

Sector trends:

Intersectionality: inclusion, cohesion and continuity

The concept of intersectionality has steadily been gaining traction in the sector over the last few years, and the next challenge is embedding it into our work in practical ways. Currently, Family Safety Victoria (FSV) is working with the sector to develop resources and tools to support intersectionality in practice to more effectively prevent and respond to family violence. The *Intersectionality Capacity Building* resources, due for release in 2020, builds on the lived experience, expertise and hard work of specialist non-government organisations, academics and advocates. We spoke with Crystal Bruton and Mary Lee from FSV about why intersectionality is critical to best practice, and for a preview of what to expect in FSV's upcoming resource.

Inclusion can mean many different things depending on your own view of the world. It can manifest in our language, our assumptions, our biases (unconscious and conscious) and our behaviours towards others. So much so that others don't get heard, choose not to access services, feel discriminated against, and ultimately end up being excluded.

Wherever we're placed in the social scheme of things, we need to have some shared understanding of what power, privilege, oppression and marginalisation look like in order to achieve real reform and get the whole service system working together. With this in mind, FSV's 'Intersectionality Capacity Building' resources will provide guidance to members of any organisation to ask why people are being and feel excluded by the service system. Their resource will also provide tools to help us examine and unpack our own power and privilege that contributes to others being excluded. What we need is a collective answer to know why certain people are marginalised; and why certain voices aren't being heard. The resources will support organisations to create a culture that includes everybody without exception.

The development of FSV's resources is a key priority in *Everybody Matters: Inclusion and Equity Statement*, which applies an intersectionality framework across the family violence reform. Informed by the work of the Diverse Communities and Intersectionality Working Group, the group's Co-Chair and Chief Executive Officer of Women with Disabilities Victoria, Leah van Poppel, emphasises the importance of *Everybody Matters* as an 'important step in developing a strengths-based, human-rights focused, inclusive family violence service system which is here for everyone'.

To embed inclusion and equity into the fabric of our working lives, we all need to play a part, and be able to advocate for change.

Applying intersectionality into practice takes us beyond an intellectual understanding of power and identity, and moves us into embracing one another's differences and being in step with each other.

In order to get to this point, we need to look within ourselves, at our own behaviour, our language, and at the culture of our organisations. Only then will we be able to see how we consciously and unconsciously create social disconnection and disengagement.

The resources will support the application of an intersectional approach across whole-of-organisations, thereby enabling the identification and breaking down of barriers and making every single person – from upper management to frontline workers and victim survivors of family violence – feel connected and safe regardless of our circumstances or the identities they inhabit.

The resources will be published as a handbook with information on the theory of intersectionality within an Australian context. This theory is complemented with practical tools and tips – including a critical reflection tool to help individuals and organisations develop awareness of bias (unconscious and conscious), positions of power, privilege and social location; an inclusive language tool, including specific guidance on terms and phrases that foster inclusion; and an organisational audit tool to assess current strategies, policies and practices in areas such as direct service delivery, client engagement, management and governance.

By building on previous work on diversity and intersectionality, FSV's resources will leverage existing workforce development opportunities by embedding its content into already established training programs and other existing resources. For example, the resources will support organisations prescribed under legislation to align their policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools to the Family

Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) framework.

FSV's Crystal Bruton says that: 'if we're expecting a quick win from intersectionality, then we're not doing it right.' Intersectionality is a process of continuous improvement and learning from our mistakes. It's about everyone recognising that we all have biases; we all have lived experiences; and we can never truly understand another person's experience. It requires the humility to step aside and say: 'I'm here to listen and to help transform the system with you.' That's the key to building strong and socially inclusive organisations and communities. ■



Family Safety Victoria (FSV)'s 'Intersectionality Capacity Building' resource is a key priority from *Everybody Matters: Inclusion and Equity Statement* that articulates the Victorian Government's vision for a more inclusive, safe, responsive and accountable family violence system for all Victorians.
www.vic.gov.au/everybody-matters-inclusion-and-equity-statement

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**Inclusion is: Belonging. Acceptance. Participation.
 To be seen and heard.**