

Learning from family violence specialists and survivors

07 November 2018

By Jessica Gregory, a policy analyst in our energy team

On 1 November 2018, the Thriving Communities Partnership and Women's Information Referral Exchange (WIRE) held a national roundtable on organisational responses to family violence. Representatives from the corporate and community sectors came together to consider new research from WIRE by Dr Nilmini Fernando.



Participants at the workshop discussed a variety of family violence challenges and heard from specialists and survivors.

We attended the event to better understand how we could incorporate the findings from this research into to our work program on family violence, specifically lessons on how, when and where women want to receive financial information and support.

There was strong representation from commission staff at the roundtable, including our chairperson Dr Ron Ben-David, directors Sarah McDowell and Marcus Crudden, project manager Lucy Weston and analysts Ann Randles and Jess Gregory. We also sponsored the event as a way to recognise the significance of forums like these bringing sectors together to collaborate on solutions for problems we all share.

Hearing from survivors

The most powerful part of the day was in the morning, when attendees took part in an active listening activity with fifteen women who were victims/survivors of family violence and now survivor advocates. In small groups we were invited to listen as the women shared stories from interviews with participants in the research. Through the stories they told we learned about five phases of a family violence journey: pre-crisis, crisis, early recovery, mid- recovery and long-term recovery. Hearing these stories from women who had themselves experienced family violence brought a deeply personal connection to the words, and they told us it felt powerful to be heard in this way.



At this workshop, we learned more about the five phases of family violence. Photo credit: [WIRE](#)

The listening activity was deliberately slow. We were invited to hear the women's stories and to absorb the complexity of what they go through at different stages of their journey. The research was brought to life in a way that is not always accessible to businesses and other sectors. Through this activity, we learned how important it is to think deeply about someone's experiences, and to consult with them directly, to develop systems, products and services that will have real benefits to their lives.

The women who led the listening activity were part of the Speaking Out program by Women's Health East, which supports women who have experienced family violence and sexual assault to advocate and have their voices heard in the public arena. They can share not only their stories of survival but also provide insight and expertise on the role everyone can play in responding to family violence and violence against women.

Key speaker: Rosie Batty, Australian of the Year 2015

Rosie Batty also delivered a heartfelt address to the room. She acknowledged how crucial the women's sector had been in bringing the issue of family violence out of the shadows and keeping a record of the number of women killed each year. Rosie highlighted the important role corporate organisations have in the community, and encouraged men to keep working alongside women in preventing and responding to family violence. She spoke about wanting to see a world where family violence is as socially unacceptable as smoking, and that everyone has a responsibility to contribute to that goal.



Rosie Batty, 2015 Australian of the Year, presenting at the conference.

Send us your feedback on our family violence issues paper



Our family violence principles for the energy sector aim to help the industry provide safe and effective support to customers.

We're working with family violence specialists and the energy industry to put in place safeguards for energy customers who are dealing with family violence. As part of this work, we've released an issues paper and want your feedback by 7 December 2018.

[Learn more about our family violence resources review project](#) and how you can get involved.

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[Family violence resources review 2018](#)

We are developing resources for energy retailers outlining how they can support customers experiencing economic abuse associated with family violence.

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[Find out about our next workshops on 15 November and 4 December 2018](#)

We're supporting energy retailers to find practical ways to implement family violence support with workshops and presentations by family violence specialist services. Learn more about the workshop and access our registration portal.

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31 October 2018

[Working together to better protect people experiencing family violence](#)

In this news article, we discuss how an issues paper we released aims to help energy retailers can improve their processes to provide safe and effective support to customers and staff experiencing family violence.

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