



White Ribbon Day 2020

Event: White Ribbon Day 2020

Speaker/s: Sharyn Ghidella, Master of Ceremonies

The Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier of Queensland and Minister for Trade

Brad Chilcott, Executive Director, White Ribbon Australia

Vanessa Fowler, Chair of the Board of Directors, The Allison Baden-Clay Foundation

Kat Baulch, Lead Facilitator, Australia's CEO Challenge

Ben Bjarnesen, Founder and President, LGBTQ Domestic Violence Awareness Foundation

John Siaki, Owner, Siaki and Sons Removalists

The Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

Bob Atkinson, Co-Chair, Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council

Kay McGrath, Co-Chair, Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council

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E&OE

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Well, good afternoon everyone and welcome to the Queensland Government White Ribbon Day Event for 2020. I'm Sharyn Ghidella and it is my absolute pleasure to be here today to be your Master of Ceremonies. Before we start today's official proceedings, I'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather today and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I would also like to acknowledge the Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier of Queensland and Minister for Trade, the

Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, the Honourable Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO, Brad Chilcott, the Executive Director of White Ribbon Australia, speakers and panellists, members of the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council. Lloyd and Sue Clarke, Beck O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer, DV Connect and our virtual audience with us all today. Thank you very much for joining us.

Now, we are here today for the Queensland Government's White Ribbon Day Event. Now, this is the sixth year this event has been held. However today, obviously, is a little different to how we've gathered previously, for obvious reasons. Now, for the first time ever, this event is being streamed live across the state with viewers joining us from places like Mareeba, Longreach, Mackay and Blackall, to name just a few. During today's event, you will learn more about how you can be a catalyst for change in your community, reinforcing that we all play a part in ending domestic and family violence. The White Ribbon Day 2020 theme is Community by Community, Workplace by Workplace, recognising that everyone is required to consider their own role in creating safer communities and workplaces free from all forms of violence.

For all of you viewing today, wherever you are in Queensland, whatever your cultural background and whether you are from a government, a not-for-profit, a sporting or a big corporate organisation, you best understand the unique challenges your workplace and your community faces regarding domestic and family violence. All Queenslanders have the right to respectful, supportive and safer relationships, and to feel safe and secure in their homes and in public. It can never be said enough, domestic and family violence is never acceptable. We have all felt the pressures of COVID-19, the pandemic, I remember home-schooling very well, to be honest. It has increased financial, emotional, health and mental wellbeing pressures for Queenslanders and the challenges are not over yet. It is these increased pressures that can exacerbate the difficulties facing those experiencing or are at risk of experiencing domestic and family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. So now more than ever, it important to remember that help is always available, and your safety remains the highest priority.

Today's event beneficiary, DVConnect, is one of the many organisations helping Queenslanders find pathways to safety away from domestic and family violence. When registering for this event, you could donate to DVConnect. I hope you all did. You still can via dvconnect.org.

Well now it gives me great pleasure to introduce the Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier of Queensland and Minister for Trade, to provide an address.

PREMIER:

White Ribbon Day has never been more relevant than it is in 2020. Coronavirus has had a huge impact on our community. The pandemic has amplified social isolation and we recognise this has had an impact on personal relationships. My government has had a clear

plan to rebuild our economy and keep Queenslanders safe. Domestic and family violence prevention is an important part of our plan for Queensland. In total, we have invested more than half a billion dollars to address domestic and family violence. But there's plenty more to be done. At the height of the coronavirus pandemic, we rolled out a new campaign to remind Queenslanders that help was available. And as Queensland's largest employer, it's our duty to lead from the front. That's why I've ensured that all Queensland Government Departments have White Ribbon workplace accreditation driving cultural change within the public sector. It's crucial that everyone plays a part in addressing domestic and family violence. Today's speakers will share with you their personal stories of survival and recovery. I thank them for their bravery and for taking part today. The Government remains committed to partnering with organisations like White Ribbon and DVConnect to tackle domestic and family violence. The work you do every day is helping to save lives. Thank you.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Thank you very much, Premier. And thank you for all that you do and of course making Queensland a leader when it comes to domestic violence reform. Now, as you would all know, White Ribbon Day is part of a global social movement working to eliminate gendered violence. It strives for an Australian society where all women and children are safe. White Ribbon Australia works through a primary prevention approach in communities, in schools, and workplaces across the country. It therefore gives me great pleasure to introduce Brad Chilcott, the Executive Director of White Ribbon Australia, who is joining us from South Australia today, to share some insights around the future of this organisation.

BRAD CHILCOTT:

Thank you Premier Palaszczuk and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet for having me with you today and for putting on this White Ribbon Day Event. I'm coming to you from the lands of the Kaurna People, now known as Adelaide. I pay my respect to Elders of the lands that I live on and to all First Nations Elders and people of these and other lands. It's essential to remember that the privilege many of us enjoy came at great cost to others, that sovereignty was never ceded, and that injustice continues to this day. I want to thank the Queensland Government for your strong leadership on the prevention of men's violence against women and acknowledge the essential work of the Premier's Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council. Your whole of government participation in White Ribbon Australia's workplace accreditation program is a great demonstration of commitment to gender equality and safer workplaces that give people experiencing violence the confidence they will be believed and supported to do whatever they need to be safe without losing their financial security and employment. It's an impressive standard to set for other Queensland and Australian workplaces and helps equip all public servants with a message of respect and equality that they can spread throughout their communities.

If you're a part of a workplace that isn't yet accredited, I'd love to hear from you and see how we can support your organisation on this journey too. It's also been really encouraging to have a commitment to Queensland having the best coercive control response in the world.



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Another important step towards a society free from all forms of men's violence and abuse. As I hope you've seen we've made a lot of changes to the way the White Ribbon Australia movement operates in this new chapter under the custodianship of Communicare. One of the key changes is a shift from a focus on awareness raising only towards sustained action and advocacy. And what I mean is this - incredible female activists worked for decades to get gendered violence on the national agenda, to bring family and domestic violence out of the shadows. And what's changed as a result of this action is that we're now aware. We know. We know that more than one woman a week is murdered by their current or former male partner. We know that sexual harassment is rife in our workplaces and that sexual violence is on the increase in our community. We know that women don't feel safe doing things that men like me take for granted. We know that police are called out to family violence incidents once every two minutes across Australia. And we know that only 20 per cent of incidents are ever reported. We know that gender inequality is structural violence that leads to women being trapped in abusive relationships through financial insecurity, cultural pressures, and men using the power and privilege they were born into to control and dominate.

So, we are aware, we all know. And know there is something more that's required of each of us. Preventing men's violence against women. Stopping it from happening in the first place requires all of us, all-in. I firstly want to speak to my fellow men and say it'll take more than awareness, more than a pledge, more than a ribbon, more than an event. Of course, not all of us use violence in our relationships. Yet all of us pausing to self-reflect upon the facts I mentioned before would go a long way towards change. When stress levels rise, does my family feel afraid? Am I communicating in a way that shows respect to the people I love? If my partner tried to control my behaviour, who I talk to, what I wear, where I go, like I try to influence theirs, how would I feel? Take a moment, with humility, to listen to and learn from the women in your life. Those in your family, in your workplace, in your community. Pause to think about whether you contribute to a culture that privileges the power, ambitions and desires of men over those of women.

Secondly, for all of us today, I'm putting out a national call-to-action, asking every one of us to get involved in ending men's violence and abuse, community by community and workplace by workplace. I want all of us to consider our own role in creating change. We know that communities whether geographically located, faith-based, multicultural, sporting or others, they best understand the challenges they face and how to engage their men and boys in the process of cultural change. And so, we're asking that White Ribbon Day events like these aren't ends in themselves, but that they're catalysts for action.

This year, we're asking people to establish community action groups in communities and workplaces across Australia that will continue the work beyond these events, identifying opportunities to prevent violence and advanced gender equality that will work in each community, in each workplace, and to pull their collective commitment, creativity, and energy towards meaningful change. It's not enough to be aware. It's not enough to think it's bad. It's not enough to want change. It's not enough to hope someone does something about it. It will take all of us, all in, community by community and workplace by workplace. We can

end men's violence against women together. Join us, stand up, speak out, and most importantly, take action. Visit whiteribbon.org.au to find out how. And thank you again for your leadership Queensland Government, Premier Palaszczuk and for having me with you here today.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Thank you very much Brad, we appreciate your time. White Ribbon Australia certainly has a very important role to play. As you mentioned, addressing domestic and family violence in Queensland is everyone's responsibility. It's requires action from all facets of the community and with this in mind, we are pleased to have Vanessa Fowler, the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Allison Baden-Clay Foundation here today. Now, Vanessa is on a journey to educate the community around the signs of domestic violence and teach tactics to be active and effective as a bystander. Vanessa.

VANESSA FOWLER:

Thank you Sharyn for the introduction. And thank you very much for the invitation to join you today. Today, I'm going to discuss a major epidemic that's happening within our country at the moment. And no, I'm not going to be talking about COVID-19. I'm going to be talking about the epidemic that's occurring about violent behaviours and attitudes within our country. To disrupt the current trends we need to create and build a community that is committed to bringing about change in attitudes about domestic and family violence and recognise its many forms, including the patterned behaviour of coercive control. Now more than ever, it's important for all of us to recognise the signs. Through empowering the community to be active bystanders and teaching the skills to intervene effectively and safely people may be more willing to step up and support someone who is vulnerable. Each one of us is a bystander. However, it's important for us to take the lead and be effective bystanders. We need to be equipped with the tools and the skills necessary to break the silence, break the cycle of violence within our community. Is it easy being a bystander? No. It's difficult. Because in order to be an effective bystander we need courage. We need to trust our intuition and act on it by overcoming our fear even if it is uncomfortable.

Most of you would be aware of the high-profile murder case of my sister Allison. Her story shocked and captivated a nation. It resonated throughout the community. Why? Because she was the girl next door. She was a kind friend, a businesswoman, well-educated, and a loving and devoted mother. And if there's one thing that my family has learned over the last eight years is that domestic violence can happen to anyone. All classes of people, all income and education levels, all religions. Allison, like so many other women, suffered in silence until her death. It can happen to anyone, it doesn't discriminate. So we as a family now look back and realise that there were signs of violence, although not always physical, and in hindsight, if we'd have known what to look for, such as changes in her behaviour and in her level of self-esteem, then our lives and those of her three children may have been very different. We have to take solace in the fact that we didn't know what we didn't know at the time. Allison's murder changed many lives forever and none of our lives will be the same. Because we live



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with the guilt of what we should have done, could have done, and would have done if we'd have known more.

So, our resolve as a family is to teach others to identify the signs of domestic violence, which manifests itself in so many different ways. Following Allison's tragic death, our family has been committed to turning our anger and sadness into something positive through our foundation and have partnered with Griffith University MATE bystander program to educate people on recognising the signs of family and domestic violence and to teach practical skills on how to intervene effectively and sensitively. The training workshop is aimed at the corporate space and weaves Allison's story throughout, explaining the power and control wheel and showing what violence looks like in its many forms. We call the program 'Allison's Gift', and we're empowering and educating bystanders just like each one of you to know how to identify the signs, what to say, and what to do.

So, how do we move towards a cultural and systemic change? The first step is to change our mind-sets. As a society, we're told to mind our own business and not intrude in other people's affairs. In a domestic violence situation this can make it hard to determine what to do, especially when it involves someone's personal relationship like marriage. We all need to overcome our fears and step up to show support. Domestic violence is gendered violence. And the problem lies in the unequal structures, the norms, and practices that prevent women and girls from enjoying the same opportunities as men and boys. As a society we prepare our children early in life to enter the world where men are the leaders and women are the followers. When women are considered inferior, lesser, or unworthy of respect, you can see how people can justify victimisation and other forms of behaviour. We can address gender inequality by actively challenging it in the places where we live, learn, work, and play. When we use phrases like *"it's just boys being boys"*, or *"don't run like a girl"*, *"don't cry like a girl"*, that immediately sends a message to that young boy that he is superior. This becomes instilled in them at a very young age. So, I believe that education needs to start in schools.

To all the good men out there, do your part. Call out your mates for any disrespectful or derogatory comments made towards women. Make them accountable for their actions. Men, you are an important part of this conversation, an important part as we work towards equality for all. It's important for our family that Allison's legacy is a positive one and that by sharing her story we may help others. Effective change cannot be achieved unless each and every one of us takes a personal interest and engages in promoting healthy and non-violent relationships in our homes, schools, work, and the broader community. We also need to address the underlying attitudes and cultural beliefs that perpetrate gender inequality and socialisation that leads to violence against women and children. We must reform the system, making it more responsive and protective. So, my call-to-action for you is to become educated in identifying the red flags of domestic violence. Be prepared to be an active bystander if and when needed. Be on standby. Be fully equipped with your toolbox of skills and strategies to show your support. Because you could not only change someone's life, but you could save someone's life. Thank you.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:



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Thank you Vanessa for sharing your story and for all the work that you and your family do. You are amazing, and since you are so amazing, I'm going to ask you to come back up on the stage. We haven't done with you yet. We're going to introduce you now to the panellists this afternoon, each of whom has generously given up their time to be here. I know they have very busy schedules, so we thank you very much for that. So, please join me in welcoming Ms Kat Baulch, the Lead Facilitator at Australia's CEO Challenge. Now Kat... Yeah, give her a round of applause, yes. Kat has 17 years' experience as a social worker within the fields of domestic and family violence, child protection, healthcare, and corporate settings. As Lead Facilitator at Australia CEO Challenge, Kat has provided workplace education, training and support to increase workplace maturity to respond to domestic and family violence. Thanks for joining us, Kat.

Next is Ben Bjarne... Oh, I knew I was going to get this wrong, Ben. Bjarnesen, how's that? That's it, Ben Bjarnesen, founder and president of the LGBTQ Domestic Violence Awareness Foundation. A round of applause for Ben. Now, Ben is a passionate educator, campaigner and speaker who became a fierce advocate for improved services for LGBTQ+ victims and survivors of domestic violence after discovering an incredible gap in services when he himself experienced abuse within a same-sex relationship.

And finally, Mr John Siaki, owner of Siaki and Sons Removalists. Thanks for joining us, John. Now, John's company specialises in helping women in abusive relationships flee to safety. Before COVID, John's removal company averaged around four domestic violence moving jobs every week. But since the pandemic, a strong demand has pushed that figure to 10 moves a week which is just unfathomable. We thank you for your work there, John. And thank you all for being here today. And congratulations also to Ben, to Australia's CEO Challenge, the Allison Baden-Clay Foundation, and Siaki and Sons Removalists on your recent induction to the Queensland Government's Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Honour Roll. Well done indeed, for that. The Honour Roll recognises individuals, businesses and organisations who are raising awareness and are champions of the cause.

Well, as I mentioned earlier today, White Ribbon Day 2020. The theme is 'Community by Community, Workplace by Workplace' and it recognises, doesn't it, that everyone has to play a role in making our communities safer from domestic violence, all forms of violence. So, to kick off the discussion, I thought I'd open it to all of you and I'd pose this first question. Why is it so critical that all Queenslanders have to get behind this cause and have to do their part? Is it the only way that we are going to stop domestic and family violence? Kat, I might start with you.

KAT BAULCH:

Thank you. It is one of the major ways that we can all play our part to end domestic and family violence. When we look at domestic and family violence across Australia, it is the leading preventable contributor to death and illness for Australian women aged 18 to 45. So, I really want to highlight that it is preventable. In our workplaces, in our communities, in our



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sporting groups, within our family. We all have a role to play, to call this out. And as Vanessa mentioned calling out the gendered attitudes and the drivers of domestic and family violence.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

And Vanessa, I'm assuming you'd agree with all of that?

VANESSA FOWLER:

Yes, I certainly endorse what Kat has said. Yeah. As I said, now more than ever, it's very important for all of us to become educated and be empowered and actually engage. Take on the responsibility to, to... act and make change because it's up to all of us. It's not going to happen. We do need a cultural change. We need a generational change in order that we can live in a violence-free society.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Well Ben, you've been a victim of domestic violence sadly. I guess you would also agree that everyone has to play a part in bringing this to an end?

BEN BJARNESEN:

Yeah, definitely. It's one of those things where we all have a responsibility to do something. We can't rely on our friends to do something or someone else to do something or a particular government department or the police. We all have a responsibility to join as a community and do our part in ending domestic violence.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Well, John you're dealing with victims on a daily basis. You would agree with Ben?

JOHN SIAKI:

Oh, totally. There's a lot of domestic violence out there where... ladies are stuck inside their homes and your neighbours are not realising what's happening in their own home. Yeah, so I could relate to all four of them. All three of them, sorry. And it's... it should be educated into our schools about domestic violence and our schools should start learning to teach kids about respect because that's where it all starts is respect.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Yes, we do need to get to children at a young age, don't we, and teach them about that. Kat, it's not just about individuals though, is it? The corporate sector also plays a very important role here. How can a corporation help stop domestic and family violence?

KAT BAULCH:

Well, there's many steps that workplaces can put in place to be able to provide safety, and for the wellbeing of their employees. First and foremost, we recognise that domestic and family violence has a huge economic impact in Australia – a \$22 billion impact to the Australian



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economy and a \$1.2 billion impact to employers. So we know that keeping people in safe and secure and meaningful work is one of the safest things that employers can actually do. It means that staff have access to finances for their own financial security or to leave home, that kind of thing, but also to support and also to have a safe place to go to that's free from violence. So, there's a number of steps that workplaces can take to be able to make a, and become, I guess, an employer of choice around this sort of place. The first step would be looking at having a really meaningful policy around providing domestic and family violence support. And having that policy, and we call it 'stress-testing' that policy, where we check can your staff find the policy? Can they access it? Is it transparent? Is it flexible? Does it allow for leave to be able to move home or to attend court? That kind of thing. So, we look at that kind of being your first step. Any form of change in workplaces has to be top-down. We have to have a culture where there is respect, where workplaces are actually taking this issue seriously. So with that we look at providing support or education and training, and that's a big part of what I do. It's that training and education for the leaders, the managers and your people and culture team. Because they're the people who are largely going to be getting these calls and they need to know what to do. So, there's lots of little steps that organisations can take to really create awareness, to call this out and to really change the attitudes that cause domestic and family violence.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Well, John, you run a business. You saw a need; you did something about it. How did you actually turn what you saw into action? Was it difficult as a business to do what you did?

JOHN SIAKI:

Yeah, it was many years ago... I witnessed a male hitting a female in front of me. And I fell into deep depression just witnessing it. And, it was hard though. It was very hard to witness that and take it on board and hold it on your shoulders for a whole year. I fell into deep depression and my wife ended up telling me.... I'd said to my wife, "*we should do something about this*" and this lady's face is just in my dreams and everything, it's haunting me and my wife turned around and said "*You've got a truck, use it*". Yeah, ever since then... I ended up calling this one lady, and I said "*Do you remember me? Your husband hit you in front of me and I couldn't do nothing about it.*" I didn't know what domestic violence was then until you witness it. And coming from a family with, that holds a lot of respect, you tend to... you tend to start kicking-in to your cultural background. And I rang her up and I said "*Look, I've got a truck and I can move you out.*" And she said "*No, no, no, that's fine. I'm fine, my house is all...*" and I said "*Well, look ma'am, I've got the truck here. It's ready when you're ready.*" Two weeks later, she texted me and she said "*Oh, he's kicked me out, me and my five-year-old son.*" And I said "*Alright, we're on our way.*" So I called a family member up. He's a lot bigger than me.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Reinforcements.



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JOHN SIAKI:

So I had to call him. I said *"Look, look, cuz. I, you want to come and help me do this?"* And he goes *"Yeah, what are we doing?"* and I said *"Oh, we're heading downtown."* So, we headed all the way down there. I felt so much pressure coming off me. And we got there and she was just crying. The little child did not know what he was up against. And yeah, ever since I moved her out into a storage unit I just wanted to keep on doing it, keep on doing it. I felt really good about it. And yeah, 11 years now, we're still going.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

And do you know how many women you've helped along the way?

JOHN SIAKI:

Oh, I don't keep count. I just... a day at a time, it's a day at a time. If I could teach every kid about respect and not implement learning off their parents about abuse or violence in their home, when they're outside of their home they bring that outside, their violence outside. So, if I can teach kids to become more respectful with women and men, then the world will start being a better place. Because right now, we're all old as it is. Well, I'm still 21.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

You're very young, very young.

JOHN SIAKI:

Still 21. Right now when I... when I think of that, we can't teach the old now. We have to start them young. And I go into schools and I pull kids aside and just talk to them. So, to me I'm still trying to do what I can with my community and embrace my community around me. And yeah, that's why.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

We appreciate all that you do so thank you very much. Vanessa, you're an advocate for education as well. You mentioned that in your speech. You've also spoken publicly about not doing more to help to intervene with your dear sister Allison. Through your work with the foundation you've undoubtedly spoken with a lot of other people who would have experienced the same thing. What do you think it is that stops people from intervening?

VANESSA FOWLER:

I think the main thing, as I mentioned, is overcoming their fear. I know that in our case we did ask questions, but we were fearful that if we pushed that little bit harder to get more information that there would be consequences that would come back on Allison and her three children. So, we were very mindful of that. And I think that has a lot to do with the fear. So, I think it's important that people can overcome that, have the courage to know what to say and what to do. And I think the underlying aspect is we need to change our mind-set. We need to change our mind-set that even though you ask the question, it's ingrained in us that we don't



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get involved. When someone is married with their own family, you understand that they're going to be strong enough and they're going to be capable enough to deal with what is happening within their marriage. But we and a lot of other families have found out that everyone needs support and we just needed to... everyone just needs to plant that seed of support. And it's there as John said, his truck was there when she was ready. So, you just need to plant your seed of support. If it's taken up now, great. In six months' time, even better. You just need to be there.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Well, Ben, we also know that some groups in our communities, they face higher risks of being subjected to domestic and family violence. They also face additional barriers in trying to get support. Can you give us your insights into domestic and family violence experienced in the LGBT community?

BEN BJARNESEN:

Yeah, unfortunately when we look at studies around domestic violence in LGBTI communities it's suffered at a much higher rate. So, at the moment the studies are showing it's around one in two people from LGBTI communities are affected by domestic and family violence at some time in their life. But despite those really alarming figures, the engagement with support services is really not there. There's not a huge amount of engagement and there's a large gap in those support services as well. I know, myself when I experienced abuse, there's sort of this reluctance to go and seek out assistance from any services because I guess there's this sort of belief that the services aren't there for LGBTI communities. So, how are these services going to help us if they're not trained about the sort of unique behaviours and dynamics and unique methods of power and control in LGBTI communities? And if you don't think that you're going to get supported or if you think that you're going to get ridiculed or treated inappropriately because of your sexuality or gender identity, there's this real fear of actually going to that service just in case they don't treat you appropriately. So, there's definitely a lot more to do in that space and making sure all services are accessible to all communities.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

And what more needs to be done?

BEN BJARNESEN:

Look, I think one of the best things that we can do is just raising awareness about sort of what the barriers are, that services might have. For the services we recognise, can we actually assist this person if they come to us whether they be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender? What can we offer this person as a victim or as a survivor or as a perpetrator? Are our services equipped to support those people? And knowing what the specific behaviours are. So, in LGBTI communities for example, there's added things like threats of outing of sexuality or gender identity or health status. There's things like abuse based on your identity.



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So, you're not masculine enough, you're not feminine enough, you're too gay, you're too straight, that sort of thing. And controlling your medications like hormone therapy which can be fatal in some cases. So, there's all of these extra sort of methods of control. But if services aren't recognising what these extra methods are, how are they meant to support someone if they don't actually know that's abuse?

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Kat, we know there are always challenges, but there are always opportunities. A lot of businesses, they are doing it tough now as a result of the pandemic. Do you have any advice for these businesses to ensure that violence programs they do remain a priority, that they aren't forgotten about as a result of tough times for businesses?

KAT BAULCH:

Definitely and I certainly empathise with those workplaces and individuals who are doing it tough due to COVID, that's changed everything for them. But there are certainly lots of things that we can do that don't cost a lot of money. In investing in your staff through providing full support to them, be it a domestic and family violence policy, be it flexible leave, it really means that you're investing in their wellbeing. As I mentioned before, domestic and family violence has a huge economic impact to our employers. And early intervention is a lot cheaper than our long-term support that we need to offer. So, if we are able to offer wraparound support, education, respectful relationships, a culture of respect and a culture of support where people feel like they can share their stories and ask for help and support, then we're really going to be able to create that change to change the ending. So, a lot of things that workplaces can do – jumping on the Queensland Government's website and looking at a basic policy to begin with, to start with, to provide support. There's lots of e-learning programs out there that aren't too expensive as well. We know that when times are tough, that's the time that we should start to invest in our staff, really, for their wellbeing. And we've found at Australia's CEO Challenge, 12 months ago, you would have found us flying around Australia providing face-to-face training and I was just sharing with Ben that 12 months ago, I was in, I think, three cities in one day providing training. So, I'm kind of glad that's finished. But COVID has brought a lot of flexibilities. So, our training programs, we've moved them all virtually really early-on and we make sure we can still create a trauma-informed educational space. And by having virtual training it means we can actually reach more people. We can reach our rural and our regional areas that have been pretty tricky to get to previously. So, there's lots that workplaces can do. And I guess my suggestion would be to start by jumping on the Queensland Government's website, certainly reach out to us in our organisation and we can point you in the best direction for these resources.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Ben, can I ask you, we're talking about corporations there, but now let's get back to individuals. A lot of people are hesitant to become involved because they don't think they can



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unless they're part of a group or an organisation that's set up to deal with this type of thing. But anyone can get involved, can't they?

BEN BJARNESEN:

Yeah, definitely. And I think one of the great things that came out of the Marriage Equality Plebiscite was how much of an impact the whole community can have to make the lives better of LGBTI communities. And we can't do it by ourselves. We really need the support of all people – our family members, our work colleagues, support services if we're to be able to make a difference to domestic and family violence and end it.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

And John, what about in terms of your employees? How did you go about communicating to your staff the need to jump on board what was your idea in terms of helping victims of domestic and family violence?

JOHN SIAKI:

Oh, that was easy. That was easy. My workers they're all against domestic violence... and I've got a neighbour across the road and my two family members. We were all brought up with anti-smacking and... we had a little smack here and there, but we didn't know what domestic violence was back then. And witnessing all this, I said "*oh look, we're going to do all this. You tell me how good you feel afterwards.*" And we moved another domestic violence client at three o'clock in the morning, when he'd left to go to work and we got home I said "*How do you feel?*" And he goes "*Oh, I feel awesome. I want to do it again.*" It gets addictive. But... the thing we need to start teaching our removalists is, removal companies, is how to approach a domestic violence situation. It's very, very intense. It's very frightening at times. But some removalists out there they think it's just a normal removal. But they're not realising the effect that's happening inside their home or what the lady is up against. That's where I've... I've sort of learnt along the way on how to approach ladies that are experiencing domestic violence. So, to me, teaching all the removal companies about domestic violence and how to approach it, not go in guns blazing or using your hands and thinking you're macho man, it's not going to work like that.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

You need the sensitivities when you're dealing with those sorts of situations, yeah?

JOHN SIAKI:

You've got to have a heart.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Kat, last year 36 workplaces, I believe, underwent your training program with more than 4600 people participating. Some organisations would be further along the cultural change

journey than others. What are the two most innovative responses you've seen workplaces implement to respond to violence?

KAT BAULCH:

We've got a few workplaces that have been working with us to really mature their responses to domestic and family violence. So, I've got a few suggestions. But I just wanted to say, how exciting is that? That many workplaces and 4600 staff that attended some form of a face-to-face training session. And that doesn't include any sort of e-learning. So, 4600 people then had a conversation with just one other person and sort of said "*Hey, I went to this training session.*" or "*This is what I learned today.*" Imagine that ripple effect that we can then have in our community.

So, that's, I guess, what keeps us going to really create that change. And one workplace I was thinking of in particular, they reached out to us about sort of 18 months ago and they said "*Oh, we've got this policy, can you review it?*" And we said "*Great, great. We'll review it with a best-practice lens.*" And we threw at them a whole bunch of things that we thought, let's just see if they'll put it in there. Let's just see if they'll put 'unlimited domestic and family violence leave'. Let's just see if they'll put in there 'accommodation support'. Let's just see if they'll put in there around some 'money for a removalist,' because they move their staff around Australia, so they had a removal company that they use. Let's see if they put that in there. And let's see if they put in there that they'll be able to give some cash to people that isn't a loan, it's actually a donation to help them get started. And we thought, we'll just throw this stuff in there. Let's challenge them and see what their appetite is really if they really want to create change. And they did.

And not only did they take all of that on board, but then we sort of said "*OK, OK, what else do we want to do? Let's look at the gender drivers of domestic and family violence.*" And one of those is gender inequality. So, then they started, out of their own accord, this organisation, they looked at pay parity across their managers and their leaders. Not only did they review the pays across similar roles, but then they then made that transparent within their workplace and then worked to create gender equality. So, we talk about one of the first steps is education, it's awareness, but it's actually challenging the norms that sort of minimise or excuse or perpetuate domestic and family violence. And this organisation did that, and that's really exciting. And a couple of the other organisations we work with they've come on board with our partnerships program. So, what we do is we partner workplaces with frontline services such as refuges or behavioural change programs to really create that on-the-ground change. And we've had a lot of workplaces jump on board to create partnerships. We've had financial institutions go into refuges and do budgeting support. We've had building and pest support. We've had people fund a men's behaviour change program to reduce wait list time. So, there's lots that workplaces can do outside of the beginning step of developing a policy.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:



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Alright, well, I've just looked at my clock. We've got one minute left, so I'm going to throw the last question open to you all. We've had a terrible year, haven't we, this year? We look to the future next year for some hope. What do you see as the biggest opportunities to encourage others to take action to end domestic and family violence? What can we do? Who'd like to start? Vanessa.

VANESSA FOWLER:

Well I know it's been said many times this morning, but I think education is the biggest opportunity that I can see. And also, I guess, looking at the different drivers of domestic violence and knowing that violence is not always physical. You need to look at also the history and the pattern of behaviour that has occurred. You know certainly in my sister's case, it's been realised that there was a pattern of behaviour, yet very difficult to realise. And so, looking at that coercive control and looking at that a little bit more deeper and seeing how we can actually formalise that and criminalise that would definitely be another major step forward towards living in a violent-free community.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

And Ben?

BEN BJARNESEN:

Look, obviously similar, education is the key. Make yourself aware of what a healthy relationship looks like and what an unhealthy one might be and how you can link that person into support services safely if they do need assistance and how to have those... the confidence in having those really hard conversations with someone. Another thing would be celebrating or recognising days such as the LGBTI Domestic Violence Awareness Day and just really being a visible ally to those communities and saying *"We recognise it happens to you as well and we're here to support you if you need it"*.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

And Kat, any opportunities you see next year?

KAT BAULCH:

Well, there's certainly an appetite for this particular topic and for education and support. But rather than opportunities, mine would be more of a call-to-action. I think that us as individuals and workplaces and communities, we need to do more. There's lots more that we can do. So, call out the gendered attitudes or the jokes that minimise or perpetuate domestic and family violence. And ask your workplace, do they have a policy, and can they provide that support?

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

And John, last word to you?

JOHN SIAKI:

Mine's pretty much the same. It all comes down to education. Where it all starts with education is educating our kids, what violence is, and putting more signs up and letting everyone know that there are services out here that are ready to take you on board. Just meet us halfway.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Alright, we all need to remember we can all make a difference. Thank you very much for your time today. That was very insightful, thank you very much for that. I think we can all definitely take something away from that conversation today. So, please join me in thanking Kat Baulch, Ben Bjarnesen, Vanessa Fowler and John Siaki. Thank you very much.

They're a hard act to follow, everyone, but I would now like to welcome to the stage The Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP, Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, to say a few words. Thank you.

MINISTER FENTIMAN:

Thank you, Sharyn. And I'm absolutely delighted to be joining you today on White Ribbon Day. Can I also start by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather, the Turrbul and Jagera people, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. And it's always wonderful to be Welcomed to Country by Aunty Maroochy. She does such a beautiful and special job. Can I also acknowledge our Premier for her wonderful message today. To the Co-Chairs of the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council, Kay and Bob and all of the members, it was wonderful to meet with you earlier today and I'm really looking forward to working with you. Can I acknowledge Dame Quentin Bryce and all of the work that we did around implementing your wonderful 'Not Now, Not Ever' report, which really brought this issue to the fore in Queensland and has resulted in significant change. So, there's always more work to do, but thank you for your hard work. And to our wonderful panellists, that was really critical and thought-provoking discussion. Thank you for the work that you do each and every day in our communities but thank you for being here today to talk to everyone in the room here, but also our livestream audience.

It's a day, White Ribbon Day, that can bring mixed emotions. On the one hand, we see the strength that we have here in this room and the commitment and the capacity that we have to overcome violence against women in our communities. But on the other, we acknowledge just how much more work there is to do if we're truly to eradicate violence from our Queensland community. So, we have achieved a lot, but we're all in this together for the long haul and there's still a lot to do. So, I want to start by paying tribute to every single person that has escaped violence and to every single person that has reached out to help them, and to everyone here today who are all working towards the same goal, and that's ending violence against women. And of course, the Palaszczuk Government has been committed to tackling this issue in partnership with the community. And events like White Ribbon Day provide a valuable opportunity for all of us to understand and respond to violence against women and

how it can be a catalyst for change in our workplaces, our neighbourhoods and community. And it is just more than pinning on the ribbon. It's about sending a clear message that violence against women will not be accepted or tolerated within workplaces and communities. And that clear message is really important.

But we have to go beyond that. We've all got to step up and do what we can. And when we talk about taking action and doing something, I was particularly pleased to hear John talk about his wife and we should all, I think, channel John's wife - "*You've got a truck, use it*". I think we've all got something to contribute and we can all do more. And whether it is about asking your workplace if there is a policy, if it is about asking a service whether or not their workers have been trained in helping deal with victims from the LGBTI community. It is about asking the school that your kids are at whether or not they've got some great education programs in place. There is always more we can do. Because what happens to one of us, happens to all of us. And in the wake of COVID-19, it's absolutely critical that tackling violence against women remains in focus. We don't know the full impacts of how COVID-19 has affected so many women in our community, but it has been reported that almost one in 10 Australian women in a relationship experienced domestic and family violence during COVID, with two-thirds saying that attacks started or became worse during the pandemic. And again, I want to pay tribute to the members of our council and to our government agencies who worked so hard to support so many women and so many Queenslanders during the pandemic. So, we absolutely can't afford to look away from this as confronting as it may be at times, we all do have that shared responsibility.

So, thank you for coming along today and for joining us online. And especially those who made a valuable contribution to DVConnect, they absolutely are at the front-line supporting women and children escape violence and helping them plan a pathway to a happier and healthier future. Thank you.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Thank you very much, Attorney-General. Now to two people who've both worked tirelessly to help prevent domestic and family violence, please welcome Mr Bob Atkinson and Ms Kay McGrath, Co-Chairs of the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council.

KAY MCGRATH:

Thank you very much, Sharyn. This is social distancing at its best. Sharyn, it's great to have you here today. Vanessa, Ben, Kat and John, congratulations on a really interesting and powerful discussion, and for all the work that you're doing. Never doubt that it is making a very real and considerable difference in the community. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm mindful of the time. So, I won't keep you for long. I would also like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we're gathering. And I'd also like to acknowledge Bob and my fellow council members in the room. I'd also like to acknowledge Quentin Bryce and all the work that you've done over so many years to empower women and it's been a privilege to help in a small way, continue the work that you began in the reform of domestic and family

violence in this state. I'd also like to acknowledge the work of previous minister, Di Farmer, and her tireless efforts during this yucky year of COVID, 2020. But I want to assure you before I hand over to my fabulous Co-Chair that there is a great, great deal of work being done. And often, we have to look in the rear-view mirror and just reflect on how far we have come. Who would have thought we would have sat with a panel... listened to a panel where John the Removalist is awake to this issue of domestic and family violence, where on our council we have advocates for tenants, we have big corporations who are awake, we have multicultural, we have the LGBTQI community, all represented and the disability community as well. We're all coming together and we are making strides and we are making a difference. So, never doubt, please, that work is being done. And I'd like to acknowledge those people who are joining us from remote and rural Queensland. You are top of the council's mind so often. Bob, I'd like to hand over to you now.

BOB ATKINSON:

And we've organised this beforehand. I'm going to then hand back to Kay, but I'll be very brief. I just want to endorse and acknowledge everything that Kay just said and agree with it, which is what I usually do. What a great one-hour session. Who would have thought that you could have packed so much and such powerful messages from such wonderful presenters into what we've heard today? This was never going to be a quick or easy journey. It's been over 30 years since the legislation was first introduced in Queensland. And for five years now, since the landmark report by Dame Quentin Bryce, the 'Not Now, Not Ever' report, and we're roughly halfway through the government's 10-year strategy. But I believe that there is a powerful momentum in place in Queensland, if not Australia today. And that's because of the people in this room and it's because of the people watching, it's because of the presenters, it's because of all of us really. And I believe we are an unstoppable force, but what's really important is that that momentum that's there now is continued until the goal is achieved of a Queensland and Australia free from domestic and family violence. Thank you for today, back to you Kay.

KAY MCGRATH:

Well, that word 'momentum' is one that I was going to pounce on as well. I'd like to acknowledge Lloyd and Sue Clark who are with us in the room here in Brisbane and acknowledge your loss and the loss of so, so many other women, particularly women and men and the pain and suffering, and give you an assurance that, and I know I can speak on behalf of the rest of the council, we are working and we are committed to regaining the momentum that we had in February this year. And I think it is also fitting that we acknowledge the government as a whole. Dave Stewart, the work and the commitment that has gone into stamping out domestic and family violence. And AG, Shannon Fentiman, congratulations once again. It was wonderful to have you at the final meeting for the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council for 2020 and to hear and... again, get a sense of your commitment and your true passion to make a difference. I think 2021 is going to be a good year to align this issue of domestic and family violence with the Attorney-



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General and Department of Justice. I think it's a very powerful combination and we look forward to working with you going forward. Thank you very much. Sharyn.

SHARYN GHIDELLA:

Thank you Kay and Bob and for all the work that you do. It is very much appreciated indeed. Now, for those of you viewing from home, work, or perhaps with family and friends, I hope you have gained some valuable insights from today's event, ensuring that community by community, workplace by workplace, we are all playing a part to end domestic and family violence in Queensland. Thank you very much to all our panel members today. That was fantastic, it really was, well done. Of course, if you or someone you know is experiencing domestic or family violence, help is available 24 hours, seven days a week, by phoning 1800 RESPECT. And remember, as we've heard today, there are many ways we can all help as Queenslanders find pathways to safety away from violence. That concludes proceedings. Thank you.

[ENDS]