

## Results from the NTV Survey on Pay and Conditions

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In the late winter and early spring of this year, NTV conducted an anonymous, electronic survey of male family violence workers on issues related to pay and conditions for this work. The survey was open to men's behaviour change program co-ordinators and managers, group facilitators, and workers engaged in partner contact, intake and assessment or case management.

We are delighted to have received 57 completed or mostly completed responses to the survey. Although not every relevant question was responded to by each participant, the sample size was sufficient to enable some definitive conclusions to be drawn. We are very grateful to all who took the time to participate.

(A note on terminology: in this article "the proportion of respondents who ..." means "the proportion of those respondents who answered that particular question who ..." - not the proportion of the total number of respondents to the survey. Questions were generally answered by most respondents for whom the question was relevant, but not by all.)

The results that stood out the most concerned access to supervision. Almost half of respondents engaging in male family violence work during standard business hours (averaging two days per week across these respondents) reported receiving supervision specifically related to their work less frequently than once every four weeks. Approximately one-quarter reported receiving supervision related to their work either rarely or never.

Approximately 40% of respondents who do male family violence work during standard business hours reported that the average length of supervision was greater than one hour (typically either 90 minutes or two hours). This raises the possibility that lengthier supervision sessions are being used in part to offset the limited frequency of supervision. Both individual and peer/group supervision were common formats, and a bit over two-thirds received at least some supervision from a female supervisor (even if they were not necessarily their main supervisor).

Access to supervision in relation to male family violence work conducted after-hours (e.g. group facilitation) was even poorer. Sixty percent of respondents reported receiving supervision less frequently than every four weeks in relation to work conducted after-hours. Twenty-nine percent reported receiving supervision in this context rarely or never.

Taken as a whole, it appears that the sector is not meeting the NTV minimum standard concerning supervision (MS 46) for a significant proportion of its workers. MS 46 states that:

*Level Two and Three Facilitators, and Contact Workers, have at least monthly, one-on-one supervision, with a Supervisor who meets NTV's criteria for supervisors. Level One Facilitators have at least fortnightly, one-on-one supervision, with a Supervisor who meets NTV's criteria for supervisors. Staff undertaking assessments of men have at least monthly, one-on-one supervision, with a Supervisor who meets NTV's criteria for supervisors.*

One possible explanation of these findings on supervision is that programs are cutting corners in order to respond to service demand and work with more men (and therefore partners) than what they are funded to do – even if this means providing less than sufficient levels of supervision.

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Another potential explanation focuses on the difficulty of finding sufficiently experienced and specialised supervisors in rural and regional locations.

Insufficient frequency of supervision can potentially compromise the quality of practice and result in workers feeling unsupported. It is therefore an issue that NTV would like to explore in more detail with the sector as a whole in 2011.

A second key focus of the survey was levels of remuneration for male family violence work. Approximately one-quarter of respondents reported that they did not have access to salary packaging for their male family violence work conducted during standard business hours. Given the relatively poor remuneration levels associated with the SACS award, lack of access to salary packaging is a significant financial impediment towards earning a right livelihood through this work. The percentage of those without access to salary packaging for after-hours work was significantly higher (44%), though this is probably related in part to some of these respondents being on their organisation's payroll (either as a casual or part-time employee) for only a handful of hours per week.

Apart from salary packaging, a key remuneration issue is of course the hourly rate that a worker is paid. In order to report data that's relevant to the vast majority of workers, the following results for remuneration excludes those respondents who reported being co-ordinators or managers of a program. (This is not to assume that co-ordinators and managers are highly paid, but their rates of pay were as a whole moderately higher than average.)

The average hourly rate, before tax, of male family violence work conducted during standard business hours was \$28.35. (A small proportion of these respondents reported performing this work on a casual basis, and hence this figure is marginally inflated through the inclusion of the 25% casual loading in these cases.) There was a significant amount of variation between hourly rates, with approximately 30% reporting rates of \$24 to \$25 per hour, and 25% reporting rates of \$30 per hour or above (mostly in the low thirties, with the highest being \$38).

For after-hours work, again excluding those who are managers or co-ordinators, and excluding after-hours telephone-based intake workers, the average hourly rate (including after-hours penalty rates) for those not doing this work on a casual basis was \$31.28. For those doing this work as casual employees (only 8 of the respondents), the average hourly rate was \$33.12 (including the 25% casual loading).

While based on a low sample size, the results for casual after-hours work is concerning. It appears that some casual employees are being remunerated at below the SACS award for casual after-hours work. According to the SACS award, work conducted after-hours on Monday to Thursday nights (when most after-hours male family violence work occurs) should be eligible for penalty rates to reflect the night-time nature of this work, in addition to the casual loading applied to the relevant hourly rate. Given the difficult, complex and highly specialised nature of male family violence work, employment conditions beneath the SACS award is doubly concerning.

For those respondents employed part-time or full-time, the average hourly rate of \$31.28 for after-hours work appears more on par with the SACS award. If these employees were paid at the casual rate, the casual loading would lift their hourly rate to an average of \$39.10. However, it is important to note that this figure is an average rate, and that some respondents reported being paid below this. A casual rate equivalent of approximately \$39 - \$40 per hour should be the minimum that all program facilitators are paid for night-time work, including preparation and debriefing time.

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Almost half of the respondents who do after-hours male family violence work described the remuneration associated with this work as “not OK” but that they continue doing the work because they feel it is so important, is something they love doing, and/or because they feel they have no choice. In particular, the importance of the work stood out as the reason why these respondents are prepared to do it despite the perceived unacceptability of the remuneration.

Almost one-half of the respondents who do after-hours work reported occasional thoughts of leaving the agency due to the remuneration. A further one in six had thought about this often or actually intend to leave the agency due to the rate of pay.

Overall, the results on remuneration indicate that many male family violence workers, particularly but not exclusively those who work on a casual basis, are being paid below SACS award rates for evening work. This has significant implications for a sector working towards a society free of exploitation. NTV is using the results of this survey in our advocacy efforts with government to provide further evidence that programs are cutting corners to meet service demand beyond the targets through which they are funded.

A third issue that NTV was keen to explore in the survey concerned the use of independent contractor arrangements to hire labour for male family violence work. Independent contractors can be individually sued by clients for alleged malpractice, and without their own professional indemnity insurance might therefore be vulnerably financially if any such claim was to be successful. NTV also became aware of one labour hire arrangement where male family violence workers, hired as independent contractors, were required to provide their own public liability insurance.

Fortunately, only a very small proportion of respondents reported being hired through independent contractor arrangements, and it is likely that only one or two programs are using these arrangements. The vast majority are employed as part-time, full-time or casual employees.

Finally, respondents who identified as a manager or co-ordinator of a men’s behaviour change program (16 in total) were asked a small number of specific questions regarding support and funding for the program. Approximately 80% reported that their agency understands men’s behaviour change work at least reasonably well, and is supportive or exceptionally supportive of the program (with 50% of the 16 co-ordinators / managers reporting exceptional support). Just under half of the co-ordinators / managers reported that their program requires significant cross-subsidisation from other programs or funding sources to supplement state government funding for the program, a point that will not be lost in our pre-election advocacy for additional resources for the sector.

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