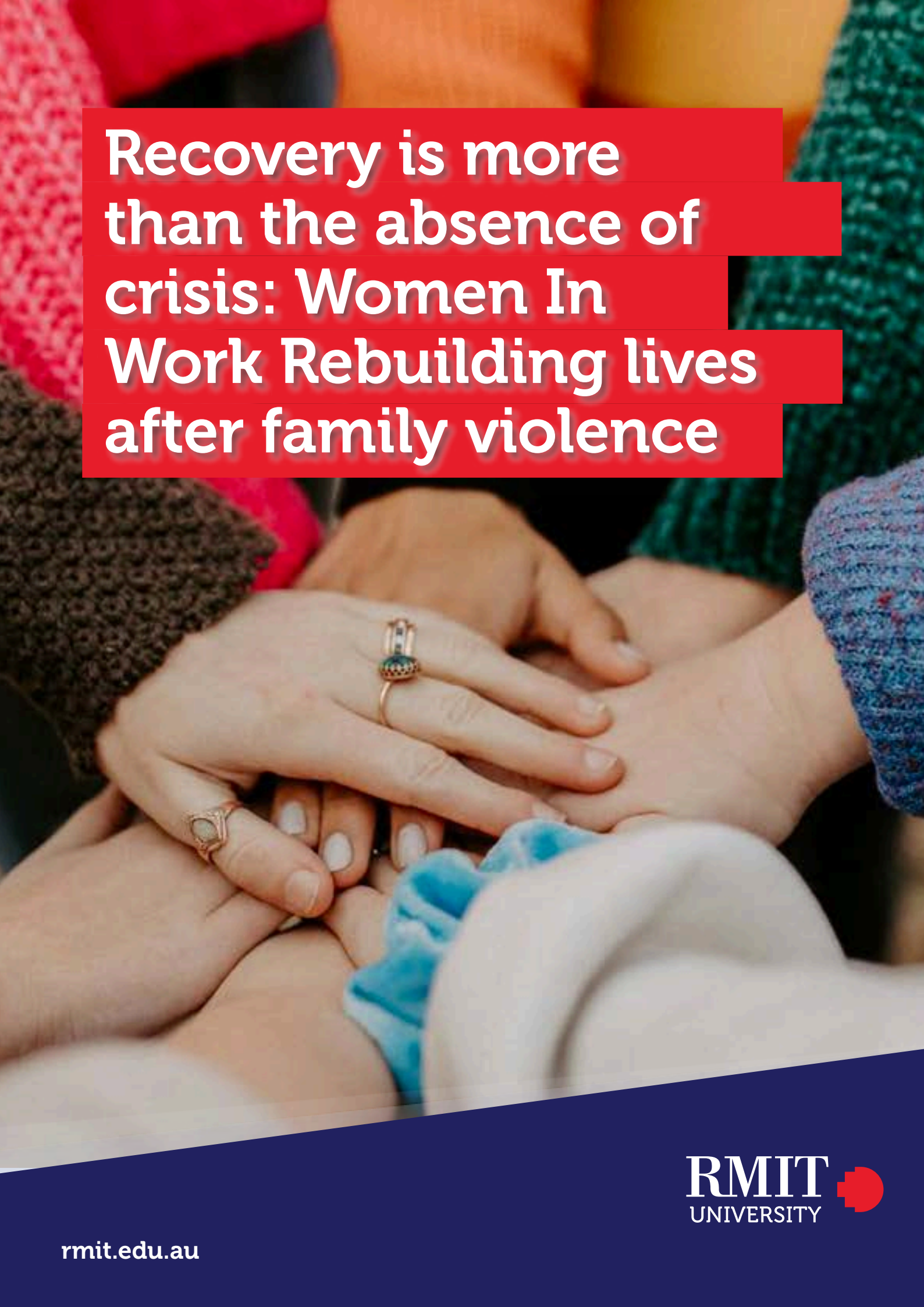

Recovery is more than the absence of crisis: Women In Work Rebuilding lives after family violence

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Acknowledgements

This research was conducted on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations. We acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners of these unceded lands. We pay respect to their Elders past and present.

It always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

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Abbreviations

DFV	Domestic and family violence
GSI	Good Samaritan Inn
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
PICF	Participant Information and Consent Form
US	United States
WIW	Women In Work

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GOOD SAMARITAN INN

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Executive Summary

In July 2024, Good Samaritan Inn (GSI) contracted social work researchers from the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies at RMIT University to request research and evaluation of their Women in Work (WIW) program. The aim of the project was twofold. The first, to determine elements of good practice in DFV recovery employment programs supporting women to recover and gain economic security following domestic and family violence (DFV). The second was to evaluate WIW and determine how best to retain the integrity, uniqueness and attributes of the program in any expansion moving forward. The work was guided by the research question: *'What is best practice for trauma-informed employment and coaching programs for women, recovering from domestic and family violence?'* In keeping with GSI's vision of supporting and advocating for women to feel safe, empowered and take control of their lives, the methodology for this research included a literature review of international and Australian evidence, and a total of 20 interviews with a collection of different stakeholders. The interviews comprised of seven women who have been - or currently are - supported by WIW, eight DFV workers from external specialist DFV agencies who work alongside the program, case managing and referring women, one employer stakeholder and four GSI WIW workers. It was important from the beginning of the project for the voices and wisdom of the women participants to be prioritised. The reflections and experiences of the women, alongside their cultural backgrounds and diverse family formations offered significant and nuanced insights into the systemic barriers they face and their hopes for sustainable recovery. These reflections were used to inform and guide the questions and discussions for other interviewees.

Summary of findings

The findings revealed DFV recovery work is nuanced and not as well understood or resourced as work in prevention, early intervention or crisis. Recovery work requires a structural lens to address systemic gendered barriers faced by victim survivors.

Review of the literature
There are very few sustainable DFV recovery programs in Australia
Recovery programs are not as well understood or resourced as programs addressing primary prevention, early intervention and crisis work
It is essential for recovery programs to work from trauma informed practice principles and with an understanding of the specific structural gendered barriers experienced by women recovering from DFV, and the impacts of these
Work in the recovery space is different to that of crisis and immediate case management
Interviews
WIW sits firmly in the recovery space and is more than an employment program
Structural gendered understandings of DFV and trauma-informed principles of practice are key underpinnings of the program
The role, timing and practice of the coach/recovery worker is essential to the success of the program
Individualised and ongoing support and care, unique to the individual, is a crucial component for retaining the integrity in any expansion

Summary of considerations

The following recommendations are suggested for the sustainability and growth of WIW at the macro (structural), mezzo (organisation and program) and micro (work with program participants) level.

Macro - Structural
1. Building the evidence-base for DFV recovery work
2. Developing Mobility Mentoring for the Australian DFV context
Mezzo - Organisation and program
3. Continuing commitment from GSI's leadership
4. Building the capacity of the program
5. Relationship building to sustain interagency communication and collaboration
Micro - Work with program participants
6. Inclusion of lived experience
7. Development of a WIW community
8. Building on the concept and practice of encouragement and recognition
9. Consider the development of a sub-program for children and young people

Introduction and background

DFV is a serious and widespread issue worldwide. DFV occurs across socioeconomics, demographics and cultures (Our Watch, 2025), and is a leading risk factor for burden of disease among women between 18 and 44 years (Council of Australian Governments, 2022). DFV commonly occurs in intimate relationships, with recent statistics confirming 77% of physical, sexual and stalking offences are committed by men towards women (Crime Statistics Agency, 2024). While the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) reports one in three women experience physical violence in their lifetime, the true number is unknown because most do not seek assistance (Silvester, 2020; State of Victoria, 2016). DFV refers to any violent, threatening, controlling or coercive behaviour that occurs in a current or past family, intimate, kinship or family-like relationship (Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, 2022). Central to DFV is the abuse of power, especially the use of coercive control. Coercive control is a pattern of manipulative and threatening behaviour designed to instil fear (Hill, 2019; Stark, 2023). Coercive control isolates, degrades, humiliates, gas-lights, exploits and harasses, creating barriers for victim survivors in their confidence and opportunities, specifically when considering recovery (Crossman et al., 2016; Stark, 2023). Research also demonstrates DFV is a key contributor to significant material disadvantage (Summers, 2022). Unaddressed, the consequences of material disadvantage can lead to poverty and poor long-term health outcomes (Crawford et al., 2010).

Another key feature of coercive control is economic abuse. Economic abuse is often present in DFV (Corrie & McGuire, 2013; Stylianou et al., 2019). As defined by the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) s.6, economic abuse involves the denial of financial autonomy and/or the withholding of financial support. This type of abuse enables a perpetrator to create and maintain power over the victim survivor through economic control, employment sabotage and exploitation (Stylianou et al., 2019; Warren et al., 2019). Economic abuse works to limit access to, and sustainability of, education, training and employment (McAuley Community Services, 2021; Showalter, 2016), and can have extensive impact on income security and emotional and social well-being (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024; Council of Australian Governments, 2022). Tactics used can include restricting movements, hiding car keys, refusing to provide care for the children, informing employers the victim survivor cannot attend work, prohibiting them from working and/or stalking or harassing them at their place of employment (McAuley Community Services, 2021, n.d.). These actions can result in interrupted, insecure and/or terminated employment and education, and make it difficult to establish and sustain independence, leave the relationship, maintain separation and tackle poverty (McAuley Community Services, 2021, n.d.; State of Victoria, 2016). The consequences of economic abuse have generational implications.

The benefits of addressing financial recovery following DFV is well documented, with financial security described as a vital component in leaving the relationship, building independence, social connections, well-being and remaining safe (Allingham-MacLaren, 2023; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024; Breckenridge, 2020; Council of Australian Governments, 2022; McAuley Community Services, 2021, n.d.; Showalter, 2016; State of Victoria, 2016; Tandorf, 2024; Warren et al., 2019).

DFV recovery employment programs assist victim survivors to gain work and build towards other future hopes and goals. Additionally, access to sustained employment can support a victim survivor to achieve the economic and financial security necessary for recovery and stability (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024; Costello et al., 2005; State of Victoria, 2016). This aligns with the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 which identifies four pillars necessary in working with victim survivors of DFV: Prevention; Early intervention; Response and Recovery. However, much of the current focus and funding remains on prevention, early intervention and response and less so on recovery (Council of Australian Governments, 2022; Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, 2022). Therefore, there remains a gap in the academic and grey literature, and in service provision regarding DFV recovery work. This gap is about articulating and progressing good practice* for addressing economic security while also attending to the emotional and social well-being needs of victim survivors and their children. Through the development, facilitation and potential expansion of WIW, GSI seeks to build on this knowledge and challenge this gap.

The Good Samaritan Sisters have been supporting women who require refuge since the 1840s. Initially, a combination of personal funds and fundraising kept the service operating, leading to the creation of Magdalene House in New South Wales in 1848. In 1998 two Good Samaritan sisters established a women's DFV refuge in Melbourne. Today, Good Samaritan Inn (GSI) provides crisis and short-term accommodation and a range of supports for women, children and young people escaping family violence. GSI maintains a communal refuge ensuring that women and children remain connected to each other and gain strength from these connections. GSI provides support to keep women safe and empower them to make clear and informed decisions about their life.

In keeping with this philosophy, GSI established WIW in 2020. WIW is a trauma-informed DFV recovery employment program supporting women after initial crisis. WIW is based on Mobility Mentoring, an evidence-based empowerment coaching model developed by Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath) in the United States (US). Mobility Mentoring aims to alleviate poverty by recognising, supporting and addressing the effects of prolonged trauma on executive functioning skills (Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath), 2019). Mobility Mentoring is based on a theory of change which argues improving executive functioning skills helps build economic independence. Executive functioning skills are described as the ability to self-regulate, explore and set priorities, problem solve and move forward (Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath), 2019). Mobility Mentoring work concentrate on setting goals in five areas: Family stability; Well-being; Financial management; Education and; Career management. These areas - also known as pillars - form the Bridge to Self-Sufficiency; a tool used to help track progress of these goals. Mobility Mentoring promotes focusing on goals in these five areas to assist individuals to move from poverty to economic well-being (Babcock, 2014). Through the development of WIW, GSI have successfully built on the Mobility Mentoring framework.

Since WIW was established in 2020, by the end of the 2023/2024 financial year participants in WIW earned more than a combined $204,000. At the time of writing, there have been 46

*We use the term ‘good practice’ intentionally in this report, as the term ‘best practice’ implies that one model or approach alone can address a complex issue (Coffield & Edward, 2009).

referrals into WIW, with 31 participants currently supported. To date, eight participants have been referred internally, with the remaining women referred from seven external agencies (Good Samaritan Inn, 2023). These statistics speak to the economic success for participants and the importance of communicating and building relationships with other DFV agencies.

Methodology

This project incorporated a literature review and 20 interviews. The interviews were comprised of women currently or previously supported by the program, GSI WIW workers, specialist DFV workers from external organisations and one employer. Feminist theory underpins the methods, research design, methodology and the interpretation of findings, all of which are located within the broader gendered context of DFV.

Theoretical underpinnings

The research team adopted a feminist-informed approach to guide the work on this project. This was important as the project was underpinned by a nuanced understanding of the broader structural gendered context of DFV. A feminist-informed approach positions the impacts of DFV on women within the gendered power relations that "frame their lives" (Moulding, 2016, p. 190). As was evident in the literature review, interpretations of these impacts are often bereft of broader structural gendered context, with many programs focused on deficit-based understandings of the consequences of DFV. Using a feminist approach allowed the research team to challenge these individualised responses, promote the voices and wisdom of women with lived experience, and champion the need to challenge inequitable social arrangements to address social, political and economic disadvantage (Morley et al., 2019). This approach allowed the team to prioritise the voices of the women and consider recommendations that address structural reform.

Review of the literature

The inclusion criteria for the literature reviewed comprised of local and international publications in English and of academic and grey (industry) literature between 2005 and 2024. Academic publications were sourced from the RMIT Library, Google Scholar, and Reverse Cite. The grey literature was sourced from customised Google searches. A combination of search terms was used to source these documents: "trauma-informed, employment, family violence, domestic violence, women and coaching". Our search revealed 61 sources, 49 from the search strategies and a further 12 through reference lists and manual search. Sources were predominately from Australia, the United States and Canada because only English language publications were included. A thematic analysis was employed to review the sources which were then distributed to the research team for analysis. To ensure consistency, shared understanding and rigour, the literature was first analysed by the team together, and then independently. Members of the research team were tasked with becoming familiar with the literature, developing codes and identifying themes.

Data collection

Alongside the literature review the research utilised inductive, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted with women currently or previously supported by the program, GSI WIW workers, DFV workers from referring organisations and one employer.

Adopting interviews as the main method of data collection allowed for the centralising of gendered experiences from all participants. Centralising gendered experiences is a pivotal concept in feminist understandings of DFV (Healy, 2022; Leavy & Harris, 2019; Moulding, 2016). As a qualitative research method, interviews also align with a feminist approach emphasising participants contributions and the significance of their lived experience (Leavy & Harris, 2019). During the interviews, particular attention was paid to accurately and respectfully representing the women's experiences, clarifying vague or ambiguous statements. The women were also given an opportunity to read their transcript prior to analysis. All participants choose what mode of interview was most suitable for them, some conducted online via Teams, some via phone and some face to face. Interviews lasted up to 90 minutes and consisted of eight to ten open-ended questions with guiding prompts (*See appendices A, B, C & D*). While the focus of each interview was on the experiences, evaluation and suggestions for improvement of WIW, some participants reflected on their personal or professional experiences of DFV and/or their interactions with services and employers. As a skilled group of social workers with extensive experience in working with survivors of DFV, the research team were able to honour these reflections. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, with recordings deleted once transcriptions were complete. The transcriptions were saved on password protected computers through RMIT University's information technology platforms. The women participants were compensated by GSI for their time and contribution.

Recruitment

To recruit participants, the WIW program manager directly approached potential interviewees by phone and/or email to share information provided by the researchers about the project. Once participants were recruited, details were provided to the research team who contacted

participants for further explanation of the project, the PICFs, consent, confidentiality and privacy. There were five employer representatives invited to participate in this research, however, only one was interviewed, with others citing permission from management and availability as an issue. The specific inclusion criteria for interviewees is included in Table 1 (*Table 1: Inclusion criteria for interview participants*).

Table 1: Inclusion criteria for interview participants

Participant group	Inclusion criteria
WIW participants	Identify as a woman Age 18+ years May or may not be currently employed Have a current DFV case worker (GSI or other)
Employer representatives	Organisational representative offering employment to WIW recipients Age 18+ years
GSI WIW workers	Employees working in WIW at GSI Age 18+ years
DFV specialist agency workers	External DFV specialist agency workers who refer women to WIW Age 18+ years

Ethical considerations

This research received ethics approval through the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC Ethics approval no. 27956). Ethical considerations included GSI WIW workers identifying participants, which could potentially introduce selection bias and/or impact the ability of the participants to speak freely. The research team took steps to alleviate these concerns by clearly explaining involvement in the project had no bearing on their place in the program and/or the services they receive. The PICF for all interviewees addressed confidentiality and deidentification, discussed at the beginning of each interview.

Challenges and limitations

There were several challenges and limitations in conducting this research. The potential for selection bias has been discussed above. The participation of only one employer representative was another limitation. While there are no identifying details of that employer representative included in this research, the employer representative feedback only represents a single employer's views and cannot be taken to be representative of all employer stakeholders in the program.

Review of the literature

Overall, it was difficult to source literature on DFV recovery employment programs. Some were difficult to identify as they did not classify their program as specifically relevant to DFV victim survivors. While further investigation revealed most of these program participants where from this cohort, the programs were advertised for a wider audience as a strategy to attract funding (see for example Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath), 2024; For Purpose Evaluations, 2023). In exploring these programs and the literature pertaining to them, three main themes emerged. The first was the importance of a critical intersectional gendered lens in the development and implementation of DFV recovery employment programs. The implications of this were programs need to address the structural, emotional and practical barriers faced by women and their children to work towards emotional and economic recovery. The second theme builds on the first by including trauma-informed principles as a key component of the work and reiterates the importance of this in addition to the critical intersectional gendered lens mentioned above. The first two themes then lay the foundation for the third theme which articulates the differences between case management in crisis or episodes of care* work compared with work in a recovery setting by a coach/recovery worker.

Theme 1: A critical intersectional gendered lens

The literature overwhelmingly supports the inclusion of a critical intersectional gendered lens in the development and facilitation of DFV recovery employment programs for victim survivors. This lens encompasses the examination and acknowledgement of the structural, practical and emotional barriers to recovery through an understanding of the impact of DFV and the intersectional gendered factors that contribute to these (Cortis et al., 2016; ICAN Learn, 2022; Interval House, 2016; WIRE, 2024). This is important considering the dominance of Mobility Mentoring, an evidence-based empowerment coaching program that focuses on deficits in executive functioning skills of those who have experienced trauma (Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath), 2020). Mobility Mentoring is driven by goal setting and outcomes, and aims to empower individuals through identifying and working with participants to acquire "resources, skills and sustained behaviour changes necessary to attain and preserve their economic independence" (Babcock, 2014, p. 4). While this theory of change is well evidenced, without an intersectional gendered understanding of the impacts, and associated structural barriers experienced by women recovering from DFV, the work is individualised and deficit based. This speaks to the need for the inclusion of a critical intersectional gendered lens in the aims, design, content and facilitation of any DFV recovery employment program. While considering aspects at a program level, this lens also includes identifying and working through systemic and practical barriers, and the psycho-emotional legacies of abuse and trauma (GOGO Foundation, 2023; Interval House, 2016; Lester et al., 2021; WIRE, 2024).

This literature reinforced the need to address structural, systemic and practical barriers and emotional legacies of abuse in particular ways when working with women recovering from DFV (See *Figure 1: Structural, systemic and practical barriers and emotional legacies of abuse*). Structural and systemic barriers identified include discrimination, stigma, lack of accessible employment, childcare, transport and interpreter services, difficultly in accessing support

*The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence specifies episodes of care as the process for crisis work.

services (including for complex legal issues) and cultural obligations and the current political and economic climate (GOGO Foundation, 2023; ICAN Learn, 2022; Interval House, 2016; South East Community Links, 2022). These barriers speak to ensuring programs include interagency collaboration and high-level advocacy that fits within the Australian political, economic and social context (Allingham-MacLaren, 2023; GOGO Foundation, 2023; Good Samaritan Inn, 2023; Zonta House Refuge Association, 2024). Related to these are practical barriers which include a lack of sustainable housing, interrupted work experience, training, education and skills, isolation from networks and supports, and difficulty obtaining required identification and documentation (ICAN Learn, 2022; Interval House, 2016; South East Community Links, 2022). Emotional legacies as a consequence of the abuse are described in the literature as stress and trauma reactions and include hypervigilance, poor self-esteem, self-doubt, a sense of powerlessness, no confidence in resilience (for victim survivors and professionals), unhealthy boundaries in relationship building, a fear of conflict management and a view that change is linear (Good Samaritan Inn, 2023; Interval House, 2016, 2024; Lester et al., 2021; Stylianou et al., 2019; WIRE, 2024; Women's and Girls Centre, n.d.).

Figure 1: Structural, systemic and practical barriers and emotional legacies of abuse

The literature is clear that in a DFV recovery employment program these issues can be addressed through understanding these experiences as universal while also unique for each and every woman, impacted by intersecting identities and that coping with these barriers is a systemic barrier in and of itself (GOGO Foundation, 2023; Interval House, 2016; Stylianou et al., 2019; WIRE, 2024).

Theme 2: Trauma-informed principles and practice

The literature stresses the need for the centrality of a trauma-informed framework, to develop and hold safety, dignity, consistency, transparency, trust and choice (Cortis et al., 2016; Desmond, 2011; Stylianou et al., 2019; Tarshis et al., 2022; WIRE, 2024; Zonta House Refuge Association, n.d.). In this context, safety includes supporting physical, emotional, cognitive, structural and cultural safety (Allingham-MacLaren, 2023; Cortis et al., 2016; Desmond, 2011; South East Community Links, 2022; Tandorf, 2024; Women's and Girls Centre, n.d.). Of particular significance is that establishing safety entails more than ensuring safety from the perpetrator. In recovery, safety includes creating trusting spaces and relationships through individual work, peer support, group agreements, social connections, self-awareness, self-compassion, reflection, supporting autonomy, and opportunities for choice, education and guidance to help better understand experiences and assist with the processing of long-held trauma (i.e. deep breathing, meditation) (Allingham-MacLaren, 2023; GOGO Foundation, 2023). When working with emotional safety the process and the way it is done is as important as the outcome (Tarshis et al., 2022). Working in this way means workers address power dynamics by offering consistency and transparency alongside knowledge of the neurobiology of trauma. This approach demonstrates an understanding of the impacts of trauma on confidence and self-esteem and that this, and the journey to recovery, differs for every woman (Good Samaritan Inn, 2023; Stylianou et al., 2019). This speaks to program flexibility in terms of delivery and mode, tailoring to individual needs and goals and allowing women to go at their own pace (Interval House, 2016; Tandorf, 2024). Desmond (2011) argues flexibility also requires programs to provide a continuum of service so women can move in and out of support for as long as they need. This was supported by several programs who noted the longer women had access to support and the coach/recovery worker, the better the outcome for that woman (For Purpose Evaluations, 2023; WIRE, 2024).

The overarching aim for a DFV recovery employment program is to provide participants with opportunities to regain independence (Stylianou et al., 2019). When working from a trauma-informed lens this requires working in a way that maintains and sustains dignity (Interval House, 2016; Tarshis et al., 2022). The literature describes dignity as attending to diversity in the types of employment and/or education offered, taking into consideration culture, language, illness and/or disability, flexibility in terms of delivery and timelines (including mother-centric schedules) and real opportunities that lead to affordable wages, long-term employment and career development (Desmond, 2011; Interval House, 2016; Tarshis et al., 2022; WIRE, 2024). The literature also highlights the benefits of incorporating peer support as a vital component to empowerment, as well as the importance of encouraging relationships to maintain healthy and positive boundaries and providing opportunities where women learn to trust and combat past isolation (Cortis et al., 2016; Crawford et al., 2010; Desmond, 2011; GOGO Foundation, 2023; Tarshis et al., 2022). (See *Figure 2: Trauma-informed practice in DFV recovery work*).

Figure 2: Trauma-informed practice in DFV recovery work

Theme 3: Coach/recovery work versus case management

The literature in this area was clear on the importance of the timing of a program and the implications this holds for the work done by the coach/recovery worker. DFV recovery employment programs work best for victim survivors after the response to immediate crisis has lessened. Timing is an important factor in giving a victim survivor every chance of success as they may not be ready for recovery work if immediate safety, physical, material and psychological needs have not been stabilised (Allingham-MacLaren, 2023; Catholic Social Services, 2021; Council of Australian Governments, 2022; Desmond, 2011; Interval House, 2016; WIRE, 2024). Working with a victim survivor on recovery and healing before these immediate needs have been met has implications on their ability to have the emotional space necessary to be receptive to the work.

In the Australian DFV context, crisis support provided to women experiencing DFV is commonly referred to as family violence case management (State of Victoria, 2016). This crisis support involves episodes of care (limited intervals of support) and is focused on risk assessment, safety planning, meeting the needs of physical and emotional health, shelter, material aid, care for children, income support, and visa and/or legal requirements (Cortis et al., 2016; Desmond, 2011). In the literature, the overwhelming majority of DFV recovery employment programs separate recovery work from crisis focused case management by moving away from the language of case management and referring to coaches/recovery workers for future focused work, longer-term planning and goal setting (Allingham-MacLaren, 2023; Catholic Social Services, 2021; For Purpose Evaluations, 2023; Good Samaritan Inn, 2023). There were two programs in the review that used the term case management and still, these programs differentiated this type of case management from crisis response case management provided in the initial stages of support (Lester et al., 2021; McAuley Community Services, 2021).

In the literature, several programs provided a clear understanding the role of the coach/recovery worker was not a replacement for counselling. These programs specified workers in the recovery space needed to understand the impacts of DFV through a gendered lens, acknowledge the structural barriers to workforce participation created by these, and provide personally targeted advocacy when needed (Cortis et al., 2016; GOGO Foundation, 2023). Coaching and recovery work was described as future-focused because it involves building capacity and recognising the strengths, skills and the resilience within the victim survivor to motivate sustainable change. This work includes allowing women to develop and enhance healthy boundaries, build relationships and connections, regulate emotions, and recognise when and how to share DFV experiences in social and employment settings (Catholic Social Services, 2021; Cortis et al., 2016; WIRE, 2024). Coaches/recovery workers focus on safety, transparency and consistency, make time for reflection, recognise signs of trauma, put aside judgement and understand it takes time to build trust (WIRE, 2024; Zonta House Refuge Association, 2023). Crawford et al (2010) argues this work involves critical consciousness raising, time and space to assist the victim survivor to self-reflect and understand their personal values. Through collaboration, goals and strategies for change that align with those values are identified, including balancing short-term needs with long-term career and educational goals.

The literature on coaching takes much from the expertise, skills and methods of social work and case management practice, exploring the need to assist people to enhance the quality of their lives, through listening, observing and customising their approach for individual clients (Hamer, 2023). Emphasis is on choice, control and autonomy, aiming for the woman to hold more of the expertise as work progresses (Flint and Genesee County Literacy Network, 2023). These principles of practice are consistent with social work literature (AASW Practice Standards, 2023). The literature on coaching support this in knowing a participant's state of change is vital to assist them to decide if they are ready for the work, again, pointing to importance of timing for success (Flint and Genesee County Literacy Network, 2023). Regardless of the title given to the recovery worker, the skills of the worker in terms of the relationship they build with the victim survivor and a belief in the capacity for change, is of crucial importance, as is the length of time a woman has access to the coach/recovery worker (Allingham-MacLaren, 2023; JUNO 2023a; WIRE 2024).

Findings and discussion

Overall, the interviews revealed similar observations and reflections and aligned well to the literature, with some differences in emphasis, language and understandings. For example, all participants articulated the need for the program to address intersectional gendered barriers. This section begins with an examination and discussion of the strengths and challenges of WIW and concludes with an analysis of considerations moving forward.

Strengths

All interviewees were forthcoming of the many strengths of WIW. Overall, these discussions reflected positive aspects for the women, GSI WIW workers and DFV workers. Of note was the flexible, supportive and individually tailored work and the importance placed on the relationship between GSI WIW workers and external stakeholders. Following is a summary of the strengths shared by the women, the GSI WIW and DFV workers and the employer. The discussion begins with the women to elevate their contributions.

The women participants

The women spoke of how the program gave them time, space and guidance to think and reflect on what they wanted for their lives and that of their children. The program helped them believe that they could achieve change. Some women described WIW as the first time they had been given permission for this. The women reflected when experiencing DFV and in the crisis of leaving, there was no opportunity to think about the future. They talked of the importance of surviving, confusion, trying to keep things together and believing their partner's narratives (being they were not allowed or capable of anything else). The women explained the timing of the program was important to them and had they been given the opportunity earlier they may not have done so well. This aligns with the literature around the importance of timing (Allingham-MacLaren, 2023; Catholic Social Services, 2021; Council of Australian Governments, 2022; Desmond, 2011; Interval House, 2016; WIRE, 2024).

> ***"I wanted it to give me hope, and it worked for me in that way"***
>
> ***WIW participant 2***

The women spoke of the importance of flexibility, commenting that although they were through the major crisis of leaving the relationship, the tasks associated with this - court hearings, gaining sustainable housing, and working through emotional recovery - were not always straightforward. The flexibility of meeting with the coach either face to face or online, going at a pace that reflected their energy, the ability to postpone meetings because of fatigue or clashing commitments without negative consequences, to set the frequency of meetings and come back to the program when needed, was essential to their continued engagement and success. These reflections mirror the literature on the complexities, consequences and barriers

post-separation and the need for an intersectional gendered trauma informed lens in recovery programs (Corrie & McGuire, 2013; McAuley Community Services, 2021; Showalter, 2016; Stylianou et al., 2019; Warren et al., 2019). These reflections also speak to the underpinnings of Mobility Mentoring in understanding the effects of prolonged trauma on executive functioning skills (Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath), 2019).

"In the early days after leaving, my brain was completely off-line, I couldn't even do basic tasks at that time."

WIW participant 6

The women described the coach and her role, as a game-changer and the missing piece of their recovery (WIW Participant 7). The women were unanimous in providing positive feedback about the coach, describing her as someone they felt safe with and who offered emotional support. They described how valuable it was to have a non-judgemental space. They also reflected on how important it was to be provided with motivation, confidence and help with articulating goals based on their specific values, and assistance in understanding the immediate and aspirational components needed to achieve these. The women reflected the coach had the right balance of offering guidance and information, while also allowing independence, which built confidence to allow them to follow through on ideas and tasks. For some, it was the first time they had anyone in their life telling them they could do it, that they were doing great and should be proud of themselves.

"Someone to understand, someone who listens, help us rebuild ourselves again, gain confidence…build up my mind, not just my career."

WIW participant 1

Reflections on the importance of timing and the essential role of the coach speaks to understanding the gendered nature of DFV and the importance of a trauma-informed lens. This also connects to the work involved in creating new ways of thinking while also ensuring space and time to embed and sustain this, a key component of Mobility Mentoring (Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath), 2019). The women spoke of wanting an opportunity to give back to the program, in mentoring other women, or assisting GSI in growing the program in whatever way they could. This idea is discussed further in the section on considerations. The strengths of the program were also evident in the descriptions from the women about their achievements. These achievements correspond with the pillars utilised in the Bridge to Self-Sufficiency: Family stability; Wellbeing; Financial management; Education and learning; and Employment which are detailed as follows.

Family stability

The women described improvement in their family functioning and stability, practically and emotionally, in relation to their children and their role of being a mother. They reflected how working with the coach assisted them to stop and think before reacting to set-backs, bad news or difficult behaviour which helped them remain calm in their home. Practically, the women described receiving support with school refusal, setting up counselling for their children and meeting their children's emotional and health needs.

"My kids can see that I can now, and that makes me feel like I am doing a good job as a mother."

WIW participant 4

Two of the women asked about the possibility of a coaching program for their children. Both women were raising young adults at the time of the interviews and felt that there was little for these young people to assist them with direction and self-regulation.

Wellbeing

When exploring wellbeing, much of what the women discussed reflected on improved well-being tied to their relationships with their children. One woman explained how she learnt to keep herself "checked-in and…focused" (WIW participant 5), making it a safe environment for her children. Another spoke of giving herself time to understand information from the perpetrator before she reacted or panicked which assisted her in keeping her stress levels in check. The women described learning breathing exercises to help them focus and receiving encouragement from the coach to assist them in understanding they were enough, and they were capable. Many of the women explained they had been isolated, had lost friends and family and/or cultural and/or community acceptance. They spoke of working with the coach on the importance of making new friends and not spending too much time on their own.

"I had to cut ties with my family when I left. I have a few friends now and my boundaries are in a better place."

WIW participant 3

Financial management

The women described an improved ability and confidence in managing finances. Many reflected on the significance of this because some women had never been allowed to work or manage money before. They reflected on how prior to entering the program they felt panicked about managing daily expenses, and a property, and were anxious at maintaining this long-term. They explained they were shown tools to assist in managing money and budgeting for rent, bills and saving money. One woman reflected on being able to visualise where the money was going which assisted her to quit smoking and join a gym. The women also spoke of how, because of the program, they now know how to do their tax and navigate Centrelink.

"The coach showed me how to use the money smart tool to see how I was spending… and where does it go and how to visualise everything. I still use it now, it's really helpful'."

WIW participant 2

Education and learning

The women described the program as assisting them with formal and informal education and learning. The formal education helped them to engage with courses and gain qualifications while working at jobs to bring in money and gain confidence. They also reflected on how the coach

kept them motivated, asking about their homework and “making me feel like I could do it” (WIW Participant 7). The women also shared how they had now learnt other life skills too, including travelling on public transport and learning to drive.

"I am doing a job while I am studying. The job is for money, the study is for the future."

WIW participant 1

Employment

All of the women were employed during their time in the program. While most described their current employment as not where they eventually see themselves, they were aware the work they were doing was building confidence, motivation and assisting their financial situation. They all noted this was a necessary part of their recovery. By preparing for and engaging in work, the women from CALD backgrounds reflected on the confidence they gained in speaking English. Those with children reflected on the coach validating the importance of motherhood as a legitimate consideration regarding availability for work. The women emphasised how grateful they were for the motivation and assistance in gaining employment. Overall, being in the program meant the women had someone who understood the reality of their situation, who could advocate to ensure any employment opportunities addressed barriers such as limited or no work experience, or the need for flexible hours because of childcare commitments. Some of the women also shared how beneficial it was to engage in practice interviews and resume building to help build their confidence.

"I was a different person before I got the job, it’s bringing my courage back."

WIW participant 6

Overall, the women spoke positively about the program, the coach and the opportunities this has afforded them. Their reflections demonstrate emotional, cognitive and economic growth and success and practical assistance. They were positive about the usefulness of The Bridge of Self Sufficiency, and its pillars. Most importantly, the experiences of the women in this program also highlighted the need for this work to be underpinned by an intersectional gendered lens that incorporates trauma-informed practice principles in understanding DFV and recovery.

The workers

The DFV and GSI WIW workers reflected the program was one of the few that caters for women in the DFV recovery employment space by offering support and guidance after initial crisis. The GSI WIW workers were clear this was recovery work, a model different to case management, the common system response to DFV which is timed and often crisis orientated. WIW tends to a necessary gap in the recovery space which while touted as essential continues to be misunderstood and not very well supported in the DFV sector (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024; Council of Australian Governments, 2022; State of Victoria, 2016).

Framing the work from a structural lens

The DFV workers reported they felt confident in the program for several reasons. These reasons included a shared value alignment, an intersectional gendered lens (which included identifying structural barriers) and a trauma-informed understanding that recovery is ongoing and often non-linear. All DFV and GSI WIW workers were able to articulate the many structural and gendered barriers present in recovery, including women having limited or no access to work or study, no bank account, no opportunity to acquire money management skills or independent finances, no access to a car or opportunity to gain a driver's license, continuing health and legal issues, cultural barriers around language and visa requirements, and a loss of social, community and family networks. The workers explained that mothers who had children with behavioural and childcare issues often experienced these barriers more intensely. The DFV and GSI WIW workers had a good grasp on the potential emotional legacies and consequences of these, including issues with communication and confidence brought about through perpetrator tactics (e.g. coercive control and gaslighting).

Referral process

The DFV workers reported they felt confident referring women to WIW due to the ease of referral and knowing the women would be supported. They spoke of a good working relationship and collaboration, where they were able to pick up the phone and speak to someone, stating this was more beneficial than engaging in "just another anonymous email referral process" (DFV worker 4). Of note was that workers were appreciative of the opportunity to have a "de-identified" (DFV worker 3) consult prior to making a formal referral, and the knowledge that GSI WIW workers had a good understanding of DFV. The DFV workers appreciated the "feedback loop" (DFV worker 3) and how they were informed when the women had met with a GSI WIW worker. This was an important step to assess if a woman was ready to commence the program, so as not to undermine her confidence for future ventures.

"I know there is going to be a level of support there that I can't get in other places."

DFV worker 3

As a program WIW holds an intersectional gendered lens and works in a trauma informed way. The GSI WIW workers stated this translates to understanding barriers and challenges specific to DFV recovery while offering physical, emotional and cultural safety. This is different to the literature on Mobility Mentoring which focuses on the effects of poverty on brain functioning and the alleviation of poverty as the ultimate goal (Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath), 2019). The language in Mobility Mentoring does not articulate an intersectional gendered lens or an understanding of the effects and/or consequences of DFV. Several workers were able to locate this as a deliberate strategy employed by Mobility Mentoring, aimed at navigating the US context which relies heavily on philanthropic support. What was also shared was that Mobility Mentoring runs employment programs aimed at reducing poverty, rather than DFV recovery employment recovery program. While the DFV workers agreed on the relationship between DFV

and poverty they highlighted a response which focuses only on the individual and does little to address the bigger picture. The workers shared that while Mobility Mentoring was valuable as a tool to guide goal setting, outcome measurement and support, in the Australian context, and in a DFV setting, this work needs to include intersectional gendered understandings.

"That intersectional feminist lens is really important… we are not interested in a program that is…individualised and takes away the systemic stuff."

DFV worker 2

The importance of an intersectional gendered lens and working through a trauma-informed lens was also evident in the comments from the DFV workers when asked to reflect on The Bridge of Self Sufficiency (The Bridge). The Bridge is defined as, a "visual tool that acts as both a framework for the participant and an assessment tool for the mentor" (Good Samaritan Inn, 2020, p. 9). The DFV workers all had knowledge of The Bridge.

The Bridge of Self Sufficiency

The workers explained The Bridge was a useful tool, assisting in the development of goals and the validation and evaluation of progress, growth and achievements. While the GSI WIW and DFV workers reflected the women were well supported, and the universality of their situation was understood, the program also catered to individual needs and goals which at times did not fit neatly into the Bridge. All agreed it was important to keep this flexibility and reiterated work with the women is not limited by The Bridge.

"We hold the bridge lightly."

GSI WIW worker 3

The workers emphasised the importance of capacity building with the women. They spoke of how the women's personal and professional confidence was increased through careful and individualised planning of achievable goals. Highlighting capacity building in WIW mirrors the literature which argues such a focus assists in building confidence, motivation, empowerment and success (Interval House, 2016; Lester et al., 2021; WIRE, 2024). Overall, the GSI WIW and DFV workers agreed on the program's ability to create both practical and aspirational goals, confirming that recovery is about thriving not just surviving.

"If you can set things up in a way that people get small successes, then that reinforces agency, it reinforces capability, it builds confidence as well as those new neural pathways."

DFV worker 2

The role of the coach

The GSI WIW and DFV workers described Mobility Mentoring as a financial empowerment program that uses coaching, as opposed to a coaching program that works towards good financial outcomes. Aligned with the reflections of the women and with the literature (Allingham-MacLaren, 2023; For Purpose Evaluations, 2023), these same workers were unanimous about the importance of the coach and saw the role as different to DFV case management. All workers saw case management as intense work, suited to a crisis response and centred around identifying, assessing and managing risk and safety.

"Case management is for while they are in the mess. Coaching [is for] when they want to… [so they can] be more future focused, [when] they have made that mind shift."

DFV worker 6

Overall, the GSI WIW and DFV workers described coaching as a process where the coach supports the women to identify strengths, capacities, needs, wants, dreams and passions, reminding them of their skills and resilience, holding hope, guiding them and ensuring the skills are transferred to the women to sustain the change. The focus of the coaching/recovery allows the women to create a new narrative while still being mindful of the effects and consequences of DFV. "Intergenerational capacity building" (GSI WIW worker 1) was also discussed, where children witness first-hand what their mothers have achieved which fits with the literature on the financial, physical and cognitive intergenerational impacts of economic recovery (Crawford et al., 2010).

"They don't need to tell their story, but we hold the knowledge that they have been through it."

GSI WIW worker 3

Some workers spoke of a need to document the coaching/recovery role and create a practice guide for DFV recovery employment work in the Australian context which was evident in the findings of the literature (Allingham-MacLaren, 2023; For Purpose Evaluations, 2023; Zonta House Refuge Association, 2024).

Challenges

As with the strengths, we begin this section on challenges with the contributions from the WIW participants, to prioritise their voices and experiences. We then discuss the challenges reflected by the GSI WIW and DFV workers and the employer. The challenges identified included the need for a clearer understanding of the program at the referral stage and an overall lack of recognition and funding for recovery work. The women participants were keen for further assistance with some of the already identified practical barriers including lack of access to transport, gaining a driver's license and an increase in employment and/or educational options.

The women participants

Initial referral

In the interviews with the women, it was clear that at the stage of initial contact for WIW, they were unsure as to what the program and/or coaching entailed. Some thought it was specifically an employment program and others were confused about the role of the different GSI WIW workers (i.e. intake versus coach). While these aspects became clearer once the women connected with the coach and with the program, it speaks to perhaps further clarity regarding information for the referring workers to pass onto the women.

Addressing the barriers

The women explained that the GSI WIW workers had a very good understanding of the barriers they faced because of DFV and how this intersected with cultural beliefs, language and parenting. The women reflected the program worked to address these. However, a consistent barrier was access to transport. The women explained that this affected their ability to attend face to face appointments with the coach and narrowed their employment prospects. For example, two women spoke of wanting more face-to-face contact with the coach but explained that because of their location public transport was overwhelming and the cost too great. Some women were also unsure if the coach had an office or if there was anywhere else to meet. These reflections led to a discussion on the need for an office easily accessible by public transport, assistance with public transport costs (a MYKI) and/or WIW running a driver's education program, to assist women in gaining their driver's license.

> **"*Transport is a really big thing. It impacts on your ability to find a job.*"**
>
> ***WIW Participant 5***

Preparation for employment

Overall, the women felt prepared for interviews and employment and spoke of how supportive the coach was as they approached their interviews and first days of study or work. There was confusion however, as to whether WIW helped with building resumes and preparing for interviews. Some women spoke of getting assistance with resumes and interview preparation,

while others were referred to external agencies for this prior to joining the program. Those that were referred externally described this as a stop/start and disjointed experience. Once in employment, the women were a little unsure as to how much managers in their new workplace knew about their situation, whether they knew about DFV and many of the issues faced at this time of recovery. The women did not want to be treated differently but understood that there may be times when they had to address other issues in their life (e.g. court, childcare arrangement, medical appointments).

Fulfilling aspirational goals

While the women understood they needed to achieve the little goals before moving towards aspirational ones, understanding this took time and patience. The women shared the program was not always able to cater for a specific skill set. Instead, they felt there was a need to work on expanding options, noting choices for available employment and study were limited. This led to a discussion around the need for more options and extending these to pathways that are not traditionally gendered (e.g. not just support work or childcare).

The workers

"The WIW program sits in the recovery space."

DFV worker 7

When asked to comment on the biggest challenge for the program, the DFV and GSI WIW workers spoke of the continuing lack of recognition for the importance of recovery work and associated funding. The workers spoke of WIW being about quality not quantity, where success is measured by the number of women who have been empowered, not about how many have been employed. The workers spoke of the paradigm shift needed in the DFV space for this to be recognised and validated, and that work needs to be done in this space to further this shift. All agreed a shift in the framing of a recovery program needs to include an intersectional gendered lens and will only be possible with advocacy toward systemic change.

"You can't go fast and do harm...it's just the start of the journey."

GSI WIW worker 3

Messaging

While some DFV workers felt they were able to easily describe the program to potential participants, others expressed they did not have enough information or a good understanding of the role of the coach, the availability and length of the program and other specifics such as if the women needed to prepare a resume beforehand. This mirrors the comments from the women. The DFV workers explained the need for further information to pass onto potential participants, and for this information to be clearly communicated. The DFV workers suggested a brochure for potential participants would enable them to make an informed choice, an important factor when considering trauma informed practice.

"Be clear about what you are offering, for how long and for who."

DFV worker 7

The employer added the information they received in the early stages was clear and enabled them to make an informed choice about the fit of their organisation to the WIW participants.

Addressing barriers

Overall, the DFV workers reflected WIW addressed many of the barriers and challenges faced by the women they referred. Several workers mentioned that some women were not confident yet with taking public transport, some could not afford to and for others it was too much at this stage of their recovery. One worker suggested for the coach to come to their agency to work with the women, which would address these issues. Access to transport and its cost were key reflections from the women and the DFV workers.

Employment opportunities

It was clear from the interviews with the GSI WIW workers they are aware that further work is needed to reach more employers, especially those who understand and cater for the intersectional gendered barriers faced by women recovering from DFV. GSI WIW workers gave examples of needing more employers who offer flexibility for working mothers, provide time and space to address ongoing health, legal and housing issues and understand English is not necessarily the women's primary language. Both the GSI WIW and the DFV workers identified challenges in gaining sustainable employment and training opportunities, having these available in different geographical locations and different fields of work and study, including those other than in traditional gendered roles.

"So important not to pigeonhole into female serving and caring positions. You need to build in the aspirational stuff."

DFV worker 1

There were also conversations about the difficulty of finding and approaching the right employer, the right person within the organisation and the best way to describe the program. Workers spoke of the need to work with the employers to ensure there were established and promoted DFV leave policies and procedures, the organisation could respond appropriately to disclosures and understand the benefits of informal opportunities for team building and social connection. The employer also discussed the commitment and need for further training and work for all employees and wondered if this was something that GSI could provide. This speaks to the need for further work on employment recruitment, and potential training, which will be detailed in the following section.

Considerations

It is important that all considerations maintain the integrity of the program. The considerations are located at a macro (structural), mezzo (organisational and program) and micro levels (work with participants). This framing fits with Mobility Mentoring and it's three organisational pillars: Attention to the practice of the program; A commitment to research and; Commitment to advocacy (Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath), 2019).

Macro - Structural

From this evaluation two systemic considerations emerged. The first is to promote WIW as a DFV recovery employment program, naming it as such and building evidence for future work. While priorities in the DFV sector are on crisis, safety and episodes of care, WIW speaks to further advocacy for recovery work and the need for systemic change. This is not to say that organisations and workers are not investing in this space but emphasises the importance of language and naming this as recovery work. For example, although this program addresses women in work, it is so much more. Capturing this in the language used to describe the work and the coach/recovery worker is important. The second structural consideration is to ensure the intersectional gendered and trauma-informed lens remains a solid foundation for Mobility Mentoring in the Australian DFV sector. Considerations are detailed below.

Building evidence for DFV recovery work
Promote WIW as a recovery program in marketing, paperwork and/or on social media
Continue with the use of the Bridge to Self Sufficiency to expand the evidence base, assist with defining recovery, and recording, collecting and sharing program data for use in research and evaluation
Establish a WIW lived experience advisory group to build momentum and assist with advocacy
Mobility Mentoring in the DFV Australian context
Develop Mobility Mentoring for working within the Australian DFV sector
Situate this work within an intersectional gendered and trauma-informed lens to ensure less focus on individualisation and the pathology of trauma

"It's a systems issue. The system isn't broken, the system's patriarchal and it's designed to function exactly as it should, it's divisive and separated, and puts all the onus on our victim-survivors and our survivor advocates, and on a community mostly of women who are busting their chops to do their jobs. We are doing this work in isolation."

DFV worker 1

Mezzo - Organisation and program

Considerations at the mezzo level include ensuring good practice in program documentation and delivery, and building relationships with other specialist DFV organisations and employer stakeholders. These considerations sit within the practice of the program and are detailed below.

Continued commitment from GSI leadership
GSI leadership to continue to support program development and sustain implementation of policies and procedures
Prioritise time for staff participation in training, operationalisation, practice reflection, evaluation and consultation
Building capacity within the program
Develop and document the program's intersectional gendered and trauma-informed practice framework (including a value statement)
Introduce a train the trainer model for any future coaches/recovery workers
Implement an ongoing dedicated position for a proactive employment/education liaison worker
Interagency collaboration, communication and relationship building
Build on the existing community of practice
Expand on sustainable relationships with employers and education providers who care about the cause including those in non-traditional gendered career areas
Develop clear and informed referral information and messaging in all materials for DFV specialist agencies, employers, education providers and potential program participants, including protocols for feedback loops
Build the relationship with employers and education partners to build their capacity to assist with this work (for managers and staff in organisations)

Micro - Work with program participants

The WIW participants were generous with their feedback. These reflections mirrored the literature and reinforced the need to incorporate an understanding for intersectional gendered and trauma-informed practice. Many of the challenges identified by the women have already been discussed (e.g. issues with transport, assistance with attaining a driver license, flexibility in participation). Further considerations at a micro level are detailed below.

Inclusion of lived experience
Develop a mentor model (including training) using former WIW participants to act as mentors for those in the program
Develop a lived experience advisory group to assist with the development of the program, policies and advocacy work, including strategies and training to work specifically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and those from CALD backgrounds
Develop a WIW community
Consider using the program to bring women together so they are connected, supported and engaged with other women
Consider the introduction of a peer support group
Building on the concept/practice of recognition
Consider formalising incentives, celebration and acknowledgement for participants
Building on the concept/practice of recognition
Consider the development of a coaching program for young adults

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Appendices

Appendix A: WIW program participant prompting questions

1. Tell me about your involvement with WIW

2. Considering the program addresses much more than getting a job how did the program help you with movement in financial management; employment and career management; Family stability; Wellbeing and education; and Training)?
   a. Did you gain what you hoped for?
   b. What worked and what didn't?
   c. What was done in [name the area]?
   d. Any gaps? Any barriers? If so, how could this be improved?

3. If you engaged in the program to gain employment were there any the specific challenges/difficulties in gaining employment?

4. If you engaged in the program for goals other than employment what were they?
   a. Where there any barriers/difficulties that challenged these goals?

5. Thinking about what you needed to assist you in setting you up for the future what other areas do you think the program could address and why?

6. Tell me about the role of the coach
   a. How did the coaching assist you (confidence, knowledge, empowerment, motivation, strategies to deal with stress/anxiety/pressure/time management etc)?
   b. What was the most valuable thing about having a coach?
   c. How long did you have access to the coach? Was that long enough?

7. Do you think the coaching assisted with your progress or insights into how you feel about the following?
   a. Strengths
   b. Challenges you faced/face
   c. Setting realistic and attainable goals
   d. Improving your relationships
   e. Your ability to keep calm and focused
   f. Your ability to set Strong and healthy boundaries

8. How are you now placed in the following areas, after completing the program, and how does this compare to before the program?
   a. Financially
   b. Sustained employment
   c. Other
   d. What difference has it made

9. Tell me about the delivery of the program
    a. Was the program flexible enough for your needs?
    b. Was it face-to-face?
    c. Was there training on becoming familiar with IT?
    d. Would online components also assist? Ot is access to IT difficult?

10. Tell me about your employment (if you are currently working)
    a. Did you feel prepared enough at the start? If not, what might've helped? If so, what contributed?
    b. Did you feel supported by your employer?
    c. In what way did you feel they supported you? (eg. flexibility)

11. GSI is considering expanding the program. As someone who has been through the program what do they need to consider for others completing the program in the future?
    a. What works well?
    b. What could be improved?
    c. Where are the gaps?

Appendix B: DFV specialist worker prompting questions

1. Tell us about your involvement/interest/role with WIW

2. Tell us about the need for such a specific program in the sector
   a. What particular value/benefit does a trauma-informed lens bring to this program?
   b. Why are there not more programs like this?

3. Tell us about the 5 areas this program addresses (Financial management; employment and career management; family stability; wellbeing and education; and training)
   a. Do you think there is anything missing?
   b. When they ran their program, SECL added a 6th pillar (diversity and participation), do you think this would be something worth investigating for WIW?

4. Reflecting on the referral process
   a. What works well? Why does it work well?
   b. When could be improved? How?

5. What kind of feedback do you get from the women you have referred into the program?

6. Some similar programs have closed due to lack of sustainable funding and becoming overwhelmed with demand
   a. How can WIW mitigate these risks?

7. GSI is looking to expand WIW
   a. What factors need to be taken into consideration for this to happen?
   b. What needs to be maintained to ensure the integrity of the program?

Appendix C: Employer prompting questions

1. Tell us about your business's involvement in WIW
    a. How long has the business been involved?
    b. How long have you been involved?
    c. Tell me about the development of the business relationship?
    d. How many women have you employed over this time?
    e. Are they employed on a FT/PT basis?

2. Tell us about the referral process
    a. What happens?
    b. Ease of referrals?
    c. Issues/gaps/ideas to make it more effective/efficient?
    d. What would have to happen to make this easier at your end?
    e. How does it work from your end? Do you have a specific person responsible for these employees? Or are they like any other employees once they are employed?

3. Tell us about your readiness to employ the women
    a. Is there any FV training or information given to you (eg. Impact of FV)?
    b. Was this adequate?
    c. Do you feel you know how to handle a disclosure or a conversation about experiences of FV if they come up?
    d. Do you have FV leave policies and procedures?
    e. Do you think there needs to be?
    f. What would else might be useful?

4. Tell us about the women you have employed
    a. How prepared are they for employment?
    b. Is there anything you can think of that could improve this?
    c. Any gaps?
    d. Do they need further support (e.g. time off for legal processes etc)?

5. Tell us about how employing victim survivors benefits your company/wider community

6. Tell us about your ongoing relationship with GSI
    a. What is communication like?
    b. Are WIW staff approachable and available?
    c. If there are challenges with an employee from the program, do you take it back to GSI or are they treated like any other employee?

7. GSI is considering expanding the program
    a. What works well?
    b. What could be improved?

Appendix D: GSI WIW staff prompting questions

1. Tell us about your role in WIW
   a. How long have you been involved?
   b. How many women have participated in the program to date?
   c. How many have secured employment
   d. What do you see as their barriers in their journey through the program?

2. Tell us about the trauma-informed lens of the program
   a. How does this inform your work? Why?
   b. How do you realise this in the program?
   c. One of the early goals was to develop a trauma-informed resource to share with other agencies. How has this been achieved? What has been the benefit of this?

3. Tell us about the coaching
   a. What does it entail?
   b. How long do the women have access to their coach? Why this timeframe?

4. Tell us about the 5 pillars in your bridge of self-sufficiency (Financial management; Employment and career management; Family stability; Wellbeing and education; and Training)
   a. How do you introduce these to the women?
   b. How do you measure progress?

5. SECL added a sixth pillar (diversity and participation) to their program
   a. Is this something WIW has considered?
   b. Why/why not?

6. WISHIN offer incentives for the women in their program as they achieve and/work towards their goals
   a. Is this something WIW has considered?
   b. Why/why not?

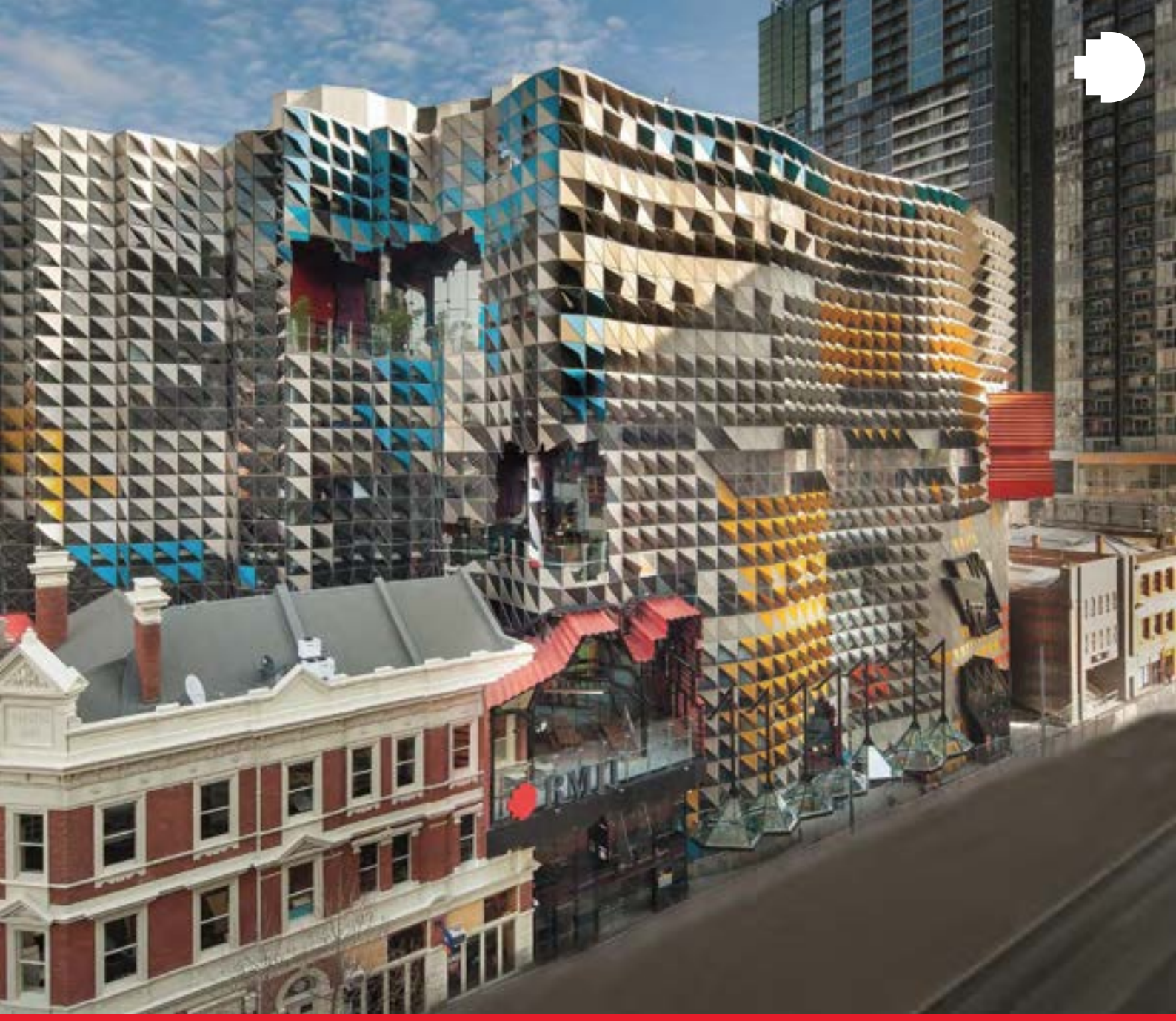
7. Tell us about the importance of the development and maintenance of the business relationships in this program (employer businesses, RTOs, employment and recruitment agencies, health and wellbeing services, childcare services)
   a. How is this going?
   b. How is this managed?
   c. What are the barriers?

8. What future work do you think needs to be done to continue to build the networks for opportunities for the women?
   a. For instance, at the outset of the program there was a goal to work with specific stakeholders to contract out some of the learning. These included Box Hill Tafe (Cert 3 in commercial cookery), Community Four, Direct Recruitment, Elizabeth Morgan House, Fitted for Work (She Works), InTouch, WIRE, MacAuley Works, Northern Community Care Works, WISHIN and YMCA.

9. Tell me about the employers
    a. How are they chosen?
    b. Do you work with them to build their knowledge about family violence and its impact?
    c. Do they understand the need for flexibility in the workplace given the practical issues of recovery (legal, health etc)?
    d, If we asked them about the job-readiness of the women referred to them, what would they tell us?
    e. If we asked them about the emotional readiness of the women referred to them, what would they tell us?

10. Successes and challenges of the program
    a. What do you consider to be the success of the program?
    b. What do you consider to be the main challenges?

11. Regarding the expansion
    a. What do you think needs to be considered for the expansion to be successful?
    b. What components of this program are necessary to retain the program's integrity in the expansion?



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