of gender-based violence, along with the most effective approaches. This will help create a shared understanding of what to address and key steps to take, and make sure that everyone is equipped to respond to questions, concerns and feedback from students, staff and other stakeholders.

## Defining the parameters

The first step is to identify the program, discipline or area of study that is going to be the focus of integrating primary prevention content into teaching practice. The selection of participating disciplines should be based on an evaluation of their readiness, using the points outlined in [Getting started](#) as a baseline – that is, look for course leaders and academics who can champion the work and deliver the intended outcomes.

Working to understand the drivers of gender-based violence and gender inequality can be uncomfortable for some individuals and groups, as it can challenge their values and opinions, as well as their personal or professional identity. In this regard, it is useful to focus your efforts where there is already momentum and buy-in. This helps to establish a test case or pilot, which, if successful, can then be replicated in other academic programs. Those disciplines which show the most interest, commitment and receptivity to collaboration and partnering in the prevention of gender-based violence should be given priority.



## Recruitment

A faculty, school or discipline may have the resources and authority to mandate that all teaching staff participate in the implementation of the upskilling initiative. This will ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to staff professional learning and the subsequent implementation of a modified curriculum. However, this approach should be taken with caution, as making the completion of professional training mandatory can backfire. Forcing uninterested individuals to undertake training can cause ill will that is detrimental to the gender equality cause.

Instead, it is recommended that a university invite or recruit staff with a specific role and/or interest in the initiative. Teaching academics will be expected to not only apply the learning and discussions from the training and workshops to their teaching practice, but also collaborate across units to ensure that prevention content is scaffolded and embedded across the life of the undergraduate program. In this regard, it is ideal that unit chairs of core units from every year of the program participate in the professional learning. Using a scaffolded learning approach will result in key prevention concepts and content being embedded in first-year core units and onwards through the entire course.

Lecturers and tutors should also be encouraged to participate, as they will have responsibilities around delivering the content to students and helping to contextualise prevention content to unit and module learning objectives. Any teaching academics engaging directly with students on this topic should also participate in the recommended training, so they will have relevant knowledge and skills to respond appropriately to disclosures from people who have experienced or used gender-based violence. See [Recommended content](#) for more information.

## Primary prevention core capabilities

Primary prevention work involves any action or activity to address one or more of the drivers of gender-based violence and gender inequality more broadly. In order to be able to teach students about the relevance of these actions and approaches to their profession, teaching academics will need to be familiar with the knowledge, skills and key messages provided below.

The knowledge areas and skills are categorised into primary prevention and tertiary response. While the focus of the learning is primary prevention, a basic understanding of tertiary response and how it supports and is supported by primary prevention ensures a holistic approach.

The capabilities in the table below can be used in numerous ways – for example, to guide a staff skills audit and training needs assessment, or to inform the design of the professional learning program. They can then be used to assist academics when mapping the existing curriculum and identifying where it would be appropriate to include content on primary prevention.



## Primary prevention core capabilities

Category	Knowledge	Skills
<p><b>Primary prevention</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender construction and reinforcement in society.</li> <li>• Gender stereotypes, assumptions and myths.</li> <li>• Socio-ecology of gender norms, practices and structures.</li> <li>• Intersectionality and systemic forms of discrimination and inequality.</li> <li>• Gender-based/family violence: statistics, facts and types of violence.</li> <li>• Drivers of gender-based violence.</li> <li>• Essential actions for addressing gender-based violence that are tailored to the discipline.</li> <li>• Locating gender equity within professional codes of conduct, ethics and accreditation standards.</li> <li>• Forms of resistance and backlash to gender equity initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locate and identify own bias/ beliefs/values and assumptions relating to key knowledge areas.</li> <li>• Increase capacity to engage in self-reflection relating to key knowledge areas.</li> <li>• Identify the drivers of gender-based violence within profession.</li> <li>• Identify systemic and structural forms of discrimination and abuse that influence how gender-based violence is experienced differently by different groups of women.</li> <li>• Apply an intersectional lens to work with individuals and communities.</li> <li>• Identify and call out sexism, harmful gender norms/ stereotypes/violence-supporting behaviours and gender inequality related to professional role.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities to integrate prevention into professional role.</li> <li>• Respond to resistance and backlash when attempting social and behavioural change.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tertiary response</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to deal appropriately with disclosures, from both victim-survivors and perpetrators.</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities in gender-based violence response.</li> <li>• Referral and specialist services/ secondary consultations.</li> <li>• When working with children:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Impacts of violence on children and families.</li> <li>– Trauma responses in children.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify gender-based violence/ family violence.</li> <li>• Identify and respond to risk in the context of professional role when working with all clients and communities, including with victim-survivors and perpetrators of violence.</li> <li>• Respond to disclosures of gender-based violence and refer appropriately, including for victim-survivors and perpetrators of violence.</li> </ul>

## Key messages

Key messages are included to maintain a focus on the social change nature of the work and support attitudinal change where necessary. It is not the sole role of this initiative to change attitudes of participating academics and their students. This is work that needs to happen university-wide, so think about where work across the university – from student services to human resources – can be brought in to help reinforce messaging to promote prevention attitudes, including:

- Gender-based violence is prevalent but preventable.
- The national framework for primary prevention (*Change the story*) sets out how different sectors can contribute to prevention of gender-based violence.
- Promoting gender equity and addressing the gendered drivers are effective in preventing gender-based violence.
- Gender equality benefits all people, communities, and society.
- As a professional, you have a role to play in helping to prevent gender-based violence. There are supports and resources internal and external to the profession to help you do this.



## Skills audit for staff

Prior to implementing the project, it is recommended that staff participate in a skills audit. Gender equality work can be highly personal and requires teaching academics to have a solid understanding of existing unequal power relationships between women and men, and of men's use of violence against women and girls, as well as good teaching and facilitation skills. These facilitation skills may be required to respond to students negatively affected by the content and/or students who challenge, dismiss or deny the severity, prevalence and seriousness of gender-based violence. Teaching staff are also required to actively engage in ongoing critical self-reflection as to their own social identity and experience of gendered power relationships.

A skills audit can be a small, confidential in-house survey that helps to explore staff's comfort with certain topics, self-rate their confidence in teaching the content, and flag areas where they feel they might need support. The [core capabilities](#) mentioned above can provide a framework to start surveying and mapping staff's existing skills, knowledge and attitudes against what is optimal. It is also worth acknowledging that staff's level of knowledge and skill will change and improve over time.

The aim of a skills audit is to bring to light any issues or gaps for specific teaching academics, as well as to provide a targeted approach to general upskilling of the teaching team. Due to the reflective and transformative nature of prevention work, ongoing professional learning is required, regardless of the specific skills, experience and expertise of the teacher.

## Tailoring professional learning to the needs of teaching academics

Ideally, the professional learning you deliver to staff should be tailored to meet their needs and expectations in relation to the topic of gender-based violence prevention, the resources available, and their learning preferences.

### Contextualisation

People care more about an issue when it is packaged in a way that seeks to align with one or more of their values, interests or beliefs. Therefore, the content of the training needs to be relevant to the audience and linked to discipline-specific skills and outcomes. Aligning the work of gender equality to their professional values helps make the inclusion of this content more compelling. Include statistics and examples from the relevant sector when showing the way gender inequality and intersecting issues of injustice manifest in the workplace and professional practice. Likewise, take success stories from their field to show what gender equity and prevention work looks like in practice.

It is also important to consider the relevance of any regulatory and risk management frameworks to the outcomes of gender equality and violence prevention. Identify relevant state or national legislation and public policy in relation to addressing sexual harassment or sexual or family violence, and how it corresponds to the discipline. For example, [respectful relationships education](#) is now mandatory for all state primary and secondary schools in Victoria. This makes the work of supporting the prevention of gender-based violence not only the right thing to do, but necessary from a legal and compliance perspective.

## Delivery mode and methods

This upskilling approach recommends that the professional learning includes staff training and workshops. However, how this is actually delivered will depend on the context of the university, the preferences of teaching academics, and the resources available.

Delivery modes can include:

- **Face-to-face** – In-person learning is great for teaching and workshopping on topics that require reflection and critical analysis. Where possible, face-to-face learning in groups of up to 20 people at a time should be encouraged. This mode also helps to create safe and inclusive spaces so that all participants can interact equitably and safely engage in difficult and challenging conversations. In addition, participants will experience good teaching, and facilitation of difficult content.
- **Online learning** – Using digital methods and mediums can help you reach and equip as many people as possible with the information and skills they need to integrate gender equality into their teaching practice. However, these should be live sessions such as webinars or small group trainings, and any static content (for example, online modules, click-through courses) should be combined with direct engagement and facilitated discussion with teaching academics. For more guidance on this topic refer to [Educating for Equality: Best practice principles for online learning](#).

Content needs to be delivered in engaging and interactive formats, providing teaching academics with the opportunity to ask and answer questions, so they can process the concepts and make meaning of them in relation to their own field of work. While lecturing might be appealing, didactic methods do not work as well as interactive learning, even with adults.

It is also important to provide reflection points within the delivery, to give teaching academics time to consider what the learning means to them and their professional role, and how they are going to apply it. This can be done successfully using break-out activities where the learning is shared and processed in small groups and pairs. However, in doing so be aware of power dynamics within the group, since where these are not balanced between individuals (for example, associate professor and tutor), it can create a barrier to open and honest dialogue.



## Recommended content

A balance needs to be achieved between valuing the complexity of prevention work and maximising the time and attention of academics who are generally constrained by a number of demands, especially in the context of COVID, which has changed the way universities deliver education. As a minimum, however, it is best to start with introductory content about responding to disclosures of gender-based violence, and to follow this by exploring the national framework for the primary prevention of gender-based violence, [Change the story](#).

The information provided below is a guide, and should be tailored to meet the training needs of the teaching academics. It can also be structured in a number of ways, as a full-day session or a series of shorter sessions. However, time in-between sessions to reflect on the content supports adult learning principles.

### Responding sensitively to disclosures

Increasing awareness and understanding of gender-based violence can result in individuals feeling more comfortable disclosing their own experiences of violence to those delivering prevention activities, as well as to friends, peers, colleagues, response and specialist support services, or even the police.

Therefore, teaching academics who are going to incorporate prevention content into their teaching need to feel confident in responding safely and respectfully when a student (or colleague) discloses, and in providing advice to other colleagues, where appropriate, on how they should respond.

To this end, it is recommended that the professional learning program begin with sessions covering background knowledge regarding gender-based violence, and basic skills for responding appropriately to people who have experienced or used gender-based violence. This content should always be delivered by a skilled professional with specialist knowledge and experience in response, and tailored to the internal response services available within your university, so be sure to consult or engage the relevant people through the design process.

## Module 1: Responding to disclosures of gender-based violence

### Module summary

#### Learning objectives

- Understand the definition, dynamics and impacts of gender-based violence.
- Recognise indicators and ask questions to identify gender-based violence, as appropriate to their role.
- Safely provide a basic response to a victim-survivor disclosing gender-based violence.
- Understand principles of developing a simple safety plan and making effective referrals.

#### Duration

2–3 hours

## Topics covered in module 1

Topics	Detail
<b>Understanding gender-based violence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting the scene – why are we here?</li> <li>• Training scope</li> <li>• National and state context of gender-based violence</li> <li>• Defining gender-based violence</li> <li>• Survivor stories</li> <li>• Forms of violence, impacts, statistics</li> </ul>
<b>Drivers and myths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol, poverty, mental health – not drivers of gender-based violence</li> <li>• Gender and violence</li> <li>• Gender inequality as the social context for gender-based violence to occur</li> <li>• <i>Change the story</i> video</li> </ul>
<b>Recognising disclosures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person-centred approach – acknowledging the victim as the expert on their experience</li> <li>• Role clarity</li> <li>• Indicators of gender-based violence</li> </ul>
<b>Responding to disclosures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barriers to disclosures</li> <li>• Responding sensitively and respectfully - key messages to the person disclosing</li> <li>• When someone doesn't want assistance</li> </ul>
<b>Skills application</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice session – role-play about recognising and responding to disclosures of gender-based violence</li> </ul>
<b>Safety and referrals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role clarity</li> <li>• Safety planning – minimum requirements</li> <li>• Considering additional barriers to safety</li> <li>• Making referrals and referral options</li> </ul>
<b>Responding to perpetrators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key considerations for safety</li> </ul>
<b>Self-care and wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-care techniques</li> <li>• Available supports for staff</li> </ul>

## Primary prevention framework (*Change the story* and the gendered drivers)

The second and main focus of learning should be on the primary prevention approach to gender-based violence, covering an introduction to the *Change the story* framework, the drivers of gender-based violence and key concepts including gender, sex and intersectionality. Where possible, it is best to tailor the concepts, statistics and examples to the academic audience to help bring the core concepts to life for them.

### Module 2: Introduction to *Change the story* and primary prevention

#### Module summary

Learning objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the different levels of prevention</li><li>• Understand the gendered nature of violence</li><li>• Understand intersectionality, and how this applies in prevention</li><li>• Understand the drivers of gender-based violence</li><li>• Identify how the gendered drivers manifest in each discipline.</li></ul>
Duration
2–3 hours

#### Topics covered in module 2

Topics	Detail
<b>Understanding primary prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difference between primary prevention, early intervention and response</li><li>• Whole-of-population issue and public health approach</li><li>• Socio-ecological model – everyone has a role to play</li></ul>
<b>Sex and gender, gender norms and stereotypes, intersectionality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sex, gender identity and sexuality</li><li>• Gender norms, practices and structures</li><li>• The intersection of gender inequality with other forms of discrimination</li></ul>
<b><i>Change the story</i> framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drivers of violence against women</li><li>• Reinforcing factors</li></ul>
<b>Intersectionality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Changing the picture</a> overview as an example of an intersectional approach to the prevention of violence</li><li>• Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrants, refugees, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities</li></ul>
<b>Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do the gendered drivers manifest in the specific discipline? (Support with data, case studies and anecdotes of gender inequality in that discipline.)</li></ul>

## Workshopping

Following training in the key concepts of primary prevention, teaching academics will be able to apply a primary prevention lens to their existing curriculum and plan the way forward for the integration of primary prevention into their subject content. To this end, the workshopping component should focus on curriculum mapping and action planning. These can be run as part of the professional learning sessions or delivered separately through other mechanisms such as academic staff meetings or planning forums.

### Curriculum mapping

Refer to the [Primary prevention core capabilities](#) for a template of where staff can start with the process of mapping. This should be reviewed carefully, either before or during the workshop, with suitable stakeholders, to determine where nuance needs to be applied in accordance with the discipline of focus. For example, where graduates are likely to be working with children, 'trauma responses in children' might be suitable knowledge for graduates to have. But if they are more likely to work with adults, this knowledge would be less relevant as a core competency.

It might be useful to prepare a list of all the core units from first to final year prior to the workshop so that it can be populated with information about which core capabilities are already covered in the existing course curriculum (and how they are taught). This makes it easier to highlight gaps as well as identify who could be responsible for addressing those gaps.

### Action planning

Mapping, identifying gaps, modifying the curriculum, delivering content to students and continued professional learning to support the integration of a primary prevention lens is ongoing work. Therefore, it will be key to wrap up the workshopping process with some action planning, to identify the key priorities for the group of teaching academics to focus on. This should be grounded in a vision of what staff want to achieve with this work, and with careful consideration of the resources available to support ongoing curriculum development. Responsibility for each action should also be allocated to a specific person or team to ensure accountability for implementation.

Below is a suggested session plan of objectives and activities to cover in the workshop process. Refer to the [Implementation](#) section for more detail about the key actions that will need to be planned.



## Module 3: Application of the primary prevention framework to specific discipline

### Module summary

#### Workshop objectives

- Apply the drivers of gender-based violence in own professional practice
- Map primary prevention skills and knowledge to own curriculum
- Identify where in the curriculum this teaching already exists and share information about how it is taught
- Identify gaps and where there is the opportunity to further embed primary prevention work into teaching practice
- Develop an action plan for integrating content into teaching practice

#### Duration

2–3 hours



Topics covered in module 3

Topics	Detail
<b>The gendered drivers in specific industry/ discipline</b>	Explore further stats and anecdotal examples of the drivers in the specific discipline
<b>Skill set required by professionals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorm relevant skills and knowledge required by students to integrate into professional practice</li> <li>• Review against primary prevention core capabilities, and modify as needed</li> </ul>
<b>Course mapping</b>	<p>Workshop with teaching academics the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where are these skills and this knowledge already being taught in the curriculum? Identify specific units and modules.</li> <li>• What methods do you use to integrate this information, e.g. case studies, journal articles, assessment activities, exam questions?</li> <li>• What are the gaps in the program?</li> <li>• Where are there opportunities in specific units/modules to further incorporate primary prevention content?</li> <li>• How can we coordinate to embed the content across the entire program?</li> </ul>
<b>Action planning</b>	<p>Workshop with teaching academics the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do we want to achieve?</li> <li>• What are the priority actions to achieve this?</li> <li>• What are the opportunities, barriers and risks to consider?</li> <li>• What are the next steps?</li> <li>• How will we know if it has worked?</li> </ul>

## Implementation

Implementation will depend on the needs of the course and the resources available. However, as a minimum the follow-up actions for implementation should include:

- detailed curriculum mapping
- developing resources specific to the learning objectives of the course and units
- pedagogical design that embeds content across the life of a course
- delivery of content to students.

### Detailed curriculum mapping

Depending on the scale of the intervention (for example, undergraduate course or whole school) and the number of units being reviewed, the curriculum mapping process may take more or less time. If it is not completed within the workshop, then time and resources should be allocated in the implementation phase to complete this critical step. It will require coordination to ensure relevant staff provide input as to what is currently being taught and where they see opportunities to enhance the current content, and to embed and scaffold new content.

New content might include incorporating new resources such as tutorial activities, or perhaps more structurally through new learning outcomes where a need is identified. The opportunity to introduce new learning outcomes in specific units will depend on time and resources available to review and modify the curriculum. However, in doing so it will create a greater impetus for students to engage with the primary prevention content and reinforce the relevance of it to their professional role through related assessment tasks.

### Developing tailored teaching resources

Through the curriculum mapping process it is likely that gaps will be identified where specific prevention knowledge areas or skills are missing from the course content, or are not framed as part of the evidence base for the prevention of gender-based violence. In this instance, it will be valuable for teaching academics and/or other specialists working with the university to spend time developing or tailoring their teaching resources. Further guidance on developing and tailoring resources suitable for teaching about prevention of violence in the university context can be found in the [\*Educators' guide to upskilling pre-service professionals\*](#).

Partnership pedagogies are becoming increasingly popular in the university context. This approach promotes the co-design, co-development and even co-delivery of teaching content between university academics and their stakeholders, including specialist support services, community and students. Given the emerging nature of primary prevention theory and practice, and the way it needs to be tailored to each context, it might be useful for teaching academics to team up with relevant stakeholders to ensure the development of safe, appropriate and relevant teaching resources.

## Scaffolding content across core units

One-off sessions for students are not effective. Information needs to be delivered over a sustained period, due to the complexity of gender-based violence and its underpinning concepts. Students need time to meaningfully engage and reflect on the content for it to have a lasting impact. Ideally, information would be delivered and reinforced at multiple touch points throughout the life of the degree – that is, in years 1, 2, 3 and 4. In addition, the information should be provided through a range of methods, such as prescribed readings, guest speakers, tutorials and, where possible, assessment tasks.

In order to take an integrated approach, the course director and unit chairs will need to work together to plan how the key concepts and skills can be embedded and scaffolded in a carefully paced and considered way, so that students are supported to deepen their understanding at each level. This planning work may need to have additional resources allocated to make the time available, considering the demands on teaching academics. However, it is an essential component to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the upskilling process.

## Delivering content

Once scaffolding of prevention concepts throughout a number of core units is planned, and relevant teaching resources have been developed, teachers will be in a position to deliver the content to students.

This may be confronting at first, depending on the teaching academic's level of confidence with the material. Co-facilitation may be a good option in the first instance, to give teaching academics a chance to apply their learning with the support of a colleague and get feedback to further build their confidence. Suitable co-facilitators may be found within the university or sought from experienced prevention practitioners working in the community.

It may also be the case that some lecturers or tutors who did not participate in the professional learning or workshopping activities are asked to include the new teaching materials in their coursework. Again, in this instance, a collegial approach to professional learning is encouraged through a co-facilitation and debriefing model. Teaching academics who did participate in the training and workshops can support their peers through co-designing lessons, team teaching, moderating assessment tasks and participating in group reflection.

For more detailed information on preparing sessions and facilitation approaches, see the [Educators' guide to upskilling pre-service professionals](#).

## Monitoring and ongoing work

The work of developing the capability of others to understand and integrate prevention of gender-based violence concepts into their professional and personal practice requires persistence and a commitment to incremental change. Change will not be immediate, and just as students will benefit from a carefully scaffolded approach to their learning, staff need to be engaged in a continuous process of iterative learning to allow the approach to be deepened, broadened and sustained over time.

## Knowledge sharing and continuous learning

Staff who participated in the professional learning and workshop sessions will need ongoing support to develop their knowledge and skills in prevention. This can be achieved by creating a space for staff to regularly come together such as learning forums or a community of practice. There may be other coordination mechanisms within the university that could also be utilised to raise issues and challenges with the approach and share success stories.

For these spaces to be a site of ongoing learning, teaching academics need to:

- feel engaged through conversation, activities and shared outputs
- understand that they are part of something and that they belong, through reflecting together about practice (for example, what their practice means in the context of broader education practice and primary prevention practice)
- align themselves with the expectations and standards of the group, through shared agreements and the establishment of a common goal.

This type of mechanism requires resources, time and effort to coordinate, prepare and run. A person or group will need to be allocated specific resources to support coordination – otherwise it's unlikely to succeed in being a space where teaching academics feel engaged and can develop their practice in an ongoing way.

## Collecting and analysing data

Gathering and reflecting on information is important for tracking the progress of any changes introduced, for measuring their effectiveness and impact. This data can be garnered through student feedback and staff surveys, and preferably incorporated into existing data collection mechanisms so as not to overburden teaching academics with multiple surveys.

Monitoring implementation through data collection helps ensure that:

- the identified actions are being implemented in the way they were intended to be
- any issues or barriers related to teaching practice, student learning or professional learning can be identified and addressed
- the effectiveness of the material in teaching students both the knowledge and the skills of prevention in relation to their profession can be assessed, and areas for improvement identified
- the learning environment, teaching practice and content are inclusive, respectful and responsive to the diverse needs of the student cohort.

Seeking immediate and ongoing feedback from students, staff, senior leaders and other stakeholders will provide vital information about their level of awareness and engagement, which can inform ongoing tailoring and refinement of the upskilling approach.

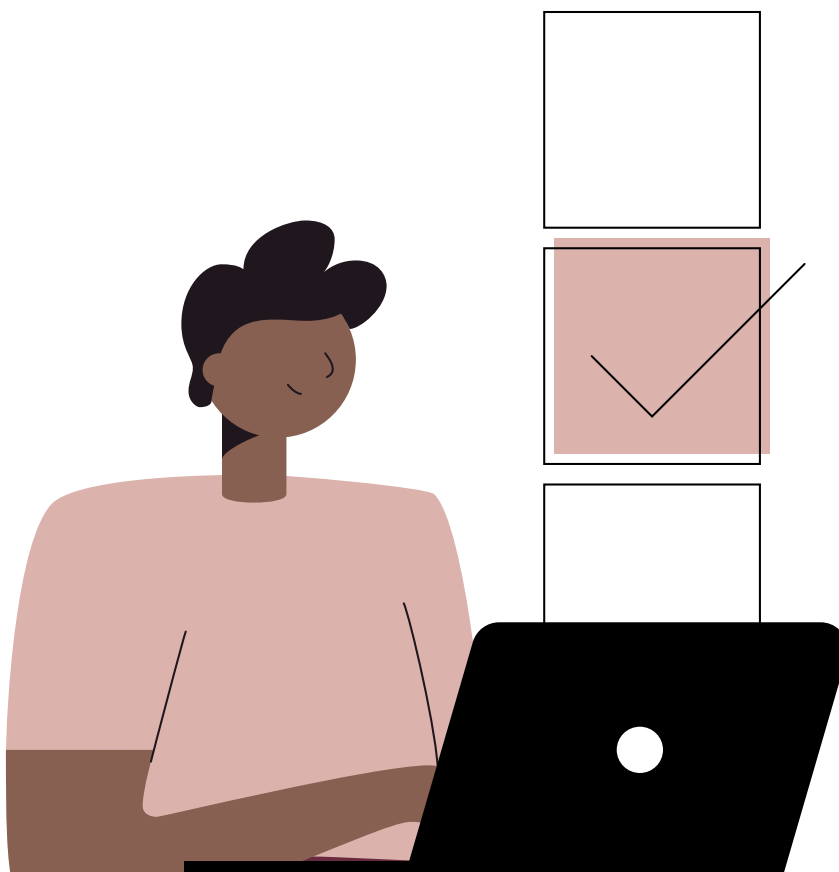
## Promoting good practice across your university

Given the scope of academic programs offered by all universities there will be extensive opportunities to roll out this approach in a number of courses, disciplines, schools and faculties. In doing so, a whole-of-university approach to gender-sensitive teaching and learning can be achieved.

Reflecting on what has worked and what has not will enable the formulation of more effective actions to support change in the long term. Furthermore, sharing your experience with others, within and outside of your university, will help to foster new ideas and solutions to challenges.

Disseminate the lessons learnt from the experience of implementing this approach to other parts of the university, to advocate for broader adoption. Initially this can be done by approaching the teaching and learning committees within the relevant school or faculty to inform them of the benefits of the approach. At the organisation level, dissemination can happen by working with the strategic communications department to incorporate updates into newsletters, forums, committee meetings and other communication channels that exists within the university. There are likely to be a number of other equity-related spaces to tap into, such as gender equity networks, existing and new research projects, academic working groups, and the Respect.Now. Always initiatives, both internal or external to the university.

There may also be an opportunity to engage with the national bodies that accredit the courses to which your university is applying the upskilling approach. Sharing with them the benefits of the approach and any evidence of its positive impact on staff, students and graduates can support structural and systemic approaches to prevent gender-based violence nationally.



# ENDNOTES

- 1 United Nations. (1993). Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.
- 2 Our Watch's mandate is to prevent violence against women. Our Watch's work draws on the evidence base as outlined in Our Watch. (2021). [\*Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia\*](#) (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.
- 3 Our Watch (2021). *Change the story*.
- 4 Our Watch (2021). *Change the story*.
- 5 Our Watch (2021). *Change the story*.
- 6 WGEA. (2018). [\*Workplace gender equality: The business case\*](#).
- 7 MacDonald, A. (2013). 'New risks in family violence reforms'. *Insight Magazine*, Issue 8: Crime and Justice. Victorian Council of Social Service.
- 8 IBM Smarter Workforce Institute. (2014). *The business case for gender balance*.
- 9 United Nations. [\*Gender equality\*](#).