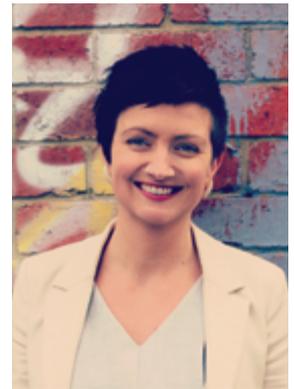


DVRCV's focus:

The importance of conversation

While working as a team on this issue of the Advocate magazine, we identified one of the key ingredients to successful change is the conversations we have, particularly when consulting with a multitude of different experts, all sitting at the one table.



We were talking in the office recently about what it takes to manage complex change, and we started to identify just how many parallels there are between our own organisational-level change and system-level changes that the entire sector is experiencing. The Advocate magazine for example, in its recent transformation and relaunch, offered a useful analogy to explore what is essential for successful change.

Changing the Advocate: An Analogy

Once we'd articulated our vision for the Advocate, what quickly became obvious is that I'm not an expert on redesigning a magazine. Even though the responsibility for realising our organisational vision is mine, it's not up to me to make every decision about how to do things – it's smarter if I leave the expertise up to the experts, so when it came to relaunching a new version of the Advocate, I had to ask others involved: 'How are we going to get this done?'

The second thing that became clear was the importance of knowing which expert to ask about what, and when. Redeveloping a magazine requires the orchestration of many – communications specialists, writers, designers, artists, editors, printers, distributors, not to mention the content experts – family violence and prevention

practitioners who work in the field. Any conversation with different experts come with a different context, and that needs to be clearly understood when giving or taking advice.

Conversation Matters

There's little controversy in the statement: Change is difficult. Even at the micro-level of transforming an industry magazine, it's challenging. To change entire systems at statewide level is a vast and complex task, and one that hundreds of people across Victoria are working through as we speak.

In the process of system reform, it's the community sector's job to advise the government of the day to support them to make the best, evidence informed and practice relevant decision possible. Therefore, our ability to advise and transfer knowledge is as essential as government's ability to listen and try to engage with the complexity of practice.

It takes vision, accountability, leadership, collaboration and the ability to let go. Progress is made via conversations, and those conversations can be difficult and sometimes confronting. It's hard to listen, interrogate, engage and be willing to have your mind changed. An authentic, frank and fearless conversation takes courage and trust.

We are in an era of unprecedented, once-in-a-generation change. There are complex political, economic, cultural, social layers and the conversations that guide our government's best foot forward are crucial. That sounds overwhelming but it is achievable. We – as an organisation and as a sector – are already starting to change; the mere fact that these conversations are taking place demonstrate change. But in the midst of these conversations, should it begin to get bogged down, derailed or become too polarised, we should stop and ask each other: what is the one thing we all want? Are we making decisions that will achieve that? If so, how? If not, who at the table has the specific, specialist experience and knowledge needed to provide the right advice on the issue at hand?

If every one of us at the table, from government ministers to community sector practitioners, are able to make ourselves accountable to the one change we are all trying to achieve, then our conversations will be embedded with the kind of fearless advice and open listening we need in order to reach a future in which all women and children are free from violence.

Emily Maguire | Chief Executive Officer



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It's difficult to listen, interrogate, engage and be willing to have your mind changed.